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ASTROLOGY IN THAILAND

THE FUTURE AND THE RECOLLECTION OF THE PAST

by

Nerida M. Cook

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Australian National University
July 1989
This thesis is my own work. 
All reference to the 
work of others 
has been 
duly acknowledged.

[Signature]
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This thesis would not have been possible without considerable assistance from many people, only a few of whom can be acknowledged here.

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Any errors of fact or interpretation in this thesis are entirely my own responsibility.
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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Thai words are spelt according to the system used by Mary Haas in her Thai-English Student's Dictionary (Stanford University Press, 1964) with the following exceptions:

Consonants

The final consonant 'b' is here written as 'p'
The final consonant 'd' is here written as 't'
The final consonant 'g' is here written as 'k'

The initial consonant 'j' is here written as 'y'

The consonant 'g' is here written as 'ng'
The initial glottal '?' is omitted and no tones are indicated.

Vowels

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A number of other conventions have been adopted in this thesis.

Except in cases of direct quotation only Thai words appear in italics. All other foreign words and emphases are underlined.

Personal names have been transliterated rather more loosely in order to give an indication of spelling (as opposed to pronunciation); however long consonants in names have not been shown. Personal and place names which have an English form are spelt in that form. In works where a page number referred to is a Thai letter, the equivalent letter according to the order of the English alphabet has been used.

Works published in the Thai language are referred to using their Buddhist Era date of publication. (In Thailand the Buddhist Era is 543 years ahead of the Western year.) The AD year for each work is supplied in the bibliography. In keeping with standard practice, Thai authors are listed according to their first name.
SYNOPSIS

This is a study of astrology in Bangkok, based on fieldwork in 1982-3 and a short return visit in August-October 1984. The research was based on the activities of two astrological associations, and incorporated information from formal and informal interviews with a range of practising astrologers and other fortune-tellers about their role in contemporary Bangkok society. Other research activities included observations of fortune-telling consultations and discussions with clients.

The aim of the research was to discover what the modern role of astrology is in Bangkok, and to attempt to assess what was happening to this aspect of Thai belief under modern urban conditions. It was also an exploration of the relationship of astrology to other elements of the Thai world-view, since this has not previously been the subject of investigation; and further included an examination of the Thai astrological view of the past, since history was found to be a prominent interest of astrologers.

The argument of this thesis is also about time, since I suggest that Thai astrology is basically a system of interpretation of the meanings discoverable in temporal experience. Some portion of the thesis is therefore devoted to the analysis of the temporal experience underlying Thai astrology both as a system and in the way that astrology is dependent on temporal context for its very practice. It is suggested that the use made of astrology in Thailand shows that qualitative views of temporal experience are not incompatible with linear concepts of time.

In this thesis it is argued that Thai astrology has continued among some groups in Thai society as an intrinsic aspect of a world-
view concerned with auspiciousness, power and legitimacy. This is an inheritance from Thai astrology's élite background, at least in the sophisticated level of astrology investigated here.

The fact that Thai astrology is eagerly supported by some in Thai society while as keenly refuted by others is discussed to show that the opposition to astrology in Bangkok is not just a repetition of the kinds of arguments concerning credibility and determinism which has been found in the West, but rather a debate with distinctively Thai concerns about the adequacy of religious explanation in Buddhism and about the development of a rationalised and democratic society. It is therefore suggested that astrology in Thailand has become involved in deeper political and philosophical conflicts which are of ongoing social and political significance in contemporary Bangkok, and that this is an important factor in understanding the present role of astrology in Bangkok.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This study is concerned with two subjects, one of which, time, has recently received extensive exploration in a wide range of intellectual areas; and one of which, astrology, has received very scant scholarly attention. The lack of attention paid to astrology in Western scholarship has to do with its historical transformation in Western intellectual thought, and the consequent antipathy of its scientific successors, to the point where even for the study of those historical periods in our own past where the "occult" was still acceptable to the majority, 'it still seems necessary to fight for basic historiographical rights for the subject, and for its human subjects' (Curry 1987: 3). To some extent the same may be said for the discussion of elements of what we now class as occult, such as astrology, in that other 'past' ('The past is another country, they do things differently there'), non-Western societies, where adherence to such belief systems scorned in Western intellectual traditions has often gone unanalysed. This is the case for Thailand, where in spite of the acknowledged prevalence of the use of a complex of astrological ideas, this has rarely been the subject of any sustained examination.

To the extent that this study deals with our concepts of time, it is inevitably drawn into a dichotomy which 'embodies the deepest and oldest themes in Western thought' on this subject (Gould 1987: 10): that of linear and cyclical perceptions of time. Gould has recently shown the importance of attention to this dichotomy and
its attendant tensions in the history of Western thought, and even recent feminist attempts to take a sceptical approach to Western concepts of temporality have maintained the usefulness of the two types of temporal perception (Johles Forman 1989: xiv). This discussion will focus on one example of the hopes and fears expressed in the use of 'time's arrow' and 'time's cycle'.

**Time in Anthropology**

The concept of time has received only spasmodic attention in anthropological analysis, although since Evans-Pritchard's original observation, based on his experiences among the Nuer, that notions of time can be highly culturally specific, anthropology as a discipline has made several contributions to the understanding of this aspect of human perception.

Evans-Pritchard's work on the Nuer concepts of time, as of those of space, indicated a fundamentally different, and relativised experience of the qualitative nature of and experience of time, one which he related to the nature and structures of Nuer social organisation itself (1940). Since then, a number of other authors have reached similar kinds of conclusions, to the extent that it has recently been critically asserted that the view that concepts of time are closely related to the social organisation of the society in which they occur and are therefore highly variable between societies has become 'probably the most fundamental claim ... made by cultural relativists' (Bloch 1977: 282).

There has been much discussion of the conceptual difficulties entailed by some of the anthropological attempts to deal with such ideas: as Barnes has noted (1971: 541), Lévi-Strauss' influential contrasts between different types of time 'might better be described as between different kinds of temporal process rather than between different kinds of time, but the nomenclature is now too well established to change'.
Anthropological writings on the experience of temporality have often focused around what has usually been regarded as a dichotomy between traditional societies, which are frequently held to have a system of 'reversible time' (to use Lévi-Strauss' term), and modern literate societies, which express their dependence on notions of progress by primary orientation towards non-reversible time. Bloch correctly points out that, rather than a plethora of notions of time, the anthropological literature largely makes use of two notions of time: that already familiar to us which is 'rather like our own folk everyday concept of linear durational time' (1977: 282) and a contrasting notion of what he refers to synonymously as cyclic, static time. Bloch argues that the latter is not necessarily the only kind of cognitive system of time available to the peoples studied by anthropologists, and that the exotic should not be over-emphasised (1977: 285). Yet Bloch's own assumption of the universality of 'practical' durational concepts of time, and his argument that the practical domain utilises notions of time in a system by which people know the world while ritual notions of time help to hide the world have also been criticised (Bourdillon 1978; Austin 1979; Howe 1981: 222). Bloch's designation of cyclical time being restricted to ritual also connotes 'temporal distancing' which detracts from other elements of his analysis (Fabian 1983: 30, 44).

The opposition between synchronic and diachronic forms of analysis have received sustained discussion within anthropological circles, particularly in relation to functionalist and structuralist theories, and yet Barnes has argued that in the work of Lévi-Strauss the dichotomy between these two has been overemphasised to the point of needless limitation (1971: 547-8), and a similar point might be made about the assumed dichotomous nature of cyclical versus progressive concepts of time. Forth has recently called into question Leach's assumption that most primitive societies are characterised by an alternating and reversible concept of time (1983: 75), showing that irreversibility can be common to both
cyclical and linear views of time (1983: 76). He further points out that opposed concepts of cyclicity and linearity can coexist, and are not themselves incompatible or contradictory (1983: 74), a finding similar to that of Howe. Howe argues that the issue anthropologists should be addressing is not 'the different notions of time but rather ... the different ways in which the passage of time is represented' (1981: 223), and concludes that 'duration is neither wholly cyclical nor completely linear', and that if a society accentuates the cyclical aspect of duration rather more than the linear, this does not imply 'that they have a static concept of time any more than it means they repudiate the passage of time altogether' (1981: 232).

Ultimately, perhaps, it is partly the attempt to argue within the value-laden terminology that has been perpetuated within these debates that leads to suggestions that other peoples do not repudiate the passage of time. As Hobart has argued in relation to Geertz's well-known essay on Balinese concepts of time, much confusion in the discussion could be avoided if, "instead of asking what time really "is," we were to look at how it is actually used and the relations which its use implies" (1986b: 143).

Writers like Howe and Forth appear to find the categories of cyclical and linear time useful in categorising the conceptual frameworks of the societies they study, and suggest that the differences between societies can be characterised as the different degrees to which they 'emphasise the linear and/or the cyclical perception of duration' (Howe 1981: 223). This might best be regarded as an attempt to break away from too strict an opposition between kinds of societies, substituting a naturally occurring continuum of societies ranked according to the degree to which they are dominated by cyclical or progressive notions of time. Nevertheless Howe, like Geertz before him, is writing about the temporal system of the Balinese where a considerable difference is perceived between 'their' time and 'ours,' even though Bali is and
has long been a highly literate society extensively exposed to the impact of foreign contact and eventually European political and economic domination.

If Giddens is right in following Lévi-Strauss' stress on the 'importance of the emergence of historicity, and the various conceptions of history associated with it, in the modern world, and to contrast this with ... traditional cultures' characterised by their relative absence of social change, we are still left with an opposition of 'them' and 'us', and the derivative notion of traditional societies as those 'in which tradition is pre-eminent, [and] processes of social reproduction are interwoven with different forms of awareness of past, present and future than in the contemporary industrialized world' (Giddens 1979: 199-200). In this view tradition 'is the "purest" and most innocent mode of social reproduction' (Giddens 1979: 200), an explanation which takes little account of the fact that 'tradition' is often invented (Hobsbawm 1983). While Giddens does acknowledge, based on the rise of writing in the West, that when tradition 'is no longer dependent on "usage and presumption alone"' then the process of interpretation is likely, giving rise to 'a concern for problems of ideology, in both intellectual disciplines and in practical political activity' (1979: 201), comparatively little exists in the anthropological literature on the conception of time and temporal processes in those societies which might now be seen, as a result of their emergence into the international economic and political system, as representing "modernising traditions".

The analyses of temporal systems just mentioned are concerned to elucidate the indigenous systems, as far as possible abstracted out from any outside influences, and yet, if the post-feudal West is characterised by 'the encroachment of historicity' (Giddens 1979: 201), then it is to be expected that the conceptions of time, duration and historicity now perceived as typical of the capitalist West must be having some impact on the 'traditional' conceptual
systems of societies which are now increasingly being influenced by Western political and economic dominance. Giddens points out that 'the control of time as a resource in structures of domination' has received little attention (1979: 210), although there has been some attention devoted to this in Marxist interpretations of the incorporation of formerly subsistence societies into a capitalist political economy (e.g. Michael F. Smith 1982). On the whole, however, the study of conceptualisations of time in other cultures has maintained the traditional anthropological interest in the 'relationship between the West and the Rest' (Fabian 1983: 28), with the result that such studies have been carried out with "timeless" theory and method' by ignoring the role of time in the relations between cultures (Fabian 1983: 41).

Bourdieu has written of the temporal orientation of the Algerian peasant:

If the scientific and technical mind, in order to take possession of the future, has recourse to rational induction founded on the knowledge of natural laws and on the postulate of determinism, the traditionalist mind assures itself of the 'forthcoming' by attempting to fashion it, by the means at its disposal, in the image of the past, to reduce the innumerable possibilities, fraught with all the dangers of the unknown, into the experience of the past which reassures because it is over and done with.

(1963: 69)

This is a common assertion about the nature of the relationship between past, present and future in the 'traditional' world-view, contrasted explicitly with the modern, future-oriented world-view of our 'scientific' outlook, and implicitly with our Enlightenment critique which 'questioned the very principle of tradition itself, the authority which the past exercises over the present' (Giddens 1979: 201).

Anxiety about the future is held to be an adequate explanation for the recourse to cyclical notions of time in societies where there are perceived to be inadequate means for
controlling the future, and yet it is just such anxieties concerning the imminence of change in modern rapidly changing societies which are also held to have led to the creation there of tradition which by repetition suggests a continuity with the past (Hobsbawm 1983: 1). It is thus possible to question whether the notion of and recourse to 'tradition' is an adequate basis on which to set up a dichotomy of conceptual frameworks for the experience of temporality, let alone of societal types; since, as Giddens himself admits, 'the influence of tradition never wholly evaporates, even in the most mobile or fluid societies' (1979: 219). While it may be true to say that 'modern' societies are dominated by a perception of linear progress which forms a basis for action and where 'that consciousness is organised actively to promote social change' (Giddens 1979: 200), it cannot be held to fully constitute the temporal framework within which the members of that society operate, any more than members of 'traditional' societies eliminate the notion of the passage of time.

This study will examine the impact of change on, and the nature of the continuity of, a 'traditional' system of temporal experience, namely the Thai astrological system, in present-day Bangkok, and it aims thereby to provide analysis of one example of the impact of modern secularising influences on a temporal system which is founded on quite different principles to the concepts of time introduced with Western political, intellectual and economic institutions.

The study of an astrological theory as a temporal system in the context of the current debates is important in two respects. Firstly, astrology as an explanation of temporal experience in the West has generally been held to have experienced a natural demise with the rise of modern scientific thinking, as secular scientific theories of the nature of the planetary system overtook any understanding of the possible meanings for mankind gained from the study of planetary motion, and as other principles of causation
superseded the use of planets in explanations of the connections between past, present and future events. Astrological thinking is thus usually considered incompatible with modern scientific views in the West, and indeed it appears to fit quite well into Bourdieu's 'traditionalist' world-view. It is therefore of interest to see what impact modern secular thinking has had on the practice of astrology in a non-Western but modernising context.

The second reason for the importance of the study of astrology is that it is, and presumably always has been, only one form of temporal system among others; indeed in Thailand, although it has been widely recognised for several centuries, it is still maintained as something of an esoteric system which is only partly coincident with Buddhist and Western notions of temporal divisions and experience. It can therefore be studied not as the Thai temporal system, but as one system which can be utilised for specific purposes. The Thai astrological system has always had to accommodate to and compete with other systems, and thus the present situation can be seen as a continuation of this process. This thesis will examine the Thai astrological system as one which must be seen in the context of a variety of systems of temporal experience, and it will be argued that the significance of the maintenance of the astrological system cannot be divorced from the coexistence of these other formulations of temporal experience. A part of this discussion will be an attempt to assess the impact of Western modes of time conceptualisation on the Thai systems.

The Thai Astrological System

A word needs to be said here about the nature of Thai astrology, and the reasons for studying it as a 'temporal system'.

The astrological tradition of Thailand is closely related to the Thai experience of time in a number of ways. The Thai astrological system is based on the ancient Indian astronomical
calculations of Hindu astrologers, and represents the mathematically most sophisticated form of temporal measurement in Thailand, and it was partly for this reason that the construction of calendars fell to the astrologers of the royal court. Howe reminds us that Hubert and Mauss first pointed out that we cannot study time in the abstract, it must be seen as 'the relationship between points which divide time and the intervals so created' (Howe 1981: 222), and the sharing of this understanding is a fundamental aspect of the basis of social organisation. 'A temporal order that is commonly shared by a group of people and is unique to them functions both as a unifier and as a separator' (Zerubavel 1981: 70), unifying those bound by its framework, and distinguishing them from those who do not recognise it.

In Siam the regular task of the complex formulation of a centralised temporal system catering to religious and political coordination naturally fell to the determination by members of the court of the absolute monarchy. The astronomically based calendar of the royal astrologers provided a regulated and reasonably consistent means of temporal measurement, providing a central and politically supreme standard which overcame the inconsistencies of regional variations. The connection between the construction of calendars and political control (Davis 1976: 3) was maintained as a result, and it is probably no coincidence that astrology was adopted along with other Brahmanic influences from the Khmer empire as a part of the elaboration of the role of the Siamese monarchy as a key institution of political consolidation (Wales 1931: 60).

Leach has also observed that we tend to think of time 'as if it were a concrete thing waiting to be measured' whereas in fact we create time by creating intervals in social life. Until we have done this there is no time to be measured. (1961: 135)

The fact that time must be created lends it cultural usefulness, as some of the analysts referred to earlier have noted. However the
creation of time need not refer only to the creation of intervals to be measured, but also to the nature of those intervals in the way they are experienced. The notion of clock time, with its regulation of meticulously exact and precisely similar units following each other in regular succession provides one dimension of the measurement of time. This naturalised concept of time is so much a part of our own experience of time under capitalist industrialisation, that, as Fabian notes,

[i]n most ethnographic studies of other time conceptions the difference between standardized clock time and other methods of measuring provides the puzzle to be resolved. (1983: 29)

The Thai astrological system, however, points to another element of the importance of the creation of units of time, where, as Geertz has pointed out, the demarcation of temporal units can also

... mark and classify the qualitative modalities in terms of which time manifests itself in human experience ...

Thus a calendar can create bounded units of time

... to describe and characterize them, to formulate their differential social, intellectual, and religious significance. (1975: 391)

In claiming that the Balinese calendar actually creates just such kinds of units rather than providing units of time which can be used to measure the elapse of time, Geertz places the Balinese temporal framework within the non-durational, 'detemporalising' view of time which is so often opposed to the Western concept of time. However in his assertion Geertz chooses to ignore the calendrical concepts of absolute dates, eras and so forth which he claims are of distinctly secondary importance for everyday life (1975: 391 fn. 29). For Geertz, a corollary of his emphasis on the importance of the singular significance of any particular moment arising from its location in the conjunction of several concurrent temporal cycles is that 'Balinese social life lacks climax because it takes place in a motionless present, a vectorless now' (1975: 404).
As Friedman has indicated, Geertz's account leads to the apparently contradictory image of a people who do not recognise the flow of time but who are 'perfectly capable of recounting their history in a clearly linear fashion' (1985: 173). It may be the case that Geertz's influential essay has been taken too much at face value by his supporters in its apparent message of the Balinese non-recognition of durational time, for Geertz himself concedes, against the overall tenor of his argument, that the Balinese 'immobilization of time' is only an attempt, and only a partially successful one at that (1975: 399). In Geertz's analysis we find out how the Balinese obsessions in this direction are manifested, but there is little explanation of why, outside the terms of their 'radical aesthetic' itself.

In contrast to the kind of view put forward by Geertz, I will argue that, although the Thai astrological system places the same importance on the location of moments in time in relation to the various temporal cycles which Geertz reports for the Balinese system, this is not incompatible with a function of maintenance of a long-term measurement and evaluation of the elapse of time. Indeed, in the Thai astrological system, it is just the conjunction of moments in time within various temporal cycles which provides events with their sense of 'climax' or long lasting importance and effectiveness. There is thus a strong link between the notion of recurrent cycles and particular moments of fundamental importance which is realised by the idea of performing appropriate acts at their most auspicious moments. Moreover the social and religious significance of the units of time in the Thai astrological system become imbued not only with a sense of direction, but also with a means to define a certain sense of history. If the Thai astrological tradition lacks a sense of historicity in the progressive sense, it does so in the present context as only one view of temporal experience among others, some of which do include fundamental concern with various kinds of progress. The distinctive
way in which Thai astrology defines the relationship between the past, present and future must, I argue, be understood in relation to rival interpretations of the 'vectors' of the present.

Thai astrology not only establishes the different types of qualities of particular periods of time, and elaborates on the nature of the various kinds of temporal conjunctions which occur, it also predicates rules for understanding the relationship between the past, the present, and the future: and indeed, astrology everywhere is most famous for its purported ability to cross these boundaries in ways not usually deemed possible in the ordinary experience of temporality. If the usefulness of astrology primarily lies in its ability to allow visions of the future 'ahead of time', however, its application in Thai society does not end there. In its more routinised aspects, astrology provides schedules for the timing of significant events, enabling participants to attempt to maximise the efficacy of activities by ensuring that they are performed when auspiciousness is at a peak; and similarly it enables dangerous undertakings to be performed when malefic forces are minimal. Astrology enables a reading of the calendar for temporal periods which are useful or pernicious for undertaking planned activities.

Thai astrology, like its Indian counterpart, is also useful in a way which has now largely been destroyed in Western astrology by religious attacks from the seventeenth century onward: and that is as a supplementary aid to the fundamental religious and moral understanding of the relation between actions and social status. Thai astrology is intimately interlinked with the Buddhist notion of karma, the moral doctrine of the consequences of individual action, and while the doctrine of karma is normatively superior to any other kind of explanation of the consequences of an individual's actions and his or her current status in life, astrology plays an active part in providing a basis for understanding the temporal dimension of this doctrine.
The 'law of karma' theoretically provides an unequivocal moral determination of the consequences of past actions for present and future fortune as it explains present situation by past acts; but it remains indeterminate in ascribing the timing for these consequences on the life and experience of the individual, and astrology is thus popularly held to provide one way of showing how long presently perceived consequences will last, and when unforeseen consequences are likely to influence an individual. As Perinbanayagam has pointed out for Hindus,

The temporal structure of the causal nexus [in the theory of karma] has a past as well as a future reference. If one is suffering, one must have done evil in the past life. This interpretation enables a believer to make sense of his life and frame it in a neat structure of cause and effect... Yet, it becomes imperative to know what particular relationship exists between a cause in the past life and effect in the current life, and astrology becomes the method by which this relationship is discovered and some means of mitigating the ill-effect is found. (1981: 70)

In the Buddhist world-view of Thailand, as for South Asian Hinduism, morality and its consequences are explicitly conceived within a linear temporal framework which astrology, for practical purposes, seeks to make temporally specific, and thus provide a more secure basis for action within it. It also complements the creation by the Buddhist doctrine of a constant expectation that one's present karma can run out, and that things may therefore change: whereby in fact, Thais 'do not see the future to be conditioned by the past in any static sense' (Mulder 1985: 166).

Although, as I shall show later, this relationship between the fundamental tenets of Buddhism and the practice of astrology is not uncontested in contemporary Thailand, karma is nevertheless one of the principal conceptual mainstays of the astrological system in a world-view which maintains the importance of the inexorable yet dynamic links between past, present and future experience.
A final important aspect of Thai astrology was encountered during fieldwork, namely that astrologers, when not actively engaged in the pursuit of interpretations of the present and future, are just as actively interested in the interpretation of the past and in an elucidation of the patterns of historical events. Because astrology provides a basis for understanding occurrences at any point in the temporal framework with which it is concerned, Thai astrologers provide themselves and their fellow countrymen with one kind of historical interpretation which not only makes explicable the past in relation to the present, but also the relationship of both to the future. This kind of commentary on national and world events is as much a part of the astrological enterprise in sophisticated astrological circles as the reading of individual fortunes or the calculation of auspicious times, and is part of the kind of discourse which astrologers see themselves as able to contribute to as a group.

Like the practitioners of a 'traditional' Thai form of explanation studied by Irvine (1982: 21), moreover, Thai astrologers are explicitly concerned with 'making public statements of loyalty' to the nation, Buddhist religion and monarch, and in particular are concerned with the notions of nationhood and national identity. Much of the Thai astrological interpretation of history is clearly linked to the conceptualisation of a distinctively Thai national history. Thai astrology thus also provides a system of historical interpretation which, while it is not completely independent of other forms of historical explanation, is nevertheless based on its own distinctive criteria for establishing understanding of historical processes.

At times this explication of historical events verges on the historicist in the Popperian sense, namely aiming to discover 'the "rhythms" or the "patterns", the "laws" or the "trends" which underlie ... history' (Popper 1961: 3), and although this is not necessarily evolutionist or progressive in the way common to modern
society (Giddens 1979: 199), neither is it reduced to the denial of social change. The Thai astrological interpretation of history tends to argue continuity of form through vicissitudes which may be experienced in any particular period, and in spite of accepted non-reversible changes. In this sense, it is closer to Lévi-Strauss' cosmological 'history which explains more and teaches less' (1966: 262) in comparison to other contemporary Thai theories of history, but it must also be remembered that it presents, in the contemporary context, only one of a 'plurality of axes of irreversible time' (Barnes 1971: 547) in a highly literate society, and as such its emphasis on conditional continuity of form has a significantly ideological component.

Outline of the Thesis

It can be seen from the brief outline given so far that Thai astrological knowledge is inextricably linked to theories relating to the nature of temporal experience in a wide range of ways. The Thai astrological tradition has been responsible for one of the most sophisticated systems of time reckoning, it posits a qualitative nature to temporal units which provides both a timetable for action and a complement to Buddhist moral teachings, and it provides one variant explanation of the nature of historical experience. These aspects will be dealt with in more detail in subsequent chapters.

The remainder of the first Chapter will provide an account of the setting in which fieldwork was carried out, and other background information pertinent to the research location. After a brief historical account of the institutionalisation of astrology within Siamese court culture, Chapter Two will go on to a discussion of astrology in its contemporary setting, including the role of modern astrological associations. This chapter will also include discussion of the impact of changes in the availability of astrological knowledge, and provide an outline of the current challenges to astrological thinking in modern Thai thought. In
Chapter Three the relationship of astrology to the structuring and measuring of intervals of time will be discussed, including the qualitative nature of time incorporated into temporal schemata, while in Chapter Four the way in which duration is incorporated into this understanding and applied to the life-cycle of the individual is discussed. In Chapter Five the practical issues of consultations and credibility are discussed, in order to show what impact astrological views have on the individual and more generally to consider the ethical climate in which astrology is followed within Bangkok society, as well as the issue of to whom astrology appeals most.

In Chapter Six astrology as a conceptual framework within which to conceive of and explain national history is analysed, including attempts within astrology to cope with the recent changes in the political constitution of Thai society. This is followed in Chapter Seven by an analysis of the role astrology plays in the general political arena, before moving to the relationship between the political ideology underlying much of the popular history of Thailand and the discussion of Thai history in astrological terms: the context in which the latter lays claim to one kind of political view among other competing views of the nature of Thai history and thus of Thai society. The Conclusion then summarises the way in which the distinctive view of time which is utilised in the Thai astrological perspective has enabled the dissemination of one kind of view of Thai history and society in order to legitimise particular kinds of political action and leadership. The Conclusion will also assess the relationship between the form which astrological perceptions of time take and the existence and development of other kinds of view of temporality.

The Fieldwork Setting: Bangkok

The importance of the fact that the research for this thesis on an aspect of the 'Thai' world-view was carried out in Bangkok
should not be under-emphasised. Bangkok was chosen as the research site primarily because of the presumed accessibility and variety of astrological personnel and activities located within the capital, as well as the fact that Bangkok could be assumed to be the most Western-influenced location for the study of the impact of outside ideas from among the most modernised sector of the Thai population, while being the primary site of rapid social and intellectual change in general. Specificities of astrological emphasis related to the status of Bangkok as the national capital became obvious during fieldwork, and these will become clearer later in the thesis.

Bangkok is statistically the 'most primate' city in the world (London 1980: 28; Sternstein 1984: 43) and, partly as a consequence, Thailand has remained 'the most centralised of nations' (Sternstein 1984: 68). Just prior to the time of fieldwork, in 1980, when the Thai population was just over forty-four million (Penporn 1985: 407), Bangkok's official population had passed the five million mark in the same year (Sternstein 1984: 43). Over one in ten people in the country were therefore resident in the capital in a society still largely rural-based, and with Bangkok having a population fifty-one times that of the next most populous urban centre (Sternstein 1984: 67). Moreover Bangkok continues to grow at a faster rate than all other urban places in the country (London 1980: 39).\(^1\)

It is not only in size, however, that Bangkok dominates the rest of the nation, for a variety of economic, political and cultural factors have been seen to explain the pre-eminence of the capital within the Thai nation-state. Many of these factors have continued over time, despite the very changed circumstances in which modern Thailand finds itself compared to the time when Bangkok was founded by a non-royal general as a part of the 'reconstruction' of

\(^1\) Unofficial estimates of Bangkok's population, taking into account the increasingly urbanised hinterland and large numbers of unregistered residents etc., have reportedly put Bangkok's real population at up to twice the official figure.
the city-state type of political entity known in the former capital of Ayutthaya before its destruction by the Burmese in 1767.

For much of Bangkok's history Western observers have noticed the central importance of Bangkok as a capital. In the mid-nineteenth century for example a foreign missionary reported that

The population of this city is large... People from all parts of the country constantly visit this city, which is at once the seat of government, of religion, of foreign commerce, in short of nearly all public life in the kingdom. Bangkok is more to Siam than Paris is to France.

(quoted in Sternstein 1984: 49)

A century later another observer stated flatly that 'for decades Bangkok has been Thailand' (Huff quoted in London 1980: 113), and this view is still evident among members of Bangkok's élite, for whom the primary cultural and political importance of their capital remains unchallenged. As the economic, political, social and 'cultural symbolic' centre of the country, therefore, Bangkok is also a 'functionally' primate city (cf. London 1980: 6).

Bangkok has been the economic centre of Thailand since its establishment two centuries ago, and its economic dominance is, if anything, stronger now than ever, in spite of government attempts to decentralise urbanisation and some sectors of the economy. Large business groups in Thailand are based in Bangkok, as are trading companies and banks, and ninety-five percent of imports pass through Bangkok (Krirkkiat and Yoshihara 1983: 20-21). Similarly manufacturing industries have been concentrated in and around Bangkok, and, given the importance of political patronage to business in Thailand (Krirkkiat and Yoshihara 1983: 24-26), this close association between economic concentration and the centre of political power is likely to continue.

As a result of this economic centralisation, migration to Bangkok is of such a level that the city's population growth has been the most rapid in the country, in spite of its fertility rate
being the lowest; and close to ten percent of Bangkok's population in 1980 were migrants who had been in the city less than five years (Lim and Porpora 1987: 76). A large proportion of the industrial workforce in Bangkok is therefore estimated to be supplied by rural migrants who are either permanent or seasonal migrants, while Bangkok's development can be argued to have been undertaken at the cost of the rural population's development (Lim and Porpora 1987: 87). Bangkok's centrality in interregional migration is also expected to continue for some time (Penporn 1985: 420).

Bangkok is also economically dominant from the point of view of its disproportionate consumption of the country's resources, including eighty percent of the country's electricity supply and telephones and of around fifty percent of its cars (Girling 1981: 88). The disparity between incomes in Bangkok and other areas of the country is also very large: Bangkokians earn more than two and a half times the national average (Girling 1981: 87). The taxation system also tends to favour urban dwellers over rural dwellers and the poor (Girling 1981: 84-86), and there is little doubt that as a result of centre-directed modernisation the concentration of economic and political power in Bangkok is 'draining the resources of the rest of the country' (Girling 1981: 85).

London argues that Bangkok as a metropolis can be seen to have been economically parasitic throughout its history, but suggests that more accurately,

it is the elite which creates and appropriates not only the surplus but the need for an urban service class which, too, must be fed by the surplus. Thus, the ultimate stratification pattern created by the division of labor is not subsumed under a metropolis-hinterland dichotomy. It may be more aptly described by the distinction between a primate city elite and all the other urban and rural groups with which that elite interacts.

(London 1980: 114)

Support for this view can be found in the widening gap between not only the urban and rural sectors of Thai society, but also between
the wealthy, educated, bureaucratic and business élites of the city, and its increasingly impoverished and marginalised poorer masses (Girling 1981: 87), creating a metropolis of highly visible disparities in status and wealth (London 1980: 31). Nevertheless, the ruling élite has found it necessary to maintain some level of material satisfaction among Bangkok's urban population for its own survival (Girling 1981: 85-86), and thus political motives have been in part responsible for the maintenance of a much larger gap between the population of the city and the rest of the country.

The political pre-eminence of Bangkok arises from the location of the political élite within the highly centralised government based in Bangkok, as well as the privileged position of Bangkok dwellers because of their political necessity to the rulers. The importance of Bangkok as a locus of political activity also finds reflection in the fact that the most important military units are strategically located within and close by the capital, and it is an accepted tradition that whoever comes to be in charge of the section of the military units in Bangkok and the central region can expect to later control the Army (Suchit 1987: 19). In another sense Bangkok's political pre-eminence is also guaranteed by the fact that the highest and most prestigious educational institutions, necessary for the reproduction of both the bureaucratic and the business élites, are located within Bangkok (Girling 1981: 88-89). Thailand's symbolic élites (London 1980: 53) of the monarchy and the central hierarchy of the Buddhist monkhood are also, of course, centred in the capital. While the higher education necessary for élite status and wealth is established in the nation's principal city, the capital exerts other forms of cultural 'pull' as well, as is shown by the fact that of one hundred and fifty well-known Thai intellectuals in Phillips' survey, of whom over half had grown up outside Bangkok, only five did not reside in the capital (in Girling 1981: 90).
O'Connor's theory of indigenous Southeast Asian urbanism suggests that a number of the features just discussed represent a kind of continuity of the role of the capital from the premodern Thai polity. Historical Thai kingdoms displayed the typical mainland tendency within the region to have a place-centred location of sanctity and power as the focus of urbanisation (O'Connor 1983: 65-67), with the result that the king's palace and the country's most sacred Buddha images which served as royal palladia were an intrinsic part of the power of the capital. The hierarchical nature of the Thai Indic-influenced polity was dependent for its perpetuation on the centre.

People needed the centre. Who they were, what they had, and what they hoped for all came from ritual or status distinctions that had no meaning without a centre. We would call this acceptance of the centre self-interested, as indeed it was, but it was much more than that. In fact the very substance of 'self' came from the centre, as a title for a few and as a notion of civility, even humanity, for everyone. Thus urbanization progressed through the elaboration of ritual distinctions that tied people to the centre. (O'Connor 1983: 59)

The distinctions made by the centre 'had worth because they came from the centre and carried its "power"' (1987: 18-19), and thus everyone had a stake in the centre's definitions. It is not too difficult to see a certain continuity from the former court of the absolute monarch, from which were dispensed all titles and ranks (epitomised in the sakdina system [1987: 19]), and within whose walls most education and leadership training was carried out, to the current political and cultural centrality of Bangkok. O'Connor argues that Southeast Asian cities such as Bangkok are still "the main site of symbolic production" (1983: 117), and that they have continued to provide both a sense of hierarchy and community even after modernisation.

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2 Toshiharu Yoshikawa has shown just how active Cakkri kings throughout the Bangkok dynasty have been in creating, accumulating and preserving sacred and powerful images installed in Bangkok (2526).
O'Connor suggests that modernity has replaced the old Indic system of meanings and hierarchy, and while economic and political ideas still provide sources of controversy, the one wholehearted idea taken from the West concerns the idea of progress and, concomitantly, science and technology. He asserts that these have a clear parallel with Indic ritual knowledge, for both reveal cosmic laws which govern the universe.

Both explain their failures as a failure in method. Both promise progress and prosperity for those who know them. Both can be turned to an esotericism that supports the expert and those who command his services. Both science and ritual present a deterministic view of the universe.

(1983:96)

Thus modern science, through the government-controlled educational system, can be used to continue a pattern of prosperity and the enhancement of status 'in a social hierarchy that was presumed to reflect one's access and conformity to ritual knowledge' (1983: 96). Bangkok met the ideological challenge of Western introduced ideas by 'adding modern cells' without necessarily modernising: it introduced a reformed, non-superstitious Buddhist sect, the Thammayut, and established the modern mass educational system which, although it spread new ideas, it followed an old pattern - it added a huge new cell to the bureaucracy and extended the center's control. The center imposed and managed an education that inculcated its values and co-opted the most talented students... Today, as education and technical expertise justify the bureaucracy's rule, modern ritual distinctions replace Indic ones.

(1987: 21)

Even the Thai monarch has managed to emerge as 'both the embodiment of tradition and the epitome of a modern educated man' (1983: 98). A number of key political assumptions relating to development and democracy among Southeast Asian élites can be seen to be a part of this partial selection of Western ideas (O'Connor 1983: 97), but in a country like Thailand, where only the élite have access to Western ways, there is an ambivalence towards things Western, since indigenous antipathy towards things alien and Western can undermine the source of élite prestige (O'Connor 1983: 98). Moreover, another
problem with modernity is that it does not have a clear centre in the way that the old Indic order did, and thus, despite the introduction of notions of a nominally central concept of chaat, or nation, a whole range of institutions and groups can now claim to represent this vague entity, leading to destructive competition whereby Bangkok has become, by default, the effective center above centers, now not as an Indic but an international city, not just the ruler's site but the one place, the arena, where all segments of society meet. Thus whatever sways Bangkok moves Thai society, as the capital's distinctions become society's differentiation.

(O'Connor 1987: 24)

However, while O'Connor notes the huge increase in the bureaucratic sector of the population in the seventies, and thus the large numbers who 'are tied to the center's modern distinctions that command not only money and power but the respect of almost everyone' (1987: 23), he has not then accounted for the conflict generated by the inability of the bureaucratic élite to continue to absorb the greatly expanded number of student graduates created by the rapid growth of universities in the sixties. His theory perhaps over-emphasises the degree to which all Thais agree to 'play' according to the game set up by the centre's distinctions and rewards, and the ability of the centre to maintain its system unchallenged. Thus although his argument draws attention to a number of useful insights, sociologically it is possibly more accurate as a view representative of the attitudes of the Bangkok élite itself rather than those of other, less privileged members of Thai society. If the centre has considerable centripetal 'pull', it is also true that its attraction is stronger the closer one is to the source of that force. Indeed Girling has noted the breakup of the 'consensus' which obtained when there was a closer approximation of social reality to traditional values, and points to the significance of the psychological gap which is increasing between the urban élite of Bangkok and the remaining rural population (1981: 102). Therefore, a number of significant features of the historical developments in
the Bangkok period must be discussed to introduce some modifications to the implications of O'Connor's presentation.

London reminds us that there was a significant political reason behind the adoption of some features of 'modernity' in order to maintain national sovereignty and the pre-eminence of the traditional monarchical élite (1980: 119). He argues that the adoption of these modern ideas has led the élite to have to promote modern Western notions of citizenship as part of the legitimation of their new form of rule, and, rather than reciprocating materially for the extractions from the rural areas, provided instead 'the symbols of nationalism' (1980: 118). London further suggests that the mid-twentieth century succession by the bureaucratic élite to the leadership of the country used development only as a form of rhetoric which masked their pursuit of self-interest (1980: 119). Finally, he suggests that from the political developments in the sixties and since, when there was increasing political challenge to the legitimacy of the ruling élite after the dissemination of modern development ideas, and when economic failures lead outside groups to want to participate in the political process, actual development took place as a form of social control over those who challenged the central élite, with the result that 'for virtually the first time in Thai history national development was equated with elite self-interest' (1980: 120).

London's analysis suggests that rather than simply a process of the adoption of new consensus ideas, the range of ideas now formally recognised by the élite have been variously acted upon and disseminated only according to perceived élite self-interest. Similarly, the adoption of these ideas by the ruled has been accompanied by adjustments in their perception of their own political role in the new social order, not just their own status within the overall social hierarchy. The difference between the urban élite and the rural masses is not just one of rank: it also continues to be that of "the developers" and "the developed" (Demaine 1986: 110).
As a result of the challenges from representatives of the rising capitalist class to the bureaucratic polity, there are now various contenders for political roles: the military, the civilian administration, business, parliament and parties, moderate workers' and farmers' organisations, and urban and rural radicals (Girling 1984: 402). These groups represent not only different positions across the political spectrum, but also considerably different socio-economic interests. Under conditions where, since the mid-seventies, there is perhaps a wider basis for political participation than previously in Thai history, there is as a result much scope for revision and debate about the nature of the Thai polity, and the various forms of legitimate leadership which should participate in the running of that polity. Where there is divided opinion about the nature of future directions to be undertaken, there is likely to be introspection on the nature of paths taken to the present. The many debates in Bangkok in both intellectual circles and at the popular level attests to the vitality of interest in these matters. As a result of the diversity of positions and views presented, it is plausible to suggest that O'Connor's modernism may not be the sole conceptualisation presented as a new ordering principle, but rather only one among competing concepts, and always therefore subject to relative political advantages.

Given the close historical association of the adoption of the ideas of modernisation and of nationalism, both of which can be traced in their infancy to the mid-nineteenth century in Siam, there has been an understandable emphasis on the question of processes of modernisation appropriate to the 'Thai' nation. This has included debate not only over which kind of political system is appropriate - in a Western sense to what extent democratic processes are appropriate to the Thai case - but also what are to be the religious underpinnings of the type of political system and ideology to be adopted, and how this relates to the legitimacy of various kinds of political leadership.
The strength of the establishment of the three pillars of Thai nationalism: Nation, Religion and Monarchy, have ensured that these three perceived bases of unity all demand attention. Buddhism has traditionally been closely associated with political legitimacy (e.g. Somboon 1982: 6; Charoenkiat 1978: 135), and the question of an appropriately modern Buddhism which is capable of providing guidance for a new social and political order is an important part of the debate about Thai modernity. As far as the monarchy is concerned there is at least among some groups 'an almost unavoidable tendency to prefer the tactical gain of invoking royal support to the strategic interest of safeguarding its symbolic status' (Girling 1984: 401). However since the monarchy is not always as disinterested as its image suggests (Phuu Phaakphuum 1978: 20), this pillar is less accessible than that of nation which, as noted above, can become the publicly cherished emblem of almost any group.

Contemporary Bangkok, therefore, is not only the dominant centre of social, economic and political influence, it is also the site of many attempts to introduce change, and it is hence also the location of the most intense formulation of religious, political, social and economic ideas and ideologies. To a large degree, future developments are most likely to have their inception in the nation's capital, especially with the decline of the most trenchant opposition to the current status quo, the jungle-based Maoist wing of the CPT (Girling 1984: 398). No longer an intrinsically central cultural pivot, it is instead a meeting ground of the representatives of many interests. It is in this environment that the role of the astrology which is the focus of this study is promoted, challenged and reformulated.

Field Research: Modern Thai Astrology

The main period of fieldwork was carried out in Bangkok from April 1982 until June 1983, a period which included much of the Bicentennial celebrations of the founding of Bangkok as the capital
of the Thai nation, and the national elections of the subsequent year. It was thus a period of some historical interest in itself, and the kinds of discussion and activities which took place during that time have implicitly helped to shape the perspective of the research undertaken, and where possible they have also been explicitly incorporated into the analysis presented here. Fieldwork was largely based on the activities of two particular astrological associations in Bangkok, both of which have been in existence for some time. I have considered it important to make some use of the published works of members of these associations over time, as well as of the observations made during fieldwork itself, since the associations are forums where continuing discussion and debate take place both within the associations and for the benefit of the general public. Moreover, since the associations are self-conscious promoters of a school of thought which is not without its critics in other sectors of the population, this study attempts to discuss not only the views and activities of the association members, but also those of the detractors of astrology, in order to present the role of Thai astrology within a realistically broad framework.

This controversy was not difficult to research, since in Bangkok the mention of things astrological often provokes spontaneous and animated discussion on either positive or negative aspects of the topic (and indeed I have also experienced this keen interest in provincial urban society). The question of the validity and credibility or otherwise of astrology and fortune-telling often underlies such conversations, since this is an issue of considerable interest among the general public as well as among the experts.

There has been very little substantial research into the nature and role of Thai astrology, literature on this subject largely amounting to occasional references to the prevalence of the Thai notion of the importance of auspicious times for undertaking rituals or other activities of uncertain outcome, and to the role of astrologers as one among many kinds of indigenous consultants who
may be sought out in times of difficulty. This thesis therefore aims to provide some detailed delineation of a little-known topic. The principal subject of this study is astrology itself: that system of belief which uses the study of the positions of the stars as a means of providing insight and prophecies regarding the events which befall humankind at both an individual and general level. However astrology is not always a clearly delimited field in Thailand, both because it is frequently grouped together with other forms of divination or prophecy, and because it is also often practised together with other techniques which are either not related to the stars and planets, or only indirectly associated with them.

The Thai word for astrology, *hooraasaat*, can be used to cover many forms of prophecy than that based on the stars and planets. The collection of the traditional texts collectively called the *tamraa* *hooraasaat* in the Manuscript Division of the National Library, for example, includes not only works of astrological interpretation and almanacs, but also a wide range of other works on topics as diverse as dream interpretation, the study of omens, and numerology. Since it appears from the chronicles that the learned astrologers of the court were formerly expected to master all of these sources of knowledge, the dictionary meaning of the term in the generic sense of the books containing the learning of astrologers (Royal Academy 2493: 977) is not without historical justification. There is also a linguistic vagueness in the use of the term in common parlance. When mention is made of *hooraasaat*, many people then enquire as to which method in particular is under discussion: palmistry (duu laai), numerology (duu leek), or astrology (duu daaw).

There is often a similar blurring of distinctions in divinatory practice. The common term for all specialists providing predictions of the future by whatever means is *moo duu* (lit. an expert in seeing; fortune-teller) and to many this group includes astrologers (Philairat 2524: 21), as well as those who use
palmistry, numerological calculations based on the date of birth, physiognomists and even mediums who predict the future. Those who do practise as moo duu often combine a number of techniques of prediction, seeking to maximise accessibility of information about their clients and hence accuracy in prediction by doing so. The three main methods of prediction, astrology, palmistry and numerology are often combined in some form. While astrology or numerology are seen to provide a good overall view of an individual's life, for example, either may be supplemented by a palm reading, since it is believed that the minor lines on the palm as well as other ephemeral features provide a particularly pertinent source of information on present conditions and events in the life of the client. Practitioners so often cross-check their analyses using a variety of methods that the commonality of provision of predictions is usually the defining characteristic of moo duu (Philairat 2524: 22).

Among practitioners themselves, however, a concept of hierarchy can sometimes be used to invoke the superiority of astrology as a method and astrologers will similarly distinguish themselves from other moo duu by virtue of the fact that they use astrology as a basis of their predictions rather than other methods (Philairat 2524: 22). The superiority claimed for astrology largely arises from its close connection with Brahmanic knowledge, raising it above the other kinds of interpretation which are then characterised as simpler folk methods or cruder forms of saiyaasaat (magic). Astrologers with a competent knowledge of the texts may be referred to as boon or nak hooraasaat, both of which convey a sense of being true experts, or eligible to be considered teachers (Manit 2526: 1059). The adoption of this term, however, can also be used to suggest an explicit distinction between those who really know and understand the subject, and those who merely practise some minimal level of knowledge in order to make a living. In this sense the boon places himself at a distance from the moo duu in terms of both proficiency and motivation, and even of credibility and morality.
While many of the methods employed by moo duu are textually based, Thai astrology is without doubt the most complex of the various divinatory methods, and as a system requires the most sophisticated forms of calculation, memorisation and interpretation. It is also highly accessible for this study, since it is reasonably consistent in its methods, even though there are several schools of thought in Bangkok astrology. Astrology is also clearly related to the experience of time, and the general Thai perception of the 'fatal' nature of time, and therefore this thesis will deal with the analysis of the conceptual system of astrology only. Discussion of the practice of prediction, and of the professionals concerned, however, will usually be intended to refer to all (or most) fortune-tellers observed, unless otherwise stated.

Much of the fieldwork period was spent examining and to some limited extent participating in the activities of two astrological associations in Bangkok. I was introduced to these by several prominent astrologers, and their recommendation that the associations would be a good place to find out about what is involved in Thai astrology proved to be apt in many ways. The activities of both associations were similar, although their histories and sizes were not. Each of them ran a school, which provided a highly accessible, if somewhat formal environment in which to research both the systems of prediction represented by the associations and the more general attitudes towards the methods and aims of the transmission of astrological knowledge of association members. I shall describe each of the associations in turn, before discussing the general features of the community they represent.

The Astrological Association of Thailand (AAT) is the best-known and most prestigious society of astrologers in Bangkok, and no doubt in Thailand. It is also the oldest such association, having been established in BE 2490 (1947). The society is housed in a building belonging to the Buddhist University of Wat Bowornnives, the chief monastery of the reformist Thammayut sect of the Thai
Sangha (and the site of the sect's Buddhist University), and the Association is popularly referred to as being 'at Wat Boworn'.

While its location may benefit the fame and prestige of the association, there appear to be few formal links with the monastery, although a senior monk from the wat is a patron, and the society provides some token support to the wat. The association has a thriving membership. In early 1983 members numbered about 2300, a number much larger than the estimated five hundred or so members a decade earlier; although those I spoke to had no ready explanation for why such a rapid increase had occurred. The association has at various times established 'branches' in other provinces, including one in Chiengmai, but these have failed to keep going.

The AAT provides a general service of consultation available to the public every day of the week at a set (and reasonably modest) price. This service was started about five years prior to the time of research, and helps the association to remain financially solvent, as well as enabling it to provide some of its members with a place to practise professionally. In 1982-3 between five and ten members would act as consultants in this way during weekdays, while as many as twenty would do so on weekends. The association calculated that about sixty clients sought advice each day. True to the pattern discussed above, the moo duu who provide consultations each day do not just practise astrology, but may use any of the more common forms of prediction. The availability of this service is well-known and apparently well regarded among the Bangkok population. Those members who came to provide consultations, however, were flexible in the time they devoted to this activity, and some clients were frustrated by the fact that they could not necessarily find their previous practitioner on subsequent visits. However the respectability of the association is such that there is a widespread belief that all of the available practitioners are likely to be reliable.

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3 This association was also temporarily housed at Wat Mahathat some time ago before moving back to its present site.
On weekends, the moo duu who usually sit at tables spaced around the main hall are moved to the outdoor perimeter corridors so that the hall may be used for the association's school, which is open every Saturday and Sunday. I was told that for much of the association's history the weekends were mainly an occasion for informal meetings and teaching by various experts for interested members and the public, but formal classes organised into courses were begun in 1981 or 1982 and prove very popular. During the period of fieldwork one of the most popular classes (the first year of Thai astrology) attracted up to one hundred and forty students each week, while the association catered to a total of over three hundred and fifty enrolments in its seven courses.

One of the association's main aims is the dissemination of information and understanding of Thai astrology as well as of other branches of hooraasaat, and the school's classes accordingly cover many of the more popular methods of prediction. In 1982-3 the association taught both Thai and Western (saakom) astrology, Uranian astrology, numerology, and palmistry, and there were plans to find a teacher of the Chinese school of physiognomy, known as ngo heng, which is taught intermittently. There was also some interest in the possibility of providing classes in computerised astrology.

Along with formal registration of students into courses, the association commenced a system of certification for the year's courses. Thai astrology and palmistry were both divided into first and second year courses. Moreover, the association had for about five years held an annual wai khruu (homage paying to teachers) ceremony to celebrate the khrubba aacaan (teachers in the collective, historical sense) who had been responsible for the transmission of the knowledge presently taught at the association. The decision to incorporate this ceremony was expressed as being out of respect for a good and appropriate Thai custom.
The association has continued its practice of providing a Special Address for all interested members of the public each weekend. Another aim of the association is to gather together a comprehensive library of old texts, either by acquisition where possible, or at least in photocopy form, but there were inadequate facilities for this at the time of fieldwork, and the present library collection was recognised to be incomplete and its holdings suffered from 'disappearances', and did not really prove an adequate resource.

Membership of the Astrological Association of Thailand confers considerable prestige, while being a member of the association's committee or teaching one of its courses can further enhance one's standing among fellow astrologers. The committee is elected annually by members, and the teaching staff are normally members of the committee. At a more mundane level membership of the association also confers a sort of generalised status-enhancement, and many fortune tellers in the streets will display association certificates as an aid to entice clients. Many members of other associations also maintain membership of this association, which in 1982-3 cost one hundred baht (around A$5) per year.

Membership entitles students to a discount on the cost of the association's classes and automatically entails a free subscription to the association's monthly astrological magazine which contains articles of specialist interest, and even written lessons in various predictive methods, largely contributed by senior association members. This magazine is Thailand's longest-running astrological magazine, and receives some sale distribution outside the association, although it is recognised that there is a limited market for this kind of magazine among the general public. Overall, membership enables one to participate in a social and intellectual circle of one's peers and those more expert, and so on weekends there is much socialising and exchange of information and ideas.
The International Astrological Association (IAA) was formally recognised as an association in February 1974. It provides similar services for its members, although on a much smaller scale, as those of the AAT, and it appears to be modelled in many respects on the original association. The founding of the International Association was explained by reference to 'rivalry among teachers'. In 1970 and 1971 there was a series of disagreements among members of the Astrological Association of Thailand which even went as far as the courts, and it may be that the rifts which occurred, together with some withdrawals of membership, was partly influential in the formation of the new association soon afterwards, although I have not been able to confirm this. Any 'rivalry between teachers' appears to be ameliorated now, and many members of the International Association participate in the activities and social networks of the AAT, and in 1983 one of its senior members even ran (unsuccessfully) for election to the committee of the AAT. The membership of the International society appeared to be about one hundred at the time of fieldwork, although regular attendance was around twenty to thirty people at a time. The membership of this association may have dwindled from past levels, since the class lists of 1979 indicate that the largest class held in that year had one hundred enrolments.

Like the AAT, the International Astrological Association runs regular classes in several forms of prediction every weekend. In 1982-3 this included Thai astrology, an 'applied' astrology which was a combination of Thai and Indian astrological techniques, palmistry, numerology, yaaam (a system of prediction using the time of day), and thaksaa, the Hindu-derived dasa system which is often used in conjunction with astrology. There were also classes in Uranian astrology and, less regularly, coverage of physiognomy and other more esoteric types or elements of Thai astrological theory, included in weekly Special Lectures. There was thus diversity in this association's classes, but the classes were rather informal and were subject to fluctuation and change, depending on the other
commitments of the teachers and the ability to accommodate to the timing of the very long weekend schedule. As with the main association, a modest charge was levied on the courses to recompense the teachers.

During the year of fieldwork this association held its first annual examinations for those who attended the classes and conferred certificates on those who passed these tests. They also held a wai khruu ceremony. Moreover during this period the association started an astrological magazine, although a previous attempt to run a magazine had petered out. The association has published a number of books written by its teachers, which are then used as teaching texts in the classes. This association did not have the resources to provide regular consultations during weekdays, although at some times one or two of its members would use the association's location to provide advice for their regular clients. There were also occasional weekend visitors seeking predictions, but these were comparatively rare. This association is not as well known as the Astrological Association of Thailand, and does not advertise its services in any systematic way.

The smaller numbers of this association's faithful membership led to an informal and rather more intimate atmosphere among teachers and pupils than was evident at the Astrological Association of Thailand, and as a result of the greater diversity of discussion this led to, more research time was spent at this association. In 1982 the International Association had recently moved to occupy an open-air hall in the grounds of a well known royal temple, some five minutes by bus from the Astrological Association of Thailand, and both pupils and teachers would frequently commute to the main society for a class, the Special Lecture, or to meet with friends and teachers. Less often, regulars from the AAT would attend at the smaller society.4

4 There is a third major astrological association in Bangkok, known as the Astrological Federation (Sabaphan boon). This is located in a monastery at some distance from the other associations, and since it also operates only on weekends it
Both of the associations studied catered mainly to a middle-class section of the community, the portion of the Thai population which is most interested in astrology and fortune-telling in general (see Chapter Five). This socio-economic background was generally common to both teachers and pupils of the association schools, and indeed a large number of the clients (Philairat 2524: 154). Some of the regular association teachers were also teachers by profession, including a teacher of an eminent wat school, and a medical teacher at a major military hospital. Many of the teachers were university-educated and a number of them had overseas qualifications. Indeed the ability of the associations to provide overseas forms of astrology was a result of the overseas experience of a number of the teachers who had acquired both language skills and experience of Western methods during their period of training. A number of police and armed forces officers taught or were members of the committees, and lawyers and businessmen, as well as a number of people of independent wealth, were also prominent association members. Many of the students at the schools were of similar backgrounds, including a few university lecturers and students, teachers, salaried workers, military officers and business owners, as well as less well-off employees and traders.

The associations ran on weekends since most members and students were fully employed during the week, and while there were a number of people studying at the associations who were already practising as fortune-tellers, or who were intending to do so, the majority of students I spoke to stated that if they were likely to use the knowledge they learned at the school to make money, it would only be as a sideline, or an activity to be undertaken after retirement. Interest in the skill taught at the schools was only partially inspired by economic incentives, therefore, and a great was not practical to include observation of its activities in the research undertaken. This association also offers classes, and provides consultation services by its members on weekends. In 1982 it appeared to have quite a sizable membership, and I was told by one of its teachers that the methods taught at this association included a northern variant of astrology borrowed from Burma.
many students expressed a desire to 'find out about' the methods taught as a form of cultural exploration rather than as skill acquisition to provide employment.

The stated aims claimed by leading members of these two associations are very similar, mainly comprising dissemination and perpetuation of knowledge of Thai astrology and other related forms of prediction. Despite concentration on the understanding of traditional Thai astrology and divinatory systems, the associations also actively incorporate other relevant schools of thought from elsewhere. The importance members of the associations place on maintaining links with astrological traditions elsewhere can be gauged by the fact that, according to one estimate, while Uranian astrology was first introduced to Thailand only around 1967, it had nevertheless been taught at the Astrological Association of Thailand since about 1974. In 1975 the three Bangkok associations hosted an international astrological conference, and in 1983 members of the associations proudly organised their first Uranian astrology conference. The readiness to accept the benefits of computer astrology can also be seen in this light. Those who have the linguistic skills to do so spend some time keeping up with the trends elsewhere, and the much-cited visit of an eminent Australian astrologer some time ago was remembered by many. Some astrologers expressed concern that Thai astrologers may be regarded as behind the times with regard to international astrological thinking, a view they are keen to disprove, and the associations provide an

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5 The Uranian system of astrology, founded by German astrologers of the Hamburg school in the 1930s Alfred Witte and Friedrich Sieggruen (Brau et. al. 1980: 294), provided a somewhat radical departure from accepted theories of the time, not the least because it posited the existence of eight hypothetical Uranian or trans-Neptunian planets. These planets, which Witte and Sieggruen 'discovered' by means of the observation of their influence on the then outermost known planets, Uranus and Neptune, have since had their movements and orbits calculated on the basis of this perceived influence (cf. Sherman and Frank 1976: 5). Their existence was posited before the astronomical discovery of Pluto. While this system has not attracted a wide following in all countries where other traditions of Western astrology remain popular, it is reportedly well-known in Europe (Niggemann 1961: n.p.[viii]), and has apparently become quite popular in astrological circles in America, where it was first introduced in an English-language work in 1939 (Niggemann 1961: n.p. [viii]).
accessible arena where information of mutual interest can be discussed, and where groups of interested individuals can create information networks by means of newsletters and so on.

The activities of the two astrological associations clearly reflect their objectives. The formal classes run by both societies encourages interest in the associations' activities, as well as allowing direct transmission of information and views concerning astrology to the general public. The publishing activities of the associations also meet this need, although they mainly provide a source of expert information to members. Moreover the provision of astrological and other consultation is formally recognised as a duty of the associations towards the general public, and implicitly reinforces the social and cultural importance of the knowledge maintained by the associations within the wider society.

The associations further this latter role more obviously by participation in public charities. At the annual Red Cross fair, for example, the Astrological Association of Thailand is always invited, and in 1982 all three major associations attended this annual event. The International Astrological Association was established by invitation in the Queen's section, where they provided consultation for around 1000 people during the fair. The associations are also frequently requested to send members to provide consultations to raise funds at other charitable functions, where they achieve significant results. The Wives of the Judges group set up a fortune-telling centre at Sanaam Luang outside the Grand Palace for the first six months of 1977, for example, in order to raise funds for the royally-founded Sai Jai Thai Foundation, the funds from which were to help government police and military forces fighting communist forces. The centre was staffed by members of the AAT, and was reported to have raised the considerable sum of 100,000 baht in the first six weeks (Bangkok Post 21 February 1977: 5).  

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6 The then Prime Minister, Thanin Kraivixian, was himself a former judge, an astrologer, and a staunch monarchist and anti-communist.
A final important function of the associations is that they provide an arena where a similitude of professional standing and qualifications can be recognised and ranked, a process which implicitly and sometimes explicitly leads to the exclusion of what are judged unacceptable levels of knowledge and practice. The associations are a main arena in which status as a respected expert or teacher can be defined and agreed upon among peers, and many of the most eminent astrologers known through their general reputation or publishing activities are members of the associations, even though their actual participation in the latter may be little. In this way, the associations function in much the same way as the traditional medicine association discussed by Irvine (1982: 54-55). It may also be that the diversity of types of interpretation involved in Thai astrology itself, as well as the important role which personal experience is held to play in the development of astrological education, makes a society of this kind necessary for the management of the complexity and diversity of information evident in the present state of knowledge.

It can be seen that the associations represent the participation in astrologically-related activities of a relatively homogeneous group: the educated, military, bureaucratic and business middle class of Bangkok. The reasons for this organisation of activity will be discussed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER TWO

THE TRADITION OF THAI ASTROLOGY

Introduction

Astrology was formerly maintained and perpetuated as part of the educated tradition centred on the court and the ruling élite in a manner which was possibly largely unchanged until the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932. With the demise of the political supremacy of that institution astrology lost one of its most important institutionalised arenas, although the other major institution in which it was supported, the monkhood, has continued transmitting this knowledge within its ranks.

It will be argued in this chapter that the astrological associations in Bangkok provide an arena for the maintenance of this sophisticated form of astrology. The teaching encouraged there maintains the importance of the oral handing down of astrological and related knowledge at a level of complexity which has always been associated with the élite tradition of astrology in Thailand. Moreover this new form of institutionalisation provided by the associations has provided the possibility for attempts to maintain continuities with past élite practice in which astrology was a necessary corollary of the other political and cultural activities once undertaken by the court.

In this chapter the history of astrology in Thailand will be briefly sketched before the consequences of the end of the absolute monarchy for this branch of knowledge is discussed. The analysis will then move to a consideration of the sources of objections to astrological knowledge and practice which have been made possible by the political and intellectual developments of the post-1932 period.
Astrology in Thai Elite Culture

Astrology was in all likelihood introduced to Thailand in its present form mainly via the Brahmanic tradition of the royal courts of the Khmer empire. It was consolidated as a regular part of the court complex of activities and theories which served to express the political and ritual pre-eminence of the monarchy during the Sukhothai period, and even more firmly during the Ayutthayan period. That astrological knowledge was well known during the Sukhothai period is attested to in the aspects of astrological thinking which were included in one of the earliest Thai works still extant, the fourteenth century *Traiphum Phrabang* of King Lu Thai. Prior to that the foundation date for Chiang Mai recorded by chroniclers indicates some astrological knowledge in 1296 (Davis 1984: 93), and the Lan Na King Ku Na who reigned in the second half of the fourteenth century was well known for his skills in astrology (Wyatt 1984: 75-76), so it would appear to have been well accepted in ruling circles throughout the area by this time. In the view of one observer an inscription in the southern capital of Nakhorn Sri Thammarat in BE 1319 (776 AD) may indicate the influence of astrological knowledge from the Srivijayan empire much earlier on (in Somrocana 2524: 247).

Thai astrology is often popularly believed to be a composite from many sources, including ideas from Indian Brahmanical teaching, and from Burmese Mons, as well as from indigenous sources among the peoples formerly inhabiting Thailand including the Mons and ancient Khmers (in Somrocana 2524: 247). In this view Thai astrology is believed to be an original creation from diverse traditions, and therefore in a sense uniquely Thai. Davis also argues that there was already a strong concern with concepts of fatal time in the early Tai kingdoms, which would have furthered the acceptance and elaboration of Indian astrology when it was introduced, but notes that the sophisticated systems developed in the courts would not have been accessible to villagers (1984: 92). This implies that the
elaboration of astrological knowledge most likely remained an élite privilege. While there is no sharp distinction between the popular folklore and the learned tradition in Thai any more than in European astrology (Field 1987: 145), it is still useful to distinguish between popular folk practice and the tradition pursued as part of a more complex literary cosmological knowledge of the intellectual élite. The extent of astrological influence on élite cosmology in the past can be gauged from Siamese literature.

The textual evidence that astrological knowledge was available to the royal author of the *Traiphum Phraruang*, or 'Three Worlds' cosmological treatise\(^1\) is significant in a number of respects. It not only indicates the acceptance of this type of knowledge as early as 1345, the most likely date of the work (Reynolds and Reynolds 1982: 5, 354) - which makes it almost as old as the Siamese state itself (Reynolds 1976: 203) - but it also indicates the degree to which so early on astrological knowledge and its related astronomical conceptions could inform Thai knowledge as part of an explicitly Buddhist-derived understanding of the physical and moral workings of the world. While it can be appreciated as an

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\(^1\) This work is a description and analysis of the three worlds of the Buddhist cosmology traditionally known to Thais. The "Phra Ruang" version was composed by a king of the Sukhothai dynasty of the same name. It contains a lengthy description of the thirty-one levels of existence which form a hierarchy of merit (Reynolds 1976: 204), and the didactic effect of the work is primarily that of a sermon on the theme of *karma*. However the text's moral message is also thought to have made it suitable as an early political treatise, and it is in this sense 'permeated with royal interests and themes' (Reynolds and Reynolds 1982: 5). Despite the fact that the cosmological concerns of the Three Worlds has come under sustained criticism and reassessment since the mid-nineteenth century, and that the last king to commission a recension was the first monarch of the current dynasty (Reynolds 1976: 203, 204), it has been edited and published many times since 1912. It is currently included for the study of Thai religion and literature in Thai universities; it is used by intellectuals in the quest for a Thai approach to social ethics and moral philosophy; it is also used in monastic instruction (Reynolds and Reynolds 1982: 24-25), while its cultural significance can also be gauged from the fact that it was the subject of a seminar held to commemorate the 1983 celebrations of seven hundred years of Thai writing (Krom Sinlapakorn 2526: Introduction). Most importantly, the work has continued to provide a symbolic focus in the political conflicts between conservative anti-socialists and pro-socialist reformers throughout the twentieth century (Jackson n.d.).
instructive and systematic compendium of existing accepted knowledge, it also includes 'a veritable picture of the government of a monarchy conforming to the Buddhist ideal', and explicitly exhorts the monarch's subjects to proper Buddhist conduct (Coedes 1957: 352).

However the work also reveals the prominent influence of the Hindu interests of the court of the time, including the special knowledge of its putative royal author, who is known to have maintained a particular interest in astrology and astronomy and who had thus been able to make the calculations for the stages of the decline of Buddhism (Andaya 1978: 10), concern with which was partly responsible for the composition of the treatise itself (Coedès 1957: 350). As well as astronomical and Buddhist-inspired mythological elements concerning the planetary deities, the treatise also includes horoscopes of the times of the Buddha's attainments of the Nibbana of the defilements, the Nibbana of the aggregates, and the Nibbana of the relics (Reynolds and Reynolds 1982: 330-331), illustrating the complementary nature of the compatibility between Buddhist and astrological beliefs in the view of its royal author. The treatise remains of considerable significance for modern Thai thinkers, and although Bangkok astrologers now tend to use Western explanations of the planetary systems rather than that explicated in the Three Worlds cosmology, the treatise is still used as a source of investigation into the historical development of Thai astrology (e.g. Oan 2524), and as evidence of the long-standing incorporation of astrology in the Thai world-view.

Another early literary work which illustrates the close links between the practice of statecraft and astrological knowledge is the Tamraa Phichai Songkhraam, a treatise detailing the methods of warfare. The first version of this work, which was substantially borrowed from the Khmers, was probably composed at the turn of the fifteenth century and subsequently added to and modified over time (Wales 1952: 121). This work contained substantial astrological
material and tables, as well as other divinatory material relating to the reading of omens. The last recension of this treatise ordered by a king was that commissioned by Rama III in 1825, an explicit reason for which was that it was felt that the destruction and fall of Ayutthaya showed that the ritual and prognosticatory elements of the treatise must be in need of correction (Wales 1952: 122). In the subsequent edition a century later, however, the major justification for publication according to Prince Damrong was the literary merit of the work, and as a consequence some of the astrological material was omitted (Wales 1952: 120).

All actions undertaken during a military campaign were dependent upon the court astrologers finding auspicious times for their selection and execution, and as a result astrologers were always a necessary accompaniment to the king's forces in the field (Wales 1965: 157). For their part commanding soldiers would dress in the colours of the ruling planetary deity to ensure their military success, and appear to have been expected to take interest in the prognosticatory and ritual aspects of warfare as well as excelling in strategic military tactics.

It is a commonplace of popular conceptions of Thai history that the skill of the Siamese astrologers considerably enhanced the great victories of the Thai army in the past. While similar astrological knowledge was probably common to all of the peoples of the region, astrology is still thought of as having played a significant part in maintaining the independent sovereignty of the Thai nation. The association between astrology and warfare is so close that it is believed to account for the considerable interest which still continues to be shown by members of the Thai armed forces (Segaller n.d.: 200).

While these two early and significant works contain specific information on Thai astrology, much of the general literature produced by the court also contained many references to astrological
beliefs and practices. Some of this can still be found in works explicitly designed to educate young courtiers in the proper conduct according to prevailing élite customs, as in Sunthorn Phu's *Sawasdi Raksaa*. Other major literary works contain more subtle references to the relationship between planetary influences and human fates and the ability of humans to benefit from astrological knowledge, including such famous classics as *Phra Aphaimanii* and *Khun Chaang Khun Phaen* (Thep 2524: a).

The astrological references in the major epic of the *Raamakian* of Rama I,\(^2\) is often cited as evidence of the astrological knowledge and skill of its royal composer (e.g. Somrocana 2524: 249), and his work is seriously studied by astrologers (Thep 2524: a) who often include references to the story of Rama in their manuals (Velder 1968: 38). The constant references to the heavenly settings against which its well known episodes are related add veracity and legitimacy to the assumptions utilised by the royal author about the context in which such heroic events unfold, as well as providing literary sophistication to the work by the adoption of the cultural knowledge and preoccupations of the élite audience it was originally intended for. Moreover, the tendency of the Thai audience to regard the epic's characters as representative of human society (Velder 1968: 34; the parallels symbolically suggested in a variety of ways between the Thai monarchs and the epic's hero Rama (Velder 1968: 39); and in particular the attempt to suggest direct associations between the first Cakkri king and Rama in the highly literary version of the first reign (Maneepin 2525), may have had a deliberate didactic effect in bolstering the appropriateness and legitimacy of the reign of the dynastic founder. If it is indeed the case that the astrological references were an original contribution to the recension of this reign, they no doubt were intended to contribute to this effect. Students of classical Thai

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\(^2\) The *Raamakian* is the Thai version of the Ramayana. Rama I, the founder of the current dynasty, is held to have composed a lengthy first version for the Bangkok era, while his successor also composed a highly literary version of the work.
literature who now study these works become familiar with these divinatory preoccupations as a part of their historical and literary education.

The other major source of astrological reference in the Thai literary heritage arises from the considerable interest shown by Thai chroniclers in the astrologically relevant events of their day. Chronicles of the Ayutthayan period make frequent reference to a variety of supernatural omens which required interpretation by the Brahmans (Wales 1931: 62), or which implicitly helped to explain the events recorded, particularly in relation to persons of importance. According to one chronicle written not long after the fall of Ayutthaya to the Burmese (Somkiat 1986: 3) the much celebrated Siamese King Naresuan (r. 1590-1605), who was brought up in Burma but who later fought a famous battle against the Burmese heir apparent, was noted to cause the principal royal pavilion of the Burmese king to quake. When he heard of this the Burmese king prophesied that his Peguans would be forced to feed the elephants of the Siamese, and later advised his son not to fight Naresuan who was valiant, able and "destined ... to become a great hero of this our world" (Vivadhanajaya 1935: 147-148). Today this king is still celebrated as one of the 'great' kings of Siamese history, a hero who restored national independence after the first fall of Ayutthaya to the Burmese, and who greatly increased the might and security of the realm for over a century and a half. Because of this political significance various elements of his weaponry and armour used in his various battles with the enemy have been preserved as royal regalia to the present day (Rong 1973: 61).

The final fall of Ayutthaya has been the subject of much speculation, and Thai historians ever since have sought explanations as to why the great capital was able to be defeated. Here also the notion of supernatural or cosmic significance has entered into the depiction of this disaster in the form of the fulfillment of prophecy. One hundred years before the final fall of the city, when
there was no apparent reason to question the current security and prosperity, a poem was written prophesying a catastrophic end to the kingdom using the concepts of Buddhist conceptions of inevitable degeneration over time, and invoking the duties of a just and righteous Buddhist monarch. The authority of this dire prediction is no doubt enhanced by the fact that it is believed to have been composed by the then king Narai (Wyatt 1982: 9-10). After the fall of Ayutthaya, one monk-historian recalled a series of omens observed for several years prior to the city's fall in the same terms as those mentioned in the prophecy, attributing them to the accession of a particular monarch. To this historian, the ultimate disaster 'quite literally fulfilled the prophecies' of the earlier century (Wyatt 1982: 11, 44).

The degree of destruction of Siamese society entailed in the burning and looting of the city, decimation and enslavement of the population, and wholesale destruction of written records (Wyatt 1982: 11), could not simply be attributed to accident or mere military defeat. The chronicles of the survivors reflect the sentiment that nothing less than processes of cosmic proportions could account for the conditions witnessed, and that these processes were evident to those who had the wisdom and knowledge to understand them. Thus Wyatt suggests that much of the activities of the early kings in the new capital were devoted to avoiding the pitfalls of their royal predecessors (1982: 17), including the ill-fated Taksin who was deposed prior to the accession of the first Cakkri king.

The descriptions of the early Bangkok period are not without accounts of a similarly prophetic kind. The founding of the city required an auspicious time for the setting up of the city pillar.

3 Another royal survivor of the Ayutthaya destruction described a similar prophetic vision, which he ascribed to a later, astrologically skilled monarch (see Vivadhanajaya 1936: 136; Krom Sinsapakorn 2507: 362). Many early Bangkok chronicles depicted the fall of Ayutthaya in terms of the time of the kingdom having come to an end (Somkiat 1986: 153).
and the decision on which this was based is now used to indicate the astrological prowess and political wisdom of the present dynasty's founder. A well-known prophecy concerning the first king was the prediction (like other indications of his destiny only inserted in the official chronicles during his grandson Mongkut's reign [Gesick 1983: 91-92]) that a Burmese general had foretold that the then army general Cakkri would one day become a monarch (Gesick 1983: 98-99).

Unofficial records of the day also show preoccupations of this sort: the memoirs of the first king's sister noted a propitious halo around the sun at the time of the commencement of building of her brother's new capital (Narinthornthewi 2501: 15), an observation which was very recently recalled during the bicentennial celebrations of the city's founding, when the same auspicious omen was again reportedly sighted above the royal palace. When this early Bangkok document was discovered in the fifth reign, the recorded mention that its founder predicted the royal dynasty would last 150 years was disputed by the then King Chulalongkorn (Narinthornthewi 2501: 220-221), for whom the date was ominously close, although this idea is now accepted as having been prophetically accurate today (Chula 1982: 116).

The inclusion of such incidents in the chronicles appear to confirm the historiographic usefulness, noted by Michael Aung Thwin for Burmese historians, of the utilisation of omens and prophecies to suggest continuities of form, particularly in the case of new dynasties and debatable successions (1982: 94). Aung Thwin argues that such devices enabled a depiction of society closer to its ideal form than the actual occurrence of events might suggest. Moreover in a Buddhist society, with its expectation of the inevitability of change over time, these devices bridged the ideological gap between the ever-changing events of narrative history (and belief in the Law of Impermanence) and the persistent traditions and institutions of custom-valued society (and the desire for continuity) (1982: 100).
- especially that continuity, one might add, required in Buddhist monarchs' quests for legitimacy.

We can therefore see from these various literary records that there was significant use made of astrological knowledge and beliefs, reflected in a wide variety of cultural contexts, as an active element in the world-view of the Siamese élite. The use made of this system of beliefs can be seen to reflect directly upon and to enhance a number of political and cultural interests of the court, and of the royal dynasties in particular. The continuing institutionalised role of astrologers within the court also reflect the importance of such beliefs for the practice of statecraft into the present century.

**Astrologers of the Royal Court**

Wales has noted that the Court Brahmins first employed by the Siamese monarchs provided two main functions: the knowledgeable direction of Hindu rituals which enhanced the standing and efficacy of the royal ceremonies, and their knowledge of Indian and Khmer ideas on government, especially their 'ability to interpret the dharma' (1965: 58). The Brahmins at the court of Siam, however, were divided into several departments, and although it is not clear at what point the role of astrologer became quite separate from that of the Brahmins (Wales 1931: 62), it appears likely that this separation, in which the role of the Court Astrologers was passed over to interested Thai experts within the Royal Scribes Department, predates the Bangkok era. This department included the scribes who were responsible for the production of official documents before the introduction of printing in the mid-nineteenth century, as well as the court poets, while a subsidiary krom served the Royal Pandits responsible for editing and copying religious manuscripts, and yet another consisted of the Royal Astrologers (Wales 1965: 100). The Book of the Palace Law mentions that in the daily timetable described for the king both the Royal Pandits and the Astrologers
would be summoned daily after the monarch's evening meal to 'discuss the law with him' (Wales 1931: 44).

There were eight official astrologers' positions within the court mentioned in the records, including four for the Front Palace, headed by the Chief Royal Astrologer holding the position of *phra hooraathibodii*, who had primary responsibility for most astrological duties, with the second highest rank being that of *phra lookkathiip*. These officials were supported by two deputies. The Second King similarly had four Royal Astrologers in his court (S. Phlainoi 2525: 6). The chief responsibility of these officials was to find the auspicious times for royal ceremonies, and the Palace Law entailed serious punishment for those who made mistakes in their predictions or in the performance of their other duties (Wales 1971: 11).

The royal astrologers also had other duties of importance. They set the annual calendar for each coming year, they accompanied the royal forces on all military expeditions, and they participated in royal rituals. As a part of their drawing up of the calendar for each coming year, the royal astrologers would submit a report to the king on what the likely fortunes of the coming year would be in terms of weather conditions, prices of goods, diseases, foreign relations and security, and other problems or benefits for the various sections of the population as a whole, as well as for the royal family and the members of the court in particular. These reports were based on the horoscope of the city, discussed month by month, and thus could be quite detailed. The importance of such annual predictions in an agricultural society should not be underestimated: when incorporated in calendars where they also provided general knowledge of the conditions under which all activities were to be performed, even the peasants could be forewarned of late rains so that they could delay planting when

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4 See, for example, the report submitted by the head of the Royal Astrologers at the beginning of the sixth reign in the *tamraa hooraasaat* no. 19 choo-chaadok [j] in the Manuscript Division, National Library.
necessary (Wyatt 1969: 20). It is indicative of the importance placed on the role of astrological experts in the activities of the ruling élite that the governors of first class provinces also had their own divisions of astrologers (Wales 1965: 116-7).

Another important task of the court astrologers was the noting of any astronomical occurrences which might be of significance for the social and political events of the time. The astrologers frequently recorded events at court, and it is possible that they checked these against the relevant horoscope of the time as they also noted the coincidence of unusual astrological or other natural phenomena to see what they had portended in the human realm (Damrong 2507: 8). The royal astrologers had the duty of recording the time of birth of new members of the royal family, for example, and of drawing up the royal horoscopes of the new infants, and thus provided the basis upon which the new-comers' subsequent career and actions could be based. Their constant duty of recording in their calendars the timing of both natural and social events of importance to the court was such that one historian has repeated Prince Damrong's suggestion that these 'diaries' were a particularly reliable form of historical records for the dates of events 'since it was the special task of astrologers to keep track of dates' (Charnvit 1976: 163). Damrong also noted that many people with an interest in astrology other than the royal astrologers would also have kept annual calendars for jotting significant events down, and there is thus a very personal element to the views expressed in some of the records made in this way (Damrong 2507: 9).

Vickery has found, upon close inspection of some of the relevant documents, that there are wide disparities in these records between various documents, even for dates of significant events, and also points out that there is considerable evidence of editing or "correcting" in the documents themselves, so that it is difficult to ascertain just what process might have transformed the original jottings of the astrologers. Moreover, the few published records of
this kind have been only recently selected and copied, and this, together with the fact that astrologers' abilities to calculate dates back through time make the historical authenticity of many of the "astrologers'" records dubious, means that these kinds of records are not more reliable than other old sources for historical events and dates (1979: 140-141). However, the difficulties faced by historians in using these documents as evidence does not detract from their usefulness at the time, nor from the fact that they have been regarded as useful and interesting sources of information for historians for as far back as the Ayutthayan period.

Furthermore Vickery has noted that these records also contain references to other historical works, which may indicate that their astrologer authors perceived and recorded the close relationship between changing astral phenomena and their experience of the process of history. In fact, one of the better-known chronicles of the Ayutthayan period, the Luang Prasoet Chronicle, was composed by a Chief Royal Astrologer, indicating that the knowledge and experience of such experts was thought to make them suitable as historians of the court; a role complex of astronomer-astrologer-historiographer which was also found in China (Needham 1965: 10). Although this particular historical record is far from complete in comparison with the fuller court histories (Schweisguth 1951: 107), it has been regarded by many recent historians as being more accurate than other records of the earlier Ayutthayan era (Vickery 1979: 125 fn. 12). Significantly, Charnvit sees this seventeenth century chronicle, composed during the reign of King Narai (r. 1656-1688), as an example of a new type of history emerging at this time, revealing more secular authorship and orientation than the formerly more Buddhist oriented works produced by the monks (1976: 7).

At around this same time a talented astrologer also contributed to other forms of literature produced by the Siamese court, the most prominent example of his work being the well-known composition on Thai language and poetics, the Chindaamani, written
by the Chief Royal Astrologer on the request of King Narai (Schweisguth 1951: 106). This work, still accepted as the first textbook written on the Thai language, was used as such until the end of the nineteenth century (Rong 1973: 83). King Narai was apparently interested in sponsoring the work as a counter to the cultural influence of the French on his subjects (Rong 1973: 83), and the book formed an important part of the newer educational system developing at that time, as well as having a profound effect on the subsequent development of Thai literature. The work, which Wyatt describes as 'in many ways typical of Indian textbooks and treatises' might also have been intended to inform the foreigners with whom the court was by then increasingly in contact (Wyatt 1969: 21-22). The phra booraatlibodii who was so influential in the cultural life of this period had come to the court to complete his education, and eventually became 'an accomplished savant of renown' (Damrong in Wyatt 1969: 21). The fact that Narai placed such great trust in him may be a result of the fact that he was a teacher to Narai when the latter was still a young prince (Wyatt 1969: 18 fn.).

While some astrologers participated in the cultural life of the court, other members of the court were also very familiar with at least some level of astrological and divinatory knowledge. Together with soothsaying and knowledge of omens, astrology was among the sciences studied by would-be kings (Alabaster 1971: 210), and Damrong reports in his memoirs that astrology even formed part of the court education for talented young ladies (Damrong 2494: 339). This knowledge was therefore widely applied to occurrences affecting the members of the court, and sometimes confirmed belief of suspected events when rumours had already become widespread. Such was the case as recently as 1946 when Seni and Kukrit Pramoj saw and understood the ill-omen of a band of yellow across the evening sky resembling the sash of the Cakkri order, observed at the death of King Ananda (Kruger 1964: 99). Members of the court who took an interest in matters astrological would collect the birth horoscopes of other members of the court, and many of these are now
handed down among astrologers for the lessons they reveal about the characteristics of men eminent in their respective fields.

In the recounted traditions of present-day astrologers, however, among the most prominent features of the historical role of astrologers in the court of the absolute monarchs are the uncannily or unexpectedly accurate predictions recorded in the chronicles. The reigns of King Prasaat Thong (r. 1629-1656) and King Narai (r. 1656-1688) are regarded as a period when court astrology flourished, since the chronicles of that time are full of references to astrologers' predictions (S. Phlainoi 2525: 3). This may be due to the cultural imperatives of the time, but it may also simply be because of the personal influence of the same renowned astrologer, for Damrong thought it likely that the same person was Chief Royal Astrologer during both reigns (Dhanit 2521: 49). A well-known example concerns the prediction recorded for BE 2186 (1643 AD) when a royal astrologer predicted that within three days there would be a fire in the royal palace. Since this astrologer had been so accurate previously, the king took precautions against the fire, but then was almost sure of safety before the prediction actually came true after lightning struck a palace building (S. Phlainoi 2525: 4).

This same astrologer has achieved a wide reputation because of a famous prediction which is still frequently recounted today as an example of skill in horary astrology, that branch of astrology which supplies prognostications based on the horoscope of the moment when a particular question is asked. The story relates how the king, upon seeing a mouse run in front of him, placed a gold bowl over it to cover it. He then sent for his astrologer and asked him to tell him what was under the bowl. The reply came that the concealed object was a four-legged kind of animal. The king then asked how many were hidden, so the astrologer did his calculations again, and replied that there were four animals. The king declared that his prediction of the kind of animal was right, but that the number had been calculated incorrectly. However, when the king
lifted the bowl, it was found that the mouse had had three young while hidden, and there were now indeed four animals as the astrologer had predicted (S. Phlainoi 2525: 4).

Matters of greater moment were also within the purview of the astrologers. During Narai's reign, the king was correctly informed of the success in battle of one of his generals only a short time before the news confirming the prognostication reached him from the battle front (S. Phlainoi 2525: 5). The astrologer on this occasion was a titled monk who received gifts from the grateful king in recognition of his skill.

Astrologers were also employed in the social life of the elite beyond affairs of state. On one occasion a nobleman's wife was able to use an astrologer's judgement to gain support for her accusations of criminal guilt against a slave (Reynolds 1979b: 13-14).

Examples of predictions concerning accession to the throne are also frequently found in the chronicles. The prince who was eventually to become King Song Tham (r. 1610/11-1628) was an accomplished monk-scholar who is believed to have foreseen his own rise to the throne in his horoscope, a prediction which led him to disrobe and successfully usurp the incumbent Si Sawaphak (S. Phlainoi 2525: 5). Another successful prediction that a young prince would become king led the new monarch to reward the monk who had told him of his destiny with a title. The king was so impressed with the monk's prediction that from then on any aspirant to this monkly rank had to be an accomplished astrologer, with the result that in the current dynasty the title was not awarded again until 156 years into the Bangkok period (S. Phlainoi 2525: 3). While predictions such as that foretelling the accession of the first Cakkri king are very familiar to the Thai public, some other predictions are less familiar. One example is the prediction made to the present Princess Mother that the present king would be
crowned king, although his elder brother would not - a prediction revealed to be accurate when the elder brother was found shot at an early stage of his reign (Kruger 1964: 56).

King Mongkut, fourth monarch of the current dynasty (r. 1851-1868), was a well-known astrologer who made several significant decisions during his reign based on his interpretation of the Bangkok horoscope. Mongkut, like Song Tham of Ayutthaya, studied astrology while a prince in the monkhood, confirming that this aspect of élite culture was equally disseminated and practised within that institution. The examples just mentioned illustrate, moreover, that there has been a relationship of mutual support between high-ranking members of the Sangha and members of the ruling élite which were furthered by a common interest in astrological matters. It will be shown later that this pattern of mutual support has continued into the present.

Several princes in the Bangkok period, some of them eminent monks, were renowned authors of astrological works, contributing to the restoration of part of the much-reduced literature on the subject which remained after Ayutthaya's final defeat (S. Phlainoi 2525: 6). In this they contributed to the general cultural restorative work for which their ruling relatives were lauded. True to the training and background of their authors, some of these works, such as the Cakkrathiipanii, and the Lilit thaksaa phayaakorn were composed in verse of such quality that they have continued to be appreciated for their literary merits alone (D.N. 1952).

The real effect of the political and cultural role of the astrologers of the élite in Thailand's past is beyond the scope of this discussion, for it would require extensive historical research. However, it is discernible from the examples cited that a clear impression is nurtured today about what that role was. Many of the examples cited by astrologers naturally include those where the astrologer was proven correct in his predictions, and their stories
also relate the kings' readiness to accept the word of their astrologers. The themes which emerge from the above examples further stress the positive aspects of the relationship between astrologers and the absolute monarchs, as the former protected and guided the personal well-being of the members of the royal family, and provided assurances concerning the royal line and inheritance to the throne, while also regularly providing vital advice for the king's troops in battle and for the royal rituals of state.

It should also be pointed out, however, that the same kinds of expertise in non-official hands are recorded to have sometimes been inimical to those same royal interests. The reign of King Mongkut alone provides numerous examples of such instances, even though the king himself was an avid student of astrology. On several occasions he had reason to issue stern proclamations against rumours and unrest following the sighting of comets (Phracomklaw 2511 Vol 1: 288-289; 440), and against reported sightings of the politically significant omen of two suns (Phracomklaw 2511 Vol 1: 442). At least once he specifically denounced moo duu (fortune-tellers) as invidious and sycophantic rumour mongers (Phracomklaw 2511 Vol 1: 115), and on another occasion advocated the death penalty for moo duu and their clients caught involved in certain activities (Phracomklaw 2508: 109-111), all of which suggests the degree to which monarchs have been forced to contain unofficial use of divination.

Astrology and its associated practices therefore formed an intrinsic part of the court culture promoted by the royal rulers of Siam, and shared by those associated with the court and senior levels in the Buddhist monkhood, and, more importantly in the context of this study, they continue to be seen to have done so. Astrology was inextricably woven into the élite's historiography and Buddhist values, their ideas of society, geography and culture, and of their own place in relation to these. It formed part of the core of élite beliefs which found expression in the official activities
and leisure pastimes of the court society, as in the many forms of literary works emanating from the court, quite apart from defining the specific duties of the court astrologers and their provincial counterparts.

Astrology in the Constitutional Period

Much of the formal importance of astrology was lost after the end of the absolute monarchy in June 1932, when middle-level officials and armed forces officers staged a coup d'état against the king's government and introduced a modernised constitutional monarchy. In the early period of this move toward democracy the power and role of the royal family were greatly reduced, and consequently much of the administrative and ritual role of the court was abolished. Some of the royal rituals were revived under Sarit's regime in 1957-1963, ostensibly because of their 'sociological' importance, but also to enable Sarit to use the respect shown towards the monarchy to legitimise his own position.

The monarchy still retains royal astrologers, who continue to set the times for those royal rituals which are still preserved, although today these public duties are so reduced that the astrologers' principal task is to maintain the library of royal astrological texts. It seems to have been the case for quite some time that these officials are usually people closely associated with the royal palace who develop a special interest in astrology. These court astrologers still draw up the official horoscopes of new members of the royal family, although their personal advisory role appears to have diminished. Those members of the royal family who do take an active interest in astrological matters are free to consult whichever skilled practitioners they choose, often resulting in the favouring of outside experts who then become the subject of

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5 The system of titled ranks is no longer maintained, the most senior of the group merely being referred to as the 'head' of the royal astrologers (buanaa boon luang). The last phra hooraathibodi was cremated in 1951 (see D.N. 1952: 119).
public interest. Court astrology, therefore, is often regarded as something retained, like so much of previous court life, as a symbolic link with past royal tradition.

However, while astrology in the court context can be seen to be a mere reflection of its former self, it is nevertheless also regarded as an important source of national unity and identity, as are many aspects of the court tradition which have come to be portrayed as defining 'Thai' culture for the traditionalists among the educated urban elite, especially since for this section of the population more parochial rural practices have long been regarded as inferior or rough derivations of the refined sophistication of the court (but cf. Rubin 1974: 11). It is because of the role ascribed to astrology as an intrinsic part of the way the life of the court as cultural centre has been guided, that contemporary astrologers justify promotion of this branch of knowledge as a continuation of the Thai way of life.

That the early development of the astrological associations was seen as a way of preserving this court-derived system of knowledge is suggested from the early founders of the Astrological Association of Thailand. The twenty-four members who founded this society were all senior and accomplished astrologers when they established their association in 1947, and many of them are still known by their reputations today, although most are now deceased. They included the then Chief Royal Astrologer (phraya hoorathibodii), as well as two princes of mom cav rank, one of mom luang rank, along with many other men holding the royally conferred bandaasak titles of phrayaa and luang (Samaakhom Hoon Haeng Pratheet Thai 2524: 20), one of whom was reputedly closely associated with the royal family through his skill in medicine, and who held senior government posts for many years. There were also three army officers in this prestigious group. It was thus largely an educated and established élite who first decided to form an association to preserve and propagate knowledge of all forms of Thai astrology and
to use their knowledge for the benefit of the public. One feature which must be noted in these associations is that both the Astrological Association of Thailand and the International Astrological Association specifically stipulate their non-political role (Samaakhom Hoon Haeng Pratheet Thai 2524: 2; Samaakhom Hooraasaat Naanaachaat 2526: 51). That this is not just a formality is indicated by the dissatisfaction caused in the past when AAT members did come to be seen as acting in a political role, and its members are now constrained to observe this rule.  

The Spread of Astrological Knowledge

There is another factor of importance to consider when discussing the changed role of astrology in the twentieth century, namely the increased availability of astrological texts; a change which is partly related to the new political situation, but one which also goes back to the introduction of printing in Thailand in the mid-nineteenth century and to the universalisation of the education system in the first decades of the twentieth century.

In a society in which the court and the monastery were the only sources of an education in literacy and the arts, access to books was naturally an elite privilege with status implications for those who sought it. When the reproduction of texts involved the complex manufacture of folding books or the careful preparation of palm-leaves and the laborious work of transcribing, moreover, possession of texts was only available to those of means. Access to existing texts was also limited, since they were located in the privately owned libraries of the aristocracy, or in the collections belonging to monasteries. In the case of astrological texts, it has been argued that the destruction of such texts in the fall of Ayutthaya would have meant that the only copies restored and

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6 Some of the possible reasons for this political caution will be discussed in Chapter Seven.
rewritten would have been in the hands of very few concerned with the performance of ritual duties of the early Bangkok court (Singto 2522: 8). However when King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910) opened a library where texts formerly in the possession of the élite could be collected and made available to the general public, astrology was for the first time accessible to all Thai citizens. These texts helped provide a basis for the later publication of a whole range of modern astrological manuals.

Prior to the establishment of what became the National Library, access to texts was so restricted in the case of court-sponsored literary and historical works that even into the second decade of the twentieth century most people had no idea of the existence of the riches which the collections of the élite had housed (Breazeale 1971: 31). This ignorance had probably been increased by the often jealous guarding of documents by officials within the court system (cf. Thipakorawong 1978: xxiv). During the first two decades of the twentieth century the lack of any sort of coordinated inventory of holdings helped make possible a flourishing trade in royal manuscripts (Reynolds 1973b: 85-86), and helped some ambitious commoners such as K.S.R. Kulap to enter official service on the basis of a reputation enhanced by historical knowledge and possession of old texts (Reynolds 1973b: 75). On the whole, however, many still had the attitude that such texts were 'too venerable for commoners to use' (Breazeale 1971: 32). After considerable effort had gone into establishing the National Library, restoring former holdings and ensuring the printing of rare texts, Prince Damrong was further able to make use of the practice which developed at the turn of the century of privately printing memorial volumes for special occasions. Traditional ceremonies, most often cremations, provided the basis of the expansion of this activity among the nobility and, later, the well-to-do as it took on the aspect of merit-making (Breazeale 1971: 32). Many astrological texts, including those of early Bangkok royal or élite authorship, were published in this way, and thereby became available to a larger proportion of subsequent generations.
The publication of astrological texts has had implications for the transmission of knowledge beyond mere access to the books, however, since many of the early manuals were not elaborate works containing detailed exposition, but merely comprised the records required to sustain the memories of those whose education in the field was partially obtained by oral transmission from a teacher. As late as the 1920s an eminent astrologer was dependent upon instruction from his teacher in order to study some of the more esoteric aspects of Thai astrology (Wisandarunkorn 2508: n.p. [Introduction]). Many astrologers who make available copies of older formerly unpublished works express concern at the difficulty of understanding their contents in the absence of the required exegesis from their authors to make them comprehensible — especially in the case of those composed in verse (e.g. Choei 2513: Introduction). There is a prevailing recognition that many experts have now died, much of whose more sophisticated knowledge has died with them, with grave consequences for the state of Thai astrology (Prasit 2523a: n.p.). Some astrologers, such as the one-time librarian and editor for the Astrological Association of Thailand, have responded to this situation by attempting to encourage as much unadulterated publication of old manuals as possible (Sira 2511: 3-6), so that the attrition which is perceived to be occurring is ameliorated as far as possible. This means that experts now can potentially have available to them an increasingly broad range of esoteric texts, but inconsistencies and incompatibilities become apparent which are not easily resolved given the present state of knowledge.

The astrological treatises from earlier periods preserved in the Manuscripts Division of the National Library appear, from a cursory examination, to be brief, terse, repetitive texts which often provide little or no exposition to make accessible the numerous diagrams, charts, and mathematical or numerical formulae which they include. They appear written as aide-mémoires, with mnemonic verses, repetitive formulae and patterns of internal logic
serving to provide the student or practitioner with the basic information he needs to learn in a concise and systematic fashion. Such texts suggest that the actual learning process which took place involved the student committing to memory as much of the text as he could, but having the exposition supplied separately by the teacher.

The modern texts available on the market, unlike the former manuals, are usually designed as "teach-yourself" works, with systematic outlining of various systems of calculation and interpretation, with the author's own understanding providing the source of instruction on the basic schemes (although there is a good deal of repetition, even 'plagiarism' between authors). The most accessible manuals are written in easy language and designed to be suited to the modern context. The relationship of the author's knowledge to the older texts is rarely discussed. Thus while some senior astrologers do seek to reproduce something of the character of the old manuscripts which they have access to, providing their own exegesis for the aid of their reading peers; on the whole, the difference between the former manuscripts stored in the Manuscripts Division and the modern textbooks is great, and it appears likely that there is much more homogenisation of views and interpretations arising from the newer manuals.

The kind of study associated with the older texts was perhaps common in those 'traditional' societies which were much more dependent on the use of oral transmission before the widespread availability of printing, as is found in the account of the education of the Indian literati described by Wood (1985).

Wood shows how the use of texts in such societies was formal and intensive in character, in contrast to the informality and extensiveness of the use of records now possible with the development of modern media (1985: 3). The formality involved in the labour of learning lent itself readily to emphasis on concentrated repetition to learn, obedience to and faith in the
forms used, and respect and reverence for the texts and the teachers who helped make them accessible (1985: 4-5). In this system there was little room or time for criticism of the texts, and a high level of dependence on the available texts and the explanations of them supplied by the teacher:

Respect was cultivated practically by disciplined obedience, symbolically by ceremonial and ritual deference, and personally by ideals of devotion towards elders and superiors who provided direction and support.

(Wood 1985:5)

Moreover,

because of the need for intensive, condensed presentation, ... traditional theory had to be presented through bare, authoritative assertions of established principles; and it was left to the student, under his teacher's guidance, to relate these assertions of principle to particular experience. At a time when texts were not printed for extensive reading and reference, but were condensed into verses and aphorisms designed for memorization and repetition, it was not possible for a traditional text to derive, explain and justify its theories with extensive discussion and information in the modern, more democratic manner of presentation.

(Wood 1985: 16)

The kind of teaching practised in the association schools bears some resemblance to this traditional method, with bare details being recorded for copying on the board, and then the teacher providing his understanding of the derivation and practical application of the point. Much use is still made of mnemonic verses, to many of which are ascribed ancient authorship, and some of these are well-known beyond astrological circles.

Part of the advantage of having a teacher for the modern study of astrology lies in the fact that the traditional texts leave so much to be desired in the way of exposition, and even teachers often express their lack of understanding of how certain principles or calculations came to be recorded. It is clear that a loss of astrological knowledge is felt, a loss compounded by the comparative
dearth of traditional texts available after the destruction of Ayutthaya. Such circumstances have led to emphasis by some on the superior knowledge of the original teachers who, it is thought, had a fuller understanding of the material recorded; and a subsequent expectation of continuing deterioration of knowledge over time.

The need to formalise and maintain old forms of knowledge is one context where the advantages of the conservative and didactic functions of the astrological associations assume particular importance.

One advantage of the associations' schools is that they enable not only a basic education in astrology, but also the opportunity for students to hear those who are recognised as being of expert standing and to be able to discuss the subject with them. Furthermore guest lecturers and their specialised and even arcane fields of interest also become known to the students. Such open classes allow as many interested students as possible access to the subjects, and serves to enable the associations to act as popularisers of astrological knowledge in doing so.

However, these regular classes are sometimes regarded as being of limited scope as a result of their accessibility. Some students were of the opinion that what the teachers taught in such open forums, for which they received a nominal fee from each student, was likely to be only basic and general. Many of those who taught at the association schools also taught students privately, and it was sometimes suggested that to really learn the subject this private tuition would be preferable, since the private students would receive better instruction. One teacher explicitly denied that he held any information back from his association class pupils, but taught them everything that he taught pupils who came to his house, which suggests that this hierarchy of teacher-pupil relationships is also recognised by the teachers. Many students sought to further their studies by actively seeking the opinion and
advice of the teachers as often as possible outside the classroom teaching, since without this they were likely to gain only the bare outline of the subject, without the necessary expert knowledge and 'secret techniques' (kblet lqp) which the teacher possessed. Learning in this environment was therefore a process of constantly inviting, but also deserving by diligence and intelligence, the cooperative passing on of knowledge by the teacher. Some association students would also eventually become private students of a respected teacher at his or her house.

A similar scepticism about the quality of divulged information is applied to many of the now numerous astrological manuals available on the market. Such books are often regarded as money-spinners which do not require the author, even if renowned, to reveal all or even much of his knowledge. The impersonality of the relationship between author and reader minimises the moral responsibility of the teacher, and makes this form of learning even less enviable than the classroom situation from the point of view of those teachers and pupils at the schools. The need to make some provision for the teacher-pupil relationship is shown by the number of authors who include a respect-paying-to-the-teachers verse for the student to use when studying the book as a moral incentive for the student, but also perhaps to enhance the potential buyer's perception of the seriousness of the author's commitment.

Many students still learn the subject from individual teachers, therefore, and the standing of a teacher can still be based on prior access as a student to a renowned expert. Similarly the possession of old texts is still highly prized, and used to enhance one's standing among colleagues. There is, then, still much evidence of the idea that knowledge such as astrology is best obtained within a pupil-teacher relationship, and that the kind of insight and understanding necessary for the successful mastery of the subject is dependent upon much more than a grasp of the now highly accessible basics.
There are further beliefs widely expressed which confirm that Thai astrology continues to enjoy an aura of esotericism. Many practitioners claim that when they applied to learn their craft their teacher examined their horoscope or palm in order to ascertain whether or not they were suited to study such a subject. Similarly, in astrological terms a student's interest in astrology, the occult or the mysterious (luk lap) can be discerned in a potential student's horoscope and may well be looked for by a teacher. While this evidence of innate inclination serves as a form of personal self-endorsement of the practitioner's abilities, it also serves to endorse the more general view that not everybody can be skilled at astrology and related subjects despite their willingness to learn. This is sometimes expressed in the idea that to really be an astrologer one has to have not only the learned knowledge but a kind of sixth sense (yaan thip; taa thip) to enable one to make sound judgements in interpretation. Many astrologers concur that the ability to read the future requires something of this extra quality, which cannot be either learned or transmitted from even an expert teacher. The teacher's capacity to judge students' abilities in this regard is held to account for the varying degrees of knowledge which a teacher may transmit to different pupils. This sixth sense also explains why some practitioners 'can look more accurately than the eye can see' (duu maen kwaa taa hen), while some others have no more than an average ability to predict or interpret events.

Another factor in the acquisition of astrological knowledge serving to enhance the importance of the teacher's role is the stress placed on the necessity of taking account of experience in the successful practice of divinatory arts. As with the pursuit of all practical disciplines, the success of the practitioner depends upon the accurate application of knowledge of the general principles in his diagnosis of the specific cases brought to him by his clients. A necessary part of the understanding of the traditional texts was the fleshing out of the scant commentaries provided with
the richness of interpretation gained not only from former learning, but also from the teacher's experience of the infinite variation of cases with which a practitioner is faced. The provision of elaboration of details, and the inclusion of limiting factors and extensions of the principles which the teacher has found to be valid from his own observations are often extolled as being among the most important elements in the learning in a field such as astrology, where the complexity of analysis, and the difficulty of extrapolating inferences into the future are fundamental aspects of the craft. In this way, the texts are regarded as providing the necessary foundations of an understanding of the principles, but these require extra techniques which an experienced astrologer has found to apply to the cases he has examined. Students are also frequently reminded that they should be mindful of what their own experience tells them above and beyond the fundamentals they gained in their instruction, and that this experience is what may make them a better-than-average practitioner. Similarly, long experience as a practitioner is regarded as a prerequisite for being a teacher or respected expert capable of transmitting the textual knowledge adequately.

One final aspect of the perceived advantages of the transmission of astrological knowledge being conducted within a teacher-pupil environment is the teacher's role in being able to impress upon the students the moral obligations which the practitioner has towards his clients. Much class time is devoted to the discussion of what the client's needs are, and the responsibility of the practitioner to take into account not only the technical requirements of his predictive task, but also the psychological needs of the client, and the importance of giving practical advice which is of most immediate benefit to the client. The need to be tactful and positive as well as accurate is seen as an essential part of the role of the astrologer, and the moral view of correct action in relation to future fortune is also stressed. The emphasis on this aspect of the practitioner's skills is
sometimes explicitly related to the absence of such moral responsibilities on the part of unscrupulous practitioners who do not observe the ethics of the profession.

These views all suggest an élitist approach to access to knowledge which promotes the importance of the elevation of individual experts, attention to superior and often esoteric forms of knowledge, and the importance of the traditional teacher-pupil relationship. The recent introduction of the ubiquitous Thai custom of *wai khruu* (ceremony of paying respect to the teachers) at the associations is symptomatic of the assumptions underlying the conservative tradition of education now being supported there, for the ceremony expresses dependence upon the whole lineage of teachers of the discipline, and enforces a moral obligation on the part of the student towards his seniors and to the acquisition and practice of the discipline itself. Formalised use of this ceremony illustrates the way in which many forms of educational legitimacy are endorsed at the associations, and, significantly, ties the associations' teaching activities in with those elsewhere, including in state educational institutions.

The esoteric view of astrology is not universal among all contemporary astrologers, however, for some practitioners, especially perhaps those who operate in the public domain of temple courtyards and streets, are self-taught with the aid of books or even accumulated hearsay and regard their craft as a routine exercise of learned skills. The view of privileged ability and knowledge may be mainly the preserve of the academic circle most visible, and now perhaps most viable at the associations, and is not shared by all those to whom the popularisation of astrology in the present century has made available a ready source of interest, income or advice. The discussions and exchanges in the classes, lectures and journals of the associations represent an attempt to formally preserve conservative standards in advancing the extent of astrological knowledge within and beyond the astrological community.
The educational emphases of the astrological associations goes beyond the need to educate new students, and to preserve the circle of knowledgeable experts, for the preoccupations which inform the discussions held at the associations meetings are also a way of providing a defensive position from which to justify the practice of astrology against the arguments frequently encountered in the modern sceptical and rationalist attacks against such beliefs. The professional nature of the training provided by the associations, with its emphasis on proper instruction, inculcation of professional ethics and high intellectual attainments, can be seen to suggest a modernist response to the changed circumstances in which one section of the élite-level astrology now finds itself: that is as a representative of a tradition which has been displaced from its formerly secure socio-political environment, and which has come under sustained intellectual and moral criticism from portions of the urban population. An account of the nature of these criticisms will follow a general analysis of Thai religion in the next section.

Modern Opposition to Astrology

The kinds of contemporary opposition to astrology, much of which comes from the educated urban middle class within Thai society, can be analytically divided into three main approaches. There is a substantial objection being made to astrology, as to other forms of Brahmanic and animist "superstitious practices" from within a minority, but vocal (Mulder 1985: 153) group of reformist Buddhists who seek to purify Thai religion of its non-Buddhist accretions. Another source of criticism stems from the acceptance by the educated sections of Thai society of elements of the Western scientific and rationalist world-view, much of which is formally incorporated into the educational curricula of the school system. A third source of criticism derives from the perceived patterns of use to which astrology is put in Thai society, and forms a body of thought opposed to astrology on social and political grounds. These
approaches to the critical assessment of astrology should not be regarded as mutually exclusive: they are often closely related not only in theory but also in practice, as is indicated by the fact that the main opponents to be discussed here are a sociologically homogeneous group.

In his characterisation of the Thai religious system, Kirsch (1977) separates the significant aspects of Thai religion into its component Buddhist, Brahmanical and animist elements, and places them within a structural-functionalist framework in order to understand the relationship between these elements, as well as to analyse what implications there are likely to be for the patterns of change which he sees as beginning to emerge. Kirsch notes the nation-wide mass appeal of Thai Buddhism, the content of which is formalised through the focus of activities surrounding the members of the Sangha, and thereby closely tied to the Thai state. However, Buddhism, while it claims superior status both socially, as a national and a state religion, and doctrinally, where its doctrines of karma are universal and superordinate to forms of supernatural causation, is something of an 'incomplete' religion (1977: 242), which does not satisfactorily provide for the short term psychological needs of its lay followers who require other forms of moral legitimacy to support their involvement in the everyday world than those supplied by nibbanic ideals and the indeterminacy of karma in relation to short term goals.

In contrast to the other-worldly role of Buddhism, Kirsch argues that Brahmanical beliefs provide a kind of technological (rather than religious) set of practices (1977: 253) which enable the pursuit of ends such as good health, prosperity, luck or auspiciousness in general at various specific points in life and seasonal cycles. He suggests that part of the reason why Brahmanism may enjoy a rather favourable reputation in Thailand is because the focus of Brahmanical practices, being this-worldly, are not opposed to those of Buddhism, but are 'closely intertwined' with them, and
moreover that Thai Brahmanism 'has no distinctive and coherent world-view which distinguishes it from Buddhism; its beliefs and practices are based in conceptions and ideas drawn from Buddhism' (1977: 254). Kirsch supports his argument by pointing out that much of the training of folk Brahman specialists in Thailand is carried on within the Buddhist monkhood itself, making Brahmanism not only ideologically, but also structurally dependent on the dominant Buddhist religion and its institutions (1977: 257). Because of this relationship Brahmanism is able to supply forms of legitimation of this-worldly involvement as well as the option of such therapeutic functions as the restoring of individuals to their full potential, such as is found in the khwan (soul-tying) rites (1977: 255-6).

While Kirsch is largely concerned with folk practices in his discussion of Brahmanism, his analysis is applicable to many of the Brahmanic practices of the court as well, and he notes the role of astrology and moo duu within this sphere of Thai religion.

Kirsch suggests that animism is viewed with some ambivalence in Thai society, in contrast to the positive attitudes towards Buddhism and Brahmanism. This he attributes to the capriciousness and unpredictability associated with the spirits of animistic practice. Like Brahmanism, animism is applied only intermittently to the mundane problems of existence, but unlike either Buddhism or Brahmanism, animism is often very localised (1977: 260), and there are particular categories of people who are more susceptible to spirit encounters, with the result that in general, 'where Buddhist and/or Folk Brahman involvement and activities are high, animist involvement and activity is likely to be low' (1977: 259). However, Kirsch correctly points out that 'Buddhism provides an overarching framework within which all other aspects of Thai religion must be examined' (1977: 257), even though there are 'deep-seated cleavages' between animism on the one hand and Buddhism and Folk Brahmanism on the other, and despite the symbolic opposition of many elements of animism and Buddhism, the fact that monks and even devout lay Buddhists may be considered beyond spirit attack indicates the
superior potency of Buddhism (1977: 259). While animism in this analysis may provide 'a degree of tension release for those ... who occupy a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis Buddhism' (1977: 262), Brahmanism serves a much broader function:

Brahmanistic beliefs and practices serve to mediate a number of basic religious problems Buddhism poses for members of the laity but does not directly resolve - those of forming attachments; the moral significance of health, illness and prosperity; and involvement in the mundane world. Essentially, Folk Brahmanism provides a system of religious therapy, and also legitimates the involvement of the lay Buddhist in ordinary society without posing a threat to his Buddhist commitments or to his own basic morality. (Kirsch 1977: 261)

However, Kirsch's discussion of the changes in Thai religion raise questions about the viability of the Brahmanic component in the modern era. In the increasing process of 'upgrading' which has seen continued support for the universalistic principles of Theravada Buddhism, often at the expense of the other religious elements, Brahmanism has been affected because of its structural affinities with Buddhism. Kirsch notes that the modern emphasis on Buddhist orthodoxy, particularly on the part of monks, can lead to Brahmanic elements being defined as "superstition" or as too secular to be considered the proper domain of the monk, leading to the decreasing ability of the Sangha to provide training in Brahmanic practices (1977: 265). Kirsch also correctly points out that the training of Brahmanic specialists historically provided by the monkhood can be traced to the fact that the monkhood was the locus of all education, and since the literacy necessary for Brahmanic practices was also gained there, the Sangha provided the most likely source of training for Folk Brahmanism. With universal education and the growth of publication, as I have already shown to be the case with astrology, these practices and beliefs have become more widely accessible. Kirsch suggests that such 'general accessibility without the intervention of the Sangha may actually devalue such knowledge and techniques, making them a game rather than serious
business' (1977: 266). Moreover the availability of elements of Western medicine has undermined the demand for many of the rites previously associated with the role of the Brahmanic specialist.

Modernity has therefore undermined support for and interest in Brahmanism, whereas animism, with its symbolic opposition to Buddhism, is much more closely tied to the perpetuation of a now strengthened Buddhism, and may even increase proportional to the rise in the tensions of life in the modern world (1977: 266). Kirsch suggests that if Brahmanism does now play a decreasing role in solving the problems posed by Buddhism for everyday life, abstract Buddhism would have to directly confront the problems formerly met by this component of the Thai religion: affirmation of the basic morality of the laity despite their involvement in the mundane world, legitimation of the formation of attachments in the world, and accounting for the moral implications of illness.

(Kirsch 1977: 266)

Kirsch's model suggests what we can expect to find in the current trends arising from changes in the Thai world-view under modern conditions, especially in the educated urban section of the Bangkok population which is the focus of this study. Although he discusses Brahmanism in terms of the folk tradition, with local experts who received their training in the local monasteries, it is possible to suggest that the court-derived tradition of astrology falls into a similar position as that prescribed by his model for folk Brahmanism.

The astrology of the court tradition requires a degree of literacy and intellectual sophistication which was formerly dependent on court circles or élite monastic education, and as has been seen, the end of the fundamental cultural and political role of astrology within the court at the end of the absolute monarchy has led to the preservation and development of the astrological tradition being carried on outside the sanctity of the monarchical
institution. Moreover, the general availability of education and literacy, together with the widespread publication of astrological and other divinatory material, has meant that the esoteric nature of such knowledge is now — potentially at least — considerably decreased, and as a result of this, no doubt, it has lost a certain degree of respect and awe.

However the general respect for the Brahmanism of the royal court should not be underestimated, since, unlike the folk Brahmanic tradition, it has the advantage of prestigious association with the monarchy serving to boost its popularity. Although much of the royal Brahmanic tradition was abolished as politically unsuitable and anachronistic by the original post-Revolution rulers, the American-backed anti-communist military dictatorships of the late fifties and sixties saw a resurgence in government-instigated monarchical participation in the ancient rituals of Brahmanic cast, as Sarit and his followers sought to solve their legitimacy problems by 'symbolically associating their regimes with the re-imputed legitimacy of the monarchy' (Jackson n.d.: 10). Since then this view of the monarchy has continued to be used in conservative definitions of Thai identity. In the early seventies Tambiah found that the fashionable élite of Bangkok had some demand for the court Brahmans (Tambiah 1976: 228-229), while in the early eighties, the Brahmans employed at the court reported that they were busy with performance of their rituals not only in Bangkok, but increasingly upon invitation from the élite in the provincial capitals as well, and the royal astrologers were also cultivated by those who sought their services.

It should be remembered that although Kirsch sees astrology and divination as belonging to the folk Brahmanic tradition both in its derivation and in its functions, there has long been a separation of the personnel associated with astrology and Brahmanism in the court tradition, with the result that many astrologers of the kind active in the associations do not associate themselves with the
role of Brahmans or their traditions. Furthermore, perhaps because of its rather privileged position as a courtly tradition in the Thai world-view in comparison with other folk Brahmanic elements, astrology is still very much a part of the education and practice of many monks in Thailand, including those having very close ties with influential sections of the ruling elite, and does not seem to have been rejected by the majority of the Sangha's members.

While Kirsch's argument led him to suggest that increased interest in meditation may be one response to the increasing need of Buddhism to provide answers to the problems once satisfied by Brahmanic beliefs and practices (1977: 266), doctrinal reinterpretations, such as those propounded by the reformist monk Buddhadasa and other monk and lay Buddhist modernists, also provide new directions for the urban educated middle class to employ Buddhism as a justification for its social and political aims in the lay sphere. This kind of reformist Buddhism, which seeks to rid Thai Buddhism of its Brahmanic and animist accretions, is one significant source of opposition to the practice of astrology and other forms of divination.

In his recent study of the philosophical and social thought of Thailand's most influential Buddhist reformist thinker, Jackson has traced the way in which Buddhadasa's original and eclectic reinterpretation of Buddhism has 'attempted to integrate the renunciate's hope for salvation with the layperson's hopes for well-being and fulfillment in this world here and now' (1988a: 296). Buddhadasa's emphasis on the lack of distinction between the monkly and lay roles in terms of the higher goals of Buddhism, and his development of a religio-social ethic which insists upon the development of a socio-political framework in which Buddhism can enable the spiritual fulfillment of all, have held great appeal for Thai progressives. Jackson's analysis shows that Buddhadasa's thought has developed some of the potential which Kirsch has argued is needed by a Buddhism shorn of its Brahmanic supports:
Without devaluing the pivotal place and significance of *nibbana* in Buddhist thought, Buddhadasa has related that condition of ultimate salvation to activity in the social world. Provided it is informed by moral principles and practised with *cit-wang* [freed mind], material activity oriented towards the progressive development of the social, economic and political orders is thereby given religious value, being viewed as part and parcel of the human quest for salvation from suffering.

(Jackson 1988a: 298)

Nevertheless, such a radical departure from the accepted views has not received universal favour. The main portion of the population who have adopted this new and somewhat intellectual view of the role of Buddhism has been the Thai progressives who have sought to 'develop and strengthen Thai national identity as a cultural barrier' to the incursions of foreign economic and political interests, and who are strongly democratic in their political aspirations (Jackson 1988a: 67). As well as the intelligentsia, this group of élite progressives consists of what Anderson characterised as the 'new bourgeois strata': the mostly educated administrative, managerial, professional and service workers who as a group,

[...while strictly speaking neither radical nor leftist, [... stand] in some degree of opposition to the traditional military, bureaucratic and aristocratic Thai élite whose established interests are often seen as hindering the new bourgeoisie's social mobility and advancement.

(Jackson 1988a: 68)

These élite progressives, argues Jackson, tend to seek the idea of a 'Thai based model of development which refers to Buddhist rather than to capitalist paradigms', in contrast to the élite traditionalists, who, while sharing preoccupation with many of the same issues, tend to accept a higher degree of Western economic and political influence (1988a: 67).

A significant element of the Buddhist reformulation which emerges with Buddhadasa and other modernist Buddhists is the
determination to meet the challenge posed by Western rationalism and scientific technology. The challenge here is a dual one: in the case of Buddhadasa demonstrated in his concern to show that the tenets of Buddhism are rational in their arguments and analysis (Jackson 1988a: 18); and also that Buddhism provides some basis for the social acceptance and proper use of technology and its accompanying material advantages for socio-economic development in a way that can be combined with the higher spiritual goals of Buddhism. Jackson points out that rational enquiry in Buddhism is ultimately subject to suprarational considerations of the transcendent forms of wisdom connected with morality and meditative insight (1988a: 38-39), as well as to the political exigencies of playing a predominate role in the state ideology (1988a: 40-46), but argues that modernist Buddhists faced with the task of demonstrating to the West that their religion is 'rational, logical and scientific', have frequently asserted that the spiritual truths of Buddhism are 'open to experimental verification in a way that is assumed to be similar to the method of validating scientific results' (1988a: 60-61). The assumptions involved about the epistemological bases of the scientific method, however, constitute only a partial and simplified view, which does not include falsificationist principles, but rather represents science as 'a static, abstract ideal' whose assumed authority rather than actual workings is appealed to (1988a: 61).

A corollary of this tendency to link the tenets of Buddhism to rational scientific thinking is the attempt to criticise the animist and Brahmanical components of the Thai religious system, a trend which has often been assumed to be the result of the increasing influence of Western missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century, but which was for quite other cultural and political reasons begun in the first reign of the Bangkok era (Wyatt 1982: 28-29). This kind of insistence on doctrinal purity is also consistent with the kind of demythologising of the new Buddhist thinkers like Buddhadasa (Jackson 1988a: 297) among whom there is an increasing
tendency to emphasise the humanity of the Buddha and to proclaim his social concerns (Reynolds and Reynolds 1982: 20). In this way both the founder of the religion and the practice of his doctrine are increasingly portrayed as belonging to the secular realm of actual social time and space, with the emphasis formerly placed on the traditional cosmology of successive rebirths in a structure of heavens and hells being transformed in modern interpretation to their relevant psychological states in the here and now (Jackson 1988a: 18).

Buddhist reformism in Thailand has often been aimed primarily at the members of the sangha, whose rules of conduct are strictly laid down in the Vinaya, and whose example is assumed to provide the basis for their lay following. In the current debates about the need to eradicate animist and Brahmanic accretions, now an embarrassment to educated modernists as indicating the backwardness, ignorance and superstitiousness of the Thai population, much energy is directed at improving the behaviour and understanding of monks in this regard, since monks are expected to practice and to teach an exemplary level of the Buddhist doctrine.

In the case of astrological predictions and other forms of divination, there is much criticism of monks who engage in this kind of activity among educated Buddhists and in the progressive press. A particular source of approbation are those monks who provide lottery numbers, since this is often regarded as a particularly transparent form of commercial quackery. The continuing role of monks as astrologers and palm readers for the laity who seek their counsel and advice is also criticised on doctrinal grounds, since the Buddha is said to have commanded that monks should not engage in this form of activity which is inconsistent with the practice of Buddhism. While this is popularly understood to mean that he banned it for taking up the time of the monks when they should be concentrating on their spiritual duties but did not disapprove of it as such, others argue that it is indeed inconsistent with the
Buddha's teaching that the right time to perform any action is when one has decided it is right and has the right intention to do it - an argument which implies that considerations of auspiciousness inhering in any particular moment are irrelevant and dubious.

Buddhist teachings also contradict astrological beliefs in relation to the teachings of the doctrine of karma, which suggests that all actions have their ineluctable consequences. The performance of astrological activities by monks is thereby criticised in that as renunciate practitioners of the Buddha's path they should be engaged in higher things, and in that they are not only misleading the public as to the correct understanding of the teachings but also do not understand them themselves. Monks who defend their astrological practices reply that they have a duty to help the laity who look for them for advice and support, and that although the laity who seek this help may perhaps not understand the teachings, they can nevertheless be guided to the correct actions if they ask a monk for advice. These defences are characteristic of the elitist view commonly utilised by monks which tolerates the inferior and incomplete understanding of the laity as evidenced in a whole range of popular Buddhist beliefs, but which argues that 'it is better that laypeople grasp things in their own inadequate way, and so act morally, than that they be left out of Buddhism entirely because of their spiritual turpitude' (Jackson 1988a: 64).

There are even attempts to find justifications for monks' knowledge of astrology using canonical examples, such as that where the Buddha recommended that monks should learn the times of the lunar asterisms (nakkhabbaroek) for their own safety from the predations of bandits (Saraprasoet 2512: 3). The Buddha's life and teaching are popularly seen to be bound up with prophecy, moreover, for his own historic destiny was predicted by the sages at his birth; and the religion itself was predicted by the Buddha to last only a certain time before disappearing - as do all things according to the Buddha's teachings on the law of Impermanence. These aspects
in themselves reinforce the association between Buddhism and prophetic visions of the future (e.g. Aphinayan 2500). Furthermore, even though the Buddha explicitly disapproved of the practice of astrology for monks, one of his closest disciples, Moggellana, was an avid practitioner (Wales 1981: ix), setting an example for later followers.

There are, of course, many other monks who do not see the need to justify their involvement in astrology, just as a range of other magical practices engaged in by monks do not receive arguments for their justification (e.g. Wijeyewardene 1986: 30), and the practice of astrology and divination in general appears to continue to be widely practised in Bangkok monasteries, even among those of the reformist Thammayut sect (Tambiah 1984: 165). This continuing involvement of the Buddhist institution with astrological and divinatory practices perpetuates the impression that astrology is a part of the Thai Buddhist way of life. This also furthered by the fact that many Buddhist wat continue to have before the main Buddhist images for public worship the sticks and dice of Chinese-derived fortune-telling techniques.

The Buddhist criticisms of astrology do not stop at consideration of the monks' involvement, of course. Those Buddhists who see belief in astrology as incompatible with their religious values further criticise its practice in all circles. The Brahmanic component of the traditional monarchical ritual institutions is therefore redefined, and much is made of attempts by past monarchs to 'purify' court ritual of Brahmanic accretions, although in some cases, such as that of King Mongkut, this would be more accurately seen as a tendency to add Buddhist ritual elements than to abolish Brahmanic ones (Tambiah 1976: 227). Arguments also continue to be made that the decision to end the monarchy as the absolute form of rule should now mean that elements such as Brahmanism be abolished in favour of the values of a democratic and rationalised Buddhist society. It is therefore seen as unfortunate by some progressives
that the tradition of astrology at the court is maintained, along with other archaic rituals, since this Brahmanic and absolutist view of the semi-divine monarchy is seen as a Khmer-influenced corruption of the Thai political identity of the nation introduced during the Ayutthayan period, one which is less desirable than the more democratic, Buddhist and "Thai" political system thought to have flourished in the society of the Sukhothai period (Jackson n.d.: 13). On the other hand a commonly offered apologetic for continued royal support of Brahmanic practices is that, although they may not please the élite and the educated, the untutored masses still regard them as essential for national welfare, and therefore the monarchy, as a focus of national identity, should accommodate to their expectations. This type of argument has been used to promote patterns of respect for political authority useful to conservative rulers, and the dissemination of such views of élite culture at the popular level has been a consistent function of the Thai National Identity Office (Jackson n.d.: 10).

In relation to the general criticism made by reformist Buddhists that Brahmanic elements should have no place in a properly pure Buddhism, there is a visible tendency among some astrologers to distinguish their beliefs from Brahmanism. Although astrology clearly derives from the Indian tradition, astrologers dissociate astrology from what they regard as the more magical practices which both Royal Brahmans and folk Brahmanic practitioners are associated with by arguing that their knowledge is much higher than that of the Brahmins - which they sometimes liken to the magical practices of animists - even though it is inferior to the ultimate Buddhist phutthasaat. The fact that the role of astrologers eventually became independent of the Brahmins within the court tradition aids this assertion.

Many contemporary astrologers in Bangkok therefore tend to focus specifically on interpretation of horoscopes and calculation of auspicious times, and while some maintain certain forms of ritual
practice to perform in cases of periods of misfortune or to maximise good fortune, many others explicitly distance themselves from these ritual forms. According to many astrologers I spoke to, in most cases clients who request rituals to alleviate inauspiciousness detected in the horoscope are advised in general terms about meritorious actions, much of which would not differ from the general suggestions made by monks for merit-making. A further accommodation to Buddhist criticism and requirements can be seen in the alacrity with which astrologers and other fortune-tellers argue that they are complementing rather than pre-empting or circumventing the doctrine of karma, and thereby point out that they are not going against the fundamental morality of the Buddhist teachings on the responsibilities of the individual for his own actions. By emphasising that astrology enables clients to envision responsible courses of action, astrologers see themselves as conforming to the fundamental moral ethic of Buddhism which is also its fundamental social ethic, stressing the need for conscious determination to perform actions to promote good.

The claims made by modernist Buddhists and countered by Buddhist traditionalists in the contemporary debates indicate that what lies at the heart of such debates is 'a sociological view of religion and ritual, of politics and social relations' (Wijeyewardene 1986: 31). In this context, suggestions of reform can be construed not only as unorthodox but as threatening to the order on which society is based. Thus, while reformists such as Buddhadasa appeal to his own audience of like-minded educated middle-class progressives, these are largely 'disenfranchised from the actual decision-making processes of Thai politics and ... stand in uneasy relation to the rest of Thai society' (Jackson 1988a: 301). Moreover, their minority reformist assertions are irritating to the majority of Thais who regard themselves as good Buddhists (Jackson 1988a: 300), and who resent the implication that their beliefs are not Buddhist, since this religious identification is axiomatic to their national and personal identity. Buddhist
reformist arguments do not therefore carry weight with those who prefer to draw on the customary and historical value of practices such as astrology, and who may also use the authority of the revered monarchy in defence of the appropriateness of this kind of belief for modern Thais.

As has already been suggested, modern Buddhist reformers frequently draw on the authority of science to justify their claims against Brahmanic and animist practices, which in the light of rationalism are seen to be self-evidently false. Purely 'scientific' objections to beliefs such as astrology are therefore recognised in Thailand, although these appear to be less frequently volunteered than are overtly religious or political objections. The theories of Western astronomy are now widely accepted, and are taught in schools. The Western-style planetarium in Bangkok, which has a special display dedicated to King Mongkut, is a popular attraction, and renovations to it provided the government with an occasion on which to issue a stern encouragement to the public to study the real planetary system and not superstitions regarding the heavens. Suggestions as to the lack of statistical proof of astrological theories abound, as do anecdotal stories of experiences of predictions which were not accurate, and something of the historical development of Western intellectual and moral antagonism to astrology is known in better-educated circles. Opinions are frequently expressed that beliefs in astrology and fortune-telling are symptomatic of 'backward' societies in which poor technological development and little education among the poor result in much superstition. Such views are sometimes accompanied by the expectation that progress and the development of education among the poor will automatically cause such beliefs to disappear.

These 'scientific' objections have their counterclaims in general discussions of astrology and its role in society. Astrologers themselves often include in their writings the details of the solar system according to Western astronomical research,
although, like many of their counterparts elsewhere, they do not necessarily accept that this knowledge invalidates their system's laws, despite the fact that these laws are calculated on pre-scientific conceptions of the planetary system. Astrological adherence to laws discovered by the ancients is thought by supporters to have been based on just the kinds of statistical observations which is held to constitute the 'scientific method' according to the general perception of Western science mentioned above. Indeed, in discussion of the observational basis of astrology as it was developed by Indian sages thousands of years ago, it appears that many do not have a clear idea of on what basis modern scientists claim to be doing anything other than observing statistical correlations. Moreover, while inaccurate predictions can always be attributed to inexperience or ignorance, the complexities of astrological interpretation or the vagaries of karma, a kind of scientific justification for the role of astrology in societies such as Thailand is advanced based on the good psychological effect it is presumed to have on clients. This view contains the implied possibility that astrology will disappear when social and economic improvements enable the poor and distressed to have planned welfare alternatives to the astrological consultation, but it also serves to 'explain' the differences between the Thai and Western approaches to the wisdom, if not the rationality of the practice of astrology.

However, with most discussions of the scientific or rational aspects of social practices such as astrology, as with those concerned with Buddhism, it is often not the scientific enterprise in itself which is the real concern, but rather the social implications of the beliefs and changes to their practice which are at issue. This is demonstrated in an article which was very influential in student circles at the time of its publication, no less for its scientifically educational aspect than for its political message. As is frequently the case with Buddhism, scientific thinking is valued for its social engineering potential.
In his discussion of the kinds of thought which should be eradicated or altered if scientific thought is to contribute to development, the author of "Khwaam khit thii pen witthayaasaat (Thinking which is Scientific)" discussed various aspects of Thai belief. Among the aspects which were deemed to be incompatible with scientific thinking is the preservation of tradition for its own sake, such as the observance of special days rather than attention to the value of each current day (Anut 2519: 114-115). In this analysis traditions can be distinguished according to whether they are useful or useless, and those which are beneficial can thus be retained. Saiyasaat, (magic or "superstition") on the other hand, is considered to be a part of Thai society simply because human and animal labour are still the basis of the society, and consequently there is little ability to have control over nature (Anut 2519: 120). Such beliefs are divided into six kinds:

Belief in saksit objects, those which are held to have supernatural and supersocial powers, such as the guardian spirits of the city, or phrasayaamtheewaathiraat. The author suggests that if there is anything, it is the people who can unite together, not saksit beings, who are able to protect Thailand.

Belief in phrommalikhit, or the belief in predestination, incorporates the idea that three days after birth Brahma descends to write a child's destiny on its forehead. According to the author this belief suggests a lack of understanding of the state of society, and of the causes of suffering and difficulty.

7 I am greatly indebted to Somsak Jeamteerasakul for pointing out the important influence of this article in its time.

8 Phrasayaamtheewaathiraat is the national guardian spirit recognised by King Mongkut (r. 1851-1868) who decided, at a time when Siam was believed to be facing grave threat from the encroachments of the European colonial powers, that there must be some supernatural being who was protecting the kingdom from these foreign advances. He ordered a statue of the deity to be made, and established an annual rite of homage for it. The deity's statue is still worshipped and maintained as an object of veneration, and is occasionally displayed to the public to allow them to pay their respects (Phloenphis 2520), as was conspicuously the case during the Bangkok bicentennial celebrations.
Belief in luck (chookchataa) the author characterises as being the opposite of belief in phrommalikhit, for it is belief in chance, in such a thing as "duang" which people use to explain what happens to them, especially those things they have not planned for, without taking into account the conditions necessary for those events to occur.

Belief in bunkam (merit and karma) can be where chance is a way of using the law of karma in an unscientific way, such as when a corrupt person is struck by lightning, and this is attributed to his karma. However, corruption is an error committed against society, and lightning is a natural phenomenon. This is a way of thinking which assumes that what comes first must be a cause, and what comes after the effect, even though they are not in fact connected.

Belief in this life and the next life is a belief in such things as a wicked person being reborn as a tiger, which cannot in fact happen. Such thinking goes against the scientific research of Charles Darwin. However one certainty is that genes or chromosomes of the parents are passed on, and so if there is a next life it cannot be our selves exactly reborn.

Belief in heaven and hell is glossed by the author as meaning that those who are good in the eyes of the rulers will be rewarded in heaven, while those who act against the interests of the rulers will go to hell; in other words, heaven and hell are not other than tools of oppression of the ruling class. They merely reflect the state of oppression and exploitation existing between the classes (Anut 2519: 120-126).

It can be seen from this view of many of the principle types of Thai belief that the author is not following any of the conventional distinctions between Buddhist, Brahmanic or animist thinking, preferring instead to characterise them equally as unscientific, illogical, and blind to the real causes which lie not in supernatural realms beyond understanding and control, but rather which have their roots in society, here depicted in Marxist terms of class-conflict and exploitation. The author proceeds to explain the
kinds of thinking which he advocates should replace such beliefs, including the realisation that people have the ability to change society (2519: 135) pointing out that the ability to predict the future is possible according to scientific criteria (2519: 143), and arguing that the old idea of history being made by a few people needs to be replaced by a view of history which regards human labour power as fundamental (2519: 164-165).

Such a review is a deliberate refutation of many of the traditions which are believed to be held by the majority of Thais, and one which does not even respect the accepted divisions which leave some ideas, such as those relating to the Buddhist law of karma, above reproach. The only criteria acceptable according to his argument are those consonant with a particular view of society and methods of comprehension which enable the understanding of ways to change that society to achieve desired goals. This consistent demythologising is therefore as 'subversive' as that of Buddhadasa (cf. Wijeyewardene 1986: 31), or rather even more so, since it deliberately undermines not only Buddhist values held to constitute a fundamental moral ethic sustaining society, but also notions of royally sponsored deities and the right to make decisions concerning ruling groups. These views are, like those of the modernist Buddhists, likely to appeal to only a small minority, but the general sociological trend of the argument is one which now receives some general acceptance.

Since the time of the 1973-1976 democratic era when this article was written there has been much debate devoted to the idea that a myriad of Thai beliefs do prevent exploration and discussion of some of the real causes behind and nature of social problems. It is sometimes suggested that such beliefs are encouraged in order to dupe the people and to keep them in ignorance of ways to improve their situation in society. Much progressive press coverage, for example, argues for the need for people to be made aware of the practical steps they can take to have more responsibility for their
situation and hence increase their ability to ameliorate their
difficulties, thereby attaining real improvements for themselves;
rather than relying on the comfort of ineffectual rituals which are
portrayed as the crutch of the politically disadvantaged (e.g.
Aathit 2520b). This receives its most common form in accusations
against the practitioners of various rituals and practices,
including astrologers and moo duu, who not only deceive the people
about things which are not real, but deprive them of the financial
resources they could use for actual beneficial assistance. In this
kind of view, far from providing at least minimal benefits such as
psychological comfort, the activities of such practitioners are
portrayed as dishonest and socially pernicious. While mainstream
progressive educated thought has become permeated with some of the
social-scientific concepts shared in good part by the kind of
leftist argument just discussed, Thai radical left-wing thought in
turn is returning to renew links with Buddhist views, and is seeking
to become more 'Thai' (Yuangrat 1983: 57) after the defeat of its
more militant struggles, and the most popular forms of criticism of
practices such astrology may continue from within a Buddhist-
reformist framework.

There is less explicit response to this form of socio-
political criticism evident in the justifications provided for
astrology by its supporters, either because they are not aware of
this kind of viewpoint, or because this view is as yet still very
much a minority view expressed by those who do not need to be
addressed in the way that more mainstream Buddhist critics do.
Nevertheless, there is an implicit defence of astrology often
posited which serves to encourage the view that astrology has been
socially and politically useful. This is the view referred to
earlier, which suggests that the established use of astrology by the
monarchy in many spheres has helped to ensure the proper conduct of
monarchical affairs, as of the defence of the kingdom, throughout
the several hundred years of Thailand's history. Moreover, the
credence shown by Thai monarchs of the past, and the implication of
support in the current reign, are used to argue that astrology has not only been found successful and useful, but is an intrinsic part of the Thai way of carrying out the affairs of the country, which is respected and preserved by the highest authorities in the land. Similarly some government ministers have recorded their attempts to maintain the proper use of astrological wisdom in the way they carry out their government duties, such as the former Minister for Agriculture who reportedly stated in his biography that he always took account of the annual predictions for rainfall by the astrologers in his official work in the Ministry. Such statements are not merely personal testimonies of faith in astrology itself, but an assertion of the proper role which astrology should be expected to play for the continuing benefit of the country, and are an explicit attempt to retain continuities with perceived past practice, similar to the respect shown to the guardian spirits of government ministries by incoming Ministers. They are also, of course, a way of portraying a certain respect for tradition designed to suggest both the personal integrity of the politicians concerned, and the legitimacy of their activities.

It can be seen, therefore, that astrology is not without its critics in modern Thai society, and that the criticisms range from religious questions of orthodoxy and compatibility with Buddhism, through rationalist queries regarding the credibility of the system in scientific terms, to the questioning of the role of such a belief system in the socio-political order of contemporary Thailand. None of these criticisms are made exclusively in relation to astrology, however, since all of these criticisms are also more generally directed at a range of practices, beliefs and institutions with which astrology is associated. The practice of astrology within the Buddhist monkhood, and within the court which is now constitutionally deprived of political power, and supposed dependence on it by those who can be seen to be politically, socially and economically underprivileged and unable to help themselves is attacked not simply on rationalist grounds, but as
part of a modern democratic social and political ethic which forms part of the general progressive aspirations of the educated and upwardly-aspiring middle class.

Astrology's defenders have developed arguments and accommodations to the general thrusts of such criticisms, and equally appeal to a wider social and political view, one which relies on a conservative ideal of Thai life, society and benevolent political leadership. These views may then reflect the views of the military, bureaucratic, aristocratic and latterly business groups who form the main opposition to the progressives. The defense of Thai astrology is a self-conscious move which the more educated and articulate engage in, and I have suggested that the activities of the astrological associations provide a forum for some of this public debate, justification and assertion of ethical, intellectual and social standing.

It must be pointed out, however, that astrology does not always require justification in the way which the newer views of its critics do, for to many there is little reason to question astrology in itself. The general acceptance of the customary use of astrology in Thailand, as well as the kind of tolerant eclecticism which frequently promotes the varying usefulness of all methods, whether magical, Buddhist, astrological or scientific, and which appears to be a common approach to the competing theories in Thailand (e.g. Pramual et al. 2530) means that astrology can still be seen as a non-controversial part of the Thai way of life for many. Often what questions do arise, arise with regard to specific instances of practice, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, rather than the issue of the wisdom of astrology per se. Nevertheless, the trends predicted by Kirsch are producing changes, and the role of astrology in the activities of the monkhood may be substantially changed. If reformist Buddhist or political progressives receive a wider audience than they tend to at present this will further affect Thai astrology.
Conclusion

This chapter has suggested the ways in which Thai astrology has become a modern Thai tradition. The examination of the mode of transmission favoured in the modern era within such organisations as the astrological associations sustains the public image of astrological beliefs as a form of largely arcane knowledge still predominantly the province of an élite sector of the population who endorse the world-view of traditional, pro-monarchist conservatism and the Buddhist heterodoxy associated with this view.  

On the other hand the position of astrology within the wider Thai religious system has led it to be increasingly open to criticism on political, religious and broadly scientific grounds, as a result of becoming increasingly irrelevant to the orientations of educated and modernist portions of the progressive new bourgeoisie who are no longer subject to its cultural and political imperatives and the educational institutionalisation with which it was once associated. Moreover the perception of astrology's entrenchment within and support of a reasonably privileged section of society has increased the vehemence of the criticisms launched against it.

9 While I have argued that both support for and opposition to astrology are largely a product of the thinking of the urban middle class in Bangkok, it is difficult to define the precise sociological differences distinguishing these two sectors of the middle class. Some of the factors which may help explain this include occupation, where, for example, the milieu of the military establishment may be more conducive to interest in astrology whereas teaching in a university may be less so. Related to this, of course are educational background and experience. It may also be that different generations are predisposed to one view rather than the other: it is easier to find adamant sceptics in the younger generation than among the senior generations, the latter of whom were preponderant at the astrological associations. This issue is taken up further in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER THREE

TIME IN THAI ASTROLOGY

Introduction

In order to understand the need for and the power of astrology in Thailand, it is necessary to take into account one of the most important concepts involved in Thai astrology: time.

As already indicated, astrology and time are intimately interlinked in Thailand. The word for astrology taken from Sanskrit, *hooraasaat*, is sometimes glossed as 'knowledge concerning time' (*wichaa waa duai weelaa*) (Philairat 2524: 20), a fact which explains the easy application of this term to all types of divination concerning the appropriate times for doing things, and the consequences of activities performed at specific times. Whatever the appeal may have been of the planetary deities in times past, today the main emphasis in astrological prediction is not why things will happen as they will, but rather more when. As one astrologer pointed out, referring to the oft-accepted comparison of Thai astrologers with Western psychological counsellors, in the West there are doctors who discuss their clients' problems to discover how and why their unhappiness started as a method of seeking to help them; by contrast Thais are not interested in the pursuit of this kind of analysis: they just want to know when a particular problem (period of unhappiness or run of bad luck) will be over. The northern Thai expression for going to consult an astrologer or fortune-teller, *duu mua* (lit. look at the times), also suggests the primacy of this interest. It is perhaps because in the Thai view the stars do not provide an ultimate explanation of human destiny-
this being the prerogative of the Buddhist doctrine of karma - that they are most definitely indicative of the 'when' of human existence. In present-day Buddhist Thailand as for earlier Hindu India, astrology 'intimates the time when people receive the results earned through auspicious and inauspicious actions in their previous birth' (Varahamihira in Pugh 1981: 39).

Astrology and time are also, of course, interlinked in other ways, in that it was the astrologers who were traditionally in charge of measuring and marking time by their knowledge of astronomical calculation and their control over the yearly calendar. Davis has pointed out the political importance of calendrical systems, particularly in the East (1976: 3), and earlier this century both the adoption of a Buddhist calendar as a nationalist response by King Wachirawut to Western cultural invasion (Ishii 1968: 866), and the later adoption of the first of January as the New Year, ostensibly to assert Buddhist and nationalist rejuvenation (Mekkhaphat et al. 2525: 210-211) have provided a continuation into the modern era of this political preoccupation with the significance of the management of time. It will be shown in the course of this chapter that many dimensions of the definition and arrangement of intervals of time is still of vital concern to Thai astrologers who seek to understand and use the Central Thai calendar and its demarkation of time as a basis for understanding the underlying reasons for occurrences at particular times in the past, present and future.

In Bangkok astrologers and other diviners have historically been highly dependent on the court tradition not only for the written manuals which provide the basis of their knowledge, but also for the official designation of the calendar and its divisions. In the past the acceptance of this calendar was one of the aspects of Thai citizenship. In his yearly New Year pronouncements in which King Mongkut (1851-1868) laid down the duration and other
characteristics of the coming year, the decree was regularly addressed to

all the people: all of those who respect Buddhism and the tradition of years, months, days and nights such as that which is used in mdang thai [the land of the Thai].

(Phracomklaw 2511 Vol 2: 235)

In Siam as in China, acceptance of the ruler's calendar was a 'demonstration of fealty' (Needham 1965: 9), and as a result acceptance of the Central Thai calendar, together with its associated astrological beliefs, has followed Bangkok's political annexation of other parts of the country, as has been seen in Northern Thailand (Davis 1984: 93-94). While the royal astrologers are no longer the sole source of authority in the drawing up of calendars, their influence is still felt and their calculations still made available.

Thai temporal divisions and the cosmology which has long informed their significance and arrangement provides a wide range of experiences of time, its nature, direction, and qualities, and in this chapter some of the temporal units employed in the astrological understanding of time will be examined in their own right before their application to astrological interpretation is discussed in later chapters.¹

Thai astrology is a composite of various sorts of beliefs, and consequently in the Thai calendar the structuring of auspicious and inauspicious time ranges from the complex prescriptions of the classically trained astrologers to more basic and prosaic dicta which are easily remembered and applied by all to the routine of

¹ Throughout this chapter, and indeed throughout the thesis as a whole, Thai astrological views of the temporal system are treated only as they pertain to a reasonably consistent system of beliefs based on traditional or modified astronomical calculations which do not necessarily bear any relation to the actual movements of the celestial bodies (see Eade 1987). Since I am concerned here with astrology as a belief system concerned with a culturally developed experience of time, the discrepancies between the astrological view and astronomical reality are not discussed except where they become an issue within the astrological arena itself.
daily life. It is not easy to ascribe all of the plethora of types of belief to certain sources, nor does the orthodoxy of various beliefs seem to be influential in the way they are selected by laymen; indeed they are so numerous that one non-expert individual would probably only be aware of a certain range of types of calculation. In the following outline therefore, which is intended as an illustrative account only, examples of formulas for prediction using the Thai calendar have been selected somewhat at random, but this does not imply that all of the available sources would agree with each other on any particular prescriptive detail.

The Thai Calendar

Eras

The Thai recognise several eras simultaneously. They have at various times used the Hindu mahaasakkaraat era for dating official documents, and the astronomically derived 'lesser' cunlasakkaraat era is still familiar as a civil dating measure, although its official use was discontinued in 1889 when the rattanakoosinsakkaraat (or Bangkok era), retrospectively commencing with the founding of the modern kingdom centred on Bangkok, was introduced by King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910) (Thep Karaket 2511: 4). This era in turn soon lost its primacy, however, for his successor decreed that the Buddhist era or phutthasakkaraat, which dates from the end of the Buddha's life (Cabaton 1958: 110-111; 135) and which was already popular by the eighteenth century (Vickery 1984: 38), be used instead (Thep Karaket 2511: 4).

Years

The largest temporal unit used directly in astrology and divination is the year. It is a testament to the Brahman astrological influence on the calendar that the commencement of each new solar year provides so many clues for the characteristics of the coming year, and indeed these depend not only on which year is commenced, but also upon the days on which the change of year takes
place. The solar New Year celebrated in mid-April, known as songkraan (when the sun is held to move into Aries),2 became a time when predictions for the coming year, including the coming harvest (Wales 1981: 123), were announced by the court astrologers. Pictorial representations of the myth of the songkraan maiden which supplied some of these predictions were hung on the palace walls so that the public could know from her attitude during what time of the day the Sun would begin to enter Aries, and from her mount and other paraphernalia what was in store in the coming year (Sathienkoses 2506: 22). This tradition was continued into recent times by commercial calendars which featured illustrations of the songkraan maiden associated with the coming year, and included such things as predictions of the amount of rainfall expected in the year based on the number of naga (mythical serpents) calculated to be responsible for this (Sumalee 1971: 9-10).

Today popular treatises still detail the predictions based on the day on which wan songkraan falls; and indeed the three days of the changing year (that when the sun begins to enter Aries, that when it is still in transition, and that when it has finally moved completely into the new sign) all provide different types of predictions for the year to come. The court-orientation of the Brahmans' predictions are obvious in these yearly forecasts. If songkraan day falls on a Monday, for example, 'there will be trouble for ministers and nobles', while if it falls on a Wednesday the 'king will receive presents from foreign countries, but weak children will die', and if it should fall on a Thursday this indicates the death of a high sangha dignitary and disturbance for the abbots. More general predictions for the kingdom as a whole are indicated for the other days: on a Sunday, for example, it is predicted that 'cultivated rice will not do very well', Tuesday

2 This is based on the time the Sun will move into Aries according to the traditional Nirayana astronomical methods of calculation. The Thai astrologers' ephemerides all appear to present the sun as moving into Aries in about mid-April, although they do not agree on the precise date and time.
would bring 'danger to the country, fire, robbery and much illness', and Friday ensures that '[r]ice and fruits will be abundant; but there will be frequent tempests, children will be lost, and there will be much eye trouble' (Wales 1981: 124).

Both the songkraan day and the following day, wan nar, tend to bring inauspicious predictions depending on the portion of the population believed to be most affected by the ruling planets of the days on which they fall. The wan nar predictions are perhaps more informative for the general population than the songkraan ones, although no more encouraging: if this day should fall on a Monday, for example, 'the padi crop will die and one will hear the voices of foreigners, while the nobles are upset', and if on a Saturday, '[p]adi will wither owing to scarcity of water. Rice, vegetables and fish will all be dear. There will be fire in the city. Nobles will do wrong, and Brahmans will suffer' (Wales 1981: 125).

The following day of the changing of the year, wan thaloengsok, is the day conceived as being the day on which the new year begins, and whatever the ruling deity of the day on which this falls it signifies unconditionally good news, although in the treatises this news pertains only to the élite: for this day will bring happiness and success to the king; the queen and royal ladies; the officials; the royal pundits, purohit and astrologers; the Brahmans; those who trade with foreign countries, or the Thai soldiers of the king, depending on the ruling planet of the day from Sunday to Saturday respectively (Wales 1981: 125-126).

The Thai year is punctuated with numerous rituals; indeed one of the most famous works of the monarch who reigned into the first decade of the twentieth century, King Chulalongkorn, was an extensive opus compiling and commenting upon the then extant records of the elaborate court celebration of the ceremonies appropriate to the twelve months of the year, Phraraatchaphithii sib soong dûan (The Royal Ceremonies of the Twelve Months).
Many of these ceremonies had ritual significance within the calendrical cycle itself. Wales has pointed out how the celebrations of the lunar New Year included the expulsion of evil and the feasting of the ancestors, both suitable to the cosmic renewal of the beginning of a new cycle (1977: 145). He has also suggested that the Swinging Ceremony, a popular former feature of the courtly ritual cycle held near the time of the winter solstice, was 'originally a rite of imitative magic designed to coerce Su-rya, the sun, to the fulfilment of his functions' including 'circular dances imitating the revolution of the sun and its rebirth on its return to the northern hemisphere' (1977: 146). The Ploughing Ceremony is maintained as a prominent feature of courtly ritual, and combines initiation of the yearly agricultural production with buffalo used for divination of the year's likely harvest, the results of which are regularly reported in the newspapers.

Both solar and lunar types of yearly and monthly reckoning are made use of, although the overall calendar long in use by the Thai is luni-solar. Since the official adoption of the Western calendar in Thailand the solar months and names from the Indian zodiacal system have been officially adopted to correspond to the Western months, and the official New Year now corresponds to that of the West on the first of January rather than either the lunar new year or the solar calculation of songkraan still celebrated in mid-April.

However the lunar calculation of months of the year is still commonly followed, especially in the rural areas, and this sets the routine of the celebration of Buddhist events, from the wan phra holy days which occur on each quarter of the monthly lunar phases, to the setting of the rainy season retreat each year. This system was also apparently one well known to the previous generation since many people who are still quite young know their birthday from their parents' recording of the day in lunar reckoning. The twelve lunar
months of the year contain alternately thirty and twenty-nine days, even-numbered months being those with thirty days (ddan thuan). The months commence with the waxing phase from new moon until full moon, and the waning phase of the odd-numbered months has only fourteen days instead of fifteen (ddan khaat). There is an extra day intercalated every five or six years (Boriraksawetchakan 2511: 82) in the seventh month, and seven years out of every nineteen (Terwiel 1981: 70) has an added ddan thuan as a second eighth month so that the lunar and solar years remain more or less in step. There are a variety of ways in which these intercalations are calculated, however, and formerly there were quite a few disparities between calendars as a result (Boriraksawetchakan 2511: 80).

Formerly the Thai also employed the sixty-year cycle derived from the twelve-year animal cycle of reckoning years known as pii naksat combined with a ten-year cycle (Terwiel 1981: 67). Although this was in official use for some centuries and helped avoid confusion within the old calendrical system (Wisudh 2522: 9482), it is now only the twelve year cycle which is used in its simplest form of associating years of birth with a particular year of the animal-year cycle. The identification of the year of one's birth from the animal cycle rather than an explicit serially numbered year is still popular in Bangkok where, as is the case elsewhere in Thailand, ready identification of comparative age is significant in the rapid determination of age difference as a component of status difference (Davis 1976: 13), and this cyclical system reportedly still provides a popular rule of thumb as to potential marriage partners, especially among Bangkok Chinese.

In Northern Thailand, as in Burma, birth years are celebrated ritually to ensure the longevity of the individual. In the north of Thailand, for example, there is a belief that 'depending on the year of the animal cycle in which one was born', certain acts of Buddhist piety including pilgrimage to a particular Buddhist shrine should be performed (Keyes 1975: 74). Certain Jataka tales used as sermons
and specific acts of merit-making, as well as specific poses of the Buddha, have also been associated with the twelve year animal cycle in Northern Thailand (Keyes 1975: 75).

Sometimes more general associations are made concerning the characteristics of the years according to their animal designation. One astrologer once mentioned a theory he had that each pii rakaa (year of the cock) had been the occasion of particularly significant events in Thai history.

The twelve year cycle can also be used for such rules of thumb as the rainfall expected in any year based on the number of naga which form part of the traditional songkraan New Year predictions mentioned above. Each of the years of the twelve-year cycle has different amounts of rain in each of the three parts (beginning, middle and end) of the year, with pii maseng (the year of the snake), for example, having only one naga (see Singto 2522: 661). In one popular version of this understanding, if there is more than one naga, the mythical serpents cannot be relied upon to control the rain responsibly, and the rainfall during the year will be not as desired (Sumalee 1971: 10); although astrological treatises do not appear to support this idea.

Months

Lunar rather than solar months form the basis of most divinatory prognostications as well as of many astrological calculations. Both certain months and certain days of each month are recognised to be either auspicious or inauspicious in themselves, and there a number of ways of reckoning and remembering some of these.

The division of lunar months into waxing and waning phases are further used to categorise the days of the month. When a day is reckoned as falling within the waxing or waning phase of the month it is commonly known as a wan thai (Thai day) or dithii talaat (lit.
market *dithii*). This may be distinguished from the more precise astronomical unit of the lunar day used by the astrologers (Thep 2519a: 173), since the astronomically calculated *dithii* does not exactly coincide with the dawn-to-dusk solar day of everyday experience. As far as auspicious activities are concerned, the *dithii* of the waxing phase are preferred to those of the waning phase (Phlu Luang 2528: 107). Each of the months is held to have a certain day of both the waxing and waning phases which should not be used for any propitious occasions under any circumstances. The fourth waxing or waning days of the third and six lunar months are among such days, being designated as *dithii mahaasuun* (Thep 2519a: 178). Other days are more specifically notable: no ceremonies concerning women or girls should be performed on the eleventh waxing or waning day of any month, while the sixth waxing or waning day of a month is good for opening a shop or travelling on business (Thep 2519a: 175; 180).

**Days**

The seven days of the week themselves are, of course, also attributed with certain characteristics based on the planetary deities which rule them and after which they are named, and there are a plethora of very well known beliefs associated with the meanings and activities prohibited or recommended for each of the days according to this system. Weddings are not favoured on Wednesdays, for example, since Mercury is a fluctuating and uncertain planet and therefore would not be a good ruling planet under which to commence an undertaking which should involve certainty and long-term security (Thep et al. 2521: 396). Also related to the astrological meaning of the day's ruling planetary deity is the belief that learning should always begin on a Thursday, the day of teachers and of study (attributed to Jupiter); and it is always on a Thursday that Thai schools and Universities will hold the mandatory teacher respect-paying day (*wan wai khruu*). I was also told that even today, in country areas parents will not send their children to school for the first time until this particular
day of the week even though, in common with their Western models
government schools usually start the new school year earlier in the
week.

The planets have even more general associations according to
their astrological characterisations, and this lends the days
general qualities such as inauspiciousness bestowed by the malefic
planets Saturn and Mars in the case of Saturday and Tuesday, or
auspiciousness on Sunday or Thursday as a result of the influence of
the Sun and Jupiter respectively. This sort of generalisation means
that anything of great moment would by preference be performed on a
Thursday or Sunday, and at least three of the great Thai capitals
were established on a Thursday for this reason (Phlu Luang 2519: 109),
while Bangkok was established on a Sunday.

The ruling planets of each day were formerly actively engaged
for support in human endeavours, with members of the élite often
wearing the colours associated with the ruling planets on each day
(Wales 1977: 143); and it is said that the soldiers of the Thai army
were especially careful always to enter battle dressed in the
colours appropriate to the day's deity (Segaller n.d.: 199). Segaller
reports that this concept of daily colour coordination was
recently revived in Bangkok, even if only as a fashion gimmick
(n.d.: 199). Each day also has a given direction which is
auspicious to be travelling in, and a direction which should be
avoided on that day in accordance with the directions ruled by each
of the planets (Thep et al. 2521: 624). In the traditional Thai
medical system the day of the week on which a child is born has
significance for the types of childhood diseases likely to affect
the infant (Mulholland 1987).

The day of the week on which an individual is born, of
course, also has implications for one's character, in a similar way
to the English notion that 'Monday's child is fair of face (etc.)'.
Thai children are frequently named according to the letters of the
alphabet\(^3\) which are considered auspicious for the day of their birth, and this system demonstrates the pervasiveness of the astrological relationship between the planets. A child born on Monday, for example, should be given a name which is spelt without vowels. The vowels are associated with the Sun and Sunday, and since the combination of the Sun and the Moon are astrologically speaking inauspicious, vowels must be avoided for children of the Moon's day (Segaller n.d.: 209).

In Central Thailand certain poses of the Buddha are related to the days of the week (see e.g. Thep et al. 2521: 97-104) where eight poses are used - Wednesday being divided into day and night - and on one's birthday the planetary deities can be worshipped in a combined Brahmanic and Buddhist ceremony where monks' blessings are obtained and the presiding Buddha image corresponds to that of the ruling planetary deity (Mekkhaphat et al. 2525: 195 ff.).

Most individuals are aware of the significance of some features of the day of their birth. Aspects of the astrological significance of the time of one's birth form part of the sense of identity which the individual can use both for his own reference and to communicate with others. In his auto-biographical account a prince recorded with some pride that he was born on a Saturday, just like his royal father and his father's brother the King, and in accordance with his father's hopes (Chula 1956: 63).

A bizarre extension of the use of a birthday as a form of individual representation and identification was evident during the period of the leadership cult fostered by Field Marshal Phibulsongkhram in his attempt to supply a focus for national attention and loyalty. The colour green, associated with Wednesday on which the Leader was born, became a popular national colour, while

\(^3\) In Cambodia, by contrast, the letters of the name are used in divination of such things as marriage partners or the direction in which one's house may be built. See Commission des Moeurs... 1958: 17.
throughout Government House the cock emblem of his birth year appeared everywhere: from carvings on the back of chairs to doors, windows and along the fences. Further, national flags fluttered everywhere on his birthday (Thamsook 1978: 237).

Other Units of Time

The day is further divided into conceptual units which have further consequences for activities or occurrences. *Yaam* are used to indicate the time of day in ordinary discourse, having a duration of three hours, although in Bangkok more precise timing is now favoured. Used astrologically they usually divide both the day and night into eight periods of one and a half hours in modern reckoning. Astrologers have a complex system whereby each of the *yaam* are ruled by different planets, varying for each day of the week (Thep 2519a: 151). A more popular system believed to be of Burmese origin which is easily represented diagrammatically and remembered is the *yaam ubaakoong*, which divides each day into five periods of varying degrees of auspiciousness (see Thep et al. 2521: 350-351), especially for such things as travelling from home.

Another unit of time of prime importance in terms of understanding states of auspiciousness in the day is the *roek*. Astrologically defined *roek* are derived from the calculation of the time during which the moon passes through each of the twenty-seven lunar mansions (*nakasat*). It completes this cycle every lunar month. Some of these *roek* are associated with generally favourable conditions for human undertakings, while some, because they are calculated to cross the boundaries of zodiac signs and elements associated with these, are less favourable (Thep 2519a: 16-18). Each of the twenty-seven mansions has certain meaning. For example one mansion is linked with unrest, and the events of the student-led overthrow of 14 October 1973 and the activities which led to the dethronement of King Taksin of Thonburi have both been observed to have taken place under its influence (Osthi 2524: 46).
Roek is also the term for the times of auspiciousness which a client will consult an astrologer for before commencing any task of importance, and the precise moments for commencement may be calculated down to the exact minute by the astrologer. When the astrologer does a series of much more detailed calculations and cross-checks for a specified occasion, he must ensure that the inauspicious time forbidden for ceremonies (of the moon's passing through a certain portion of the lunar mansion) is avoided (see Thep 2519a: 143).

In common astrological usage the twenty-seven lunar mansions can be reduced to nine groups of three (roek yai), which are generally appropriate for specific activities. The first of these, thalitthoroek, for example, is not a very good group of roek, being associated with hardship in life, but it is suitable for asking for a woman's hand in marriage or for calling in debts. Similarly the group known as phuupalororoek is good for commencing the building of a house or establishing a city; any theesaatriiroek is advisable for opening commercial or entertainment establishments and brothels; while the highly favourable mabattbanooroek and theewiiroroek are suitable for any auspicious activity (Singto 2522: 395-397).

The roek are often recorded on birth horoscopes, as they convey the basic tendencies of character of the person born in their duration. The moment chosen for a particular activity is also often recorded in terms of time. The moment chosen for laying the foundations of or opening a building or the commencement of a state ceremony, for example, is often to be found in even the very early historical chronicles since the auspicious time at which an activity is commenced is an intrinsic part of the undertaking.

The smaller astronomically calculated Thai divisions of time within the day, most of which seem to have been in use into the nineteenth century, no longer appear to be used in Bangkok, having
been replaced by the hours and minutes of the western astronomically-based timepiece (Caroen 2524: 10821).

**Knowing the Calendar**

It can be seen therefore that all of the major time periods in use are associated with particular forms of auspiciousness and inauspiciousness either for general activity or for the undertaking of specific tasks, and each commencement of a period of time, whether it be a new year, a new day or even hour, has quite different characteristics from the one that preceded it. In this sense the calendar does indeed tell more about what kind of time it is than what time it is (Geertz in Davis 1976: 15).

Some of these cycles are well known to all and can be abided by without reference to any knowledgeable source: barbershops often do not open on Wednesdays, for example, because of the common knowledge that hair should not be cut on that day; and the different periods of the day associated with *yaam ubaakoong* can be memorised or checked by reference to a simple diagram if the individual so chooses. It is clear, however, from the plethora of rules and proscriptions, that any undertaking of importance requires more than the observance of rules of thumb, and it is here that an expert or at least a yearly calendar of some complexity should be consulted to be sure of success. This is particularly true for city-dwellers in Bangkok, where the western calendar rules the time-consciousness of many with its solar reckoning of days and months, and where most do not memorise the more complex rules of the lunar years and months and are not aware of the date according to this time-reckoning without reference to a calendar.

There are a number of sources of information available at the beginning of each year which vary in complexity and accessibility to the layman. These range from small pamphlets detailing diverse aspects of life for the individual for the year (often specified by
year of birth) available for a minimal price at roadside stalls, to
the general ephemerides compiled by astrologers, and sometimes
designed for use by specialist and layman alike.

The issuing of the yearly calendar has long been an
established necessity, as we have seen, and given the lack of
uniformity between versions of the lunar calendar authority was
formerly the sole prerogative of the court, even though the
calculations of the royal astrologers were not always universally
accepted (Boriraksawetchakan 2511: 80-81). The information compiled
for the beginning of each solar year (i.e. that issued for
songkraan) was formerly quite involved, as the increasingly lengthy
announcements by King Mongkut (r. 1851 - 1868) show. One example of
such a calendar issued to the public by this king, himself an
eminent astrologer, will illustrate the complex interdependence of
the calculation of times for the year and the implications this has
for the activities to be carried out. Since Mongkut himself took
such a keen interest in these matters, it cannot be assumed that the
length and detail of the example were typical of all such royal
announcements in the past, but it does serve to illustrate the
concerns of the élite with the role of the calendar in organising
affairs in the capital at that time. The example is the songkraan
announcement of BE 2405 (April 1862).

The announcement commences, as always, with the date on which
songkraan will fall, and the precise time at which the sun will
begin to move into the zodiac sign of Aries, followed by the dates
of the wan naw, on this occasion two days, and the following day of
wan thaloengsok. This announcement includes a brief explanation of
why this period will last four days instead of the usual three.4
This explanation appears necessary to prevent any excitement or

4 Sathienkoses explains that this largely has to do with the fact that while
the common Thai definition of a day is from sunrise to sunrise, the astrological
texts use midnight as the commencement of the new day (2506: 11-12) and thus if the
sun's final transition is after midnight there are four days counted.
speculation among the people (Phracomklaw 2511 Vol 2: 1-2). Mongkut did not formally announce the mount of the songkraan angel, nor her attitude and what she held, preferring instead to suggest to those who wanted to know these details that they come to the Royal Palace to see for themselves.

The announcement then specifies the exact dates on which changes to the way the year should be designated occur, so that it was quite clear on which days the new animal year (pii naksat) and cunlasakkaraat commenced. This was followed by the announcement of the dates on which the major royal ceremonies were to take place in the coming year, including the Oath of Allegiance and Ploughing ceremonies, and the usual day for several of the Brahmanic rituals performed under the auspices of the court (2511 Vol 2: 2).

The main auspicious and inauspicious days of the week for the year are then recorded and the public reminded that this year Saturday as wan thongchai is good, while Friday is both wan ubaat, and wan lookaawinaat, and therefore not to be used for auspicious activities. The dates for major Buddhist festivals, and the exceptions to the usual run of Buddhist holy days (as well as the year's usual holy days) are specified, with encouragement to the people to observe them as best suits their faith (2511 Vol 2: 3-5). The days and times at which the sun will be moving into new signs of the zodiac are also enumerated clearly, so that all of them can be avoided for auspicious activities (2511 Vol 2: 5), and this is then followed by the list of days on which there will be eclipses of the sun and moon, with Mongkut showing a new skill in detailing several eclipses which will occur but not be seen in Thailand. With regard to these Mongkut advised that those who were looking for auspicious times and felt that days close to an eclipse were inauspicious could avoid those days. The areas where one solar eclipse would be seen were specified for the whole kingdom (2511 Vol 2: 6-7), before Mongkut launched into a Buddhist sermon on life, age, death, and the
advisability of making merit (2511 Vol 2: 7-10), a favourite conclusion to his New Year announcements.

Comparison with the prolegomena of modern astrological ephemerides reveals provision of very similar information, although publication of detailed day-by-day 'diaries' necessarily enables much more detail concerning the auspicious and inauspicious times (roek) during each day, and this has become a major feature of the modern do-it-yourself ephemeris. One of the most popular of such annual ephemerides (patithin), that of Thongcûa Angkaew, has usually sold out in Bangkok well before the new year has started. Based on the Khamphii Suriyaat (or suriyayaat), the classic Thai text on the calculation of the calendar, the diary specifies the dates of the songkraan day and the new year; the presence or absence of intercalated days and months; the songkraan angel and the things she carries; the annual predictions for rainfall, water and food, as well as specifications of the Thai calculations of the roek system; and the main auspicious and inauspicious periods: the days of the week, yaaam, zodiac signs, ditbii, and roek which are numerologically calculated to be either auspicious (thongchai, and athibodii) or inauspicious (ubaat and lookaawinaat) for the coming year. Many explanations are included in the introduction, and the day-to-day specifications remind the reader of the conditions applying for each part of the day, together with a horoscope of the position of the planets for that day (e.g. Thongcûa n.d.).

There are several versions of such detailed almanacs published each year by astrologers. Many of these are doubtless purchased by the moo duu who will be consulted about such matters by their clients, but even for those with less expert understanding of the astrological system such diaries contain the necessary information of each day's strengths and weaknesses, and the appropriate and forbidden times for the conduct of ceremonies. The Astrological Association of Thailand also publishes monthly calendars in its journal, and the commencement of the former solar
year after *songkraan* is marked by the commencement of the new volume number in April. When the association's calculations do not agree with those issued by the palace, the journal duly notifies the readers of this and recommends that its calendar be used for predictive purposes only (e.g. see the November issue of *Phayaakornsaan*, for 2511). In Bangkok one section of the population which maintains much closer links with the lunar calendar is the monks, and this doubtless makes them more expert in knowledge of the times used in divination than many more secularly oriented laymen.

Non-annual manuals of calculation of a more varied type, such as the ubiquitous *Phrommacaat*, are more useful for a wider range of types of divination which include some calendrical and folk astrological calculations together with divination according to dreams and other omens, and these make popular general references for those without much knowledge of the system of astrological times utilised by the more sophisticated.

**Temporal Cycles**

The system of rules for the calculation of auspicious and inauspicious times constitute a series of cycles of differing lengths, and thus irregular patterns develop within larger cycles. There are several notable features of this apparently cyclical structuring of time of importance to this analysis.

The major intervals of time which, as we have seen, all carry connotations for the outcome of activities commenced within their duration, all follow each other with a high degree of regularity. Each of the cycles repeated have their own logic of succession and spheres of influence. Each of the days of the week, for example, helps dictate the character of the people born on that day; establishes what the best and worst activities for the day are; provides spatial directions which are propitious and those that should be avoided; serves as a guide to those born on days of
favourable relation to the day and those born on an 'enemy' day of
the week; and sets the pattern as to what the most auspicious hours
during that day will be, among other things.

The cycles of different intervals, however, inevitably
overlap in terms of the significance they have for human lives. The
year of the animal cycle in which one is born influences one's basic
character; but then so does the birth day; and an auspicious day may
be more or less so depending on whether it occurs in the waxing or
the waning phase of the lunar month. The cycles are not independent
of each other in spheres of influence, therefore, and the nature of
any particular time unit always has to take into account its
relation to the other cycles, making the relevance of any one time
interval to a particular instant or action only partial.

Nor are the units of a cycle really simply repeated over the
short term since this is prevented by the complex overlapping of so
many cycles. An ordinary Thursday with its generally benefic
characteristics, for example, will be 'standard' in one week, but
then may become inauspicious for some activities because it falls on
the fifth waxing day of the month; and again inauspicious in quite
different ways when it falls on the twelfth waxing day the following
week; and it will in some years be proscribed totally, since it is
calculated to be *wan ubaat* (day of misfortune) or *wan lookaawinaat*
(day of universal destruction). Its significance within the week is
thereby modified.

The complexity of the overlapping of the cycles renders easy
assumptions concerning the nature of a particular time unwise, and
tends to so complicate the factors needing to be taken into account
that although the ostensible regularity is apparent in the rules, in
fact any cause for apprehension and uncertainty is not easily
overcome by reference to only a few simple calculations. The man-
made measures of qualitative time are so intricately overlaid that
they belie the everyday measure of time passing. Moreover what
Leach has claimed with regard to astrology could also be applied to the Thai astrological system of time-reckoning: 'the logic ... is not one of extreme fatalism, but rather that you can never be sure what the stars are going to get up to next' (1961: 133). As Davis has pointed out (1976: 22), the overlapping nature of the cycles of time employed provides a multitude of explanations for the failure of a venture, as well as a certain amount of flexibility in determining the choice of an appropriate time for an undertaking. In Bangkok, where the ordinary person is much less given to remembering formulas for the calculation of good and bad times - other than the most simple - than appears to be the case in the rural areas of the north studied by Davis (1976, 1984) and Tannenbaum (1984), this increases the dependence on a specialist who has the formulas at his command - either memorised or able to be consulted. For important activities, therefore, it is much more desirable to consult a specialist who will provide a reliable time free from inauspicious temporal overlaps.5

Cycles of time provide two sorts of vital information: the interval concerned during which an event takes place; and the time between intervals, often conceived of as being liminal and therefore dangerous. Many transitional phases in the cycles mentioned above have such a quality of change between states that they are times during which caution should be exercised. The rising and setting of the sun, for example, should not be slept through. In Thai popular reckoning dawn is the actual start of the new day, and formerly this was marked by a gun fired at sunrise to provide the signal for the opening of the palace doors, while a drum beat announced the closing of the city gates at the setting of the sun (Caroen 2524: 10723).

5 Wales (1981: vii-ix), basing his claim on the views of one or two individuals, argues that most Thai prefer the simple tabulations and divinatory schemes available to the householder, only consulting an astrologer for occasions such as weddings. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to demonstrate otherwise, although his view is undoubtedly oversimplified. However it should be pointed out that the view of astrology explored here is my interpretation of the logic of the system as it is explained by astrological experts rather than by lay observers.
The period associated with the change of year is also considered inauspicious. The first two periods of this time, as we have seen, are considered inauspicious, and the predictions associated with the days of \textit{wan songkraan} and \textit{wan naw} are accordingly ominous. Thep explains that the reason for the ill-omened nature of these days is that the sun, while entering the zodiacal sign of Aries, is on the margins of the sign on these days, and thus still also in the sign of Pisces, a sign of the element water, while Aries is the sign dominated by the fire element at its strongest. The combination of these phases is inauspicious, and only ameliorated when the sun finally has fully left the sign of Pisces on the day of the new year, \textit{wan thaloengsok}. Indeed, each of the occasions on which the sun moves to a new zodiacal sign has the implication that the days on which the sun crosses the borders between two signs are unsuitable for any auspicious occasion (Thep 2519a: 183).

Similarly those \textit{roek} which lie over two signs of the zodiac, and hence are subject to the influences of the two different elements of the two signs, are considered less auspicious, or even inauspicious, in comparison to those which are contained within one sign of the zodiac (Thep 2519a: 16-18). The last day of the lunar month on which the moon is dark (\textit{aaaaawasii}) is also considered a day on which auspicious activities should not be undertaken (Thep 2519a: 183). Potentially auspicious time only commences on the day of the new month and the commencement of the moon's waxing phase.

The fact that the transitions between specific types of intervals are considered inauspicious reinforces the idea that the intervals themselves should be noted and treated as times with special qualities all their own. The times between intervals, when the qualities are in flux and may involve disparate or even conflicting influences acting upon the moment, are dangerous and to be avoided until the new interval establishes itself and the powers
associated with the interval are installed in an unequivocal way. As Leach has pointed out, the ambiguity of the artificial boundaries of the natural continuity of time creates a source of anxiety relating to the 'no man's land' between established intervals (1976: 34). The ability to locate any specific moment within an appropriate interval is therefore of considerable importance, and the simultaneous position of any interval in several overlapping cycles needs to be carefully evaluated if action is to be taken. If action taken at what appears to be an appropriate time does not result in the hoped-for success, further investigation may reveal that according to an ignored temporal sequence the time was actually ill-advised for the undertaking.

Ultimately, choices have to be made concerning which kind of temporal sequence is to be selected as primary. Sometimes this decision is based on the nature of the activity itself, while at others it may be based on a specialist's favourite formula for selecting priorities and assigning more importance to one kind of timing. In effect selection must be applied according to the situation in order to employ knowledge of the qualities of time, and interpretation will be based on the circumstances of the case.

While the discussion has been phrased here as concerning temporal cycles, it should not be assumed that the Thai are being depicted as subscribing to a purely 'cyclical' non-linear view of time. It has already been argued that the overlapping nature of the cycles of intervals mentioned here forms a complex pattern and the effect of this is such that with the return to the beginning of one particular cycle there is rarely a return to a logical point in time (where the same point in a cycle is reached again) - and never to a temporal one (where the same point in [linear] time is reached again) (cf. Howe 1981: 231) - since only over the long term do any particular combinations of cycles return to the beginning together. One Thai New Year's day is not confused with the previous year's (any more than it is anywhere else for that matter): even though it
is the recommencement of the annual cycle it is another year's commencement. The similarity between New Year's days is attenuated since this year's day would be a different day of the week than last year's, would involve a different year of the animal cycle, and so on.

The similarities of repetition within the one cycle are therefore countered by the dissimilarities in the others when the qualitative attributes of the cycles are taken into account. The intervals of time required for disparate cycles to return to any given point of conjunction are so long that they rarely form a part of the conscious sense of a return to a particular starting point. In this the Thai astrological sense of time is very similar to that described for the Balinese by Geertz (except perhaps that the Balinese cycles may be rather shorter on the whole), and on which he based his assertion that the Balinese discount the durational flow of time (1975: 392-393). On the other hand the fact that transitional points between intervals are to be avoided accentuates the dependence of an interval on the cycle of which it is part for the very meaning it has. The sequence of which the intervals are a part are thereby also of importance, heightening the linear experience of the cycles as well as the singularity of the time interval.

Moreover, when the qualitative aspects of time are not of paramount importance the normal lived experience of time is, for want of a better term, a durational one. Like Howe, therefore, I would conclude from consideration of the Thai calendrical system that duration, the lived experience of time, is 'neither wholly cyclical nor completely linear' (1981: 232), but a combination of both.

Further, cyclical and linear concepts of time are not simply compatible; they are mutually complementary, for while Geertz argues that the Balinese calendar sets one's actions, this is only part of
the story for the Thai case. The consideration of the particular significance of a given day may determine action to some extent: it may prevent one from setting out on a journey if this is proscribed, for example. Yet the need for the consideration of the practical and/or religious significance of the day does not determine all one's activities, nor does it prescribe all the considerations which may arise out of both planned and unplanned events. If a stranger comes to the door whose business one does not know, the fact that it is already after eleven a.m. and therefore a certain *yaam* becomes relevant to one's course of action. Similarly, if a period of illness persists, or when a certain advanced age is reached, a life-prolonging ceremony may be decided upon to be held on that person's birthday. When a child reaches a certain educational stage, it is appropriate to see what her horoscope indicates a suitable future career might be, and so on. In other words experience of durational time and its consequences also determines the resort to employment of the 'cyclical', qualitative time concepts, and the latter would not be effective without the sense of development, growth, duration and progress derived from biological and social processes of a directly linear kind.

It is clear from the foregoing that the quality of time is an intrinsic part of the experience of time, and that this lends to whatever interval of time that is considered an active role. As Howe has argued from the Balinese case,

> Whereas in the West time is a passive construct-events take place in time - in Bali the reverse is the case - time seems to cause things to happen.

(1981: 233 fn. 5)

It is because of this aspect of time that the calendar is not necessarily just reproduced, but, in Thailand, it has on occasion been actively redefined or perceived to be controlled in ways which have direct consequences for those guided by it.

In what follows it will be seen that changes or perceived irregularities in the delineation of time in the calendar is a cause
of concern, and that it can also be used to attempt to emphasise certain intervals over others in order to clarify or qualify the nature of time at a particular stage. The manipulation of a society's calendar in this way is of considerable potential political significance.

**Temporal Cycles in History**

One of the ideas influential in the notion of eras on a grand scale stems from Buddhism itself. Thai Buddhists of the nineteenth century are said to have been heavily influenced by the notion of the disappearance of Buddhism within five thousand years, a prediction sometimes regarded as having been announced by the Buddha himself. This prediction involved the idea that the Dhamma would disappear within a specified time, a period which had by then elapsed. However in the Thai view the deleterious effects of this period had been averted partly by the diligence of the Thai monarchs as prime supporters of both the sangha members as transmitters of the doctrine and of the texts of Buddhism themselves, new recensions of which often formed part of the restorative and reformative acts of Siamese kings. As Reynolds has pointed out, against the background of evidence of the erosion of the religion the vigilance of the monarchs involved their 'work[ing] against time' (1973a: 273) to halt the process begun since the lifetime of the last Buddha of the gradual deterioration of the Dhamma.

A more direct example of the effect of this kind of thinking can be seen in the decision of King Prasaat Thong of Ayutthaya to change the calendar when, in the year one thousand of the era-reckoning then in use, he tried to avoid the onset of what he perceived as the kaliyuga (dark age) by changing the sequence of the new animal year, reinforcing the change with ceremony (Vickery 1984: 43). The introduction of new eras has also been employed in Burmese history by kings anxious to avoid prophesied calamities (Shway Yoe 1910: 549).
Another reason for the introduction of new eras has been the accession to the throne of new lines of succession. There is some evidence that this was the motivation for the introduction of the mahaasakkaraat in India, and the usurpation of Pagan in Burma was also accompanied by the introduction of a new era in 639 A.D. (Shway Yoe 1910: 549). In Thailand the current dynasty also has seen the introduction of a new era commemorating its inception, although this was not done at the time of the establishment of the line. When King Chulalongkorn announced the new New Year's day which was to start on the first of April rather than sometime in the middle of the month, he named the new era of rattanakoosinsakkaraat in commemoration of the time at which the founding member of the dynasty moved the capital to its new location more than a century previously (Cabaton 1958: 135). Each new year thenceforth marked a further year in the rule of the dynasty. It has been noted that this celebration commenced with the new era having the highly auspicious number of one hundred and eight (astrologically the sum total of the numerical 'strengths' of the eight planets) (Khru Kaew 2511: 47). After the abolition of the system of absolute monarchy, and in order to create a sense of newness in the country's self-perception, Phibulsongkhram's Cultural Mandates included another amendment of the Thai calendar to bring the New Year's day in line with the international practice of its observance on January 1, as well introducing a new name for the country (Thamsook 1978: 235). An even more drastic anti-historical stress on a break with the past was signalled by the Khmer Rouge adoption of their first year of power as the country's 'year zero' in neighbouring Kampuchea.

In general, however, the rulers of Siam appear to have been happy to fit in with the existing time structures as they found them. The Bangkok perspective on Thai history creates retrospective eras of its own, emphasising the major periods of the kingdom's history by reference to the capitals established and occupied by the royal houses whom the present dynasty recognises as in some sense
its forebears in the development of the modern Thai kingdom. It is doubtful whether the early kingdom of Sukhothai had an astrologically calculated 'birthday'; but the horoscope of the founding date of the kingdom of Ayutthaya remains recorded today as establishing the basic characteristics of the fate of the kingdom and continues to be the subject of analysis as such by astrologers.

Kings succeeded to or usurped the throne to become monarchs in a kingdom whose basic fate was established by the first king and was known and analysable from the characteristics of the foundation as an astrologically significant moment. The changing trends in the history of the kingdom could be gauged as different years and planetary influences succeeded each other, providing the flux of varying fortunes as good years followed bad, and as cyclical influences such as those of the planets combined with the influences dominant at the founding of the capital to produce good or ill effect. In this sense, there was a temporal continuity which belied the usurpations of the lineages of kings.6

However individual kings also had some effect on the fate of the kingdom, so inextricably entwined were the fates of the king and the nation of which he was absolute ruler considered to be. The ceremonies accompanying the accession of a new monarch to the throne, therefore, indicated the belief that 'a new reign was ... regarded as an occasion for the regeneration of the kingdom' (Wales 1977: 147). Each new king brought to the country the influence of his own horoscope, which then became another source of influence in relation to the horoscope of the nation, and depending on the compatibility of the two, his reign was potentially auspicious or requiring of adjustment to ensure maximum security of the kingdom and the monarch. Indeed, a king's power could ultimately only be

6 See, for example, Somkiat's argument concerning the lack of distinction between other Ayutthayan kings and the 'Ban Phlu Luang dynasty' until quite late in the Bangkok era, when the need to find causes for Ayutthaya's downfall led to concentration on the legitimacy of certain accessions (1986: 152).
demonstrated by what he could achieve during his own time as ruler: a reign and its ruler were indistinguishable (O'Connor 1987: 17). The reign of King Mongkut, the fourth of the present dynasty, was one case where the king himself took measures to enhance the security of his reign by promoting his brother as a second king, ostensibly in order to complement his own less fortunate horoscope's relation to the horoscope of his capital (Damrong 2514: 112-113). As long ago as the founding of Sawankhalok, the man chosen as the first ruler was reported to have been selected as monarch at least in part as a result of his knowledge of astrology (Charnvit 1976: 44). It is not difficult to see why a knowledge of astrology was perceived to be a positive benefit as a quality in a monarch (Somchai 2519: 12), and the more recent case of King Mongkut in the mid-nineteenth century is still raised as an example of the felicitousness of this combination (e.g. Phlu Luang 2511; Singto 2522: (6)).

**The Impact of Calendrical Changes**

If the dynastic establishment of a capital sets up the framework for one era, there are other kinds of cycles within the history of a capital. The case of Bangkok will be discussed more fully in Chapter Six, but by way of example a simple instance can be mentioned here. In 1982, the year of the bicentennial celebration of the founding of Bangkok, one astrologer discussed a theory he had concerning upheavals in the government of the country every fifty years since the founding of Bangkok. The first and second of these occurred in the nineteenth century, fifty and one hundred years after the founding. The third, of course, was the end of the absolute monarchy with the Revolution of June 1932, and he predicted on the basis of these three incidents that there would be another upheaval of some kind in the then two-hundredth year of the Bangkok era.

The strategy adopted by this astrologer illustrates the importance attached to the intervals of time used by astrologers in
their interpretation of timing. When the end of the year by the calendar (BE 2525: 1982 AD) passed without incident, the astrologer reaffirmed his prediction for some months by arguing that at the time of the founding of the current dynasty, and indeed of the two subsequent incidents, the year in use had been that commencing with wan thaloengsok after songkraan in mid-April. He thereby maintained that the incident which he predicted could occur within the bounds of his original forecast anytime before the change of the old solar year in April 1983. Only after this date had also passed was the prediction discarded.

In order to make predictions of reasonably accurate timing, the intervals of time used by forecasters need to be recognised and consistent. This need partly explains an intense debate which appeared in the journal of the Astrological Association of Thailand and ran over a period of some two years from 1967 to 1969. The argument concerned the identification of the 'Thai New Year', the day on which the Thais had traditionally held the new year to begin. The evidence involved numerous references to historical works, ranging from inscriptions to laws, historical records and even literary works to establish the day on which the year had been considered to change from one year to another - the evidence for which was sometimes unsatisfactorily resolved - but the terms of reference in which the debate was carried out is instructive as to why the readers of the journal found this such an important point.

The debate started as an attempt to establish when the original Thai lunar new year occurred when one author asked whether the new pii naksat or animal year commenced on wan songkraan, wan thaloengsok, or the first of April, or whether it was the first day of the waxing moon in the fifth lunar month; concluding that the latter must be correct since it followed wan trut which the dictionary defines as the celebration of the end of the year (Akkhara in Thep Karaket 2511: 1). Contrary to this, Thep Karaket put forward the suggestion that the first day of the waning phase of
the first month would have been the new year of the lunar calendar, and in part cited dates mentioned in a third reign niraat (poetic travelogue) of Sunthorn Phu and checked against a calendar to support this view. He also used as an authoritative source the Royal Calendar published for distribution by the king to commemorate Cakkri Day which shows the new lunar year starting at this time, and which, as he pointed out, is understood to be drawn up by the royal astrologers (2511: 4).

A local government official naming himself "Khru Kaew" also argued that the first lunar month must be the month during which the old Thai New Year was held, citing some of the same evidence which Thep had used, (although not referring to the earlier author), but suggesting that the day concerned was the first day of the waxing phase of the first month. This original day, he claimed, was used before the introduction of sakkaraat of various kinds confused the issue and led to the original day being forgotten since it did not correspond to the commencing days of the new eras (2511: 46). This argument presented the idea that the change of the new year to the fifth month probably only started in the fifth reign of the current dynasty when the rattanakoosinsakkaraat was introduced, and the commencing date for this was officially determined as the first day of April, or the day 'close to the birthday or day of establishment of Bangkok', later abandoned in the sixth reign (2511: 47). This author also cited a number of astrological works based on calculations according to the year, month and day of birth, pointing out that these usually use the first lunar month as the start of the new year, and arguing that an exception to this was a self-confessed idiosyncratic departure from the usual works of this kind (2511: 47-48).

A physician entered the discussion by arguing for the fifth month as the occasion of the lunar new year. In his second article on the subject, written in response to Khru Kaew's article, Uthai contested the latter's use of the discussion by King Chulalongkorn
in his *Phraraatchaphithii sib soong ddan* (The Royal Ceremonies of the Twelve Months). The subject of the Thai new year is something that had occupied both King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn in the second half of the nineteenth century, and both had written accounts of what the evidence seemed to indicate about the identification of the original new year, accounts which Uthai treated in some detail to clarify what he saw as the shortfalls of Khru Kaew's use of them. He also used historical documents ranging from the Thonburi period to the second reign of the Bangkok period to illustrate that in these there is consistent evidence to show that the new animal year was considered to commence in the fifth month and not the first (2511: 1-4).

He quoted from the new year pronouncements issued by King Mongkut, in which details of the official designation of years were laid down (for the years BE 2404-2406: 1861-1863 AD), which all informed the population that from the first day of the waxing phase of the fifth month the year is to be known by the new name of the animal cycle, and announced the subsequent date in each year on which the new *cunlasakkaraat* year should be changed. Uthai then reminded his audience that Mongkut was an expert in astrology, so that it need not be said that this was a law of the monarchical system, merely the announcement of a respected astrological teacher (*borommakhruu hooraacaan*) (2511: 5-6). Satisfied that he had established the use of the fifth month as the start of the new year for at least two hundred years, the author welcomed evidence to be submitted to the journal by any reader who could show that five or six hundred years ago (i.e. in Sukhothai) the first month was used.

Uthai also addressed the question of the Royal Calendar, arguing that if one looks at any of the Royal Calendars presented to officials who had offered their blessing to the king at the New Year for the sixth reign and the seventh reign, particularly before 1933, without exception they provided the lunar year for comparison by using the first waxing day of the fifth month as the beginning of
the new animal year. On this basis he argued that, far from the current royal calendar showing a tradition lasting from ancient times, those who draw it up are establishing a new custom for astrologers. To change the day on which the animal year starts, he went on, would require a law to be passed by the House of the People's Representatives, as was the case with the law announcing the first of January as the start of the new phutthasakkaraat in BE 2483 (1940). He therefore challenged readers to supply the documents showing that the House of the People's Representatives had passed a bill that would announce the commencement of the animal year with the first month (2511: 7).

This article concluded that the evidence of Sunthorn Phu and La Loubère showed that the matter of the commencement of the animal years had been a very confused one for a long time, and that in spite of the decreed stipulations of King Mongkut which had lasted a further three reigns, at the moment there was the possibility of confusion yet again (2511: 8).

Khru Kaew's rejoinder to this argument a few months later illustrates the issues which this author feels to be at stake more clearly than his previous article. While apparently accepting the evidence of Dr. Uthai (2512: 11), he reiterated some of the material used previously, citing the reasons provided for the original decision to change the start of the official phutthasakkaraat year to the first of January in 1940. While this decree ostensibly brought the Thai year into line with that of the Gregorian calendar used in the Western world, a change which was introduced immediately after the (since then controversial) decision to change the name of the country from Siam to Thailand (Suraphong 1978: 29-30), the well-known justifications for this change are indeed interesting for the ostensible restoration of a lost continuity with the past which they imply. Khru Kaew summarised them as follows:

1. From history the learned men have found that various nations of Southeast Asia, including the ancient Thais, had held a day between the twenty-first
of December and the first of January as the New Year day, and that day was the first waning day of dān aai or the first (lunar) month.

2. According to astronomy there are two bases for the New Year's day of the lunar calendar. According to the ... solstice, where the day occurs at the end of December around the twenty first, New Year will fall in the first month and Thailand had used this formerly, which is why it can be seen that we call the first month dān aai, followed by dān yīi (second month), third month, fourth month, and so on.

3. Ancient India used to hold the first of January to be the New Year, and later it was changed to the month of cittramaat or the fifth month as the beginning of the year. This was the case in Northern India because in that region this month had the best climate.

(2512: 11-12)

Khru Kaew cited these three points as evidence that the Thai once used the first month for the New Year, going on to argue that documentation for this usage in the Ayutthayan period may not be retrievable after the devastation of that capital (2512: 11-12). He questioned the evidence of the document from the Thonburi period which Uthai had produced by questioning whether they used it correctly according to ancient Thai custom or not. He urged the audience to consider whether it might be that, if the Thais used the fifth month as the start of the animal year there would be no need at all for Rama IV to waste time announcing the enforcement of the fifth month as the start; and when he announced that in so many consecutive years, why did Rama V have to have another royal decree in BE 2431 (1888 AD) that the fifth month was to be used as the start of the year from the following year onwards? His answer to this rhetorical question was that to use the fifth month was 'against the will of the Thai' (lūncaī thai),7 and the Thais were

7 S. Phlainoi also asserts that there was a disjunction between the court and the people in the calculation of the new year, arguing that while the Thai common people (chaaw baam) celebrated their New Year at songkran, the government of the fourth and fifth reigns used the change of the pīi naksat in the fifth month for this occasion (2519: 15). Whatever the case, as far as festivities went the lack of agreement does not seem to have been too oppressive for the people, for on one
wont to revert to their old way which was suited to the conditions of their local climate. With the Indians, northerners went back to the fifth month to suit their geography and weather, but since the Thais did not have the same conditions why would they follow them? The author attributed this change to the influence of adopted religion, writing (aksornrasaat), literature, saiyasat, booraasaat, and so on, all of which had led some Thais to forget their first month (2512: 15).

The final reasoning in Khru Kaew's argument returned to astrological themes. In the week there are seven days counted from Sunday as the first, but nobody starts from Thursday, the fifth day, as the beginning of the week. Similarly, one does not start the year with the fifth month, nor even the animal year cycle from the fifth year. Moreover, even Mongkut, who announced by royal decree the use of the fifth month for the beginning of the year, in his own divinatory text, *Taaraa Set Phracoaklaw*, used the first month as the start of the year.

Khru Kaew rejected Uthai's interpretation that the authors of the current Royal Calendar are starting a new tradition by stating that when astrologers have their freedom, they are likely to show the true values of their knowledge (*khunwichaa*). That would mean the first month was the beginning of the year as it was originally because in this democratic age nobody can force others (2512: 15).

There was another reply to Khru Kaew's second article, this time by O. Thonburi. The title "The *dhan aai* which Thais Should Forget" makes clear his opposition to Khru Kaew's position, and in the course of the article he questioned the accuracy of La Loubère's occasion an edict issued by King Mongkut pointed out that from respect for custom 'observed from time immemorial', celebration of both solar and lunar New Years resulted in a total of eleven days of celebrations each year with 'countless cases of drunken brawl, assault, battery and mayhem occurring ... [which were] beyond the power of the Nai Amphur and the police to cope with' (cited in Seni 1950: 52-53).
report given the Frenchman's short stay in the country, and produced further evidence from chronicles written during the Ayutthayan period to disprove Khru Kaew's argument concerning the historical use of the first month as the commencement of the new year (2512: 3-5). The author shared one concern with Khru Kaew, however, in that he found the issue of the real New Year worthy of consideration because of the implications it has for the usefulness of astrological texts. In this case the text referred to is the famous classic by a prince born before the establishment of Bangkok and who died during the second reign, in which the royal author specifies the fifth month as the time suitable for judging the New Year to be counted from (2512: 3).

In assessing the significance of this debate we need not be concerned with the accuracy of the reporting of the evidence, nor the skill and consistency with which the contributors put forward their views of the evidence, for in a sense this debate is not just a historical debate about the facts of what has transpired in the past but about appropriateness, and the foundations on which that appropriateness should be based. Both Khru Kaew and O. Thonburi see as a valid part of their concern the implications the delimitation of the years has for the accuracy and validity of the texts used by astrologers. Indeed, it is likely that all of the contributors feel that the journal of an astrological association is the appropriate place for a discussion of this type, precisely because the correctness of the interpretation of the calendar is the proper concern of astrologers. Moreover both of the last-named authors suggest that the calendrical divisions of astrologers are as valid as those in the historical documents, even though only O. Thonburi suggests that there is no conflict between the royal astrologers and other recorders based on the astrologers' records.

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8 Thep Sarikabutr (2517) later also based his discussion of the fifth month and the New Year on the contents of this renowned work.
The other theme of the debate, of course, concerns not the content of the records themselves, but their authority. While Uthai upholds the correctness of the royal writings as the work of careful historians and scholars, he is also careful to use the authority of Mongkut's special knowledge as an astrologer; yet Khru Kaew's argument suggests that the foreign-inspired learning followed by the court has led to decisions not only against the inclinations of the Thai people, but also against the conditions which shape their experience of time and its relation to the natural world. This he finds confirmed in the contradiction between Mongkut's view of the official calendar and his use of units of time in his astrological work. Khru Kaew's rejection of the edicts of the past do not stem simply from the kind of anti-Brahmanical sentiments which, as we have seen in a previous chapter, are an established way of denigrating astrology and related beliefs, for his argument affirms rather than rejects the validity of these beliefs for the general Thai experience. Indeed, Khru Kaew affirmed a Thai astrological experience of time which is partly independent of some of its own literary sources as it is of royal control — especially to the extent that royal control over the calendar is heavily influenced by the Brahmanic tradition.

We can see, therefore, that the astrological view of the calendar is not separable from the view of the kind of political control which has been exercised over that calendar. Khru Kaew's argument that under democratic conditions (without the arbitrary elitist imposition of foreign influences) Thai astrology becomes truer to itself, and Uthai's implication that correct regulation of time was best seen under the educated standards observed by the absolute monarchy also makes this connection quite clear.

The dependence of correct Thai astrology on an appropriate calendrical basis is an ongoing concern for astrologers, as a more recent public lecture to the Astrological Association of Thailand shows. In an address comparing the two main kinds of ephemeris
currently in use by Thai astrologers, the speaker used the occasion to promote what he sees as the true Thai calendar appropriate to Thai astrology. Some of the themes used by this speaker can be seen to be similar to those used by Khru Kaew a decade earlier. It is significant that one of the main causes for concern of this speaker is what he perceives as a lack of unity among Thai astrologers at the current time, a fact attributed to the disruptive and divisive introduction of a revised almanac developed in India as well as the acceptance of other sources of astrological interpretation.

According to this astrologer, the divisiveness caused in India by the government-inspired introduction of an astronomically-based calendar led to conflicts between astrologers there, and in the same way, the adoption by some Thai astrologers of this revised almanac in preference to the traditional Thai astronomical computations has destroyed the feeling of solidarity and the exchange of ideas among equals which prevailed among astrologers in Thailand when they all used the ephemeris based on the Thai classic text for this, the *Khampii Phrasuriyaat* (Prathip 2524: 21-22).

The speaker on this issue rejected the use of astronomical calendars by astrologers on several counts. The calendars of the astronomical kind, since they all lead to different results, do not provide any basis on which to judge which is the correct one for astrologers to follow. The justification which he ascribed to the Thai followers of the Lahiri-based calculations, namely that the Indian government has endorsed it, he dismissed as irrelevant for Thai astrologers on the grounds that they are not subject to the control of that government, and should base their judgements on their own experience, not on the recommendations of the Indian state. Moreover, the reasons for the Indian government establishing a uniform calendar for the whole of the country, largely to do with the need to coordinate religious and other dates among a diversity of peoples of several religious persuasions, are quite distinct from the needs of astrologers. Astronomy and astrology are, in fact, he
argued, different sastras, and astrologers do not need to follow the
calendars of astronomers which are not designed for their purposes.
Astronomers use ephemerides to observe the planets (duu daaw), while
astrologers use them to ascertain the likely influence of the
planets in a horoscope (duu duang) (Prathip 2524: 17-20). In this
argument Prathip quite clearly dismissed the need for a consistency
in the calendrical resources of astronomers and astrologers, and
implied that the methods used by both groups are each appropriate to
the different requirements of their practitioners.

The main justification for Thai astrologers using their
suriyaat-based ephemeris, according to Prathip, is that demonstrably
it has worked for Thai astrologers in the past. He referred to the
famous victory of King Naresuan the Great against difficult odds
over the rebellion at Sawankhalok, a success based on the
predictions of his astrologers using the suriyaat ephemeris. In the
reign of King Prasaat Thong astrologers predicted a fire at the
royal palace and were proved correct; King Rama I used the horoscope
of the city to predict the life of the city very accurately; and
even Westerners had lauded the knowledge and ability of Thai
astrologers in the past (2524: 23). In these well-known examples,
Prathip deftly sketches the sovereignty, safety and honour of the
kingdom as being closely linked to a Thai astrology based on its
traditional ephemeris. Thai history has not only proved the
accuracy of the Thai astrological tradition, but has also been
guided and protected by it, and this tradition, while originally
received in part from India, has also been refined and adapted by
the Thais in their research into and applications of the discipline
(2524: 28). In other words, Thai astrologers have formulated their
own and the nation's experience into an appropriate and accurate
interpretation of time and its processes, and Thai history is a
living proof of their success. Just as Thailand would not have
survived without its astrologers, so Thai astrology should not be
alienated from its sources with their roots in the nation's history.
Prathip's argument is representative of a not-uncommon attitude concerning the craft of astrologers and their interpretation of the temporal cycles.9 The author of the popular suriyaat-based "Astrologers' Diary" mentioned above, concludes his introduction to the reader with the statement:

We are Thai, and should be proud to use a tamraa [manual] which Thais themselves devised. (Thongcūa n.d.: n.p.).

Many Bangkok astrologers are conscious of the importance of the calendrical basis upon which they make their predictions concerning the divisions of time and the positions of the planets based on these, and one occasionally hears references in a discussion on a point of interpretation to "according to [real] Thai astrology ...", apparently meaning that the ephemeris used for the horoscope on which to base an interpretation is suriyaat-based.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the use of the notion of time is integral to astrological practice in Thailand, and that control over the divisions of time has always been the prerogative of power holders. While secular leaders have controlled the calendrical divisions of time leading to the expression of linearity, these divisions also have a qualitative aspect to them, an aspect which highlights a non-linear consciousness of the significance of time as an important cultural experience elaborated at many levels. Astrologers have been active in maintaining both calendrical and symbolic aspects of temporal divisions (i.e. the measurement of both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of time), down to the present where, as the debates reviewed show, the Astrological Association of Thailand has provided a forum where the astrological,

9 Prathip's argument, of course, did not go unchallenged. See Surasak's reply in defence of the newly introduced methods and the benefits of diversity (2525). One of the most direct attacks on the traditional type of ephemeris of Thongcūa, where it is pointed out that Thongcūa himself recognised the need for reform of the Thai system of calculations, can be found in Poramet 2520a.
astronomical and political facets of the current situation facing astrologers are aired.

We have seen in this chapter that the division of time into correct temporal divisions is a vital part of the process of astrological interpretation. Most astrologers however, as Prathip has pointed out, are mainly concerned with the understanding of these divisions in so far as they may be used in the interpretation of the quality of time at any given moment. It has been pointed out that active interpretation is always required according to the specifics of the particular situation: and it is this process, the conversion of the knowledge of temporal sequences into the temporal moment represented by a horoscope, and the way in which this provides the basis for interpretation, that is examined in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR

HOROSCOPY

Introduction

The horoscope is the most important tool for the astrologer, and whatever other sources of interpretation he may employ to enhance his understanding of a situation or person, the horoscope is usually the main basis from which he will work. Unlike the lines of the palm, which can be read as a potential representation of the person's entire life, but which is subject to regular changes, the horoscope is fixed and certain from the moment of birth of the individual, and can be calculated to be read for any specific subsequent point in the subject's lifetime. Unlike numerological bases of prediction which utilise the day, month and year of birth of the subject, the horoscope is precisely related to the moment of birth, is capable of more complex levels of interpretation, and has a highly 'individual' application to the subject in comparison to those methods which group everyone born on the same day together. Above all, to the extent that the horoscope portrays the planetary influences in all their complexity for a single, specific moment, it encapsulates the most complete expression of the powers believed to have influenced the person born at that time.

The importance of this conceptual precision is such that any new entity (however abstractly conceived) which comes into being, or any new situation which arises, is regarded as being influenced in the same way. The horoscope and the astrological theory associated with its interpretation are therefore the only suitable tools for prediction of both people and events of importance, including the establishment of a new city or nation.
This chapter will discuss the way in which the horoscope is used as a basic tool read in conjunction with various methods calculated to incorporate the changes of planetary influence over time based on the moment of origin.

The Horoscope (*duang chataa*)

Like the Indians from whom they have inherited their astrology, Thai astrologers follow the Nirayana system with its sidereal, or fixed, zodiac. The astronomical calculations used by astrologers in Thailand have long been based on the rules set out in their basic astronomical manual, rather than being based on observation (Wales 1981: vii). Many astrologers in Bangkok are aware that their counterparts elsewhere, including those in the West, use a tropical zodiac which takes account of the precession of the equinoxes, where the vernal point (the starting point of the zodiacal circle) 'moves backward against the fixed zodiac of constellations' at the rate of approximately 1° every 72 years (Brau et al. 1980: 255). Precession of the equinoxes was recognised in the nineteenth century in Siam, and referred to by King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910) in relation to the timing of *songkraan*. The King pointed out that the change of the seasons in relation to the date of the Sun entering Aries was not yet great, there being then some twenty-one days difference, and offered the opinion that although the corrected astronomical date was ahead of the traditional celebration, since it had not yet moved as much as from the hot season to the cold season nobody really felt the difference (in Sathienkoses 2506: 9).

Similarly, many Thai astrologers today do not see the need to change their own astronomical system of calculation; and some even find the astrological implications of the Western movable system disturbing and at times absurd. When discussing this subject one astrologer claimed that he used the traditional Thai system because if one casts the horoscope of Hitler, it will become that of
Einstein using the movable zodiac. Moreover, the argument discussed in the previous chapter which asserts that Thai astrology has been proved historically to have been accurate reinforces confidence in their own system on the part of many astrologers. Accuracy of prediction is considered of greater importance than accuracy of celestial mapping or, to put it another way, the degree of accuracy of horoscopes constructed from an ephemeris tells many astrologers the astrological value of the astronomical calculations.

The horoscope is a diagrammatic representation of the position of the planets in relation to the pattern of the heavens and in relation to each other as they come into a specific configuration at a particular moment. Moreover in Thai astrology it is also the basic framework for providing encoded in its form many of the more symbolic schemes which serve to supplement and realise the meaning derived from that configuration. This encoding may well be helped by the fact that the Thai horoscope is always shown as a fixed representation of the heavens, with only the positions of the planets and of the ascendant ever changing. This is a contrast to many other astrological traditions.

The basic structure of the horoscope, for example, provides information on the twelve signs of the zodiac. These twelve signs have a system of ownership (rulership), whereby the planets are said to rule over the signs allotted to them. The signs of the zodiac are also conceived of as having elemental natures, so that each of the four elements have three signs which are of that same element (the triplicities). The signs are associated with spatial orientations signalling the cardinal and sub-cardinal directions of the compass. The temporal passage marked by the changing positions of the planets is also represented, where the movements of the planets in the signs of the zodiac as a picture of the heavens can to some extent be read by an experienced astrologer quite accurately, much like the hands on a clock. All of these aspects are implicit within the basic diagram upon which the calculated
positions of the planets for a particular time are mapped. The schematic form of the horoscope is a complex blending of symbolic and cosmological factors which astrologers can use to add substance and depth to their analyses.

Just as an astrologer begins to learn his subject by learning the meanings implicit in this form, so this analysis of the Thai horoscope will commence with the symbolic system it represents.¹

The Zodiac (raasiicak)

The common word for the Thai horoscope, duang, reflects the notion of circularity (So Sethaputra 2525: 140) which the horoscope embodies. The shape of the Thai horoscope is round, and its basic form represents the circular belt of the twelve zodiac signs. Unlike the Western and the North Indian horoscopes, the Thai duang represents the zodiac in a fixed way, and always oriented in the same direction, against which the planets are represented as rotating in an anti-clockwise direction (with the exception of the lunar nodes, which move clockwise). The framework of the heavens is fixed, while any particular moment calculated is represented in a secondary and contingent way in relation to it.

The signs of the zodiac are usually calculated as being of thirty degrees each, although some astrologers make use of the knowledge that the zodiac constellations are of different sizes to adjust the time the planets would take to traverse each sign. The uppermost sign is that of Aries, and it is when the sun enters this

¹ 'Thai astrology' is not a unitary body of entirely consistent knowledge, nor is it my intention to represent it as such. The outline contained in this chapter refers to the basic elements, most of which are universally acceptable, but it cannot be assumed that any particular point would be universally agreed upon, still less used. The aim of this discussion is to elucidate the broad structure of meanings implicit within Thai astrology, and therefore differences of technique or interpretation are only specified where these differences are germane to the argument.
sign each year, at a point calculated to occur in mid-April, that \textit{wan songkraan}, the New Year according to solar reckoning, is celebrated. The other signs of the zodiac are arranged in order following in anti-clockwise direction. The Sanskrit-derived names of the solar months now used by the Thai actually mean \textit{'[the sun] arriving at the ram'} (\textit{Meesaayon} - April), and so on (Sathienkoses 2506: 7), so that the names of the zodiac read very much like the months around the yearly cycle. The perceived approximation of the astrological zodiacal representation and the yearly cycle is also evident in the way in which the \textit{duang} is discussed: for example, it is said that when the sun is in this uppermost sign (Aries), it is also at the nearest point that it comes to the Earth in its annual cycle, and the sign Aries is the strongest fire sign; and so April is the hottest month of the year.

The specific form of the \textit{duang} as it is represented in Thailand, as well as some neighbouring mainland Southeast Asian countries, appears to have been borrowed from Sri Lanka (Thep 2515: 16). It allows some compromise of the circularity of the zodiac with the cardinality of the directions which are also implied in the framework. Aries at the top of the \textit{duang} represents the prime cardinal position of east as well as the strongest sign of the fire element, while those signs which represent the remaining three elements in their strongest positions control the other three cardinal directions, with Cancer at the north being the strongest water sign, Libra in the west the strongest wind sign, and Capricorn for the south the leading earth sign.

The other signs control the sub-cardinal points of the compass, but tend to the direction closest to the cardinal direction which they are next to on the \textit{duang}. There is a simple formula of counting east, south, west, north from Aries which enables these to be easily remembered. The twelve zodiac signs therefore are associated with:
The twelve signs are also associated with the four elements (thaat) allocated from Aries in the same anti-clockwise direction in the order of fire, earth, wind and water. Of these, earth and water are held to be fortunate (kuson), while fire and wind are considered harmful (akuson).

Each of the nine planets recognised in traditional Thai astrology are held to rule, or be the lord of, one or more of the signs of the zodiac. This is the same as in Hindu astrology and, with the exception of the north node, as in Western astrology. In Thai the term applied to this scheme is kaseet, similar to that for referring to land, fields and agriculture. The Sun and the Moon rule only one sign each, with the Sun ruling Leo and the Moon ruling Cancer. Counting from either of these signs to the opposite side of the duang, the other planets are allocated their houses in the order of their astronomical distance from the sun. The north node Rahu is the optional ruler of Saturn's Aquarius. This scheme is also divided into two halves, whereby the half of the duang starting with the Sun in Leo and extending through the signs to Capricorn are conceived as those associated with the daylight hours, while the other half ending with the Moon in Cancer are associated with the night (Thep 2511: 46).

The signs of the zodiac are also, as elsewhere, associated with particular parts of the body, starting with the head in Aries, and moving down the body to the feet in Pisces, and for mnemonic...
purposes this is portrayed as a human form curled around in the
*duang* in an anti-clockwise direction so that the appropriate parts
of the body are aligned with the respective signs.

Hindu astrology uses very little zodiac sign symbolism
interpretation of the kind known in the West, preferring instead the
use of meanings derived from the planetary rulership for the
significance read from a sign (Braha 1986: 41); and Thai astrology
appears to follow this. Although some Bangkok astrologers are
familiar with the Western use of glyphs or ideographic symbols for
the signs of the zodiac, these are rarely used – and they are not
employed with the traditional Thai astrology – since the fixed
representation of the zodiacal belt renders such identification
unnecessary.

**The Planets (*daaw phrakhro*)**

The group of planets known in Thai astrology, referred to as
the *daaw noppakhro* (nine grahas), are the seven heavenly bodies
known from ancient Hindu astrology: the Sun (*aatbit* or more
archaically *suricha*) and Moon (*can* or *canthaw*), Mars (*angkhaan*
or formerly *phumma*), Mercury (*phut*), Jupiter (*phartabodii* or
*khruu*), Venus (*suk*) and Saturn (*saw* or formerly *sawrii*) as well as
the two nodes of the moon. The latter are calculated as the
northernmost and southernmost points of the path of the moon on the
plane of the earth's orbit (Wongse 2522: 9352), the north node
(dragon's head) being known as *raahuu* and the south node (dragon's
tail) as *keet.*

2 A number of Thai-English dictionaries equate *keet* (Ketu) with the planet
Neptune, but this identification is not made by Thai astrologers. See also Reynolds
and Reynolds 1982: 288 fn. 32.
by the north and south nodes. The sun is therefore designated by
the number one, followed by the moon shown by number two, and so on
up to keet represented by the number nine. The significance
attributed to the Thai numerals is on occasion incorporated into the
significance of the planets to allow interpretations across
divinatory boundaries, lending a numerological tinge to many aspects
of astrological interpretation.

All of these 'planets' are known in the Thai Brahmanic
tradition as deities, with the first eight having a specific
iconography, and they are therefore referred to by astrologers with
the honorific phra placed before their names. The nine astrological
'planets' are referred to as being essentially similar, although it
is recognised that the moon's nodes are not actual celestial bodies
visible in the sky. In homage-paying ceremonies to the teachers of
astrology the nine deities, or nopphakhro, are treated as a group.
They are also mentioned in other rituals of Brahmanic origin, and as
a group of celestial deities they are of some antiquity in Thailand;
already being in use as early as 1393 in the Sukhothai period (Davis
1984: 104 fn. 6). In the planet-based divinatory scheme known as
thaksaa (discussed below), where the planets are used by fortune­tellers in a less astrological way, the group of planetary deities
or powers are known as the attbakbro, or eight grahas, where the
ninth deity, the south node phra keet, is not included.3

Many of the teachers and students at the association schools
denied that they regarded the planets as deities, stating that this
belief was not necessary for most Thais. This was asserted in spite
of the well-known personal beliefs and practices of some teachers

3 Ketu, originally a comet god, was assimilated into the group of planetary
deities fairly late in most parts of India, and in the south of India there is only
evidence of the nine deities as a group from the eleventh century. See Gail (1980:
139-140), who also shows that the assimilation of the original eight planetary
deities to the eight cardinal directions originated in Indian cosmology.
who maintained belief in the planetary deities and who performed rites of propitiation to them as deities.

**Incorporation of New Planets**

The two nodes appear to have been late additions to Thai astrology, and their derivation is somewhat obscure. Thep argues that the south node *keet* was formerly not calculated in astrology (cited in Davis 1984: 103-104) as it was always known to be 180° from *raabuu*, and it has only recently been introduced as a regular feature in the horoscope (Thep 2524: 20). In an examination of the earliest text on Thai Buddhist cosmography still extant, the *Traiphuum Phraruang*, Oan points out that there does not appear to be any mention of the eighth 'planet' *raabuu* in the list of planets appearing in the signs of the zodiac, and argues that the reference included to *phra keet*, which literally means bright illumination, should be understood as referring to the *lakhanana*, or Thai ascendant (2524: 28; 27). He also suggests that the first appearance of the use of *raabuu* appears in a predictive work by the same author, King Lû Thai, which he calculates to have been composed some sixteen years after the composition of the Buddhist cosmography. Nevertheless it would appear that the knowledge of *raabuu* as the *asura* king who seized the Sun and the Moon, thereby causing eclipses, was well known at the time, for the *Traiphuum*.

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4 It is possible that the Thai calculation of the south node has arisen as the result of something like a transcription error. Unlike the original Indian system, where the two nodes, true to their astronomical derivation, always appear as opposite each other (thereby making unnecessary any independent calculation of the position of the south node), the Thai may share with the Khmer texts mathematical calculations for the south node which are the same as for the north node, but with the last digit of the figures given for the north node calculation omitted. This formulation leads to a quite different rate of movement for the south node from that of its companion. I am indebted to Dr. Chris Ende of the Humanities Research Centre, ANU, for this suggested explanation of the fact that this occurs in the Khmer version of the planetary calculations (see Faraut 1910: 245; 247). However, for an explanation which posits the "Thai Ketu" as unique to Thai astrologers and as having been calculated as a point of influence in the zodiac as a result of perceived irregularities in the accuracy of predictions see Phismai 2515, and (e.g.) Prayun 2515: 6.
Phra Ruang includes the story of how the Buddha forbade the demon king from seizing these deities who had shown such loyalty to him and to his teachings (Reynolds and Reynolds 1982: 109-113).

The traiphum cosmology, which explains the traditional conception of the planets in their revolutions around Mount Sumeru, remained the main source of explanation for the account of the heavens and their patterns until the mid-nineteenth century when it came under extensive criticism (Reynolds 1976), and when explanations of such phenomena as eclipses began to gain more Western-oriented perspectives (Alabaster 1971: 11-12) in a conscious revision of the traditional views by the élite. Today the Western astronomical system is well known among the educated and is the view encountered in official publications. In the encyclopedia of the Royal Academy, for example, the entry under nopphakbro contains an explanation of the Western-derived planetary system and the nine astronomical planets known to revolve around the sun, together with the Western methods of calculating their distances, before the explanation of the traditional astrological version of the nine Thai 'planets' and their cosmological correlates (see Wongse 2522).

Many Bangkok astrologers are aware of the more recently known planets Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, discovered with the aid of the telescope and used by their Western counterparts, but the latter two are mainly used by those following the Sayana form of astrology favoured in the West rather than the traditional Nirayana method. Uranus is now often used by Thai astrologers according to Thep (2511: 41) and my own observations, and he places its adoption by Thai astrologers as occurring after 1932 (2524: 21). In Thai it is known as maruttayuu, but I am not sure how or when this name meaning death and misfortune, as well as being a name for Shiva, came to be adopted for the planet. When it is represented on the horoscope it takes the zero sign as its designation, consonant with its status as the tenth planet. However Uranus is not always included in manuals of astrology where the planets' traditional qualities and spheres of
influence are explicated, a fact which one astrologer has attributed to its lack of the usual planetary accoutrements; unlike the other planets, *marutayuu* has been assigned the element ether (*aakaat thaat*), a fifth element used only occasionally in divination, and it has neither a planetary strength nor a cardinal direction (Sunthorn 2525: 410). Nevertheless its influence within a horoscope is frequently known and is generally malefic. Neptune and Pluto are more rarely used, are not usually renamed in Thai,\(^5\) and they are represented by their initial consonant or even their Western glyph when included in the horoscope.

**The Planets in Thai Astrology**

The planets are the prime activators of the particular meaning obtaining in any horoscope, since they are the moving parts which serve to define the relevance of the potential forces immanent in the duang. Each of the planets has a specific set of meanings, and these meanings are used both in the system of planetary rulership and according to where the planets occur in a horoscope. The planets are divided into two groups: those with a generally benefic character, and those which have a generally malefic influence. Those of a benign kind (*daaw supphakhro*) include the Moon, Mercury, Jupiter and Venus, while the more harmful planets (*daaw baappbakbro* are the Sun, Mars, Saturn, *raahuu* (north node) and *marutayuu* (Uranus). The south node *keet* has a somewhat indefinite role, sometimes being included in the first category, while characterised as belonging to the second by others (Singto 2522: 179). The role of the Sun is also rather ambiguous in Thai astrology; although officially belonging to the *baappbakbro* group, it is often treated as a beneficial planet in analysis.

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\(^5\) Pluto is sometimes referred to as *daaw yom* (e.g. Thep 2525 (ng)), thus taking the name of the being who rules the nether world and supervises the punishment of the wicked there (So Sethaputra 2525: 321). This appears to be a translation from the English use of the name of the Greek god.
The Sun derives some of its perceived influence from natural observations: it is obviously powerful and fiery, and it is associated with strength and positions of power, as well as honour. If it is in an advantageous position in the horoscope it presages success in work, health and ambition; whereas these will suffer if the Sun is in an unpropitious position. The Moon is associated with flux and changeability, with femininity and nature, and with the emotional side of the personality. Mars carries significations for warfare and fighting, bravery and force; and Mercury corresponds with communication, youth, and with the unstable, changing aspects of mental life. Jupiter, as the most powerful of the benefic planets, is associated with wisdom, religion and public welfare; while Venus has dominion over love and the arts, and is most influential when moving into a new zodiac sign (Singto 2522: 41). Saturn is the most malefic of the baappkahbro planets, and is associated with endurance and hardship. Raabuu tends to connote wanton lack of responsibility, while keet is associated with long life. Uranus is often associated with anything strange or secret and with danger. There is a little verse, very easily committed to memory and well-known to students of astrology, listing the principal themes associated with each of the planets in relation to an individual's life. Since the Sun is associated with high status and prestige, the verse reminds one that the position of this planet in the horoscope is always examined to see what the subject's status will be, and so on through the planets.

The general meanings of the planets also aid in memorising their many other specific forms of influence; for the planets each have their own areas of jurisdiction within the spheres of work, physique, complexion, personality, occupation, organs of the body, diseases, and so on, as well as non-personal associations such as places. Medical afflictions caused by the Sun, therefore, are likely to include headaches, given the Sun's association with the head, and fevers are also attributed to this fiery planet. The planets as a group encompass a wide range of possibilities within
any one field, so that, for example, a disease affecting any part of the body is attributable to one (or more) of the planets.

The body politic in a traditional sense is also represented by the planets and, as can be seen from the predictions involving the day of the week on which the first day of the new year occurs (discussed in the previous chapter), the conception of the spheres of influence involved in the planetary system is often restricted to categories within the élite. One version of such a schema, which quite clearly shows the Indian influence of its origins, has the planets designating both the caste and rank of their respective portions of the ruling élite and population as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planet</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
<td><strong>kasat</strong> (kshatriya; king)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>raachaa</strong>: king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or soldier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>doctor or merchant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mars</td>
<td><strong>kasat</strong> or soldier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>educated citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>Brahmmins or religious,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hermits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>same as for Jupiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturn</td>
<td>sudra or labourers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This kind of classic conception can be employed when society as a whole is being discussed in mundane (political) astrology.

For everyday personal consultations, astrologers have a wide range of occupations available in interpretation based on the planets, most of which are easily remembered from the nature of the planets themselves. Mars, for example, includes police and soldiers, gangsters, executioners, and butchers, as well as those dealing with iron, including weapon-makers, barbers and surgeons (Singto 2522: 135). The fact that Thai astrology has in some ways been reinterpreted to fit specifically Thai orientations can be seen from interpretation of the races (or nationalities) believed to be associated with the planets. A modern manual provides one such list as comprising Brahmans, **farang** (Westerners), Mon, Lao, Burmese, Thai, **khaek** (Indians and/or Middle Easterners) and Chinese for the planets from the Sun to **raabuu** respectively (Singto 2522: 150).
The planets are also associated with particular elements, with the Sun and Saturn sharing the fire element, the Moon and Jupiter both being of the earth element, Mars and raahuu sharing the wind element, and Mercury and Venus being the water element planets. Keet is sometimes referred to as being of the ethereal winyaanthaat, and does not have a partner. The association of the planets with the elements is the same as that in the divinatory scheme known as thaksaa, which shares some similar concerns with astrology but which often differs in details from it. This scheme is also responsible for the notion of a planetary strength associated with each planet, with the number allocated providing a basis for performing numerological calculations associated with the planets.

The planets have a system of amity and enmity held to exist between them, a conception which has immediate implications for the effect they have on the fate of the subject when they appear together or in certain relationships within the horoscope. Some of these relationships derive from such things as two planets sharing a common element (khuu thaat), a relationship with specific connotations according to the element if they occur together, especially if they occur together in a sign of the same element; while others have a numerological basis, such as the khou somphon, where those pairs of planets with a planetary strength which add up to twenty-seven (the number equivalent to the number of lunar mansions) are held to aid the subject of the horoscope if they appear together (Singto 2522: 202-203). Some of the relationships of friendship and enmity between the planets appear to be related to myths concerning the planetary deities (e.g. Wisandarunkorn 2508: 244-251), although I rarely heard these myths referred to when the effects of the coincidence of these planets were explained or utilised.

The planets also take on specific meanings based on their location in a sign of the zodiac. To fully ascertain this meaning
the elements of the planet and the sign must be compared, and the relationship between the planet and the planetary lord of the sign in which it is located will also affect the influence of the planet in that sign as a modification or intensification of its usual characteristics. Mars in its own house Aries, for example, is well known to be a good planet for soldiers (and traders), since in this position it signifies the ability to make correct decisions quickly, and it also indicates high rank and property. One Thai astrologer has suggested that many of the first fifteen Thai Prime Ministers have had this feature in their horoscope (Poramet in Naew Na, 28 May 2526: 8).

There are a number of sets of planetary locations within the signs of the zodiac which have specified meanings, usually a general meaning for all the planets involved, which also need to be memorised and recognised by the astrologer. Some of the sets also have their own opposite, such as pra (detriment), a set of positions of the planets in the signs opposite to those in which they are rulers. This causes impairment of the planet concerned and thus usually signifies adverse effects for the subject of the horoscope. Similarly, those signs in which each of the planets is most exalted (mahaat-ut) also have their opposite signs of fall (nit). Other positions of strength, such as those known as raachaachook, mean that the planets in particular signs promote specific kinds of good influence: in this case, for example, Mars in Taurus signifies being favoured by people of high rank, and Saturn in Virgo means a long life. There are also, of course, the various influences derived from the planets appearing in certain relationships to each other within the horoscope, of which Thai astrologers usually recognise only conjunction, opposition, trine (120°) and sextile (60°). Hindu astrology in India has been reported as having from some three hundred yook (Pugh 1981: 83), to a few thousand (Braha 1986: 239), but of these reportedly not many are known in contemporary Thai astrology, although those Thai astrologers who have sought to revive Indian sources of astrology do make use of them.
The planets each have an approximate time calculated for them to take to pass through each sign of the zodiac. The Sun is said to take thirty days to pass through each zodiac sign, while the Moon takes two and a half days, Mars takes forty-five days, and Mercury and Venus each take thirty days. By contrast Jupiter takes one year, Saturn two and a half years, raahuu one and a half years and marâttayuu seven years to traverse each sign. In contrast to the north node's much slower pace, keet takes only two months to pass through each sign. 6 With these rough guides, it is possible to quickly calculate where a planet will be at any specified time in relation to a given horoscope, and this can enable an astrologer to tell at a glance a period of likely danger or good fortune if a planet should have a predominant influence within the planetary configuration of a horoscope.

The Houses

The other major division of the horoscope apart from the signs are the houses (pbop). These are calculated from the position of the Thai ascendant (lakkhanaa), and in Thai astrology the sign in which the ascendant is calculated to be located is counted as the first house, with the next sign the second house, and so on, so that the boundaries of the signs and the houses correspond, although the commencement of the house cycle is always dependent on the position of the lakkhanaa. The houses are named, and are considered to have control over certain aspects of the subject's life. The names are reminders of the most important aspects signified by the houses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>phop tanu</td>
<td>the physical self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>phop kadumpha</td>
<td>wealth and property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>phop sabatcha</td>
<td>siblings, friends,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>short trips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>phop phanthu</td>
<td>residence, home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>phop putta</td>
<td>children, schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>phop ari</td>
<td>enemies, diverse problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 See footnote 4 above concerning the Thai calculations of the cycles of these two 'planets'.

See footnote 4 above concerning the Thai calculations of the cycles of these two 'planets'.

The houses add another layer of meaning to the view of the subject's life and fortune. Each aspect of the life of the subject will have certain characteristics lent to it by the nature of the sign in which it is located and of its planetary ruler, and will be further influenced throughout the subject's life by the planets, if any, which were located in the house at the moment of birth, as well as being temporarily influenced by the transiting planets in that house at any particular time. The house system therefore serves as a useful step in the analysis of the main aspects of the individual life. To find information about the potential spouse of the subject, for example, the seventh house in the birth horoscope is examined to find what planet is located there. Even if there is no planet located in that house, the planetary ruler of the house will be referred to as a basis of prediction.

**Lunar Mansions**

The twenty-seven lunar mansions, or *nakṣat*, are also employed in relation to the horoscope, although their use is more limited. Diagrammatically they can be represented as forming another ring beyond that of the signs of the zodiac. The commencement of the cycle of the lunar mansions is held to coincide with the first point of the zodiacal belt, in other words at the first point of Aries, and each is ruled by a planet (see Figure 1). The lunar mansions are evenly distributed around the circle, with a set $13° 20' \text{ each,}$ and thus their position in relation to the signs of the zodiac...
remains fixed and easily calculable. Each of the twenty-seven mansions also has certain meaning (as was described in the previous chapter).

The signs of the zodiac are also divided up into smaller conceptual units. In comparison to the many divisions invented by Hindu astrologers (Braha 1986: 13), there are only two basic divisions made use of by the Thais. Each of the thirty-degree zodiac signs is divided into three divisions of ten degrees each, known as triiyaang (similar to decanates). These are further divided into three parts, each of 3° 20", making a total of nine sub-divisions in the sign: the Hindu navamsa (nawaang). The total number of nawaang coincides with the highly auspicious figure of one hundred and eight. Each of the tripartite divisions and of the nawaang are allocated a planetary ruler, and these planetary rulers can also be taken into account when considering the influence on a planet in a particular degree of the zodiac sign. For example, if a planet is located at two degrees in Aries, the ruler of which is Mars, it will also be located in the triiyaang of Ketu and in the nawaang of Mars, so that the relationship between that planet and Mars, and between the planet and Ketu will need to be taken into account in analysing the effect of that planet in the horoscope. Since Mars is the ruler of the sign as well as of the nawaang, the planet's relationship with Mars will be an important factor in the astrological appreciation of the planet's role for the horoscope.

Many astrologers also construct a duang nawaang, an accessory horoscope based on a calculation of the planets in relation to the nawaang, and this is interpreted in conjunction with the basic horoscope. Although use of nawaang is quite popular among skilled astrologers, it is not universally used as part of the general corpus of astrological techniques. Since the use of this aspect of astrology demands attention to the precise planetary positions within the signs it is not employed by astrologers who rely only on
**Figure 1**: The Zodiac and Planetary Rulership  
(From Chuay 1974: 5)

**Key**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♈</td>
<td>Aries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♉</td>
<td>Taurus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♊</td>
<td>Gemini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♋</td>
<td>Cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♌</td>
<td>Leo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♍</td>
<td>Virgo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♎</td>
<td>Libra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♏</td>
<td>Scorpio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♐</td>
<td>Sagittarius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♑</td>
<td>Capricorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♒</td>
<td>Aquarius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♓</td>
<td>Pisces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☉</td>
<td>Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☽</td>
<td>Moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♃</td>
<td>Mars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♄</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♅</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♆</td>
<td>Venus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♇</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♉</td>
<td>Rahu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♋</td>
<td>Ketu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Explanation**

The Thai chart form shows the twelve zodiac signs. The inner circle around this shows the planets which rule the *nawaang*, while the outermost ring shows the planetary rulers of the lunar mansions.
knowledge of which house each of the planets are located in for their interpretation. For those who do use it, however, it is regarded as providing more detailed access to the changing overlordship of the planets as they take turns to influence significant features visible in the horoscope than simple reference to the signs and their rulers can do.

**Planetary Ages**

Thai astrologers use other techniques in conjunction with the horoscope, particularly concerning ages or epochs in the life of the individual subject. One of these, known as the *phrakbro triiwai*, divides the individual's life into set spans, each of which will be benefic or malefic in accordance with the planets in the individual's horoscope. This system divides the life of the individual into three overall periods: three spans, each of eight years and four months, constitute the first twenty-five year period, with the same for the second twenty-five year period, and the remaining six spans of eight years and four months constitute the last period of fifty years. These spans can be explained with reference to the general process of sociological progression through the life-cycle (see e.g. Yanachot 2520: 262-269). Such conceptualisation finds reflection in the common belief that the age of twenty-five is a dangerous age and surviving it can be rather hazardous. This method employs the use of the *lakkhanaa* to find the starting point of the cycle, and counts around the twelve divisions of the horoscope as for the signs and the houses, employing a specific set of twelve categories.

Another form of analysis designed to take into account the changes in planetary influences after the time of birth is the use of the present position of the planets in relation to their former positions.

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7 These ages differ from those specified in the traditional Thai medical system: see Mulholland 1979: 101.
position in the birth horoscope. Use is also made of various forms of progressed horoscope which are calculated specifically in relation to the original horoscope of birth.

Other Divinatory Techniques

There are a number of other techniques which are often used in conjunction with astrological horoscopes to further clarify detection of forms of influence active at particular moments. The most important of these are the variants of the Hindu-derived thaksaa (dasa) system.

The thaksaa system enables the analyst to posit periods of planetary rulership over the individual's life according to set patterns of succession of particular time-spans associated with each planet, the commencement of the cycle varying according to the day on which the individual is born. This system also posits that the planets are each assigned a particular kind of influence over the individual's life using an eight-fold system. Some astrologers use the mahaathaksaa system in conjunction with the horoscope. The eight categories on which it is based refer to generalised aspects of the individual's life, and can be summarised as follows:

- Boriwaan: people under one’s authority or care
- Aayu: life; health
- Deet: power and influence over others
- Sii: good fortune; auspiciousness; progress
- Nuula: foundations; stability; residence; permanency
- Utsaaha: industriousness; endeavour; movement; strength
- Montrii: consultants; knowledge and thought
- Kaalakini: all kinds of evil and misfortune

(Thoem 2525: 10).

These thaksaa schemes enable an astrologer to discover another form of general significance of each of the planets for the particular subject, and when each will most influence him in his life, by combining this scheme with the positions of the planets in the birth horoscope. The significance of a given planet according to its
position in this scheme is analysed in conjunction with the nature of the planet itself, as well as its particular sign location.\(^8\)

It can thus be seen that there are a number of astrological, symbolic and numerological techniques included in the practice of Thai astrology, all of which serve to increase the complexity and flexibility of the interpretation of an individual subject's *duang chataa* (horoscope). Although they are often used in combination, experts argue that the origins of some elements are diverse, and can be quick to mention the contradictions that arise between certain specific correlations in one set of calculations and that which may pertain in another. Thep points out differences between the eight-section system and the zodiac system (2511: 30), for example; and the variations in logic, symbolic or otherwise of the application of various techniques is also clear. On the whole, however, the systems are used in combination in such a way as to accumulate layers of meaning from among which the analyst can select to generate the most likely portrayal of the subject's life. Indeed, it seems that many of the systems analytically distinguished by contemporary experts have long been undifferentiated in the astrological texts (Thep 2511: 30) as well as in practice, since many manuals supply a plethora of techniques for the student to memorise.

Some experts justify the incorporation of many methods by regarding them as belonging to a sort of hierarchy of levels of meaning providing various levels of insight, with the most important being used to provide most information, and so on. Luang Wisandarunkorn, for example, argues that in the understanding of a person's destiny, the use of various techniques is like looking at a mango, with the fruit unseen if the skin is still on, and the casing of the seed still invisible when the peel is removed to expose the

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\(^8\) An example of analysis using the horoscope, including the *triiyaang* and *nawaang*, together with the *thaisaa* scheme is provided in Appendix I.
fruit, and so on. In a similar way, the eight-section system provides a preliminary understanding, while more can be seen when the ascendant and the planets are viewed in relation to the zodiac signs et cetera (2508: 344-345). Yet another astrologer who favoured the importance of the nawaang system of planetary influences in the chart taught his students that the duang nawaang-cak (the accessory navamsa chart) is like looking at the individual's horoscope under a microscope, and provides insight into the real person of the subject in comparison to what he appears to be on the basis of the simple horoscope.

While teachers adopt visual metaphors to explain preferred methods of increasing their insight into their subject, the conceptual processes concerned actually involve maximising analytical tools. Practical astrology relies not only on the movement of the planets in their heavenly orbits as calculated by human observers, but also on the cycles of spheres of influence within which the planets are established in the heavens, and against the background of which the planets circle in their incessant journeying. Reading a horoscope therefore involves the analysis of the patterns of influence which characterised the moment of birth, in terms of which all of the changes imposed by the transiting planets must be understood, as well as the cyclical system of planetary rulership which evolves with the passage of time, and which also depends for its logical commencement on the specific moment of birth. For these levels, the planetary positions in the horoscope are the keys, providing a basis from which most other calculations follow, as well as supplying the dynamic catalyst of movement. This crucial analytical importance of the planets in astrological theory helps to facilitate a continuing adherence to astrological theories of causation even though the planets themselves are for many no longer associated with their Brahmanic religious significance as deities; being regarded rather as useful celestial signs indicating the significance of the particular effects the subject's karmic status will produce in this life.
The astrological system proper is nominally favoured by astrologers over the other less sophisticated systems in which the planets appear as mere fixed figures in a set framework; but in practice the available systems tend to be used flexibly, with little attention paid to the origins of added elements. The effect of this eclecticism is to further enhance the analyst's ability to gauge the nature of a particular moment in time. A similar logic is applied to the incorporation of other systems of prognostication. In palmistry, for example, by referring to a person's palm the analyst has immediate reference to the most pre-eminent effects active at the moment, complete with basic information concerning the broad outlines of the subject's life. Specific times in the subject's life must be determined using detailed measurement of the lines on the palm. Subsequent checks of the palm will reveal changes shown in the finer, more ephemeral lines which appear and disappear over time. Similarly the use of the taaksaa system of overlordship allows access to a system of planetary rulership and influence which relies on knowledge of the subject's date of birth, but which is independent of the astrological system of overlordship, and thus adds another dimension to the nature of the period under investigation.

**Conclusion**

The astrological use of the horoscope is not, therefore, simply a matter of fixed bounded judgements based solely on birth, but something which must take into account what is seen as a dynamic process which changes over time in ways which can be analysed at any time and from various points of view. While some of these methods are based on the motions of the planets themselves, others are numerologically based, while others are discussed in terms of the general life process such as that seen in the *phrakhro triiwai* system of ages.
Returning to the issue of the astrological conception of time in Thailand, it can be seen from the processes of analysis outlined in this chapter that the moment of birth is seen to have special significance for the individual according to a complex of analysable meaning systems which are of crucial importance in deciphering the destiny of the individual. However, far from being an isolated moment lost to all continuity and whose qualities therefore remain forever fixed and inviolable, the process of astrological analysis posits this moment of birth and its qualities as a logical starting point for the expected trajectories of that individual's experience, with a firm place in the process of ongoing time, a fact which is incorporated into analysis by reference to a range of means of conceptualisation of the subsequent movement of the planets in the heavens as a further part of the process of interpretation.

Even without the complication of the alternative and supplementary conceptual schemes mentioned, horoscopes in themselves provide many, varied, and contradictory evidence on the aspects of the individual's destiny (Pingree 1986: 82), and in practice the skilled astrologer must always use observation, supplied information, and common sense in order to correctly weigh up which of the many sources of interpretation available in any one instance is the best suited in terms of the facts of the case, and therefore worthy of further exploration. The Thai astrological system as it is learned and practised provides a framework of possibilities which always has to be worked on and selected from in the actual process of interpretation of a horoscope, whether it be of a person, city, or situation. The following chapters will show the ways in which the circumstances and timing of the actual interpretation themselves influence the nature of the interpretation made.
CHAPTER FIVE

ASTROLOGICAL PRACTICE AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a discussion of the actual practice of astrology in Bangkok and to illustrate, by means of the common themes arising in the discussions surrounding the usual practice of astrology and fortune-telling in general, the assumptions which are used to support various points of view regarding the rationality and morality of individual action. The chapter will also include a review of some research findings on the actual sociological patterns of the use of astrology and divination, and provide some suggestions for the reasons for such patterns.

This analysis of the ideological niche of astrology in Bangkok will begin with the general forms of association of the individual with notions of fate, destiny and karma, and the role that specifically astrological notions have within the range of explanations utilised in prediction. This will then lead to discussion of practitioners' rationales in the conduct and ethics of their profession, reasons why clients visit astrologers and fortune-tellers, as well as what is valued in astrological or fortune-telling consultations; to come to some conclusion about what the astrologer is perceived to provide for the client and the wider society. By moving from general statements concerning consultations to the content of the interactions between practitioner and client, it will be possible to make some assessment of the kinds of cultural construction undertaken in personal astrological practice. Finally, the chapter will conclude by examining the relationship between the
common stereotypes of the fortune-tellers' clientele and the actual patterns of consultation found by researchers.

**Astrology and Individual Identity**

Generally the role of astrology in the life of the individual commences with birth, attends many of the life-cycle ceremonies that punctuate that life, and is at least potentially associated with the death of that individual. Indeed in Thailand astrological calculations can logically be involved in some individuals' lives even before they are born, for it is reported that if complications arise in a hospital birth, an astrologer may be consulted to find the best auspicious moment (roek) for a Caesarian operation to be performed to provide the child with the best duang chataa (horoscope) possible under the circumstances of the time (Warayaphorn 2519: 10).

The central form of astrological prediction in Thailand is the interpretation of the individual's horoscope: what is in store for the individual, the trends in his or her life, and when predicted events or dangers are likely to become relevant. There is a degree of self identification possible between the individual and his or her horoscope which commences with the first drawing up of the child's horoscope soon after birth. This is not as close or as magical an identification as appears to be made in Burma, for example, where the individual's horoscope is kept largely concealed, and is thrown into running water after death (Shorto 1978: 153). Nevertheless previously in Thailand the horoscope of a child was used in the rituals of early infancy; at least in the more elaborate versions known to members of the élite, some of whom continue these practices. At the ceremony held to celebrate the first month of a child's life, for example, where the placenta is buried in a significantly auspicious area, the child's horoscope forms part of the ritual paraphernalia (Poon 2522: 5). The rites performed at this time acknowledge the likelihood of survival of the child and
express incorporation of the child into the family. Sometimes on this occasion the child receives its name, and according to Phya Anuman the gender of the child is also socially confirmed by the rites (Anuman 1968: 251).

An especially elaborate form of horoscope, the duang phichai songkhraam, was used by the élite to invoke ceremonial protection for the individual. This could be used during life or even for the benefit of an ancestor after death; in which latter case a dual horoscope of the time of birth and the time of death was calculated. This kind of horoscope was formerly used to represent the deceased at a funeral in much the way that the photograph is today (Phansak 2531: 176). Such horoscopes incorporate Buddhist, saiya-saat and astrological elements (Phansak 2531: 175-176).

Horoscopes may still represent the individual in protective ritual during the course of the lifetime, as where the horoscope is buried in the base of a Buddha-image to afford the individual owner special protection. It has even been known for individuals advised to seek the benefits of ordination as a monk to be allowed to have their horoscopes 'ordained' if they are unable to undergo the ceremony themselves (Phinyo 2524: 16). While this is a highly unorthodox extension of ideas which can attract strong criticism, it nevertheless illustrates the degree of ritual identification possible between the individual and his horoscope. An individual may carry his horoscope with him, and can readily produce it for consultation; and an interested layman gains some familiarity with his own horoscope and portions of its significance, just as many have some idea of the basic divinatory features of their own palm.

**Astrological Consultation**

There are basically two types of occasion on which a client will consult an astrologer concerning his or her own life and future. The first of these is on the occasion of planned major
steps taken in the life-cycle or career of the individual, often celebrated in a ritual form. Consultation on this type of occasion may be regarded as precautionary: as largely concerned with optimising auspiciousness of recognised steps in the individual's life, and as concerning the individual's intended plans for the future. The second type of occasion less formally involves times when the individual perceives that, even in possibly quite intangible ways, his or her life does not appear to be going as well as planned, or has even taken a serious turn for the worse. Here the individual is more likely to be concerned with exploring notions of causality, particularly in relation to possible planetary or other influences disrupting the expected course of life. Theoretically, of course, an unexpected upturn in fortune might also require some explanation, but as astrologers and fortune-tellers all frequently commented, they are usually only consulted when the change in luck is bad, and concern for the future is therefore heightened.

The fact that the first type of consultation does not necessarily entail any agreed upon principles - other than that some times are more auspicious than others for undertaking certain activities - suggests that these concepts can be analytically separated from more complex ideas of causality such as those of fate, luck, or those deriving from the Buddhist concepts of karma and individual responsibility for action.

The first type of occasion for consultation with an astrologer comprises the routinised consultations which usually occur as a matter of course prior to any undertaking of major importance, occasions which are intended to be efficacious in producing long-lasting effects of a particular kind. These occasions may be ritual occasions, or simply occasions which are obviously of great potential influence for the individual's future. The top-knot cutting ceremony of young children, weddings, and the rituals associated with the construction of a house (and especially
the erection of the first house post) are examples of the ritual occasions for which an auspicious time is likely to be sought.

Yet other secular occasions such as opening a business or undertaking a journey are frequently preceded by the request from an astrologer for an auspicious time. In Bangkok these occasions are open to varying interpretation and elaboration. Buddhist monks are now frequently employed to enhance the auspiciousness (and status) of occasions such as the establishment of a new business, enabling the host to maximise his fortune by combining Buddhist merit-making activity with the use of an astrologically appropriate time for the inauguration; and while Bangkokians only rarely appear to take astrological advice into account when embarking on trips upcountry, an auspicious date is frequently decided upon for an overseas journey.

Possibly one of the commonest occasions on which an astrological opinion will be sought is impending marriage. Comments on this suggest that astrological advice is sometimes more important with regard to the proposed partner's compatibility and the advisability of the marriage per se - a matter of consideration of factors which are largely unknown - than it is in deciding an auspicious occasion for the event, a matter which can be fairly circumscribed in the busy schedules of Bangkok dwellers. Nevertheless many weddings commence at an auspicious time on the day thus chosen. The horoscope of one or more of the partners may be used for fixing the time of the wedding. If only one is chosen it may be that of the woman for, as one astrologer explained, it is the woman who risks most in marriage. If the husband were to leave, take another wife or die, her chances of remarriage are considerably less than her husband's. Other auspicious times for planned activities may be made without reference to the individual's horoscope.
By contrast with many other ritual occasions, Buddhist rituals are not usually associated with astrologically-based timing. On many Buddhist occasions such as ordinations or general merit-making it is not considered necessary to find an auspicious time for performing the activities, many of which may have prescribed times set by reference to canonical precedent. In the case of ordination as a monk it is said that it is not necessary to find an auspicious time on which to enter the monkhood, for the merit involved in such an undertaking is such as to outweigh any need for the consideration of any forms of temporal auspiciousness. By contrast when leaving the monkhood it is advisable to do so at an auspicious time, for one is leaving a merit-filled state to return to the travails of ordinary life, a move which requires all the protection timeliness can provide. By the same token, merit-making activities in general are not planned with reference to an astrological time: freeing birds or fishes can be performed at any time, while the more routine acts such as providing meals for the monks is performed in accordance with the rules laid down for the monks' discipline.

Apart from consultations with specific activities in mind, it does also happen that an individual will consult an astrologer without any particular reason in mind. Less devoted enthusiasts mention going to consult an astrologer either regularly, say on a yearly basis, or simply whenever they hear of a good practitioner, just to check up on what they will be told rather more out of curiosity than out of concern. A group of friends out for a stroll might stop to hear what a fortune-teller they passed had to tell them. The common phrase often used when going to a fortune-teller in this way, duu len (lit. to see for fun), reflects the diversionary nature of at least a proportion of astrological consultations.

The other major type of astrological consultation is that concerned with finding specific causes or advice for periods of bad luck or difficulty so that something can be done to alleviate the
client's anxiety and where possible solve his problems. This use of astrology will provide most of the basis for the views discussed in the next section which examines this major aspect of the resort to the resources of astrological explanation during periods of crisis. Astrology may be used whether the sense of crisis is experienced as things going wrong, a situation being out of control, or as the feeling of going through a bad time. It is this aspect of astrology which is the most frequently discussed in Bangkok, and it is one which gives rise to the most controversy about the role of astrology and other forms of fortune-telling in Thai society.

As well as providing the specialised astrological service of consultations regarding the right time to perform particular activities, astrologers are consulted on a wide range of issues and problems. They do not have an extensively developed exclusive domain in terms of the services offered for many of these, and indeed in general consultations regarding clients' problems, astrologers and all other kinds of fortune-tellers are often treated as being functionally the same. The concepts astrologers employ in their analysis and advice, while internally consistent and coherent in theory, are in practice often suffused with a wide range of other referents which are used to expound upon and to support the fundamental astrological system and its values. Therefore, while it is necessary to keep in mind the conceptual distinctions between the terms used in astrological exposition, terms such as fate, destiny, karma and so on, it is really only in viewing the actual practice of astrologers in their interaction with clients that the way in which astrological advice blends a number of themes together can be seen.

Astrology and Karma

One of the strongest and most controversial links concerning astrological ideas is that made with the fundamental Buddhist notion of karma. The relationship between astrological and Buddhist explanations in this area provide one of the main strengths and
sources of attraction to astrology in Thailand, but is also a source of tension with the dominant religious view and thus provides it with its most trenchant critics, as was pointed out in Chapter Two.

Most Bangkok astrologers argue that astrology does not contradict the doctrine of karma (kot haeng kam) which posits that one's present circumstances are a result of one's actions in the past: rather most suggest that astrology merely supplements or facilitates understanding of the particular workings of karma. In this view, the planetary picture analysed by the astrologer portrays a destiny which is the direct consequence of the client's past deeds. Since most agree that one's deeds in former lives cannot be known, all that one can know is what the results will be for this life. The importance of the role of astrology is also heightened by the fact that for many Thais the law of karma leads them to constantly expect changes of fortune when their current merit (or demerit) runs out (Mulder 1985: 166), and astrology provides a way in which such changes can be foreseen.

The effects of karma are sometimes thought to be essentially unknowable, for one does not know about deeds done in former lives nor can one know when and in what way the effects of past deeds will affect the present or the future. Although good will always result in good and evil in evil, neither the form in which the result will appear, nor the time at which it will affect the individual are calculable by recourse to the knowledge of the laws of karma (except for some popular beliefs which detail some of the more extreme forms of punishment or reward). Astrology's ability to foretell what will happen and when thus appears to provide answers which are not provided within the doctrine of karma itself.

However in this astrology runs counter to what many regard as the fundamental morality of the doctrine of karma, which encourages not the knowledge of what is to come but rather the knowledge of how one should act to avoid suffering. Moreover, the aim of seeking
astrological advice about present or future suffering is to find ways of avoiding or ameliorating the degree of that suffering, which is in direct contradiction to the ineluctable law itself. The practice of astrology, therefore, meets with opposition from those who argue that the law of karma should not be approached in this way. The third main objection to the practice of astrology stems from the accepted view that meritorious deeds or harmful actions performed now will further affect the future, so in this view the 'predestination' implied in the predictions of astrologers cannot be accepted as true given the constant ability to in some way influence the future by one's actions in the present.

The last objection to astrology is most easily answered, for many astrologers will suggest that what is predicted is merely an indication of the likely tendencies of the future (rather than a hard and fast prediction), which can be affected by the decisions the individual makes as a result of foreknowledge: and indeed this forewarning is the prime function of astrology as regards periods of misfortune. Astrologers and other fortune-telling practitioners point out that one's actions in the present will affect the future, and so this is why when a client's horoscope foretells difficulty, the practitioner will often suggest merit-making as an activity with results which cannot be precisely calculated, but which is bound to assist the client since the meritorious results of one's actions are always accorded credit as a more powerful influence than other factors, including those perceived in astrology. Nevertheless some experts maintain that the degree to which something is inevitable or just likely can sometimes be perceived by the astrologer.1

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1 A few astrologers claim to have ways of being able to assess the karma from one's previous lives in certain portions of the horoscope. One suggested that, for example, the twelfth house, the 'house of undoing' could provide at least some insight into this area, while another individual approach suggested that the 'point of karma' could be found in the tenth house (karma), which shows the effect of karma while the ascendant shows environmental factors (Simnet 2515). However, many others maintain that this kind of perception is not possible, and such interpretations are not a common component of astrological analysis in consultations. The ability to
A question which troubled one neophyte astrologer illustrates common perceptions of the relation between astrological notions of fate and the law of karma very well. This is the problem of how it is that two people born at the same time and place, and thus having identical horoscopes, could be born into very different circumstances, for example a rich and a poor person. Their horoscopes, being identical, would indicate the same life chances, with similar problems and successes, and yet this obviously would not be the case in reality, for it would be unreasonable to suppose that their lives would actually progress under similar circumstances.

The answer given to this question referred to the influence of past karma, and the fact that the true effects of karma are not necessarily visible in the horoscope. Although both persons would have similar disappointments and forms of success in their lives, having, in effect, similar destinies in this life, their past karma also dictated the different starting points for the two individuals, whereby one would live out his life in comparative luxury with all the advantages of a well-to-do status in society, while the other would fulfil his destiny in impoverished circumstances as a result of his lesser accumulation of merit in previous lives in comparison to the rich man.

The same teacher who put this argument forward, however, argued that people with different personal characteristics would not be born at the same time; and therefore one would not find a case, for example, of an intelligent and a stupid person both sharing the same birth time and hence the same horoscope. A stupid person would not have the 'right' or 'privilege' (sit) to be born at the same time as a clever individual. Personal attributes of this kind are therefore more closely associated with the horoscope than are

see previous lives is not often associated with astrology, although some more mystical forms of fortune-telling, largely those using meditation and mediumship, are sometimes associated with this.
personal fortunes. Irvine has also pointed out that in the north whether a person is 'hard souled' or 'soft souled' is regarded as being evident in the birth horoscope (1982: 111).

The degree of similarity that can obtain between the lives of different individuals born near the same place at the same time is ostensibly illustrated by an historical case which relates how King Mongkut, a keen astrologer, went to visit a monastery located close to the royal palace when he discovered that the abbot had been born at the same time as he himself had. The abbot was, like the king, an astrologer, and Mongkut asked him his opinion as to how it was that, with both of them born at the same time, one became the king and the other was an abbot of a monastery. The abbot's philosophical reply was that grass or trees planted at the top of a hill or at the bottom of the hill will grow where they are planted. The king had started at the Grand Palace and so, like a tree at the top of the hill, had become the king of the entire country, whereas the abbot had been planted at the bottom of the hill, but had still grown. The King then pursued the question of their identical horoscopes further by enquiring of the abbot what had happened in his life at the time when the King had received an excellent white elephant, traditionally a highly auspicious omen for the reign of a monarch. The abbot replied that at that time he had been given a white cat.

It can be seen that this view has several consequences in the process of astrological analysis. Neither a rich man nor a pauper would normally be aware that another of very different station shared a similar destiny, so the question of comparative advantage or disadvantage does not necessarily occur to the individual in contemplation of his own destiny, and this apparent destiny is usually interpreted in terms which seem plausible to his or her own

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2 For the many facets of auspiciousness of white elephants for Siamese monarchs in the nineteenth century see Bock 1884: 20 fn. 1.
experience. Astrological interpretation does not \textit{a priori} provide rationalisation for mobility within society or criticism of the status quo of social inequality which would contradict the assumptions of the doctrine of karma and the way in which it supports social differentiation.

These examples also illustrate the importance of the astrologer taking other information regarding a client into account in his analysis of a horoscope. An astrologer who, in reading the hypothetical horoscope mentioned above, predicted a rich man's life as the likely future for a pauper's son would not be doing his reputation any good. The analysis of the type of destiny visible within a horoscope must be placed within the context of karmic predispositions, and this is often done by reference to the discernible social attributes of the client. Thai astrologers are commonly supposed to take the apparent social, physical and personal characteristics of their clients into account, and while some more sceptical laymen regard this as a form of 'cheating' or evidence of charlatanism, it is regarded by practitioners as common sense for a good astrologer.\footnote{It is interesting to note in this regard the degree of observation of clothes and other indications of social status one researcher expected astrologers to notice during consultations, apparently with good results (Philairat 2524).} Most of all, this expectation reinforces the belief that as an explanatory and moral system astrology is not self-sufficient; as astrologers frequently point out, astrology must always be used in conjunction with understanding of the laws of karma, and this is also applied in a very practical sense to the client and situation at hand. In general, it can be concluded that for Thai astrology what has been argued for the explanatory effectiveness of karma in India also holds: that while karma is seldom the first explanation given for misfortune, it is usually the last one abandoned (Hiebert 1983: 130).
Astrology and Determinism

Although karma has moral force in explanation, it is fundamentally anti-historical in that while it asserts a causal link between the present and actions in the past, it also suggests that the relevant past is essentially unknowable, and that the exact influence of the past on the present is thus inscrutable. Nevertheless, the doctrine of karma provides a basis upon which opponents of astrology and fortune-telling argue that since everything can be explained with reference to karma, astrology is objectionable as a form of explanation. Some proponents of this school of thought accuse astrology of adherence to the idea of *phrommalikhit* (literally Brahma writing; fate), a concept ascribed to Brahmanism which refers to destiny prescribed as if by deities in a fixed and unchanging way. This kind of fatalistic belief contradicts the moral imperative behind the karma doctrine which suggests that by doing good one will receive good, even if one cannot know when or in what way. In this opposition one may see something of a parallel with the antagonism astrology encountered from orthodox theologians in Europe when astrology, as an early serious attempt at scientific explanation [of social and human behaviour] - and so ultimately at control [constituted] a rival system of explanation of events otherwise inexplicable, and a rival system of control to that provided by the Church of the day (Hill 1982: 178).

If the workings of karma are more powerful than astrological predictions, it is also possible to argue that astrological practice is irrelevant. This view was put to me one day when I was looking at books in a specialist astrological bookshop. A woman walking by stopped to advise me that it was a waste of time to take an interest in such things as astrology, and that I should simply go back to the principles of karma. She herself had had long periods of suffering, and had been advised by astrologers that she was afflicted by a number of malefic planetary influences evident in her horoscope. When she took advice to make merit in order to alleviate these
influences, however, things improved, and she thus came to realise that astrological explanations were a waste of time when all one needs is the principle that those who do good will receive good, and that one's experiences in life in the future can only be improved by observation of Buddhist teachings and practices.

Just as there is a question of the degree to which one's previous karma has influenced the birth horoscope, so there is a further important question of whether one has the ability to change the course of one's life as it is foretold by use of astrology. To the extent that what can be seen of the individual's future fate by the use of astrology is ascribed to the consequences of karma, then what the astrologer foresees may be changeable to some degree by the effects of one's actions performed in the present. However it is not thought morally possible for the individual to avoid the consequences of his actions altogether, especially by taking simple evasive action for the consequences of past demeritorious acts. To the extent that astrology is held to concretise and temporalise the results of karma, it can be seen to be potentially subversive of the inevitability of the moral workings of the karma principle, for if one knows exactly what consequences the latter will lead to evasion is likely to be attempted. Indeed it is partly the hope extended in practical astrology that present or future misfortune caused by past misdeeds can be seen, and that ameliorative or preventive action can thereby be taken, that leads to the popularity of astrology in Thailand. On the other hand, the more astrology ties itself to the moral principles of karma, the more it reduces its own claims to usefulness in prediction if nothing practical can then be done. Many astrologers acknowledge this difficulty with the suggestion that the future is inevitably more difficult to predict accurately than the present (or past) on the grounds that actions performed in the present and future may influence one's destiny in ways undetectable in the horoscope.
Frequently, however, the question of causation is more often related to practical issues than mere philosophical musings, for to the extent that action may resolve the actual problem, this tends to take the place of firm answers to the ethical questions involved. The degree of concern expressed over the question of causation will depend upon the seriousness of a problem. If, for example, a client were to discover that during a certain period in the near future he was likely to run the risk of being slightly injured in a certain type of accident - say a road accident - this might be ascribed to either bad fortune or to bad karma. In this case, however, the question is not likely to arise as a serious consideration, since the obvious response is to be especially careful when travelling on the road at this time or, if the indications are that such an accident were likely to prove serious, the client may consider avoiding road travel altogether. If there is an obvious form of practical action which it is possible to take the reason for the danger does not need to concern the client, and he is likely to be satisfied with the astrologer's information concerning the transiting of a particular planet as the cause of the potential accident. The case of potential fortune or auspicious periods is treated similarly: if the astrologer foretells of an imminent period of brief good luck as the result of the particular position of a benefic planet, the client will automatically use the astrologer's category of luck (laap) or good fortune (chook dii) to categorise the occurrence, and take steps to make the most of it (most frequently translated as buying lottery tickets).

Thai astrology in itself offers few non-karmic explanations of the causes of misfortune other than relating events to the influence of the planets. If a specific sort of planetary influence is ascribed to a given period of difficulty, there are some recommendations for dealing with this within the body of astrological knowledge. Specific offerings to a planetary deity (as when one planetary ruler is causing affliction), or to the planets as a group (in a generally auspicious ceremony such as that to
prolong life) are possible. There are also rituals which address a planet coming to the end of its period of influence, and for a planet about to start its period of influence (Thep 2511: 14). 4

Some Bangkok astrologers do recommend these ceremonies and if necessary officiate at the required Brahmanic rites. Ritual incantations addressed to each of the planets are included in some astrological do-it-yourself manuals for those who learn astrology in this way. In the kind of circles represented by the association astrologers, however, many astrologers claimed that they did not perform rituals of this kind. Many suggested these rituals were rarely performed, but some astrologers are well known for their skills in such matters. There is some recognition that these kinds of rituals are also disapproved of in some lay circles, however, and one astrologer told me that he would only perform rituals of this type for friends. It seems that this disapproval attached to rituals associated with the planets is because they are regarded as a form of magical practice, saiysaat, an association which many astrologers are keen to avoid because of the superstitious, life-taking and potentially malefic connotations applied to some Brahmanic ritual.

One reason for the apparent dearth5 of performance of rituals

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4 There are other astrologically based techniques for dealing with planetary effects. The astrological significance of gems has also been utilised in Thailand, for example. This might include the use of a particular gem associated with a particularly important planet for the individual, while to ensure the benefit of all the nine planets jewellery such as rings containing all the nine gems associated with the planets can be worn as an increased form of protection. These appear to have been very popular in court circles until at least the fourth and fifth reigns (late nineteenth century), although it is not clear how widely used they are now.

5 Of course, it is possible that the responsibility for the performance of this kind of ritual has not always fallen on those associated with the practice of astrology. It is not clear to what extent this kind of knowledge has been disseminated beyond the élite who originally practiced it: whether it has been disseminated in the same way that astrological analysis has; or whether it has never appealed widely to those to whom astrology became available with its spread to the general population, and has consequently not been adopted by them. Contemporary
associated with the propitiation of the planetary deities is that many Bangkokians, including astrologers themselves, deny that they now regard the planets as representing actual deities. The fact that astrologers can still refer to the 'influence' of, say, Saturn over a person's life is justified by one of two arguments. The first of these employs the kinds of astrological argument familiar in the West concerning the planetary influences being understood as a kind of environmental factor in the solar system – imperfectly understood but comprehensible in terms like the example of the moon's effect on the tides (an idea introduced to Siam in the mid-nineteenth century [Alabaster 1971: 9]). The second claims such statements are a way of using astrological terms as a kind of metaphor for other causes. In the latter case, the planets are seen as illustrating in a comprehensible and decipherable way the effects of destiny or karma, while not being a real source of influence themselves. This view appeared quite prevalent among the Bangkok astrologers with whom I studied.

However, there is no doubt that quite a few astrologers do take the notion of planetary deities very seriously, and are therefore influenced in their behaviour as teachers and in relation to their clients by the importance of treating the planets as supernaturally powerful beings who can be approached for certain reasons or who can decide to intervene in human lives in ways that then can be in turn affected by human recourse to ritual techniques. One teacher who saw himself as gaining knowledge in dreams from one planetary deity impressed upon his students that they also should pay respects to this deity. Another senior teacher widely respected at the associations was known as having performed the ceremony to reinstall the Brahma shrine at the Rajprasong intersection, as a result of which the shrine became truly popular when the deity's astrologers who do not practice this kind of ritual do not regard themselves as deficient in their role as astrologer because they know only the tools of analysis and make use of other forms of advice and assistance.
powers then became manifest. He was esteemed as a successful expert in matters astrological, astronomical and Brahmanic.\(^6\)

Rather than recommending courses of action which involve seeking the assistance or benevolence of the planetary deities, astrologers are likely to recommend that the client who wishes an improvement in what appears to be in store for him should make merit to alleviate possible harm (tham bun, tham bun sado khro). In fact, a majority of the astrologers I spoke to on this subject claimed that if a client were faced with hard times which he wanted to try and avoid as much as possible, the astrologer would either recommend practical action if the dangers were not too great and such action was practicable, or recommend that the client consider making merit in order to improve his chances of avoiding the misfortune.

The large number of monks who act as fortune-tellers are even more likely to link their role as predictive counsellor and Buddhist monk by recommending that the client make merit in the face of his misfortune. Monk astrologers and fortune-tellers have the advantage of being able to provide their clients with an immediate location and focus for merit-making, and if the kind of misfortune is not too grave may simply recommend that the client make an offering of candles, flowers and incense on the spot, after which the monk will bless them in the conventional way. In severe cases such as where death or serious illness may be involved, the client may be advised to be ordained. A justification for monks becoming fortune-tellers, given the demand for it from the laity, is that they are able to

\(^6\) Although astrologers do regularly employ the ritual of seeking the assistance of the nine planetary deities as teachers, and this practice is formally supported by the astrological associations, this is rather more allied with the pervasive Thai belief in spiritual teachers in many forms of knowledge than it is to do with specific values regarding the planets as active deities. Therefore the ritual is maintained for what it has in common with central Thai values of respect and obedience to teachers as historical transmitters of knowledge than for what it may reflect about contemporary attitudes to the nature of the planets.
reinforce Buddhist practices by linking them in this way to everyday problems for which they have been consulted.

This pastoral role can be extended beyond the encouragement of merit-making to incorporate an instructive role. One monk pointed out that consultations of a fortune-telling kind can be used for Buddhist instruction in a wider sense. If a couple came to request that he check their compatibility for marriage, for example, he would do so, but would also take the opportunity to instruct them on the kind of personal virtues and responsibilities which were required to make a good marriage work. In this way he used his role as fortune-teller to further his role as monk instructor, reinforcing the idea that astrological notions of compatibility and auspicious times are not in themselves sufficient; that Buddhist moral teachings on duties and right conduct are also required for success. In this way he very neatly rejected the argument that astrology and fortune-telling are in practice contradictory to the Buddha's teaching, and circumvented the criticism of monks disobeying the Buddha's injunction against practising fortune-telling instead of promoting understanding of the dharma.

Lay astrologers and fortune-tellers are not in such a convenient position to facilitate their clients' merit-making in the way that monks are. If they wish to recommend this course of action they may suggest that the client make offerings to a monk or at a monastery, but suggestions to perform other standard meritorious acts such as freeing birds or releasing fish are also very common.

Fortune-tellers may also suggest acts of charity which have some symbolic relevance to the predicted tragedy which the client seeks to avert or past act which may require atoning for. The symbolic value of the suggested remedy perhaps adds to its therapeutic value, but this kind of interpretation can be seen to be less than disinterested in the hands of unscrupulous practitioners.
Many practitioners reflect a common sentiment when they publicly criticise those who dishonestly charge their clients by the performance of extra services. One astrologer wrote scathingly of the fortune-tellers who, for example, on charging for the performance of a protective ritual would charge each successive client for materials which were in fact re-used each time (Phinyo 2524: 15). In general the provision by the practitioner of services designed to help clients who are predicted to be facing hardship can lead to suspicion and criticism for poor ethical standards from outsiders and from other practitioners conscious of their public reputation. Some astrologers seek to distinguish themselves from moo duu (fortune-teller practitioners) precisely on the basis that they do not provide such 'services', and only offer astrological advice of a disinterested professional kind. On the other hand, those who do provide extra services justify this as offering practical help to distressed clients.

Suggesting merit-making activities allows the fortune-teller or astrologer to maintain the credibility of his predictions by making his own disinterestedness clear, and leaves the clients with the satisfaction of familiar and comforting religious ritual performance which may have an undefinable practical effect, but the overall moral and psychological benefit of which is not doubted by client or practitioner. The result of this, of course, is that the astrologer or fortune-teller is prescribing a non-specific and non-divinatory answer to the nature of the problem. The support for this kind of activity reinforces the idea that the cause of the events predicted by the astrologers can be related to familiar Buddhist notions of karma. In any event, both astrologers or fortune-tellers and their clients agree that merit-making "cannot do any harm", even if the practitioner cannot guarantee to his client that the activity of merit-making suggested will provide a karma-balance sufficient to avert a specific predicted misfortune.
Moreover, as already noted, the concept of karma is useful in explaining failures of astrological predictions, so it provides some flexibility in the interpretation of the relationship of predictions to actual outcomes, and can be used with effect by both clients and practitioners. Buddhist fictional writers can emphasise that the will to take moral action in the face of adverse predictions is the main benefit to be gained from predictions (e.g. T. Liangbhibul 1982: 33-58), and to the extent that all predictions turn the individual's thoughts to doing good and to guarding against a lack of mindfulness, that in itself can also be said to be beneficial and in keeping with general Buddhist notions (Warayaphorn 2519: 11).

**Astrology and Everyday Action**

Astrologers and other fortune-tellers are also, of course, able to provide advice of a purely practical kind, and they do not hesitate to do so in their professional capacity. Some astrologers tend to confine themselves to the language and terminology of their profession but the terminology is largely incomprehensible to ordinary people who refer to it as *phaasaa moo duu*, fortune tellers' language. However many are sensitive to the way in which their clients perceive a problem or situation and, having hinted at a technical explanation for the problem in astrological terms, they will then go on to elaborate upon their diagnosis in practical everyday terms with suggestions familiar to the client but which are usually also derived from the specialised concepts used in analysis. The practitioner is guided by his own commonsense, background knowledge and feedback from the client in this type of discussion.

One elderly female palmist, in commenting on the usefulness of fortune-tellers, implied that what clients rely on fortune-tellers for most is a discussion of issues at their own level of understanding. In this case she was discussing the benefits of fortune-telling with a young educated nurse who argued that such methods were unscientific and therefore unreliable. The palmist's
response suggested that fortune-telling methods were not essentially different from other forms of scientifically based advice (such as purely medical or psychological forms of explanation), merely adjusted to the understanding of and therefore more relevant and useful to the ordinary person (khon chaaw baan) who lacked the education to make use of the other types of knowledge.

This type of argument reinforces the common perception of the fortune-teller as a kind of counsellor. Experience within this role naturally reinforces the breadth and depth of the practitioner's knowledge concerning a whole range of attitudes, life crises and walks of life, and this experience is regarded by practitioners as a legitimate form of credentials in their role of assisting others.

Of course, for some detractors of astrology and fortune-telling in general, the tendency of these practitioners to offer 'practical' advice is seen as even more pernicious than their assumed inflated charges for rituals or unwarranted claims to prescience. Some recent fictional works illustrate this kind of argument, where the unfortunate clients in this scenario are depicted as the socially and economically disadvantaged in society, whose needs can only be adequately met by overall social and economic changes (e.g. Chart 2526). This not uncommon kind of argument against astrology suggests its inherent danger is not simply that astrological beliefs are baseless, but that, by virtue of their position, fortune-tellers (especially in this view those who are in the position of needing to encourage further fees from their clients) usually 'help' the distressed client by telling them what they want to hear by way of reassurance, thus distracting the client from the need to take positive action in order to improve their situation. The view that fortune-tellers merely act as yes-men in order to please and cheer their clients is fairly common, especially among the young, who assume that clients' gullibility is increased by desperation and lack of alternative resources.
The need for the practitioner to offer commonsense, practical advice according to the situations of his clients leads to a certain degree of specialisation among practitioners in terms of the clients who most frequently consult them. This often applies most specifically to part-time astrologers who build up a reputation and work from their office or their home. The reputation of these people tends to build up within the circle of their own work environment, and so, for example, an officer in the army competent in astrology may come to be known among his fellows and consulted by them about work-related issues. This was the case with an army officer doctor whose closeness to the then (Field Marshal) Prime Minister attracted many army officer clients to his house for consultations (Aathit 2520a: 12).

This kind of case is not uncommon. Not only is such a person conveniently located and possibly familiar to his potential clients, he is also expected to have the advantage of gaining a good deal of experience in the kinds of situations faced by his clients, and hence to have a better background in successfully learning how to predict within certain areas accurately. Significantly, such specialists are also thought of by their clients and others as being better advisers because they can make use of their 'inside knowledge' of the context in which individual clients are seeking to know their own personal futures, and can advise well accordingly.

This expectation has also been expressed with regard to the astrologers to whom political leaders go for advice. In this context, if a particularly famous practitioner is visited by many aspiring clients, it is often supposed that the advice he gives (discreetly) is based more on his analysis of what he knows of his clientele rather than on purely astrological considerations. It is further worthy of note that comments that this sort of purely practical advisory role could be attributed to the king's royal astrologers have been made by Western commentators since the fifth
reign (Bock 1884: 20-21; Wales 1931: 62). The expectation that astrologers actually provide advice based on their position within an institution or network rather than or as well as on their astrological expertise makes it more justifiable for their advice to be listened to in the view of the more sceptical, since such consultations can take on the character of an exchange of ideas rather than an exercise in gullibility. Such forms of specialisations can also be used against astrologers, as when it was suggested only partly tongue-in-cheek that an astrologer acting as an investment counsellor should come under the control of the Finance, Securities and Credit Foncier Act (Bangkok Post 11 June 1979).

There is a final factor which further influences the particular role of the astrologer, and that is the perception, already mentioned, that fortune-tellers fulfil a socially useful kind of counselling role for those with difficulties. Among the well educated, this role is often explicitly compared to that of the psychological counsellor in the West, and this is sometimes used as a justification for the fortune-telling role since there are few other facilities available to the majority of the population. Fortune-tellers frequently also accept this image of themselves, arguing that they have an important role to maintain and boost the psychological well-being of their clients in the face of adversity. The emphasis on this aspect of their interaction with the clients is thus related to both the fact that fortune-tellers are usually consulted by people who are experiencing problems, and are seeking advice on how to understand and cope with their difficulties or uncertainties, and to the related need for morale boosting as a humanitarian aspect of the role of the fortune-teller.

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7 Wales, however, later pointed out that as recently as 1930 the then Siamese king publicly blamed himself for ignoring astrological advice in relation to the journey to Indochina of a lady-in-waiting who subsequently died (1971: 11).
Many teachers at the astrological school extolled the need for the astrologer or practitioner to encourage optimism in the client by emphasising the most positive side of the forecast they see likely for the client, highlighting periods of good fortune and likely opportunities the client may benefit from. One instructor, for example, recommended that it was good practice always to commence a consultation, whether a general one or one where the client volunteered their concern on a specific topic, with one or two of the strongest points in the client's favour in order to give the client sufficient confidence in his general fortune to face whatever problems may require courage and action.

Many fortune-tellers see this morale-boosting as a fundamental moral issue which provides a major justification for the practice of their profession. Indeed, some practitioners argue that maintaining the client's spirits and the right frame of mind is most important, even more crucial in their responsibilities to their clients than complete accuracy in the prediction given. One writer, questioning the wisdom of those who aspired to a reputation of being 'more accurate than the eye can see,' described his experience of dealing with a woman client who, it transpired, was planning to go with a gun to seek revenge on her unfaithful husband. The astrologer (after diligently exploring her horoscope, palm and so on until he found one form of prediction that did not bode ill), explained to her his view of what her horoscope suggested, and managed to persuade her that she would not be successful in her intentions and that to return home would be better. This author stressed that enabling clients, especially those involved in illegal activities or other serious problems, to find new paths and desist from harmful actions was much more admirable than the cleverness of absolute accuracy in what a practitioner could predict for his client (Caran Phikul 2522). This ability of the fortune-teller to help guide people in morally and personally beneficial action and even to help prevent crime appears to be recognised as part of the popular perception of their role as well.
In their use of their knowledge moo duu have the ability to inform their clients of many things, some asked and some unasked, and the selection of what to discuss and the way in which to discuss it is a constant theme in discussions of interactions with clients. By helping the client to keep in mind the more positive aspects of a situation and with constructive discussion of difficulties, the practitioner aids the client in maintaining the very important psychological states of sabaai cai (content, mental ease) and cai yen (cool heartedness) which they may be lacking if their problems are serious ones. Part of the practitioner's role, then, is to help the client cope with and manage their psychological difficulties in adjusting to life and the complexities it may currently be presenting.

The other side of this positive outlook approach, of course, is the role of the fortune-teller in dealing with impending misfortune or disaster. Most practitioners seem to be of the opinion that this needs to be carefully handled, although opinion is divided over just how much information the practitioner is obliged or permitted to give. Those who emphasised that the practitioner must at all costs help the client maintain a positive attitude were often of the opinion that the practitioner was wisest not to tell the client the full details of extreme misfortune if it was thought highly likely to occur and if it did not come up in conversation, since the client was not going to be any better off for expecting the worst before it happened.

Recognition of the fact that astrologers and other fortune-tellers are in a position of influence which may cause unnecessary hardship in the lives of clients if misused is reflected in the well-known ethical code which prohibits prediction of three kinds: marriage dissolution, the time of death of the client, and predictions from the horoscope of an infant. One commentator provides a rationale for this code by suggesting that if an
astrologer should inform a client that he or she and the current spouse are 'not a real couple' (*mi chai nda khuu kan yaang thae cing*), thereby implying that the marriage is not to last, the prediction may become the basis of a rift between spouses who might otherwise manage to live happily together. Similarly, informing a client of the occasion of his own death (correct judgement of which is generally considered a difficult, even tricky task) will needlessly destroy the client's peace of mind as the time approaches and would very damaging if the prediction proved premature. Further, predictions concerning newly born infants may lead the parents to favour some offspring over others and spoil some children by indulgence (Somchai 2519: 10).

Of these three issues, that concerning the foretelling of the client's death is most often cited, while possibly the one least likely to be breached is that concerning new-born children, for one astrologer remarked that parents did not usually consult *moo duu* concerning a child until the child had encountered a problem or had reached a time when important decisions had to be made. According to the ethical view a good fortune-teller should have understanding of the proper time for predictions to be made, as well as knowing when predictions are inappropriate.

It can be said, however, that these reasoned moral approaches, while taken seriously by many, are not observed by all, and some practitioners seem to make use of the technique of commencing a consultation with an arresting piece of bad news, such as the information that a close relative is likely to die soon, or that the client is likely to lose a large sum of money in the coming months, a procedure which is at least likely to gain the client's attention. Since accurate predictions of the time of death are considered the most difficult kind of prophecy to "get right" (Wisnusilp 2519: 4), possibly because of all incidents death is the most closely related to karma, fame can come as a result of accurate predictions in relation to eminent people. This was shown in the
recent example of a famous astrologer who was able to make up to twenty times his naval salary in consultation fees when the news of several such predictions spread (Saowarop 1982). Cases of the consequences of people being warned they are likely to die are also circulated in discussion and in the journals (e.g. Uttaraphat 2525).

The attention paid to these issues illustrates the extent to which the role of the fortune-teller is portrayed as a morally and socially important one. Above all, the practitioner is aware of the need for combining analysis with a consideration of practical steps to be taken, for clients seek them out not just to know what is likely to happen in the future but what they are able to do about it. Whether a prognosis for the future bodes good or ill, practitioners remind their clients frequently that what they are predicting may or may not happen without conscious effort on the part of the client. A client whose horoscope indicates a rosy future of business success and wealth should be reminded that he will not experience these if he does not take the necessary steps to make the likelihood a reality. It is frequently reiterated by practitioners in their dealings with clients that the client himself has a responsibility in whether a prediction comes true or not: he must work to ensure that the benefits can be realised, and he has some hope of avoiding most dangers, at least partially, if he takes reasonable precautions against something which appears likely, and strives to direct his behaviour in morally beneficial ways in order to ensure that his karma may act to protect him in as far as this is possible.

In this way most practitioners argue that their profession is the opposite of fatalistic: on the contrary, they see themselves as enabling the client to make the most of their life by exercising informed and directed choices in a way that is not equally possible for an individual who does not know what the potentials of his life are.
Clients' Views of Predictions

The views clients express of their interactions with fortune-tellers are in many respects in congruence with the view of their role held by practitioners themselves. Often a client will express particular admiration for a fortune-teller who is not just accurate in general about their life (a prerequisite for being taken seriously in most cases), but who has warned them in time of a particular misfortune or windfall which eventually came to pass. Of course, in the case of misfortune, the fact that the misfortune actually came to pass means that the client has been unable to avert it, but it then becomes a factor in the client's decision to return to the same person, possibly in the hope that they will again be warned of a danger in time to take action or at least be forewarned. Clients regard this forewarning as a duty as well as a sign of skill in a fortune-teller. One woman I spoke to had recently visited a recommended astrologer, a habit she indulged in occasionally just to see what might be in store, but whatever positive impression she had received of his abilities in general was outweighed by the fact that a short time after the consultation her house was robbed, an occurrence which the astrologer had not foretold.

There is some recognition among clients of a psychological role of the fortune-teller also, although this may not be clearly articulated. Many people reported that they usually considered going to a fortune-teller because of problems or difficult decisions in their life. This may not actually mean that they had a specific problem or even a run of bad luck which was concerning them, although this is also very frequent, but even a vague feeling of unease or a period of depression is sometimes interpreted as indicating that one is going through a trough and that something untoward may be about to occur.

Judging by the statements that clients themselves make there is some comfort to be gained from being aware of the likelihood of a
specific misfortune being imminent before it actually occurs, a sentiment that may reflect the fact that foreknowledge allows the sufferer to maintain some composure in the face of the difficulty. The way in which practitioners discuss likely misfortunes and actual problems with their clients often furthers this. In a social environment in which the individual is expected to maintain a high degree of calm composure under all circumstances, expressed in the combined concepts of coolness and detachment embodied in the notion of *cai yen*, the ability to have some preparation for the difficulties one may have to face, to have talked over the causes and the likely options open to one in the event, are all highly valued experiences. In this way the fortune-teller, even if he has to divulge bad news, allows the client to plan to cope not only in possible practical terms but also in terms of controlling their emotional involvement and maintaining an appropriate attitude in the face of their difficulties. There may also be something to the idea reported in *Thai Rath* newspaper to the effect that fortune-tellers are favoured over psychologists and social workers in their ability, among other things, to allay any sense of anxiety without referring to the shortcomings of the clients (in Philairat 2524: 5).

There are other therapeutic advantages in consulting a fortune-teller about the problems which one is currently facing or which appear to be imminent. One of these is the way in which considerations which may appear to the client to be imponderable or inscrutable can be openly discussed and various possibilities aired.

The actions and attitudes of others, which are often perceived to be unknowable, can be discussed within the context of the realm of possibility in consultation. A person experiencing work difficulties or hoping for a promotion may ask how favourable an opinion of him his superiors are likely to have. If a marriage is unsteady the fortune-teller may suggest reasons why, including the real character and behaviour of the spouse which would affect the marriage, as well as those of the client him- or herself. Such
discussions may include advice as to what behaviour the client may expect from the spouse, as well as suggestions as to what ways the client might consider improving his or her own behaviour. All of this information helps the client to form his own opinion on what he considers his best options, and these might then put to the practitioner for further analysis and advice. One woman in an unhappy and difficult marriage told me how a fortune-teller had told her when she asked if she should consider a divorce that if she divorced her current husband she was likely to have not one but a number of subsequent marriages. She chose to put up with the marriage she had.

Fortune-tellers use familiar categories such as fate, opportunity, and misfortune, and this encourages the client to assimilate the information in terms they are already familiar with, and to treat the content of the discussion in the context of everyday experience. Although many have mentioned with some awe a surprising prediction proved uncannily accurate with the passage of time, many clients do not seem awed by the predictions at the time, and the vast majority of those who mentioned going to see fortune-tellers described their attitude as one of open-minded scepticism both in relation to specific predictions and toward the process of consultation itself.

People who take the word of fortune-tellers too seriously are criticised as being credulous and misguided: the same woman who mentioned the prediction of a fortune-teller as a factor in her decision not to divorce was very scornful of an acquaintance who consulted her fortune-teller virtually before she did anything. Such an attitude is felt to reveal an undesirable lack of sense and of self-reliance. When it was reported in a mass circulation newspaper that a woman had killed herself shortly after a fortune-teller had told her she had not long to live, the case was seriously discussed as a pre-eminent example of the inadvisability of too-literal belief in the predictions given by fortune-tellers. Placing
too much reliance on fortune-tellers is also seen as being against the Buddhist teaching of self-reliance (*ton pen thii phûng haeng ton*) (Somchai 2519: 11).

If clients are almost unanimous in the idea that one should take all predictions with a grain of salt, measured with a careful assessment of the apparent accuracy of the practitioner concerning one's own case, there is also the other side of the argument: that "one never knows" and therefore it is better to bear in mind what one has been told in case it proves to be the case. Clients sometimes express very strongly the attitude that the more one can know about what may be in store, the better prepared one can be to face it. This seems best explained in terms of the psychological preparedness referred to above. To this may be added the fact that the information gathered about one's life helps to give the client a sense of direction and realistic expectations, as well as providing a sense of fitness when predictions do in fact come to prove true. Such things then appear meant to happen to the individual. If the predicted outcome is unfortunate it is not necessarily the immediate responsibility of the individual concerned, but a result of past acts. This is one of the psychological benefits derived from consultations at the time as well: for the fortune-teller will have provided the client with a sort of profile of his or her life, and, if he is accurate, will have uncovered incidents in this life to date which have already transpired, creating the impression that these, too, are fit and meant to have happened. In effect, therefore, the fortune-teller reconciles the client to at least some elements of his life and, if he is skilful at this, may have engaged the client in decisions about potential futures.

On the other hand, the client may simply wait and see if any of the predictions actually come true. For many clients, therefore, legitimacy or appropriateness of a prediction will only be bestowed *post hoc*. If the prediction does not come true, of course, it is often not remembered. When clients report discovering the wisdom of
advice given after the event, this is often the first time that the prediction has been elevated to the status of possibility. Even where misfortune is concerned, the practitioner gains prestige and gratitude in the eyes of his client if the prediction "comes true"; yet clients expect that some of the fortune-tellers' predictions may well come true, but that it is inadvisable to place too much store in what they say. For clients it may be preferable to be forewarned, but a certain degree of scepticism is recommended in order to be forearmed. Besides, both clients and practitioners recognise that no predictions can be one hundred percent accurate. There is yet a further element, however, which needs to be taken into account in the reasons which mitigate against the client taking any particular prediction too much to heart, and this concerns clients' attitudes toward the practitioners per se.

The Fortune-Teller as Practitioner

Han ten Brummelhuis has pointed out that Thai interactions with psychiatric doctors in Bangkok tend to be characterised by an attitude which is certainly not one of technically based dependency or self-evident trust in professional competence. Rather, the dependency is strongly directed toward the person of the doctor and simultaneously intermingled with a basic mistrust. (1984: 43)

This attitude leads the patient to 'shop around' to test advice against other professional and non-professional points of view. While there is a proportion of clients who have found a practitioner whom they regard as extremely accurate (duu maen), on the whole it would appear that many astrologer-client interactions in Bangkok are of a similar kind. There is a good deal of expressed scepticism even among those who regularly consult astrologers or other fortune-tellers, based not on substantial doubts about prediction per se, although this is itself a subject of much interested debate, but rather about the merits of individual practitioners, and the extent to which one can believe the advice given by any particular expert.
This scepticism partly reflects the idea that there are widely varying levels of skill and knowledge which the layman is not easily able to detect without actual experience. Such scepticism may also be an acknowledgement that there is much room for chicanery in this field.

There are many strategies adopted by clients to assess the skill of an astrologer or other fortune-teller. Many enthusiasts spend much time in eager discussions with friends and acquaintances exchanging notes on their opinions of practitioners they have been to see, and assessing the reputations of the latest most famous experts they have heard about or read of in magazines.

The reasons for which particular fortune-tellers are admired appear to vary. Most often, of course, reported accuracy is more important than trappings, and examples of surprisingly accurate predictions are a hallmark of special skill. Myriad examples of such correct predictions of the unlikely circulate in discussions on the subject, heightening the perception that "there must be something to it".

An important qualification is a reputation for or perceived level of honesty and integrity. Location at or membership of the Astrological Association of Thailand often carries this kind of assurance, for example, so that many astrologers highlight their association with this society.

Price is also a consideration in assessment of the standing of the practitioner. A high level of skill accounts for a higher price than the average, but a lower price suggests personal morality and benevolence of the practitioner, which are also important factors. Some practitioners prefer to make a point of leaving the decision of the fee to be paid to each individual client, thus avoiding the issue of appearing personally too demanding; a practice which is often an attraction and which does not appear to mean that
the practitioner is paid little for his services. Another way in which the practitioner can regulate his charges is to charge differentially according to the prediction he makes for the client. From those clients for whom he predicts great success and wealth he expects a large fee commensurate with the assistance he has been in helping them to become so, while for those clients for whom he sees nothing but poverty or disaster he expresses his sympathy and regret by refusing any remuneration at all. Overall the prices charged for consultations reinforces a notion of hierarchy among practitioners, reflecting and confirming the respective positions in the social hierarchy of their clients.

Monk practitioners, by contrast, share a double benefit from their position in that they are seen as both entirely disinterested and bound to honesty. Monks do not charge for an astrological consultation as such, although there is a recognised obligation to make some kind of donation to the monk or his temple at some stage in recognition of his kindness. This may well not form a specific act on the part of the layperson seeking his advice, however, for the monk or his wat may well be known to the layperson as part of an ongoing relationship of a basically religious kind, and the astrological advice received may form only one of many services the layman seeks at the wat. A much more potent reason for some clients preferring to go to see monk-astrologers, however, is because 'phra koobok mai dai': monks cannot deceive by telling lies. Such a reputation for honesty, and perhaps their role as responsible public figures rather than private practitioners as well as their spiritual power may explain why politicians are often seen to favour monk astrologers (cf. Tambiah 1976: 510).

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8 I was told that this was a distinctive feature of Chinese fortune-telling practice in Thailand, but have not been able to verify whether this is the case. The fact that it is such a familiar option may indicate that it is not restricted to Chinese fortune-tellers.
Monks have the authority of religious sophistication and are accorded a concomitant understanding of the nature of life's course, but they also have their drawbacks as counsellors. One young woman pointed out that there were many subjects which were inappropriate to discuss with celibate monks which might come up or be of concern in a consultation with a fortune-teller, and which are best discussed in the comparatively neutral and more worldly confidence of the lay specialist. There is no doubt, however, that many lay people feel especially confident in seeking the advice of a monk who can direct attention to religiously inclined explanations of difficulties, and has undoubted benevolence and the aura of his office to bring to his analysis of, comments upon, and suggested remedies for their problems; and monks are, of course, uniquely able to give powerful blessings to cheer psychologically troubled clients. The monks' astrological role is also positively enhanced by the fact that monks would normally be requested to provide the auspicious times for those events enhanced by merit-making where their religious services are also required.

The other main method for determining the skill of a practitioner commonly followed is the practice of "shopping around". This is often seen as being better than relying on the opinion of just one practitioner. If an astrologer has predicted something which is sufficiently of interest the client may ask for the prediction of another, to see if the advice is replicated. Of course, this can be a costly exercise, and it may be for this reason that friends or acquaintances who are known to have some skill will be prevailed upon to see if they agree with the prediction concerned. This is also a way of checking up on predictions which appear not to work.

Those clients who do not shop around in this way may have found a practitioner whom they consider trustworthy, and whom they revisit on a regular basis, whether or not the last prediction was particularly pertinent. These clients may feel that they have a
skilled expert whom they can trust. Perhaps this is primarily experienced as a familiar trusting understanding on the part of the client, but to the astrologer this familiarity with the details of the case, and the ability to learn over time what predictions have and have not come true greatly increase his confidence in interpretation of the client's horoscope, as well as providing improved knowledge of the client and his or her life.

Businessmen's astrologers often seem to have this long-term and trusting relationship with their astrologer, as reportedly do some well-known politicians, although it was not possible to find out to what extent the clients in these cases sometimes check up on their advisers by seeking second opinions from elsewhere. In such cases the bonds formed are often extended to much closer relationships than that of the formal consultation. In one case, a reputable astrologer oriented to the needs of the members of a successful commercial district, who had been temporarily incapacitated by a serious and costly disease, told me that his regular clients whom he had helped in the past kept in touch, helped with medical expenses, and made spontaneous donations to help support him during convalescence in recognition of his help. The sums he mentioned of individual spontaneous gifts were quite substantial, in the thousands of baht. In another case, an astrologer with a renowned reputation told me the case of a client of his who was so impressed with the predictions he was making in terms of solicited business advice that the businessman involved, by now doing very nicely, wanted to extend the formality of this advice, possibly in order to persuade the astrologer to help him exclusively in business matters to the detriment of potential rivals. The businessman's proposals made it quite clear that he was suggesting the astrologer become a kind of regular business adviser, and did not seem bothered by the anomaly of making this kind of request of a high-ranking monk.
The Person in Thai Astrology

In order to better present the psychological and social aspects of astrological practice, a closer examination of the kinds of discussion which take place between the practitioner and his client will be outlined.

When the client visits the fortune-teller or astrologer he has behind him a life history with which he is familiar but which, more often than not, he is concerned about at least in so far as its recent developments or imminent challenges are seen to be problematic. What he seeks from the astrologer is some indication of what elements of his experience are basic, ongoing trends, and what areas are flexible, ephemeral, or hampered by influences he is less tangibly in control of than most aspects of his everyday life.

The practitioner offers the client advice on what his orientations and actions should be in order for the client to fulfil his potential: to live the life that is right for him. In cases of adherence to a traditional world-view of a karma-regulated cycle of rebirths, the importance of achieving the most in this life allowed by the inheritance of previous lives cannot be understated. This view suggests that mindfulness of one's station and the duties, responsibilities and rights which it brings are a matter of some concern, but they are essentially unknowable by reference to notions of karma alone, and even one's birth status within a complex, strongly hierarchised urban society no longer in itself indicates the likely direction life will take. In a more secular view, this access to knowledge of what is likely to be in store often revolves around notions of luck, chance opportunities, misfortune, or personal competence, and these in their own way exercise a strong hold on the imagination.

There are a number of key themes in astrologers' depictions of the client's life, which give some indication of the most
frequent interests their clients raise. These include the major areas of work, marriage and family, health and luck (l.aap). Astrologers will often comment on the occupation of the client towards the beginning of a consultation. If a general reading is requested, this is often a good starting point, and the astrologer will list the types of occupations which he sees as suitable for the client to be following. If the client reports that he is engaged in something else, the astrologer will consider whether this may fall within the range of indicated occupations, and if not will comment on how well the client is likely to do at what he is doing, and whether or not he should consider changing his work. The work situation of the client establishes a great deal about social status and expectations, and thus lays down a set of shared understandings about the client's place within a wider social and economic framework.

Regarding the second main theme, the client's marital situation, the astrologer is likely to be asked or will offer comment on not only the personal characteristics and appearance of the spouse, but also the social status of the spouse, and whether the spouse is likely to be of assistance to the client in his or her line of work and economic situation. If the client is not yet married, and especially if female, the astrologer will often quite unprompted go into the question of when she is likely to marry, some of the characteristics of the likely spouse, and the nature of the marriage in general, since it is assumed that this is a preoccupation of such clients. The number of children, their likely careers, and the issue of whether they will be a trouble to or supportive of their parents are other frequently mentioned issues.

Another strong feature of the usual consultation discussion is the issue of the client's relations with others. The general pattern of the client's relations with other people, especially with those such as senior kinsmen, employers and superiors in general, as well as dependents, are usually analysed and discussed. The
division of the houses encompasses a great many categories of relationship from the various kinship categories to the categories of superiors and inferiors, and many of these may form the basis of the astrologer's information; although in the cases observed the various categories of kin were much less frequently mentioned than were those relating to work and members of the household.

The discussion of good fortune, usually in the sense of a stroke of good luck, is also a popular feature of consultations, with the client often asking quite baldly when he or she is likely to encounter it next. This is almost a compulsory question for some clients, and reflects the common association of fortune-tellers in general with an ability to see good fortune and enable others to make the most of this.  

Astrology and the Analysis of the Self

One of the most obvious paradoxes to strike the Western observer of astrological consultations in Bangkok is their seeming impersonality. While Western astrology at the popular level appears to cater to a pervasive form of introspection centring on the individual's "true self", other aspects of the individual's life and experience being projected as somehow following from the nature of the individual self; by contrast depictions of the individual in the Thai astrological view appear to work the other way around. The

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9 This association is possibly enhanced by the number of fortune-tellers who are willing to offer lucky numbers in lotteries of various kinds, and is certainly often misunderstood. On one occasion I overheard a young man demanding to know of an astrologer why, if he could really see the future, was he not richer and more successful than he was? The astrologer replied to the effect that even though he had the ability to see things in the future, he was still bound by his own karma, and astrology was not a skill which enabled one to overcome one's own destiny, even if one could help others to attain what good fortune they merited.
individual is manifest as emergent from, or perhaps immanent in, the account of the individual's life which the astrologer provides.\textsuperscript{10}

Such pragmatism perhaps derives from the context in which Thai astrology finds itself: the context of conceptions of karma which allow the individual actor some room for changing the pattern of his or her life during this lifetime. It is possible to suppose, moreover, that the pragmatism and impersonality of the astrological consultation contribute to the perceived benefit of astrological advice, namely some degree of psychological comfort. If the contrast with Western astrological practice has validity, then it follows that while the Western client derives some psychological boost from a renewed affirmation of self in relation to the actual experience of life, the Thai client derives comfort from reinforcement of a certain direction, standing and level of attainment in life, rather than from an explicit exploration of individualistic notions of self being affirmed. The Thai client seeks not to find who he or she is, but rather what he or she can expect from life, and how best to get it. One of Irvine's Northern Thai informants made a similar point when he argued that Thais, even those exposed to Western ideas, do not consult diviners, powerful monks or other traditional doctors to gain self-understanding, rather:

In my opinion Westernized Thai have been taught to succeed, to dominate over things and over people. When they fail in some way, they cannot bring themselves to ask for people's help, for this would make them lose face. So they turn to the supernatural instead.

(in Irvine 1982: 194)

\footnote{This contrast may be more apparent than real since the kinds of descriptions designed for popular reading in the West may not be an accurate reflection of the kinds of portrayal found in actual consultations. Nevertheless, there is an overt pragmatic emphasis in Thai astrological description which deserves further clarification for this discussion.}
The experience of life is largely seen in terms of the individual's expectations of his social environment, as well as much more intangible relations to the forces of fate and luck. A typical consultation will build a profile of beginnings and significant patterns of relations within the family of origin, likely career patterns focusing not only on interests and capabilities; but also relationships within the work sphere such as those with superiors; likely marriage partners, defined in terms of social status and way of relating to the client; numbers of children; and usually also including an estimation of general health trends. The main model for providing an account of the life of the individual then is the obvious natural course of the biological and social life cycle. However, imposed onto this is a likely pattern of periods of good and bad fortune, as well as an analysis of which aspects of the client's life are likely to be successful, and which less fortunate.

Each life has immanent characteristics projected in the horoscope, but these are further influenced and modified by the passage of time itself and the series of choices already made by the individual. A consultation at any particular time will need to take into account the general trends viewed from the perspective of the details current at that moment. The person's self is always implied within the analysis, but can be analytically separable, and in a sense the separation is frequently maintained within the discussion.

In a discussion of the work situation, for example, the client's horoscopic strengths and inclinations provide a basis for indicating in which particular field he is likely to be best situated. However, in any discussion of likely future prospects, promotions, and so forth, the astrologer is likely to look beyond the house relating to work to the indications of how he is regarded by his superiors. If the client's horoscope suggests that he is well regarded and supported by his superiors, the astrologer may judge that he has good chances for promotion or success. If the
horoscope indicates that the client does not have such good relations, and that his success is earned by his own efforts rather than by support from others, this judgment may be less likely. Significantly, the perception that a client is someone who is well-liked by his superiors and who receives their support appears to mean just that: the suggestion that the individual concerned is worthy of that support is not explicitly stated, nor do I think it is necessarily implied. The important fact is that support is gained because the individual's chataa is that it should be so; and provided he is aware of it and makes the most of it, there is no need for the astrologer to assess the worthiness of the client himself as a skilled and conscientious worker or as a loyal and trustworthy employee. In relation to a specified impending promotion or job change, of course, the astrologer would also look at the various planetary influences prevailing at the time to see if change or good fortune were indicated; a level of analysis even further removed from the individual's personal characteristics.

In questions that specifically relate to the client's relationships with other people, by contrast, the astrologer is likely to provide some view of the personality and opinions of the other people involved, especially of their dispositions towards the client. Thai culture provides a strong emphasis on the idea that one cannot really know what is in the heart or mind of another, yet this is frequently what effectively is asked of the astrologer. Not only will an employer's likelihood of promoting the client be commented upon, but the astrologer may also be asked about the fidelity or otherwise of a (particularly male) spouse, or the character and affections of a girlfriend or boyfriend, and may be further expected to venture a judgment on the integrity of a potential business partner or a friend with whom the client has financial dealings. If the client is not inclined to introspection in his interpretation of his own personality, he is often intensely interested in the motives and characters of those with whom he has dealings.
It is important to emphasise that this does not imply a totally fatalistic attitude, for both astrologer and client would at least nominally agree that the astrologer's analysis makes clear not what will happen, but what is likely to happen as long as the client's behaviour is in accord with the indications mentioned by the astrologer. The orientation achieved is psychological (an idea of what to expect) and behavioural (what type of action is most likely to guarantee the desired outcome) rather than giving greater insight into the individual make-up and personal potentials and weaknesses of the client.

It is likely that this aspect of analysis is one of emphasis rather than an intrinsic part of the astrological system, for there is provision within the manuals for explication of personality types, intellectual capacities, and so forth. It would seem, therefore, that emphasis on outcomes arises out of generally accepted theories of causal explanations, and reinforces the idea that most consultations are oriented towards specific courses of action. The fact that clients derive emotional or psychological satisfaction from such discussions appears compatible with the perception that it is the outside forces operating on the individual which are problematic and thus the appropriate focus for discussion, and that the individual in turn develops outward-oriented strategies for coping with those external forces without having his own sense of identity questioned or exposed.

The use made of astrology thus tends to confirm the findings of other writers in respect of general value orientations among the Thai. Han ten Brummelhuis, for example, in discussing Thai approaches to personal problems, even those categorised as psychological in nature, finds that the

... Thai individual seems little prepared for intense exploration of the inner world. Indeed, he is more inclined to spend energy in fending off his inner world and trying to protect it from penetration by others and perhaps also by himself. Any inclination towards laborious searchings of feeling and
motivations appears to be minimal. The preferred behavioural mode in dealing with demanding emotions is defense against involvement or simple avoidance.  
(1984: 44)

A viewpoint similar to this argument was put by the astrologer who pointed out the real difference between Thai fortune-tellers and Western psychological counsellors, to the effect that whereas the Western experts explored clients' problems by seeking the sources in the individual's own experience the Thai client's only interest was in when the problem would be overcome. The general processing of experience by the individual is depicted by Brummelhuis:  

... individualism is apparently not rooted in a differentiated inner world; it is not based on the individually articulated experiences of, and attitudes towards the outside world. On the contrary ... the preference is for traditional and universal formulas.  
(1984: 42)

This appears evident in the practice of astrology. General theories relating to the doctrine of karma, planetary influences or more nebulous notions of fate account for the 'why' of individual experience in Thai astrology, and this is articulated with a complex of notions of the differentiated nature and variable qualities of time to give some ordering of the 'when'. Both are clarified for the individual client by the astrologer when difficulties arise which demand action or reaction.

The kinds of discourse in which problems are framed in astrological consultations also reflect the general findings of the Thai values survey which found that for Thais

[in general ... to be successful and to "achieve" in Thai society does not depend so much on one's competence as on one's ability to perceive and choose the right means and opportunity that lead to success in the society. This is supported by the high rankings of the items "success in life," being "responsive to opportunities and circumstances," and a whole cluster of values that Phillips calls "social cosmetics" ... In short, achievement in Thai society does not mean hard working [sic] or task orientation. To quite an extent, it is more of a social achievement.

(Suntaree 1985: 179-180)
The astrological emphasis on choosing the right time and the right course of action to maximise one's own advantage in a situation is fully supportive of the acting out of this attitude.

Patterns of Interest in Astrology and Fortune-Telling

A recent survey has shown that there are certain clear patterns to the incidence of consulting astrologers and fortune-tellers. In their survey on Thai values Suntaree Komin and Snit Smuckarn asked those surveyed who had consulted an astrologer or fortune-teller during the previous year, to which thirty-nine percent of the respondents replied that they had (2522: 324). From the wide variety of circumstances under which a client might go to see an astrologer/fortune-teller, and given that, as has just been mentioned, visits to these practitioners are frequently occasion-specific, one year's record of visits seems insufficient basis on which to conclude, as the surveyors do, that their figures indicate that the majority of Thais do not give credence to astrology and fortune-telling. However, it is worth noting that the same percentage of respondents reported having made a vow to the spirits in return for some favour in the previous year (bon baan saan klaaw) (2522: 310), while only twenty percent of respondents had performed some kind of ceremony to alleviate misfortune (tham phithii sado khro) during the same period (2522: 317). If it can be accepted that the latter kind of performance is usually prompted by astrological advice concerning the imminence of bad fortune (Suntaree and Snit 2522: 317), then it would appear that a quite high proportion, possibly half, of those who consult astrologers or fortune-tellers are then involved in rituals designed to protect themselves from current or projected dangers. By the same token around half appear not to have required further ritual action in dealing with their situation.

11 For the purposes of this discussion, the figures supplied by Suntaree and Snit have been rounded to the nearest whole figure.
Suntaree and Snit found a significant difference in the numbers of men and women who had consulted a fortune-teller or astrologer in the previous year. While only thirty-two percent of the men reported having done so, a full fifty percent of the women surveyed had had such a consultation (2522: 325). These figures, interestingly enough, are the same as those for the people participating in vows to the spirits, figures which lead the survey authors to suggest that women may give more credence to various forms of saiysaat than men (2522: 310). The figures for the sexes in relation to astrology and fortune-telling would appear to confirm the statements made by these practitioners themselves that they usually have more female than male clients. However in relation to the argument of Suntaree and Snit that the figures show that more women than men believe in astrological prediction and saiysaat, it needs to be pointed out that the disparity in the numbers is likely to be influenced by the fact that women also seek consultations on behalf of or concerning their husbands and families. It appears to be most often the mother who will consult a fortune-teller concerning the difficulties her children are experiencing, for example, and wives frequently go to consult the astrologer on behalf of their husband regarding his business or career affairs, particularly if the husband's eminence requires a degree of anonymity.

Another discernible difference in the percentages of people consulting astrologers or fortune-tellers occurs between residents of Bangkok and people living elsewhere 'upcountry'. The Thai values survey showed that forty-one percent of Bangkok respondents replied in the affirmative, while only thirty-four percent of those upcountry did so (Suntaree and Snit 2522: 311). Although this difference is not a particularly marked one, it contradicts the generalisation sometimes made in Bangkok that these unorthodox and 'backward' beliefs are more prevalent in the less sophisticated rural areas than in Bangkok. Suntaree and Snit offer by way of
explanation of these figures that high government officials, traders
and businessmen may use astrologers or fortune-tellers quite a lot,
which may boost the Bangkok percentage. Moreover, their argument
that booraasaat is a prestigious belief system in Thailand (2522:
328), associated with those with high knowledge and professional
respectability and not just with the poor and uneducated (2522:
325), appears to be more than borne out by the figures which show
that among the occupational groups canvassed in the survey (ranging
in this case from petty traders, government officials, private
employees, skilled craftsmen, through businessmen, students and
labourers to farmers), petty traders (45%), government officials
(44%) and private employees (43%) had the highest rates of
consultations in the survey year, while labourers (31%) and farmers
(21%) had the lowest (2522: 328). Although the authors of the
survey profess themselves surprised by these occupational
differences (2522: 330), the variations would appear to suggest that
there is some truth to the perception often mentioned by both
practitioners and laypeople that people in commerce and those in
power (all of whom play high stakes in unpredictable fields) were
among the most frequent clients of fortune-tellers (although in the
survey business people rated only a 35% incidence). On the whole
the proportion of clients among the least well-paid groups was
lowest (33% of those earning less than 1,000 baht) while those
earning the most (in the survey classified as over 10,000 baht per
month) had not only by far the highest proportion visiting fortune-
tellers and astrologers (66%) but also a higher number of these
mentioning many visits in the one year (2522: 329). This lends
support to the public stereotypes which suggest that consulting
fortune-tellers is a resource available to the well-to-do who can
afford it, rather more than of the poor who cannot; and of those who
have a great deal to worry about losing, rather than of those who
have little or nothing to lose.

On the whole, the incidence of visiting astrologers or
fortune-tellers increases as the level of education increases
(Suntaree and Snit 2522: 327), a finding which is also supported by the research of Philairat (2524), but which contradicts the assumption of many educated people, namely that fortune-telling is likely to be of greatest use to the ill-educated who have the least knowledge and resources to help themselves in times of difficulty, and who therefore tend to rely on such things as fortune-telling as a kind of psychological crutch to support them through insoluble difficulties. In spite of the clear relationship between levels of education and interest in fortune-telling, the authors of the survey do not attempt any exploration of the obvious possibility that levels of education may actually contribute to interest in or dependence on astrology and fortune-telling.

The values survey found no real differences in the incidence of having visited fortune-tellers or astrologers among the different age groups of the respondents, with the figures showing only a slight peak in the fifties age group (43%). The only other notable figure in relation to age is the 3.4% of the sixty-years-and-over group who sought prognostications more than twenty times during the year in question; and indeed, in contrast to the overall incidence of consultation, the proportion of those visiting practitioners more than twenty times during the survey year increases with the age of the respondents (see Suntaree and Snit 2522: 326). In terms of general interest in fortune-telling, however, it would appear that there is no particular age associated with special reasons for attraction towards seeking predictions of the future.

While the survey just discussed shows some clear patterns in the clientele associated with astrologers and fortune-tellers, it should be remembered that the figures relate to only the period of one year prior to the enquiry, and this may not represent very accurately the overall interest in these practices. Moreover, the survey does not distinguish between the different sorts of motivation which impel the respondents to seek this kind of advice; and so it is not possible to tell what proportion of the
consultations reported were related to specific ritual matters, and what to more secular concerns.

On the question of whether Thai astrology is ultimately fatalistic or not, it is interesting to review some of the final findings of the Thai value survey regarding what the authors depict as 'fatalism'. According to Suntaree this attitude, defined somewhat negatively,

was expressed in terms of belief in karma, that all happenings in life are consequences of one's own deeds in previous lives. It is something that nobody can do anything about.

(Suntaree 1985: 178)

As with patterns of consulting astrologers, more women than men were found to be influenced by notions of karma (81% as against 71%). However rural Thais, who consult astrologers and fortune-tellers less frequently than do their urban counterparts, believe in karma significantly more than do the city dwellers (83.8% and 69.5% respectively). There is also a clear difference between the most educated and the least educated in terms of belief in karma and in the idea that people are born unequal (in terms of bun waatsanaa, or merit based on former deeds), and in terms of those seeing themselves as accepting their fate. The poorly educated accept all of these much more than the highly educated, and in the last-mentioned case, the difference is the most dramatic, with the least educated accepting their fate in over 76% of cases, while only 12% of the highly educated saw themselves as this fatalistic. Farmers, who had a low rate of interest in astrology, had the highest rate of belief that people are born unequal at birth, with the extraordinary rate of almost 92% agreement (Suntaree 1985: 178-179). Businessmen and students believed in this the least.

It would therefore appear that the charge of fatalism, especially in the most extreme sense of that term, does not correlate well with those who consult astrologers and fortune-tellers, who, as was noted at the commencement of this section, are
largely women, more often urban than rural, predominantly well-educated and at least comfortably middle-class.\footnote{This pattern of greater adherence given to astrology by the middle and upper classes in urban areas has been reported in other Buddhist societies. Gombrich, for example, noted this pattern in Ceylon, and attributed it quite reasonably to the fact that astrology 'caters for the emotional insecurity of those who have left behind the ascribed status of traditional village life for the competitive strains of a more "open" society' (1971: 148).} It seems more reasonable to suppose that the views astrologers themselves have of the usefulness of astrology, and the commonly repeated argument by clients that it is better to be forewarned and hence forearmed, are a more accurate reflection of the use to which astrology and fortune-telling are put than is the assumption of fatalism.

In line with the analysis of this chapter, the survey results may be suggested to indicate that clients of fortune-tellers appear to consult them with an aim to discussing strategies for action, and making the most of what opportunities seem most profitably pursued. They are actively engaged in the question of what to do with the future. Those who might, in a Western sense, be regarded as having a weak sense of self in that they feel least able to act upon or change their lives (or be in need of doing so) are apparently least inclined to consult fortune-tellers, and appear to find the relevance of the future either comparatively unpressing or lessened by the attitude that they will simply have to tolerate it.

It is tempting also to draw some conclusions about the role of education in Thai society in the sense that, while the educated arguably are among those with the most practical opportunities for controlling their lives, they also choose to have the most recourse to astrologers and fortune-tellers. It will be remembered that Irvine's informant questions whether the process of higher education does change the experience of the self much, and in terms of the discussion developed here emphasising what I have termed the impersonality of astrological consultations, the survey data does not contradict the suggestion that education does not actively
construct a highly individuated self in the modern sense. Astrology would appear to maximise strategies for coping with life (by a variety of socially accepted techniques) without reference to introspective concepts of the individual, and without accompanying notions that one's individual self or inculcated skills will inherently provide a basis for the desired future.

Pugh has argued that the functional role of anxiety-reduction and confidence-restoring in astrology and divination has overshadowed the less well-developed analysis of the role of astrology in meaning management (1984: 87-88). She therefore questions the ability of analysts to invoke the operation of psychological mechanisms in the divinatory... without the full support of a full description of the subtle representations of person and experience which inform the divinatory enquire' (1984: 87)

and draws on Janzen's suggested possibility that other cultural systems may 'draw the effective boundary of the person differently, more expansively, than classical Western medicine, philosophy and religion' (in Pugh 1984: 86). She goes on to argue, from her analysis of the construction of images of the client and his situation in India, that there is a 'holistic orientation... formed by the continuity between person and situation which is emphasized in astrological hermeneutics' (1984: 100).

It is suggested in this chapter that the interpretation of the individual, being perceived not only within a particular situation, but at a particular point in a longer process of time, contributes to the externalisation, rather than internalisation, of the concept of the person constructed during the astrological consultation. As Kemper has noted for Sinhalese astrology, astrology enables subtleties of distinction between individuals beyond those supplied by the more general categorisations of social status, and provides within this a further 'technique for predicting momentary changes' (1979: 478). The astrologer helps the client to
locate him or herself in relation to a process which has unfolded in certain ways to result in the present situation, and which will transform itself in yet further ways in the future; and it is this holistic placing of the individual and his present situation in relation to a past and a future which is the task most specific to the astrologer or fortune-teller.

Earlier in this chapter I argued that commonly in Thai perception, astrology must always be used in conjunction with the doctrine of karma, and it was pointed out that astrology tended to rely on the moral principles of karma for its logical completion. I noted also that astrology posited the possibility of a temporally much more precise comprehension of past, present and future occurrences than does the Buddhist moral argument. While astrological explanation relies on the moral assertions of causality associated with karma, however, it can potentially provide a more specific and thus reliable contextual basis for action, especially action designed to promote the individual's own interests, than does the Buddhist doctrine. In practice Thai astrology can allow exploration of personal possibilities removed from their moral context, while remaining theoretically tied to the Buddhist argument of cause and effect.

The fact that the Thai population shows a clearly divergent tendency of separation between those who see themselves as proponents of the law of karma and those who make use of divinatory techniques suggests that the relationship between the two conceptual frameworks can to some extent be seen as one of competition or divergence rather than of interdependence. There are, no doubt, many Thais who maintain interest in both sets of ideas, yet as far as overall statistical trends in practice is concerned, people who express adherence to notions of karma are least likely to consult fortune-tellers, while fortune-tellers' clients are mostly found among those who most often repudiate dependence on karma as a total explanation of destiny. At the very least, this can be taken as an
indication that the two sets of ideas can be and are utilised independently of each other.

**Conclusion**

It can be seen from the discussion in this chapter that astrology is not an uncontroversial practice in Thai society, and that this may be related to the contribution it makes to a number of important social and religious issues.

It is clear from the various arguments concerning the explanatory power of astrology and the role of the astrologer as personal counsellor, as well as from the general prevalence of discussion, debate and practical caution in evidence in relation to clients' interactions with practitioners, that astrology and fortune-telling are the subject of much conscious rationalisation ranging from scepticism even on the part of its followers to outright rejection on the part of its detractors. This is not necessarily new to Thai astrology, but it is clear that there has been an impact both on practitioners and clients from the arguments of rational scepticism, social reform and religious moral indignation presented by critics. The stressed relation of astrology to other elements of the dominant Buddhist belief system, the frequent down-playing of Brahmanic ritual and deity-based explanations, together with accommodation to such arguments as that requiring statistical validity, reliance on experience and commonsense, and appeals to popular psychological views all reflect this process. Indeed the degree of interest displayed in discussion by both practitioners and clients suggests that the 'sustaining of ontological security' (Giddens 1979: 219) of fortune-telling and astrology is leading to reinterpretations as a result of these challenges to their conventionality and social acceptability.

The research of Suntaree and Snit strongly suggests that the main supporters of astrology and fortune-telling are currently found
among Thailand's urban middle class. It is not unlikely that this relates to the pronounced need of the members of this class to find guidance and psychological support for their newly mobile social status and the complex decisions which they must now take in order to make the most of opportunities presently available to them. This need can be contrasted, for example, with the lack of interest displayed by farmers in such concepts as astrologically defined destiny. It may also be that this urban group, which is increasing rapidly in Thai society, and which must find new bases of legitimacy as a support for its activities, does not have the same access to the claims for moral standing supplied by the doctrine of karma which is still utilisable by the political and religious élite.

Sombat has made an important point with regard to the use of the idea of karma to support one's social standing in Thai society. While noting its contribution to the stabilisation of society by legitimising social differentiation within the social system as a whole, he also points out that the concept of karma has other complicating elements in the assessment of the karmic standing of the individual. He argues that the individual's well-being, standing and karma in effect are interdependent with those of his superiors, so that if the merit of one's superior runs out, so frequently also does one's own (1978: 125). In discussing the dependence of the inferior on the merit of his superior, Sombat is chiefly referring to the context of the traditional (and more recent developments in the) Thai bureaucracy, but to some extent his argument extends to the many members of Thai society who are bound up in their own local hierarchies of patronage and dependence.

If this argument is assessed in relation to the research findings of Suntaree and Snit, who also argue that success is defined in terms of social achievement rather than other factors, we might suggest that this interdependence also applies frequently to those most interested in astrology, namely urbanites in general, who were discussed in Chapter One as being most involved in the pull of
social and political hierarchies, and within this group including traders, government officials and private employees, the latter two of whom are especially dependent on their superiors' fortunes. This factor would also explain the prominent interest taken in fortune telling and in karma by women, who, as Sombat points out, are dependent on the merit of their husbands (1978: 124).

Finally, the attitudes and practices discussed in this chapter all illustrate that astrology as a method of divination is very practically oriented, being used at particular times when decisions have to be made or when problems arise, and being mainly concerned with the questions of what actions should be undertaken and at what times. Astrology provides an occasional source of advice, analysis and reassurance when these are required, as well as contributing to periodic reviews of the individual's sense of direction, and thus forms part of a wider series of sources of understanding and action available to both the practitioner and the client in their everyday strategies.

It will be suggested in the following two chapters that timeliness and careful attention to the practical significance of predictions are also significant features of Thai astrological contributions to the political sphere.
CHAPTER SIX

THE FOUNDATION OF A NATION

Introduction

In the last chapter it was shown that astrology is utilised to highlight choices and tendencies at various stages of the individual life-cycle, to illuminate and support the position of the individual, and to take account of the need for change and process in the life of that individual over time in relation to the astrological possibilities indicated by the birth horoscope.

In this chapter a similar process will be discussed in relation to 'mundane' (national or political) astrology, to show the way in which astrological and other divinatory techniques have been used to define the nature of the Thai polity, and to attempt to account for changes and projected trends in the most recent history of the country. It will be seen that there are many techniques utilised which are similar to those just discussed in relation to personal histories: there is great emphasis on the primary nature of the original horoscope, but also a need to keep observing the effects of transiting planets over time; on the interpretation of the context of events in order to understand their implications according to the horoscope of the time; and on the imperative to fulfil the positive characteristics and take measures to avoid the weaknesses as indicated by the original horoscope and the effects of transiting planets upon it.

The horoscope in this case is that of the capital city, Bangkok, and dates from the early stages of the building of the capital. Nevertheless, as astrologers frequently point out, the horoscope is no longer merely that of the city itself, for now that
all other regional centres are under the jurisdiction of Bangkok, the horoscope in Bangkok is effectively that of the entire country. The date of the horoscope is soon after that of the accession of the first king of the Cakkri dynasty, Rama I, who built the new city as a site for his reign after the deposition of his predecessor Taksin; and, since he was able to take advantage of the consolidation of the Siamese state accomplished by his predecessor, it marked the ascendancy of the new dynasty over the whole of what was then the Siamese kingdom.

Like his predecessor, the equally non-royal general Taksin, Rama I had to re-establish not just the political control of a central administration, but also the forms and rituals of Siamese monarchy which were an intrinsic part of the legitimacy of the ruling institution. Rama I's efforts towards reconstruction of social and political forms in the manner of the former royal capital have been the subject of much analysis (Somkiat 1986: 112). Taksin was very preoccupied throughout his reign with military expeditions to secure the allegiance of competing political centres, and it was left to Rama I to re-institute many of the more elaborate ritual forms of monarchical rule in his new capital. It was therefore only in the more settled reign of this new dynastic founder that the full coronation rituals were finally carried out (Chula 1982: 79) for example; and indeed, since at the time there was some fear that Taksin's sudden demise might have been related to his failure to undergo proper coronation ceremonies (Wyatt 1982: 28), and subsequent comments have also linked his demise to a failure to establish a city pillar (Th. Kluaimai in Cholthira 2531: 6), the importance of the ritual aspects of Rama I's installation should not be underestimated.

The horoscope of the city of Bangkok (duang muang) is located within the city pillar of the capital, known as the lak muang. The lak muang of Bangkok was erected just two short weeks after officials of the then capital Thonburi requested general Cakkri to
ascend the throne on the grounds that King Taksin was unfit to rule. After the pillar was established the construction of the royal palace and monasteries could be begun. An official chronicle records that there were considered to be sound military reasons for moving the capital city over to the other side of the river from the western city of Thonburi (Thipakorawong 1978: 1), although it is also possible to suppose that Cakkri, as the non-royal successor to a deposed king, shared with the Thonburi king the desire to 'avoid the political incongruity and embarrassment' (Butt 1978: 37) of establishing himself on a throne for which he had no hereditary credentials (Reynolds 1979a: 91). Furthermore astrological considerations are also said to have influenced the decision to relocate the capital (Butt 1978: 50 fn. 10).1 Taksin does not appear to have established a city pillar for his city of Thonburi, perhaps because of pressing military concerns, but Rama I followed what was then an accepted prerequisite for the founding of a political centre by having his astrologers find a suitable auspicious moment for the city pillar to be raised; thereby selecting a moment not only for the founding of the city, but to provide a horoscope taken to be the basis for the subsequent development of the capital.

City Pillars and Centres of Power

The history of the association of city pillars, or lak mūang, with political centres is of considerable antiquity, although the origin and symbolism of the pillar remain the subject of debate. There is widespread representation of such city pillars in Thailand (Terwiel 1978: 165), examples of which include a very ancient one in Phuket. There are records of the establishment of lak mūang in the north of Thailand as early as B.E. 151 (around 608 A.D.) in local chronicles (Kancanakphan 2519: 78), and although the accuracy of

1 Campion suggests that astrological considerations appear to have prompted relocations of capitals in both Burma and Thailand in 1782 (1988: 268).
these records cannot be substantiated, the antiquity of some pillars suggests that *lak mûang* may well be part of the indigenous religious tradition of the region (Davis 1984: 273-274). The city of Chiengmai is recorded to have formally erected its city pillar in 1296 A.D., and it is thought that the city of Ayutthaya also had a *lak mûang*, since it is assumed to have been a necessary part of the Thai political heritage by that time (Kancanakphan 2519: 84-85).

The *lak mûang* is pre-eminently a symbol of political power. Its establishment serves to officially mark the status of the community as a political and religious unit of some eminence; and when the political control of the centre is weak other centres establish their own pillars (Wijeyewardene 1986: 78). Turton has shown the relations of hierarchy and opposition between state cults of the *lak mûang* and more localised cults (1972: 255-256), and Terwiel has noted that among the Black T'ais the pillar is changed with each new chief who, on his succession, takes out the post of his predecessor and installs his own (1978: 167).

Chronicles provide several examples of the seriousness with which the city pillar has been treated by ruling groups into recent times. There is a case recorded in a chronicle of the rebel Lao Lord of Vientiane, who took the town of Nakhorn Ratchasima and forced its inhabitants to move to his own city. Apparently as a guarantee of the success of this venture, he ordered that the *lak mûang* of the defeated city be uprooted. The chronicle account of these events records that since nobody dared move the pillar afterwards for fear of displeasing the guardian spirit, it lay horizontal for quite some time. It was only when Prince Damrong was sent from Bangkok to the northeastern city (in connection with the railway line to the area) and on finding the pillar ordered it restored that it was returned to its original position (Chanthit 2525: n.p.[2-3]). The *tamnaan* of the twin city pillars of Trat confirms that the more general political independence of a community can be represented by the *lak mûang* of its capital. During the
French occupation of Trat, a perspicacious French soldier noticed how 'the inhabitants of Trat often went to pay their respects at the city pillar and how this could foster rebelliousness.' He tried to have the pillars removed, even employing an elephant in his attempts to shift them, but to no avail. The only effect all his efforts produced was to make the pillars lean a little to one side. However, soon after this the Frenchman broke his neck, and when Trat was subsequently returned to Thailand it was found that, miraculously, it took only two or three people to restore the pillars to their original upright position (Terwiel 1978: 171).

It would appear then that the chronicle traditions attest to the significance of the lak mūang as a symbol of legitimacy for the rulers of the polity. The tendency to locate pillars just outside the seat of ultimate authority - the northeastern corner of the Grand Palace in Bangkok, and more recently in front of the town hall in provincial centres (Terwiel 1978: 159) - emphasises the link between the guardian spirit of the city and centralised political power. The close relationship between the city pillar and the ruling dynasty is perpetuated today by the current king and queen who continue to pay their respects at the pillar on special occasions, such as that of the bicentennial celebrations of the city's founding. Indeed, in the current reign, notably the longest in some time, three major celebrations of worship of the city pillar deity have been performed by the king, all between 1970 and 1986 (Cholthira 2531: 6). This affirms the continuing close connection between the city pillar and the monarch, which is such that the pillar has virtually come to be a symbol of the latter (Cholthira 2531: 10). The present Crown Prince was a patron of the most recent and most elaborate renovations to the Bangkok pillar shrine in the 1980s (Cholthira 2531: 5).

More magical and animistic elements of the power of the lak mūang are manifestly of benefit to all the inhabitants within the sphere of its suzerainty. Part of the potency of the city pillar
from the point of view of the city’s inhabitants lies in the belief that the pillar is the dwelling of a spirit, usually a *theewadaa* or deity (Van Esterik 1982: 11), who takes on the function of a guardian deity for the city and its inhabitants.

It is not clear how spirits have come to be associated with city pillars. There is some evidence cited by Wales and other early writers to suggest a possible former custom of sacrificing citizens at the establishment of the pillar. The evidence for this practice is vehemently disputed by Chanthit in his publication on the city pillar of Bangkok (2525), where he suggests that the persistence of this type of reporting, with its implications for the present dynasty, owes much to a European propensity for the miraculous and a desire to show the barbarity of the Thai people and kings. However his argument explains neither the fact that such beliefs are currently held as a result of both oral and literary traditions with regard to many provincial capital city pillars (Terwiel 1978: 160), nor the long and detailed attention devoted to such practices in the version of the literary work *Raachaathiraat* compiled just three years after the raising of the Bangkok *lak m"lang* (see Chanthit 2525 n.p. [5-7]). I was also told one account of a case of a later burial at the site of the Bangkok city pillar which was held to change the nature of the spiritual power of the pillar shrine, and so it may be suggested that the existence of the belief of the practice of human sacrifice being carried out still has consequences for the supernatural powers believed to reside in the pillars, including that of Bangkok.

Van Esterik has argued that the spirits associated with the guardianship of various political domains are ranked, and that those who are charged with the protection of major units, such as cities and kingdoms, are usually referred to as the more benevolent *theewadaa* (deities), perhaps partly because they are sometimes supposed to include former members of royalty, in comparison to the more dubious character of the ghost-like *phii* (commoner spirits) of
more localised house and village domains (1982: 9). This confirms the assertion that the spirit of the city pillar of the central rulers is more powerful than the guardian spirits of other localities. In Bangkok, the ultimate power of the spirit of the *lak muang* is aided by the fact that a number of spirits from other important locations within the city have been gathered together within the shrine of the city pillar. The idea of the guardian spirits representing the prosperity and safety of the polity and its inhabitants is shown by the mention of the expectation, found in the predictions of the fall of Ayutthaya when the kings were no longer righteous Buddhist monarchs, that the guardian spirits of *phra stīa muang* and *phra song muang* would flee the city (La-ong n.d.: 196; Krom Sinlapakorn 2507: 362).

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2 The origins of all these spirits is not entirely clear. *Phra stīa muang* and *phra song muang*, whose images are similar, have slightly different areas of jurisdiction: *phra stīa muang* is said to be the protector on land and water, and *phra song muang* protects the public nationwide with the aid of two supernatural assistants. *Phra lak muang*, guardian of the city pillar itself, is the defender of laws who ensures that the juridical process is carried out justly (Chanthit 2525: n.p.) Another spirit who now resides here, *caw phoo hoo kloong*, formerly had a shrine near Wat Cetuphon at the hall of drums, a tower containing three drums which were beaten to mark the opening and closing of the city gates at sunrise and sunset, and to warn of fire in the city or of approaching enemies (respectively) (Caroen 2524: 10723). The shrine of the guardian spirit associated with the hall was removed when the hall was pulled down in the fifth reign and although there is now a replica of a Sukhothai style hall in the grounds of the Ministry of Defense, the image of the spirit has remained at the shrine of the city pillar. The other two supernatural beings, *phra kaan chaisii* and *caw phoo ceetakhup* are both assistants of *phra yam*, the Brahman god of death. The former is represented as seated on a barn owl, the mount on which he ventures forth on his night-time excursions to snatch those who have, by their transgressions, merited death. The latter carries the book in which the misdeeds of the citizens who have died are to be written, and from which he has the duty to read the list of names. This image had formerly been located in its own shrine near a former prison (Chanthit 2525: n.p.). It is possible that when the fourth monarch of the dynasty, King Mongkut (r. 1851-1868), had the roofs of the spirits’ shrines renovated, they were in their original positions in various quarters of the capital, since they are listed separately (see Thipakorawong 1966: 410). Wales reports that the drum tower image seems to have been moved to the city pillar site together with the others in 1919 (Wales 1931: 303). In the latest renovations to the site finalised in 1986 these deities were once again separated from the city pillar in a separate hall on the site, and Buddhist images were added to the complex (Cholthira 2531: 5).
The *lak műang* of Bangkok is a popular place of worship for the residents of the city; and it may be, as one observer suggested (Kancanakphan 2519: 71), that the shrine's popularity has increased over the last few decades, requiring the recent enlargement of the shrine. Even in 1969 the shrine attracted so many people daily that the offerings purchased by the visitors amounted to many thousands of baht per day (Terwiel 1978: 163). Like the shrine to *phra phrom* in the centre of the Rajprasong business district, many people come to the shrine each day to pay their respects, and to ask for assistance from the guardian spirit in business, education, family matters or health. If the wish they have asked for has come true, they will return to present the offering they vowed to make as a sign of gratitude. The best fulfillment, according to the accepted understanding, is a performance of the *lakhorn chaatrii* folk drama especially enjoyed by the guardian spirit. In the past there have also been other sources of help available from city pillars. In some instances, pillars have been held to have medicinal powers (Kancanakphan 2519: 80-81), which reminds us that at least in some instances, it is the pillars themselves which are powerful, aside from the spirits believed to inhabit them (Wijeyewardene 1986: 150).

The guardian spirit associated with the *lak műang* of Bangkok has also been invoked in many of the royal rituals which the king performs on behalf of the city community and the nation as a whole. In the *songkraan* or Thai New Year festival, for example, the ceremonies performed at the royal level include supplication of several guardian spirits of the city, including *phra kaan chaisii*, *phra suä műang* and *phra song műang* as well as the guardian (*theepsuraarak*) of the *lak műang*. In the ceremony of First Ploughing the deity of the city pillar is also called upon, along with other deities whose collective response is invoked to ensure enough rain and sufficient water for the coming agricultural year (Kancanakphan 2519: 39). Moreover, the *lak műang* received special

3 See footnote 2 above for the functions of these deities.
homage when King Chulalongkorn went to Europe in 1907, and he lauded
this same deity when he sponsored special celebrations held to
commemorate the passage of ten thousand days of his reign
(Kancanakphan 2519: 40). The city pillar also formed a focus for
part of the anniversary rituals of the sesquicentennial and
bicentennial celebrations of the city's foundation. Both as a
symbolic centre and as a historic site, therefore, the *lak mūang*
carries special meaning and protection for 'the king, the capital
and the kingdom in all four directions'.

In the Oath of Allegiance ceremony, formerly held twice a
year as part of the requirement that all of the king's senior
officials prove their unswerving loyalty to the monarch, the
proclamation called upon the *theewadaa* and the *lak mūang* spirit to
reward those who remain true to the monarch, but to mete out dire
punishments to those who plan or aid subversion (Kancanakphan 2519:
38). According to one account each new government, on taking office
for the first time, now pays respects at the city pillar; indicating
an apparent continuity of the idea that loyalty to the ideals and
institutions of proper government is still associated with the city
pillar guardian.

The establishment of the Bangkok city pillar was, according
to Damrong, Cakkri's first act as the new leader, and a fitting sign
to the community of the location of his capital. If he did not
provide such a sign, there would have been uncertainty, possibly
changes, and a moving away; but with the burying of the city pillar
the people would be with him. This is because the city pillar
together with Buddhist relics constitute the dual prerequisites for
the establishment of a major Thai city (in Chanthit 2525: n.p. [3]).
As well as a sign of legitimate civilisation as it was then known
and a claim for legitimacy of the city's ruler, the city pillar
served as a zero-milestone, from which all distances within the
kingdom would be measured. The *lak mūang* thus expresses the
symbolic establishment of the city and its legitimate rule in both
space and time, for as well as signifying the symbolic centre of the new realm, the Bangkok pillar incorporated a horoscope of the moment at which the city pillar was raised held to signal the time of the coming-into-being of the city. The temporal symbolism of the city pillar thereby established is the main focus here, and it is to this aspect of the Bangkok city pillar that the rest of the discussion will now turn.

The City Pillar and Its Auspicious Time

The selection of the auspicious time for the raising of the Bangkok lak muang has been held to illustrate the skill and wisdom of the first king of the dynasty in matters astrological and political, for the horoscope buried in the city pillar at the designated time is held to bode well for the kingdom.

Unlike the horoscope of a person, which is largely beyond the control of man, the moment at which the establishment of a settlement is to be inaugurated is deliberately chosen in advance, and there is therefore some room for active selection of the nature of the moment so nominated. The time for the horoscope of Bangkok, expected to ensure the safety and prosperity of the kingdom for as long as possible, required a serious and complex selection process; but it was also, naturally, subject to constraints including the positions of the slower-moving planets. The choice of a propitious moment in the case of Bangkok is also said to have been restricted by the need for the construction of the new city to be carried out as soon as possible before the monsoon rains set in, and this may explain why it did not take long for the pillar to be raised. Another relevant matter the new king is said to have suggested to his astrologers, according to one version, is the vital necessity of choosing a time which would provide the utmost assurance against the possibility of the Burmese once again invading Siam and destroying its capital. After due deliberation, so it is said, the astrologers presented Rama I with the time they thought most suitable for the
occasion. They assured him that if this auspicious time were used, there was absolutely no chance that the Burmese would again bring destruction to the city. There was, however, one drawback in the indications of the horoscope of this time: and that was that the government officials would be corrupt. Since the safety of the kingdom against the ravages of the Burmese was the utmost priority at that time, this heritage has ever since been evident in the government of the country in the view of some. Nevertheless general tradition has it that the horoscope reflected great wisdom on the part of the selectors, and that the moment was indeed auspicious for the country.

Later I shall return to the subject of the specific horoscope of the city of Bangkok, and to the question of the indications of the moment chosen reconsidered in the light of events as they transpired. However it is first necessary to examine the implications of the ritual of the installation of the lak muang itself, for the ceremony has important implications for the role the horoscope has played in the interpretation of later events.

**Symbolism of the City Pillar Installation**

There are various extant accounts of the ritual prescriptions for burying the city pillar for a capital used to indicate how this was carried out for the city pillar of Bangkok. The essential symbolic concerns with the significance of the pillar appear standard, and indicate that the ritual expresses a view of central geographic and cosmogonic principles regarding the role of the pillar in its significance for the community.

Thep’s account of the establishment of a city pillar describes the inscription of the horoscope (*duang phrachannasaa phranakhorn*) on a metal plate of certain composition and size, which must not be cracked while it is beaten into shape and which is engraved within the sacrosanct area of a temple (*uboosot*) (Thep
When this horoscope has been placed in the top of the *lak muang*, another plate is used to inscribe the *yan soolot mongkhon*, and two further ritual charms (*yan*) are inscribed on separate plates: the *yan phra trai saranaakhom* and *yan ong raksaa that thang sii*; the former to cover the tip, and the latter to cover the base of the pillar (Thep 2524: 8).

Close to the time of the burial of the pillar, the hole for the pillar is dug to cater to specific prescriptions of size and shape. Then earth is taken from areas of the city in each of the four directions, and shaped into four spherical balls like *luuk nimit* (auspicious stones). These earthen balls are anointed with clay, dung, scented powder and scented oil. The hole into which the pillar is to be lowered is then surrounded by the various shrines for, at the four cardinal directions, the four keepers of the world (*thaaw catulookabaan*) and in the middle a shrine for Indra, as well as other constructions for the ceremony. The lowering of the pillar is preceded by three days of rituals, including chanting of various suttas by monks, accompanied by the usual ritual paraphernalia and music which accompanies royal Brahmanic rites, and including the astrologers worshipping the deities on all three nights.

When the auspicious time for the pillar ceremony has come, four astrologers surround the pit, one standing in each of the four cardinal directions. A senior astrologer turns to face the east, and asks the astrologer standing in that direction what he is holding. The latter replies that he is holding a piece of earth,

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4 According to Urakhindr, the *yan soolot mahamongkhon* is used to enhance the auspiciousness of pillars, and this may be the purpose of the *yan* referred to here (see 2513: 189-190; 270). The *yan phra trai saranaakhom* of the three Buddhist refuges is probably the very powerful charm providing invulnerability and protection from danger (2513: 163) and perhaps also durability (2513: 216-217; 260). The final *yan* is for the guardians of the four elements.

5 In another version shrines are required for Siva, Narai, Indra and Brahma (see Chanthit 2525: n.p. [12]).
which is the element earth. This earth should ensure bountiful
growth of food crops and plant life throughout all parts of the
kingdom. The senior astrologer then turns to the colleague standing
to the south, and asks the same question. The reply is that the
piece of earth for that direction is the water element. This man
expresses the hope that plentiful rain will fall according to the
seasons to help the growth of the crops, flora and piscifauna in all
parts of the kingdom. This procedure is repeated with the
astrologer standing to the west, who states that he holds the fire
element; may the commanders, the four arms of the army and all the
soldiers have might, and suppress, punish and defeat all enemies
within the kingdom. At the north the wind element is expected to
ensure that merchants and traders from many countries bring boats
loaded with all kinds of consumer goods to enhance the bountifulness
of the city and its region.

After this announcement, the four balls of earth are put into
the shaft dug for the pillar in their order, and the plate inscribed
with the yan soolot mongkhon is placed on top of them. The pillar
is then lowered onto the plate, and the shaft around the pillar is
filled in with earth packed firmly, so that the pillar is straight
and does not lean in any direction. Music is played, the conches
blown and gongs sounded, and cannon are fired in the four
directions; water and sand are sprinkled, and a pink silk cloth tied
around the pillar. The ritual charms are affixed to the pillar,
scented powder and oil and flowers used to adorn it, and the deity
(theephayadaa) is invited to enter the lak aaang to bring the city
happiness and prosperity free from all harm (Thep 2524: 10-11).

This symbolism of the collection of the four basic elements
suggests cosmic generation, as well as the specific benefits for the
city and the kingdom required. The association of the four elements
with the four cardinal directions does not correspond either with
the associations normally rendered in astrology, nor with the
account of the elements which came to rule over the eight cardinal
points at the beginning of the world (see Saraprasoet 2512: 7); and in fact the elements appear to be the reverse of those reported by Wales, where wind is associated with the east, earth with the west, water with the north and fire with the south (Wales 1977: 135). Nevertheless, the collection together of the four elements and the four directions is reminiscent of the beginning of the formation of the world of the elements as described by Phra Saraprasoet, and the fact that the earth is itself taken from the four directions within the city emphasises the spatial as well as temporal significance of the foundation of the pillar.

The attributes associated with each of the elements appears to stem from their essential characteristics. Earth, for instance, is associated with firm strength and solidity (Sangkhom 2522: 9205-9206), and these are no doubt the qualities desired in the ability of the natural wealth of the kingdom to produce for the people's own needs. In the version of the ceremony provided in the city pillar commemorative publication, the earth element is described as benefitting the life of the city as a settlement and meeting place for the people from the beginning to the end (of time). Water is characterised by its propensity to flow, and its necessity for crops is self-evident. In the second version of the rite, this element is described as promoting the long life, contentment, strength and prosperity of the ruler, the officials and the citizens (Chanthit 2525: n.p. [12]). While fire may be genial, as an element it is more often associated with fierceness and the ability to raze, and thus its appropriateness for the activities of the king's army are clear. In the second version the army is expected to be fierce and brave, as well as successful in its vigilance against intruders from any direction. In the second version the wind element is expected to ensure abundance of crops and produce as well as commerce. Wind is associated with the ability to spread by fanning, and with movement, which lends itself to the idea of merchants from many nations converging on the capital with goods for the city's
inhabitants. The association of a city pillar with success in trading has been noted elsewhere (Wijeyewardene 1986: 150).

It is not difficult to see in the rites associated with the city pillar an expression of cosmic renewal of the kind noted by Wales to be a frequent occurrence in the rituals of Siam, Cambodia and Burma (1977: 144-147). Wales argues that much of the ritual accompanying each new reign has the significance of regeneration of the kingdom and the capital (1977: 147-148), and it is evident that the commencement of a new capital also required such rites. It is also significant that in the second year of his reign King Mongkut (r. 1851-1868) had a new lak mīng erected, with a new horoscope for the city. Although there is some belief that he did so because of a perceived incompatibility of his own horoscope with that of the city (Tambiah 1976: 227), there is also mention in the records of the event that he was gravely concerned at the time with the military threat from imperial Western powers already overtaking neighbouring countries (Phansak 2529: 220-222). It is also thought that this astrologer-king perceived weaknesses in the original horoscope established by the first reign and sought to correct them in his new version (Th. Kluaimai in Cholthira 2531: 3). The repetition of the ceremony to preserve the prosperity, security and longevity of the capital was an apparent attempt to reinforce the effectiveness of the ceremony performed before the city was built.

Eliade has had much influence in the discussion of the importance of the idea of cosmic renewal and its significance for the notion of the 'perfection of beginnings' (Eliade 1975: 75). He has also pointed out that, frequently in (but not exclusive to) the 'archaic mentality', the knowledge of the origin of something confers a sort of magical mastery over it (1975: 90). The symbolism of implanting a horoscope of the life of the city in the lak mīng adds to the symbolic import of the pillar as a standard of regenerated new beginning over and above the bringing together of the constituent elements of the world from the earth of the city.
site. It is the temporal coming-into-being of the polity, and thus constitutes a new temporal beginning. To the extent that the generation here is of cosmic proportions, the occasion provides a kind of *éternel retour*. The horoscope is also a placing within time by virtue of the fact that the influences of the moment can be perceived, and are subsequently of importance throughout the life of the city whose origin it denotes. While the raising of the *lak mūang* marks a new start, therefore, the horoscope of the city implicitly maps the future history of the city, and thus subsequently provides it with a place in known social time.

Predictions of the First Bangkok Reign

The raising of the *lak mūang* of Bangkok was one of the first acts of the new Cakkri ruler, and yet before the end of his reign — or so popular belief has it — there were several predictions concerning the likely future of his city and, by implication, the kingdom. All of these are said to have been made by the king himself, and, while they are not easily identified in terms of sources of ideas or reasoning, astrologers have attempted to assess what these predictions have in common, and to what extent their import still has relevance for the present and future of the country. Historically, they perhaps testify to the anxiety felt by the first king, or other courtiers of his day, as to the effectiveness of the re-establishment of rule in the new capital. More importantly for this argument, the analysis to which they have been subject provides us with some insight into the way the inauguration of the new kingdom with the burial of the *lak mūang* was seen to have provided a basis for interpreting the future of the nation. The first of these intimations is related to events which occurred during the ceremony of raising the *lak mūang* itself. The first prediction is that which foresaw the future of the kingdom as lasting one hundred and fifty years. The final prediction also attributed to the first reign foretells the nature of ten eras for the kingdom. These predictions will be discussed in turn.
During the ceremony of raising the *lak műang* for Bangkok there was an unexpected occurrence which caused great concern in the palace. This incident appears to reflect the uncertainty surrounding the appropriateness of the timing and carrying out of the ceremony in spite of the ostensible auspiciousness of the time and the place selected. Thep has written an account of the ceremony, along with the other predictions which followed. The gist of his description is summarised here.

He states that in the ceremony the rites had proceeded along the lines described in the previous section. The Chief Royal Astrologer had just uttered the verse of devotion for the auspicious moment, and the Chief Brahman had read out the royal decree of the establishment of the capital. After this an astrologer commenced the rite of request to the deities, and the four lumps of earth representing the elements were placed in the pit in their order according to the four cardinal directions, followed by the yan to support the pillar. The interior of the pit itself was neatly prepared: lined with a clean white cloth, liberally sprinkled with nine auspicious kinds of leaves; and the nine gems (corresponding to the planetary deities) had been scattered around the inside rim. It was then: just as the Brahmans were blowing the sacred conches, music was being played, and the cannons were fired for the auspicious moment of inviting the *lak műang* to be lowered into the pit, that something ominous happened. Even though when the pillar was lifted into position nothing was to be seen, at the moment the pillar was lowered into the shaft, four small snakes suddenly appeared and quickly disappeared into the pit. The snakes appeared too late for anything to be done, so when the pillar was lowered and the earth filled in the four snakes were left at the base of the pit (Thep 2524: 11-13).

This occurrence was very perturbing to the new king, who summoned the experts who could best advise him on the matter (his
ministers, pundits, brahmins, purohit, learned astrologers and senior monks), and asked their opinion on whether the occurrence was an auspicious or inauspicious omen. All of these learned experts agreed that it must be regarded as an inauspicious sign, but no-one knew what the likely consequences were, apart from the idea that the four snakes were likely to portend some misfortune. The king was advised to perform a ceremony to ameliorate the effects of such misfortune, and for this purpose the power of Buddhist chants was recommended. Offerings to the deities based on the astrological and saiysaat manuals was also arranged, and the inauspiciousness of the omens was thus driven away (Thep 2524: 13-14).

The apparently supernatural appearance of omens in this incident did not appear to be a recognisable sign according to formal knowledge, and yet it appeared to indicate that in spite of attention to the usual calculations of auspiciousness, there was something amiss with the preparations for the city. The snakes appeared as an omen of some consequence beyond the influence of the supernatural elements to which the ceremony was addressed, requiring yet more ceremonies in counteraction. The instantaneous appearance of the snakes at the exact auspicious moment indicated a flaw associated with the auspiciousness of that time, although the consequences could not be calculated. It is significant that Rama I was sufficiently concerned about the import of the omens that he not only took immediate ritual action, but that he was also apparently to recall the incident some years later.

This event is now an accessible part of the history of the city and its city pillar, since it was published in a very well-known work by the astrologer Thep Sarikabutr in the early sixties, and it is still mentioned and written about by astrologers when the subject of the city horoscope is raised. In one reference to this omen it was said to have only recently been the cause of a flurry of public controversy as to whether the event should again be locked at as a sign that misfortune was inevitable for the kingdom. One
astrologer also discussed the theory that the omen signified that any king of Thailand born in the year of the snake was destined to have a reign of misfortune. This is born out, according to this astrologer, by the case of Rama VII, who reigned at the time of the coup which overthrew the absolute monarchy, and who subsequently abdicated when the new regime's arrangements became intolerable to him. Similarly Thep claims that there were, in 1932, four members of the royal family (including the king) who were largely responsible for the running of the government and who were all born in the year of the (small) snake of the animal year cycle. He suggests that it was because these four, who had the meaning of the *nimit* of the four snakes underneath the *lak mlaung*, came to be the leaders of the country that the system of government changed (2524: 58-59). Nevertheless, this omen of the country's destiny apparently receives little current comment or speculation in astrological circles in comparison with the other predictions of the first reign.

In 1889 a fire was caused by lightning striking the Amarinthaphisek audience hall of the royal palace. This event is recorded in two sources: in the official chronicle of the reign and in a diary believed to have been written by Rama I's sister, Narinthornthewi, but not brought to the attention of the court until the fifth reign, when it was donated to the newly developed library. In the official chronicle of the first reign the king, royal family members, government officials and high ranking monks were all on hand to help extinguish the fire, and as a result of the swiftness with which they reacted the contents of the treasury and the pearl decorated throne were rescued from the blaze in time, although the building itself was extensively damaged. Once again the king summoned the more learned men of his court to ask their opinion as to whether the occurrence bode well or ill for affairs of state. His monks assured him that in both the Pali texts and in 'mundane knowledge' traditional beliefs handed down indicated that lightning strikes were a sign of good luck:
According to the ancient canon entitled Bimba Nibbana, if any city's walls were struck by lightning, even though enemies might come to invade that city, it would always defeat them. On the basis of mundane knowledge, according to ancient legends and stories, lightning once struck the head of a person who was being carried on someone's shoulders. The one who was struck later rose very high in position. Another time, while an army was marching, lightning struck an elephant, and the army went on to fight and win the kingdom. All this meant that nowhere was there any mention of bad luck. The Buddhist monks did not, therefore, view the lightning strike on the audience hall as an omen of ill fortune.

At this time, all the royal palace attendants put their names on a message of good wishes, which they presented to the king, bearing the same argument. (Thipakorawong 1978: 165-166)

A curious fact in this account is that, although the fire was taken to be an omen in the same way as the snakes at the lak mūang ceremony, the king did not consult all his sages, but only his Supreme Patriarch and Buddhist monks of the highest rank. The fact that the fire occurred soon after the king had convened a council to produce a revision of the Tripitaka in 1888 (Reynolds 1979a: 92) apparently prompted an explicitly religious conclusion. That this is not mere speculation but a genuine relationship perceived by the king is confirmed by the diary account of the king's sister. The diary entry of the incident in Narinthornthewi's account does not mention the counsel of the monks, but recounts the king's own conclusions as to the significance of the incident. The diary record suggests that because he had just rewritten and revised the Tripitaka, the deities had been mercifully generous (theewadaa hai ookaat kae raw). In the king's opinion, instead of losing the city as a result of the city horoscope (chataa) being constricted in seven years and seven months (from the founding of the city), only the prasaat (raised palace throne hall) had been lost. This indicated to the king that the incident marked the end of the misfortune of the city (seet sin phrakhro mūang), implying that all would now be well. They explained the reasoning behind this conclusion as containing a military analogy for the security of the
city, since if the city were attacked, the last part of the city to
be taken in the destruction of the city would be the protected inner
buildings of the royal palace. In this case, the city was spared,
since the most sacrosanct area of royal power had been destroyed
instead (Thep 2524: 15). Having arrived at this confident
assessment of the meaning of the omen in the light of his
meritorious religious activities, Rama I concluded that the dynasty
(lamdap kasat) would continue for 150 years (Narinthronthewi 2501:
18).

This prediction is now a very well known one, and is
frequently referred to by astrologers as an instance of the wisdom
of the founder of the dynasty. The king's claim is maintained to be
astrological in nature despite the fact that the basis of
calculation for the king's prediction is not one familiar to
present-day astrologers (Thep 2524: 16), and is still the subject of
analysis (e.g. Manit 2524; S. Satcayan 2525). Part of the reason
for this fame is that events one hundred and fifty years after the
founding of the city appear to have fulfilled the prediction made so
early on. According to the historical evidence, moreover, there is
some indication that there was also an element of at least potential
self-fulfillment of the prophecy at the time the prophecy was about
to elapse. When the diary containing the prophecy was first
published around 1907 (Thompson 1967: 766), however, the then king
contributed an extensive commentary which included a refutation of
the suggestion that the dynasty would only last a century and a
half. Not long before the date when the prophecy was due to expire,
therefore, the prediction was regarded as unacceptable for the
monarchy it related to.

In his argument concerning this prophecy King Chulalongkorn
(r. 1868-1910), who was able to celebrate the one hundredth
anniversary of the city and the dynasty during his long reign and
who died just over two decades before the prediction was due to come
ture, expressed concern that the dynasty should be discussed in this
way. In his commentary on the Narinthornthewi diary he attributed the likely cause of the diarist's record to a prediction made at the end of the Thonburi reign that *Baangkook* (the original village site of the capital) would be lost to Burmese troops. He even mentioned the possibility that there might have been a subsequent prediction circulating during the first reign which caused Rama I to be so anxious about the fate of his city that he would make such a prophecy when it was already several years into the Bangkok period. Chulalongkorn's discussion of the one hundred and fifty year prediction stated simply that such a short period was too conservative an aspiration, and he was therefore inclined to argue that a mistake might have been made. He suggested that perhaps 150 kings might be more realistic, and further argued that the scribe who copied the manuscript might well have dropped a zero from the figure inadvertently (in Narinthornthewi 2501: 220-221). Despite the disclaimers of the king, however, the prediction of the length of the dynasty was remembered and revived when the predicted timespan was nearing its end.

One hundred and fifty years from the foundation of Bangkok ended in 1932, the year in which the overthrow of the absolute monarchy was effected. The modern argument in support of the prediction's accuracy consists of the reconciliation of the prophecy with the events of June 24 1932, when a coup led to the introduction of a constitutional monarchy. This change in system of government is therefore seen to effectively 'end' the *laadap kasat* as foretold by Rama I. While it is doubtful that Rama I could have had any conception of the kind of government introduced in that year, the fact that the founder of the dynasty apparently 'foresaw' an historical end which eventuated on June 24 is used to lend the overthrow some legitimacy (over and above the agreement of the then-reigning Rama VII) whereby the change of government is deemed not only appropriate to its time, but, further, within the destiny envisaged by the founder of the kingdom. This retrospective
legitimacy was also useful for an understanding of events at the time of the overthrow.

During the early months of 1932 rumours about the possible fulfillment of the prediction abounded, and created room for speculation concerning the nature of the end of the dynasty (Thompson 1967: 62). The government and the king had to contend with increasing popular dissatisfaction with the national state of affairs (Wyatt 1984: 241), and the rumours circulating about the prophecy did nothing to help their position. The predicted one hundred and fifty years of rule by the dynasty was thought to end on the anniversary of the accession of Rama I on 6 April. The opening of the Memorial Bridge (built to link Thonburi and Bangkok over the Chao Phraya river to commemorate and honour Rama I as part of the 150-year celebrations for the city) became the focus of many of these rumours, since the opening was to be held on this anniversary date. Prior to the event rumours circulated that a white-robed 'nun' was seen scurrying across the unopened bridge at night; and King Taksin of Thonburi, deposed and executed before the first reign, was also reported to have been seen on the bridge gazing at the city. Both of these reported omens served to increase the already prevalent speculation of bloodshed (Landon 1968: 10). Smith (1982: 154) suggests that the rumours may have been started by the revolutionaries themselves, but their widespread currency reflects the relevance of the implied symbolism in the eyes of the disaffected public.

The rumours were also taken seriously by the government, to the extent that the sixth of April was increasingly seen to be a likely date for an attempted assassination if there was to be one during the anniversary celebrations; and the Siamese ambassador to London even sent an urgent telegram to Bangkok warning of the possibility from the rumours circulating there (Krom Sinlapakorn 2525: 209-212). The climate of public opinion was such that the king resumed thinking about some measure of representative
government, and requested from his ministers some plan for a constitution which he would be able to introduce on 6 April (Wyatt 1984: 241), although this did not eventuate. Although security was tightened there was no threat to the lives of any members of the monarchy, and no attempt at overthrow was made on the sixth. However, while Wyatt states that the day 'passed without incident', Malcolm Smith, writing closer to the time, reported the memorial bridge opening as being not quite without incident:

... When the king arrived there was no salute. As he passed, the guards suddenly wheeled, turning their backs upon him and their faces to the people. Nothing more happened.

(Smith 1982: 155)

The comparative lack of confrontation between the monarchy and the new government was also in evidence when in a formal ceremony held on 7th November 1932 the leaders of the revolution acknowledged the benefits of the monarchy for the country, and asked the forgiveness of the king for any insult against the monarchy arising during the time of the coup. In response to this the monarch agreed to forget and to 'invoke heaven's blessing on the People's Party' (Thompson 1967: 68), thereby retaining moral and spiritual superiority over the new rulers in a successful expression of continuity. A few days later this continuity was reinforced when the constitution of the new government was promulgated in the Royal Throne Room at an auspicious moment selected by astrologers (Thompson 1967: 68).

Although the Revolution of 1932 has long since passed and has often been seen to have delivered only some of its democratic potential - becoming generally subsumed under the linear history of successions - it can be seen that at the time the existence of the prophecy of the end of the dynasty was highly catalytic in terms of shaping opinions - if not actions - and perceived by many to be potentially dangerous. It was also instrumental in allowing an unprecedented political action to be popularly legitimised or
endorsed by reference to previous visions of the future, however imaginatively matched these were with actual events. This 150-year prediction is still very much a part of the Thai consciousness of the past and present, since the prophecy has been seen to have been fulfilled; and for astrologers among others the present political situation is explicable and justifiable by reference to past premonition.

The Thai astrological tradition has actively preserved the 150-year prediction as an eminently successful example of royal foresight, although the full question of just how to interpret the astrological significance of the events of June 24 1932 is a complex one which will be discussed in a later section.

The third prediction which is presumed to date from the first reign is currently the most problematic of all. This prediction is largely based on oral transmission (Morell and Chai-anan 1981: 309), and consists of an order of ten predicted eras listed in something like a verse form. Its authorship is obscure: although widely attributed to Rama I,6 this ascription is not certain and may be a political convenience. It is, further, obscure in derivation and meaning: although it is assumed to refer to the destiny of Bangkok, it is not clear on what the ten predicted eras are based, how long they should last, or even what their names mean. The prediction has therefore been the subject of much analysis and speculation, and certain clarification is unlikely.

The development of the polity which is the subject of this prediction involves the division of the life of the city into ten eras or yuk. The obvious difficulty with this is that a time scale for the duration of the period so divided is necessary if the eras

6 It has also been said to have been authored (a little later) by the eminent and highly revered monk Phrapphumthaacaan To of Wat Phrommarangsii (as is the case with a rare published version: see La-ong n.d.: 201) which would also lend it authority and sacredness.
are to be calculable, and one convenience in associating the prophecy with Rama I is that his 150-year period could be used as a basis for discovery of the ten eras. Without the temporal dimension of this prophecy being known, the relevance the prophecy has for the future remains indeterminate, and this no doubt contributes to the continuing popularity of the eras in that they can continue to be reassessed over time. Since the terms of the prophecy are unclear, I will follow the translation and gloss provided by Morell and Chai-anan, although some expansion of the ascribed meanings will be required. These two authors follow a commonly accepted interpretation that the ten 'eras' represent reigns, and thus attribute the ten eras to the kings of the current dynasty, of which the present king is the ninth.

Reign [Era] Characteristics

1 The Great Destroyer
2 Truculent Demon
3 Flowering Friendship
4 Nearness to the dharma
5 Necessary to lose an arm
6 Populace will become outlaws
7 Hue and cry of the people
8 The age of terror
9 White birds gather
10 A civilized citizenry.

(Morell and Chai-anan 1981: 309)

According to Morell and Chai-anan, the first reign is so named because of the cleansing of the land and the reconstruction necessitated by the destruction by the Burmese and the reign of King Taksin of Thonburi. The second reign saw the internal consolidation of power of the second king, while the third king extended friendship outward. The attribution of 'nearness to the dharma' of the fourth epoch is explained by the deep religiosity and religious learning of King Mongkut, who was a monk for twenty-seven years before becoming king, while the loss of an arm in the fifth reign refers to the fact that during the reign of King Chulalongkorn much territory under Siamese control was lost to the British and French Imperial powers, this being the price paid for the maintenance of
Siamese independence as a nation. In the sixth reign there was a crisis in the land causing the people to turn to plunder, hence the naming of this reign after the outlaw-like behaviour of the people, while their 'hue and cry' in the seventh reign accords with the civil disturbances and the change from absolute monarchy in 1932. The age of terror applies to the very short reign of the eighth king who is believed to have been assassinated, and white birds gathering is explained by the abundance of white-skinned people, namely American armed forces and Western tourists who have been prominent since the sixties. The civilised citizenry of the tenth and final reign is used to indicate the possibility of peace and perhaps a 'republic', with the end of the monarchical dynasty (Morell and Chai-anan 1981: 309).

The constructions of Morell and Chai-anan follow some of the better-known aspects of the last two hundred years of Thai history, and they follow a common understanding that the prophecy basically asserts that the dynasty will have only ten monarchs. This association of eras with reigns is not surprising given the common historiographic division of the Thai past into the successive reigns of kings; and the fact that these are commonly treated as 'natural' divisions of time in the interpretation of history, since the rule of each king was once thought to be the prime factor affecting the country. The authors also attempt to assess the meaning, given the prophetic conclusion of the dynasty, of the political future of the nation. Their conclusion that a more fully democratic system is to come may be accepted or hoped for by many in the current political climate, although it would not be a view relevant to all.

In contrast to some of the popular views of the meaning of this prophecy, astrologers have sought to find more astrologically-based and esoteric interpretations, a detailed example of which is
provided by Thep. This analysis is based on a theme supporting the astrological skill of the first Cakkri monarch, where the prophecy is argued to have been authored by Rama I because of similarities it has with the 150-year prediction for which the king is well known. In response to the question of what constitutes an era, the answer supplied is derived from the two most important planets of significance in the horoscope of the city based on analysis of both the duang mUang itself and the horoscope of the day the absolute monarchy was overthrown after 150 years in 1932. Two planets, Saturn and Jupiter, are found to be both prominent in the horoscopes and to have been in conjunction in the same nawaang nine times over in the intervening period since the beginning of the first reign, and thus form ten periods marked by these conjunctions (2524: 36-47). These conjunctions can be timed precisely, and Thep then looks at the events of the intervals (of roughly twenty years each) between the dates obtained to examine whether the prophecy appears to be appropriate to these periods, and finds that they are.

Thep's interpretation of the first era is similar to that of Morell and Chai-anan, counting the 'great destroyer' as signifying the idea that from the beginning of the first reign there was no escape from the after-effects of the destruction by the Burmese, and of the death of King Taksin and one of his faithful deputies who insisted on following his former monarch into death. Thep's second era begins towards the end of the first reign, and includes the rebellion by members of the Front Palace, and by one of Taksin's sons, hence the name of 'truculent demon'. The third era coincides with the latter part of the third reign, famous for the flowering of Thai literature, poetry and the arts in general, appropriate to the felicitous title of the era (which Thep has as the alternative 'the love of the pundits'). The religious overtones of the fourth era corresponds both to the end of the reign of the third king, renowned

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7 Thep's account was first published in the early sixties. It is not clear whether Thep himself is the author of the ideas discussed here, or merely a recorder of received views.
for his pious construction of many royal monasteries in the capital, and the founding of the Thammayut sect and the accession of the prince-monk Mongkut. The fifth era of 'the loss of an arm' Thep attributes to the end of the fourth and early fifth reigns, when Siam lost her Khmer territories, to the great distress of the king. Thep's version of the name of the sixth era is the homophonous 'royal outlaws' (in contrast to outlaws among the people), which he sees as a suitable term for the European powers of France and England, who, having conquered Siam's neighbours, commenced to claim parts of her territory as their own, a price Siam had to pay in order to protect her national sovereignty, but the loss of which is still felt down to this day.

During the seventh era society declined, a trend attributed by Thep to the fact that the people began wild gambling and other vices, which, combined with unemployment, meant that almost every household was poor. At the same time the Chinese, who demanded inflated rents, became millionaires in Thailand. The poverty of Thailand's people at this time gives the name to this era. The next era saw a continuation of the poor state of the economy at the end of the sixth reign, to the extent that foreigners with expertise in this area had to be invited to come and assist with the problem. During this period also was the overthrow of the absolute monarchy, but then within a year there was a breakdown into rebellion, and for the first time in the Bangkok period there was Thai pitted against Thai in political battle. The designation of 'age of terror' (yuk thamin) was thus not inappropriate for this period. For the ninth era Thep's version of the prophecy is the gathering of white eyes; although he, like Morell and Chai-anan, interprets the name as referring to Europeans. The era is distinguished for Thep by the generous and unstinting help supplied by the Americans during this period. Unlike Morell and Chai-anan, Thep's tenth era (his term for which reads as beauteous people) has already started at the time of his writing; but, again unlike the other authors, he does not provide any interpretation of this final era. He sees such an
attempt as bad manners for an astrologer (presumably in pre-empting Rama I), and also points out that it is forbidden to make political predictions, and so he has confined his interpretation only to past events (Thep 2524: 47-58).

It is clear that there are quite a few points of similarity between the interpretation of Morell and Chai-anan and that of Thep, principally in the common method followed of deciding upon the delineation of the 'era' and then finding occurrences during that time which would fit the name in the prophecy. There is even some similarity in the portrait of the history of Thai society during the Bangkok period; but there are also significant differences, which arise not just from the fact that the two interpretations are based on different time intervals, but also from different perceptions of Thai society.

Thep's view, despite the fact that he has not used reigns as eras, is a much more a conservative view of Thai history, based principally on the activities and concerns of kings. The only eras where the people are considered are the seventh era, where the poverty experienced by the people when the economy was depressed is regarded as brought about by the people's own childish weakness for excessive gambling (and the advantage taken by the Chinese intruders); and the eighth era, when the change in government led to the people fighting each other in an uncontrolled, unpatriotic manner. The assistance provided by the Americans was regarded as benevolent and constructive, a view which was perhaps more possible for Thep writing in the early sixties, with the impact of the Sarit regime and its massive American funding still being felt, than it was after that time.

Significantly, Thep does not discuss the future even though he sees the final era as having commenced, and the last period analysed is that of the American alliance. Most of all, Thep's view is based on a detailed astrological argument which has its
foundation in the nature of the duang maang of Bangkok itself, and the subsequent 'natural' periods of time which evolve out of the stellar influences powerful at the inception of the new city. The eras used are based in astrological time rather than having any clear social or political basis. Thep's view is probably well known in astrological circles like those at the associations and beyond them, since the book in which this analysis is contained is one of the better-known works on Thai astrology, and among astrologers his analysis has not been quickly forgotten, for it formed the subject of further astrological predictions at the end of the ten eras.8

In contrast to the view provided by Thep, the eras as discussed by Morell and Chai-anan are social and political creations, dependent upon the succession of the individuals who rose to be kings of the dynasty, but where the action is increasingly defined by non-royal sections of the population. The reigns of kings provide the traditional eras for analysis in the phongsaawadaan (dynastic chronicle) tradition of historiography (Charnvit 1976: 18-19), and yet increasingly for the events in the twentieth century, the portrait which emerges is one which is no longer king-based, but one in which the people play increasingly pivotal roles. From the sixth reign on, when the people's interests can no longer said to be being adequately served by this system of rulership, Thai society as a whole becomes the focus, not the kings. Unlike Thep's description, the people play a largely positive role in the interpretation of these political scientists; and the new

8 These ten eras were due to have run their course at the end of 1979, and a 'new era' was therefore announced by astrologers. In an interview the description of the ten eras was reitered by another astrologer (see Poramet in Sayaam Nihorn 2522:29), before a prediction was made that in the subsequent new era in 1981 Bangkok may fall prey to a natural disaster such as a devastating earthquake. This astrologer suggested that the time was therefore coming for a move to a new city. In spite of the Bangkok bicentennial celebrations in 1982, rumours later persisted that a new city pillar had been established outside Bangkok. For astrological comment on the ten eras at the association level, see Prasit 2523b on why the activities of the king in helping the prosperity and development of the regional areas warranted the new era to be named the 'era of the Great Thai Monarch'.
era, here not yet begun, is suggested as being one where the people finally take full responsibility for the tranquil progress of Thai society. In this interpretation the unknown tenth era potentially follows on from the continuous political developments of the previous eras. The interpretation of the prophecy here has nothing astrological about it, and bears the mark of the views and aspirations of politically educated progressives towards the present trends in Thai society. 9

These contrasting interpretations were recorded for quite different audiences, and some twenty years apart. What is perhaps most significant about this prophecy, which, as has just been shown, can be interpreted in a number of ways to account for different views of Thai history, is that since it specifies a fixed order of a limited number of unspecified eras, it retains most relevance of all the 'first reign' predictions for the current Thai understanding of the future.

In the early eighties, the ten era prophecy was very much in the back of many people's minds, since the popular acceptance of the idea that the eras correspond to reigns had great relevance for the uncertainty facing the future of the monarchy in Thailand. This uncertainty, which has arguably been relevant from the first stirring of democratic ideals in the foreign-educated portion of the Thai élite in the late nineteenth century but which was appreciably heightened after the 1975 abolition of the Laotian monarchy

9 It is possible to see further in these two accounts of the ten eras two different modes of historiographic representation. Thép's account bears strong resemblances to what has been defined by Western historians as the chronicle, where the central subject, in this case the life of a city or nation, is presented chronologically but without closure (White 1987: 16). The view of Morell and Chai-anan, by contrast, is a full historical narrative in that it satisfies the demand for closure: 'a demand that sequences of real events be assessed for their significance as elements of a moral drama' (White 1987: 21). While Morell and Chai-anan's final era implies a structure immanent in the events from the beginning, Thép's sequence, and his reticence on the last era, draws attention to 'only force, or, rather, only an authority that presents itself as different kinds of forces' (White 1987: 20).
(Anderson 1977: 24), became a subject of renewed concern after the question of the choice of successor to the current monarch arose. The king's severe illness in 1982 also fuelled speculation about the imminent tenth reign, and transparent transformations of the idea of 'ten reigns' were circulated in the bicentennial year. The idea that this ninth reign might be the penultimate one seemed to be the subject of quite some apprehensive attention, based on the apparent relevance of the "ten reigns" prophecy for the then current context, and helped by perturbations in the Thai political arena.

So far I have discussed the legacy of the first reign in terms of the astrological and prophetic tradition which it is believed to have left for succeeding generations of kings and citizens of the city. It can be seen that a variety of the predictions have become well known or retained according to the degree to which they are seen to have been potentially relevant for subsequent periods of Thai history. The somewhat obscure event involving the snake omen at the burial of the lak nang does not seem to have made much impact on the general public, and was seldom referred to by astrologers. It was an omen outside the normal categorisation: inauspicious, and apparently resolved by the passage of time. However, this flaw in the horoscope can be used to refer even vaguely to dissatisfactions of any kind and at any time. The 150-year length of rule by the dynasty can be seen to have had much impact on the thinking and activities of people at the time, and has continued in popularity because of the apparent accuracy of the

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10 One of these versions suggested that the dynasty would only continue if the tenth monarch was a woman; and sometime later I was told of a prophecy, attributed to a monk, that the tenth monarch would only succeed after having a certain number of heirs.

11 The saying remembered about the supposed choice made by Rama I in his selection of the time for the horoscope of the city "If the monarchy is happy and the people in trouble, (the dynasty) will last nine reigns, if the monarchy is troubled and the people happy, the dynasty will last three reigns" (see also Phuu Phaakphum 1978: 28) also appears as a source of contemporary comment apparently associated with the ten era prophecy.
prophecy with the application of judicious hindsight, as well as having become a well-known source of resolution of an apparent discontinuity in recent history which demands some rationalisation. The most circulated prediction among the three is probably the ten eras, however, and I have suggested that this is because of its relevance for present anxieties and supposed potential for understanding the near future. This prediction is perhaps the most widely referred to outside of astrological circles, and the most elaborated upon at present. It is believed to presage a felicitous ending; is ambiguous in implication, but linear in form.

The National Horoscope and Political Legitimacy

If predictions passed down over time are used at various times in this way, there is one remaining question regarding the legacy of the first reign and the lak mìang which needs to be considered, and that is the question of how much the duang mìang of the first reign remains relevant to an understanding of current events. This question is one still faced by astrologers, whose opinions and reasoning on this subject vary. A few examples will be show the issues as they are seen from contemporary points of view.

It must be remembered in this context that under the system of absolute monarchy there was a close identification made between the monarch himself and the city and country over which he ruled. So close was this identification that astrologers would examine the horoscopes of the city and of the king in relation to the transits of the planets in their examination of political events. The basic material for political astrological analysis was therefore clear. With the change of government to a democratic constitutional monarchy, where the king is titular head of the country but no longer its ruler, however, the basis upon which to make predictions is no longer so clearly defined, and astrology has had to face choices about what to use as a predictive basis. The duang mìang of Bangkok is apparently still universally used for this purpose; but
the question now sometimes asked is whether or not this is sufficient to take full account of the nature of the present situation.

One well-known astrologer has commented that 'looking at events in the light of the Bangkok horoscope is like going to a movie on an oxcart: by the time you get there the film will be over' (Phlu Luang 2520: 2). This author suggests instead that there are many other horoscopes which are available to help elucidate the causes of events as they now occur in Thailand. Phlu Luang discusses the new horoscope which was implanted in the city pillar erected to replace the old one by King Mongkut (Rama IV), who was, as already mentioned, reportedly concerned both about the threat posed by England and France on Siam's borders, and about the lack of compatibility between the horoscope of the city selected by Rama I and his own horoscope (Phlu Luang 2511: 45). Phlu Luang considers that the impact of this new city pillar horoscope should not be ignored, since it had inherent in it important dangers which provided obstacles to subsequent reigns: to the effect that Rama V was made king at a very early age, and during his reign almost half the kingdom was lost to the French; moreover Rama VI had a coup d'état in his reign which was the precursor of the revolution, and died young; while Rama VII lost the position of the absolute monarchy (2520: 3). The author explains the reasons for these astrologically, claiming they are shown by the relationship of the planets in the second horoscope in ways especially clear in the case of the loss of the absolute monarchy in 1932. He shows that the horoscope of Mongkut's new pillar can be seen to be badly affected at the times when such crises occurred, which suggests that if astrologers want to be aware of subsequent events, they should examine this horoscope for any signs which might appear relevant.

The same author makes a similar point about the horoscope of the time at which another significant event occurred. The horoscope of the time of the June 24 coup in 1932 he also shows to be relevant
to an understanding of many subsequent events, including the exile and death overseas of many leaders, and the most outstanding of which was the assassination of Rama VIII (2520: 3-4). The democracy horoscope of June 24 1932 is also, he argues, useful in understanding a violent armed uprising of Chinese against the police in 1945, the Manhattan rebellion against Field Marshal Phibul in 1951, and the death of students on 14th October 1973 (2520: 4-6).

In this way, Phlu Luang argues for the inclusion of many horoscopes in the 'development of the duang mthang' over the history of the Bangkok period, and his choice of examples are those which concern the state of (Bangkok) society as a whole, including the results of dissatisfaction of various social groups. His conception of Bangkok's history is one of a social history marked by widespread and varied political activity, and it is in this context that he argues that astrologers need to maintain understanding and observation not only of the original duang mthang of the establishment of Bangkok but also that of the overthrow of the absolute monarchy (2520: 9).

A contrary opinion to that of Phlu Luang was expressed around the same time by another astrologer, who argued that he chooses not to include the horoscope of the time of the 24 June Revolution in his calculation of effects upon the nation's horoscope because it is his personal opinion that those who had a role to play in the events of the time are no longer in the same position of power and it is not sound practice to take the horoscope pertaining to the actions of one person and apply them to the period of activity of others (Camrun 2519: 25).

Camrun's view of the establishment of power is person-specific, with apparently no relationship to the type of government or rule taken into account (as, by contrast, is the case with Phlu Luang). For Camrun there is no legitimacy in the establishment of power beyond the period for which it can be maintained. This is
perhaps related to his argument that an original horoscope refers to previous karma, while horoscopes of later times reflect the effect of current karma (2519: 28). It may also be that Camrun is implying a view similar to that expressed some decades earlier by the historian and scholar Prince Dhani Nivat, who argued that the traditional conception of the Thai monarchy involved the idea that the monarch was seen to represent the entire nation, and therefore the people as a whole, whereas the Members of Parliament elected by particular constituencies could not be said to represent the people in the same way (Somkiat 1986: 326). It is also significant that Camrun's analysis formed part of an examination of the question of whether Thailand was likely to become Communist, and he states that he sees a need to find answers to help generate willpower in fighting against communist dangers (2519: 24). His answer to his own question is that Thailand will remain as a constitutional democracy free from communism for all time (2519: 34) because the three principles of nation, religion and monarchy, the bulwark against communist imperialism, are all strong in the horoscope of the founding of Bangkok.

Camrun's exclusive use of the horoscope of the city pillar foundation of 21 April 1782 appears to be endorsed, in practice if not in principle, by many other astrologers who refer to this original horoscope in their analyses of political and historical events. However there is some divergence of views as to which horoscopes are appropriate for the astrological analysis of Thailand. The original duang muang of the city appears to be universally used, while limited use of the 1932 horoscope is also evident. Some astrologers advocate the use of the current king's horoscope in addition to the others, although I did not see this used in presentation of analysis of recent political events.

Phlu Luang is a rare advocate of the use of the horoscope of
the fourth reign and he appears to use it only for analysing the remainder of the absolute monarchy period. All educated astrologers are aware of this horoscope, of course, but few see any practical relevance for it: as one astrologer commented, 'it is like a principal house post: if you haven't taken down the old house how can you put up another (ritually significant) principal post'. It is possible to conclude that because the fourth reign horoscope was not considered to be accompanied by any particular change in rule there was no sense it which it could be seen to supersede the horoscope dating from the beginning of the dynasty. The 1932 revolution, however, potentially changed the nature of the polity, and since that date, the identity of the nation's rulers has also changed, so that the horoscope analysis has to be adapted accordingly. It is also possible that the prediction of the dynasty lasting only for one hundred and fifty years makes acceptable the possibility that the effects of the original horoscope have elapsed. However, no analysis of political events concerning the country seems to be carried out without reference to the original city horoscope; a horoscope which is familiar to all Thai astrologers at the associations, and which, if other considerations seem too complex, appears to be regarded as an adequate basis on its own.

It is clear then that the change in the system of government in 1932 raised a problem for Thai astrologers, namely the question of how to define the nature of the polity whose identity was formerly portrayed in a recognised standard horoscope. Political views shape the opinions of some writers, such as the developmental view of social history exemplified in the view of Phlu Luang, an academic historian, and the more conservative traditionalist-monarchist approach of police officer Camrun. Nevertheless the problem has universal relevance for astrologers, and the fact that the question continues to be debated fifty years after the first

12 See Phansak 2529 for support of the idea that this fourth reign horoscope deserves greater consideration.
change of government indicates continuing confusion about the nature of the new polity, and how other kinds of political legitimacy can be accommodated to within a system formerly dependent upon the simplicities of the rule of absolute monarchy and the close identification of the king with the nation.

What is highlighted by the question of the choice of horoscopes for conceptualising and explaining the fortunes of the country is the concern with the current situation: the need to know when the present dilemmas and trends began to be established and influenced by planetary transits, and how complex a set of relations has to be taken into account for their interpretation. While Phlu Luang's historical developmental approach makes interesting history, it makes complicated astrology. The desire to be able to create a set of clear trends and strengths which can be seen to be of long-lasting usefulness in analysis of the country's history holds a strong attraction for obvious reasons. Moreover the astrological wisdom of the explanation of the history of the Bangkok period has conventionally been handed down in relation to the first city pillar horoscope. The ambiguity of the current phase of Bangkok history is reflected in the ambivalence demonstrated towards the importance of other political influences beyond those of the monarchy shown in the debate about which are the 'real' and certain duang muang capable of explaining the present and helping prepare for the future.

This ambivalence also takes other forms, such as when, in the persistent moves to revert to the name of Siam rather than Thailand, the astrologically based argument is put forward that the country's current problems are caused by the change of its name, since the country's foundation was based on the name of Siam, and its horoscope matched accordingly (Crossette 1985). However
historically unlikely this argument is,\textsuperscript{13} it shows uncertainty relating to the present, the loss of firm foundations in the past, and a hankering to return to the time before leaders of the 1932 Revolution who later became unpopular sought to change the identity of the nation and its significant institutions.

\textbf{The National Horoscope in an Anniversary Celebration}

The occasion of the Bangkok bicentennial was an occasion for historical reflection in the astrological associations, as elsewhere. This was evident in the discussions prompted on the process of analysis of events concerning the nation and in the presentation of information and viewpoints on the first national horoscope. The year of celebration provided the Astrological Association of Thailand with the opportunity to publish a special commemorative bicentennial volume on Thai astrology, which included, together with reproduction of some important early astrological texts, several recent articles discussing the establishment of the city pillar and the horoscope of the city. The April issue of their journal also celebrated the bicentennial of the city and two hundred years of the Cakkri dynasty.

The special volume issued included an article summarising the ceremony for the establishment of the Bangkok city pillar and mentioning the appearance of the omen of the four little snakes which signalled the deterioration (\textit{khwaam siam}) of the auspiciousness of the occasion (Sumit 2525). However another article discussed the 'miraculous' horoscope of May 2 1982. According to the author this date was the exact two-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the national horoscope according to the lunar calendar and its horoscope was, according to a certain method of horoscope construction, the same as the horoscope of 21

\textsuperscript{13} The name of Siam was only used for the country for the first time during the fourth reign (Sonkliat 1986: 133) in the mid-nineteenth century. Prior to that the name of the capital city was used to refer to the kingdom as a whole.
April 1782 except for the position of the ascendant. The author of this argument, who was something of a ritual specialist and advocate of mystical sources of divination, described some of the magically powerful features of the dual horoscopes, showing that the events of 24 June 1932 (the day of the overthrow of the absolute monarchy) were implied in the original horoscope. One of the miraculous (saksit) features detected was the fact of the freedom enjoyed by the country, leading to the suggestion that Thailand would not become a colony for three hundred years from the date of the establishment of the city pillar (S. Satcayan 2525: 119). The author also showed that the change of government one hundred and fifty years, and six kings (counting from the king who continued the dynasty, Rama II) into the city's history was a feature of the horoscope and the time of its establishment (S. Satcayan 2525: 21). He argued that a ceremony to prolong the life of the city (phraaatcaphithii too aayu phranakhorn) held by Rama VII\(^4\) meant that the city would definitely survive the potential 300 years of independence indicated in the horoscope (2525: 22). He then suggested that the horoscope of May 2 1982 would be a suitable one for the auspicious time to worship the spirit of the city pillar and phrasayaamtheewaathiraat, and that the power (amnaat) of the time of the horoscope would [then] undoubtedly ensure the city a destiny lasting for five hundred years (2525: 22).

This author attributed these miraculous powers to the results of Rama I's purpose in calculating the horoscope in advance so that the auspicious time could be used for a ceremony to celebrate the bicentennial of the city. This arose from his concern for the dynasty and the city which he had so diligently worked to construct, employing his eminent genius. So it was destined that the (1982)

\(^4\) Presumably this is a reference to the public 150-year celebrations which included the construction and ceremonial opening of the Memorial Bridge. The year's other major royal activities included the casting of a statue of the first Cakkri king as a memorial (Phloenphis 2524: 4-6).
horoscope would be found to be miraculously powerful in the same way that the (1782) horoscope of the city pillar had been (2525: 22).

At the International Astrological Association there were also discussions on the foundation horoscope of the city pillar of Bangkok, and some of the same sentiments of a bright future were reflected in these. Such analysis usually returns to the issue of prompting admiration and gratitude for the wisdom and benevolence of the founding monarch who was responsible for the benefits the nation had enjoyed as a result of his selection of the city pillar horoscope. The kind of analysis emphasised, therefore, consolidated not only the validity of the horoscope associated with the monarchy but also suggested that all that had happened since the founding of the city was under the influence of the benevolent and omniscient founder of the dynasty, who is sometimes thought to have had such bunbaaramii that all have depended upon it since.15

The sentiments demonstrated in the public presentations by members of the astrological associations were no doubt entirely appropriate for the occasion of the city bicentennial, as this was also the occasion of the celebration of the continuance of the monarchy. Nevertheless they significantly reinforced the generally conservative approach to the conceptualisation of the astrological construction of the national political identity which sees the monarchy as supplying the mainstay of that identification and the ultimate source of political legitimacy within Thai tradition.

Anderson has argued that the political events of the 1970s led to the centrality of national crises becoming focused on the monarchy, and that these crises were largely felt by the 'insecure

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15 We may note here the description of kings found in the Mahabharata, namely that the king 'is the author of time, not of chronological time which is but an abstraction, but of the time which ripens the actions of men...' (Lingat in Reynolds 1979a: 100). In Bangkok this is especially true of Rama I.
new bourgeois strata' for whom the monarchy was both talisman and moral alibi.

The historical depth and solidity of the institution appeared as a kind of charm against disorder and disintegration ... Members of these strata felt their nationalist self-esteem morally guaranteed by their loyalty to the throne, the epitome of the national heritage. Thus, any assault, however indirect, on the legitimacy of the throne was necessarily sensed as a menace to that alibi.

(Anderson 1977: 23)

Astrologers such as most of those discussed here have, in their astrological analysis of the events which affect the nation, provided one variant of this loyalty to the source of the bourgeois 'moral alibi' in their depiction of the fundamental centrality and continuing benevolence of the monarchy. Their approach to the horoscope of the city pillar not only demonstrates their own loyalty, however, but also makes of the tradition of astrology (which I have argued earlier they seek to represent) an expression of loyalty to the monarchical institution as a source of political legitimacy and cultural identity. That this focus is maintained in relation to the horoscope of the city pillar also reinforces the projection of the central importance of the city of Bangkok as the pre-eminent cultural and political centre.

Conclusion

This chapter has set out to illustrate the prevalence of the association between the Thai city pillar and sources of political power and legitimacy, as well as of the security and well-being of the nation, and has sought to show the way in which these themes have continued to be reinforced by the majority of astrological approaches to the question of national identity and history.

The discussion has also shown the way in which the astrological need to relate understanding of the horoscope of origin to subsequent events and sources of influence can be traced in the characterisation of the national horoscope and the ways it has
consistently been related to a number of prophecies which were supposedly authored by Rama I in relation to the horoscope of the city pillar. It has been suggested that the pattern of popularity of these predictions over time has reflected their changing relevance for the concerns of the day, and has provided an insight into the nature of the horoscope itself and the implications it holds the past, present and future. The popular use made of the predictions has proved them capable of supporting a number of political views and aspirations, while the astrological interpretations have emphasised non-social factors.

I have argued earlier that the qualitative view of time in astrological thinking created the necessity of knowing in which particular time period events were located, and the need to rationalise the significance of the political events of the Bangkok period has led to uncertainty about the importance of the horoscope of the country, and thus about the way to assess the likely direction of future events within the country. The breakdown of consensus over traditional political arrangements has been reflected in disagreement and confusion over the astrological process of political analysis, and the understanding of the historical roots of, and indeed the nature of the present.

This disagreement cannot be divorced from divergent views of the historical process per se. This divergence will be shown in the next chapter, which includes examination of the astrological interpretation of national identity based on a historical perspective applied to analysis of the national horoscope.
CHAPTER SEVEN

ASTROLOGY AND THAI POLITICS

Introduction

In the last chapter it was seen that politically, Thai astrology has on the whole retained a conservative and royalist definition of the identity of Thailand, and that there appears to have been a ready adaptability of the Thai astrological framework to render comprehensible the new political scene in terms which have changed little with the end of the absolute monarchy. This chapter will examine the way in which astrology analyses contemporary political activity to determine to what extent it has changed to cope with the new political situation. Many professional astrologers keep a constant eye on both political events and the changing planetary influences on the duang muang of the city in order to publicise astrological analysis of the trend of events. It will be seen in this chapter that there is a strong relationship between astrological beliefs and contemporary political culture in Thailand, in terms of both astrological analysis of current affairs and astrological views of political history which are contributed to political debates.

In Chapter Two it was suggested that the actual political role of the astrologers in the court of the absolute monarchy was difficult to ascertain; and in the modern context there is much of the same difficulty in determining just how much actual decision-making is based on astrological advice or interpretation. Nevertheless in Bangkok there is a general belief that quite a proportion of the members of the ruling élite, up to the level of both senior politicians and military officers, are to some extent influenced by astrological concerns. Prime Ministers and other
powerful government officials, from Sarit, Thanom Kittikhachorn, Praphat Carusathien, Kriangsak Chomanand and Samak Sundaravej (some of whom are still politically active) have all been mentioned as having their own astrologers. Prime Minister Prem was not so readily associated with astrologers, but more recently the Bangkok Governor Camlong Srimuang was reported to have had his chances in an election correctly forecast as a victory the day before the election, the computer prediction being supplied by a monk (*The Australian* 1986: 44); while the wife of the now current Prime Minister, Khunying Boonruen Choonhavan, is regarded as being a dedicated client of another monk-astrologer (*Asiaweek* 1989: 43). In spite of the strong opposition to the use of these ideas among many left-wing and younger politicians and political commentators, therefore, it is still true to say that '([c]ontemporary Thai political culture continues to accept the role of the supernatural— the importance of luck, auspicious days, being born under the right stars— to an extent that seems unusual in the West' (Girling 1981: 141), and it is not unknown for senior politicians to publicly attribute political crises to the stars (e.g. in *Nation Review* June 29 1982: 1).

One of the most important limitations on the use of astrological analysis of national politics is the common knowledge that it is forbidden by law to make public political prophecies, whether based on astrology or other kinds of divination, which could serve to incite public disturbance. Political astrological discussion therefore usually operates either in closed circles, or restricts itself to fairly circumscribed areas and forms of expression. Perhaps the most radical difference in the political role of astrology since the demise of the absolute monarchy is that predictions of an astrological kind can no longer be officially used to support or justify political action and policy. The prohibition on public predictions, no doubt introduced in order to suppress unwanted political opposition as well as to prevent unrest in itself, also means that political leaders do not have access to the
public use of astrology for their own purposes in a way that was possible for the absolute monarchs.

Much of the general public discussion concerning politics and astrology is based on rumour and hearsay, and is therefore rather ephemeral and usually unsubstantiated. However such discussion provides a useful indication of the ways in which astrology is perceived to have continued to exert influence in the political sphere. The association of astrology with politics in the contemporary period is significant for a number of reasons. It is an association which serves to promote public awareness of astrology. Whether that awareness is positive or negative, political activities continue to be surrounded by rumours and opinions of an astrological nature, illustrating that astrology is much more than the private pastime of a few individuals. Such rumours are moreover an indication of what is perhaps the most pertinent aspect of the role which astrology plays in contemporary politics: its ability to be used to influence public opinion. While it may not be possible to know how much of the then current discussions of astrological significance reached beyond the confines of the court in the days of the absolute monarchy, astrological rumour, argument and advice are now subject to fairly widespread comment and discussion at least within politically interested circles in Bangkok, and quite probably beyond them. Thus the importance of astrology is that it allows considerable opportunity and scope for comment on political events by those not actually in power themselves, as well as providing political actors with an unofficial way in which to conceptualise and justify their part in the political process.

Astrology is also important in contemporary politics because for at least some it represents an explicit continuity of the traditional relationship between astrology and the legitimate use of political power and authority derived from the practices of the absolute monarchy. Several political leaders in the last few
decades have made open use of astrology in the conduct of their political activities, while others are commonly believed to have done so. While this use is not uncontroversial, it is recognised as being based on practices which were hitherto much more intrinsic to the practice of government than is the case today. The maintenance of the notion that moral standing is evidenced by ability to maintain power means that astrology is still a politically powerful tool where questions of political legitimacy are concerned because of the association made between destiny visible in the horoscope and the influence of karma.

Finally, the political use of astrology is of significance in that it is sometimes regarded as providing a measure of an individual's political values, such as conservatism or authoritarianism, which then makes astrology itself a political 'weapon' in the wider ideological disputes in Thai politics. The inheritance of astrological beliefs from an absolutist political system, as well as the association of astrology with particular recent political leaders, has helped to reinforce among progressives the perception of astrology as part of the ideological underpinnings of right-wing political philosophies. It therefore comes under direct political attack as part of the apparatus of an oppressively conservative form of ideological domination, and as something which should be eradicated from Thai political culture. Assessment of the role which astrology plays in contemporary political discussion is therefore vital for an understanding of the current attitudes towards astrology generally in Thai society.

**Astrology and the Press**

The print media in Thailand provide an important outlet for political astrology in Thailand, although the use of the media is subject to the prohibitions on political pronouncements which incite. In spite of this limitation, and despite the caution which astrologers frequently express with regard to their ability to make
political comments, there is an intermittent and judicious use of astrological predictions in newspapers and magazines by journalists and even by astrologers themselves.

One of the few astrologers writing regularly and directly on political events during the time of fieldwork was Poramet,¹ who had a full-page column combining political predictions and personal star-sign columns for the coming week in the Saturday morning edition of Naew Na.² The political section of the column was written in an allusive and provocative style, tended to focus on likely mishaps and dangers in the prediction period, and was designed to cater for an audience of businessmen, military men and politicians who could interpret it in the light of their knowledge of current events.

The columnist was well-known through this regular feature, and successful predictions helped to draw attention to the writer. This was the case when on one occasion Poramet implied that his predictions the previous week concerning the dangers likely to be

¹ Poramet Wacharapan was one of the few astrologers then currently regarded as a public ‘political astrologer’ (koon kaan mitang). He is the son of another well-known astrologer, Pracup Wacharapan, who is still remembered as the former personal astrologer (moo duu pracaam tua) of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, and who died in 1971. Poramet learned astrology from his father, furthering his interest and research into the ‘original’ Indian astrology (which his father had helped to promote in the 1960s) by learning Sanskrit and studying texts in that language purchased from India. Poramet was influential in the committee, as a teacher, and as an active contributor to the journal of the Astrological Association of Thailand in the mid- to late seventies, although he reported that he met with much resistance to the astrological approach he tried to teach there. At around that same time he also produced his own astrological journal specialising in Indian methods. In many of these activities he was involved jointly with Thep Sarikabutr, a close associate of his father, and reportedly also of Sarit (see footnote 22 below).

² Naew Na newspaper was at the time of research a comparatively new daily newspaper, but it was already selling well and has come to be rated as having the fourth or fifth highest circulation of Bangkok’s dailies. By 1984 it had an estimated circulation of 50,000 copies. Although it claims an independent stance, one of its major proprietors is thought to have military links (Far Eastern Economic Review 19 July 1984: 34). Poramet wrote regularly for the paper from its inception (but see also fn. 7 below).
caused by an imminent eclipse was proved correct. An army helicopter had crashed a few days later killing eleven people on board, several of whom were senior army officers. The prediction referred to had mentioned (among other things) that the position of Mars indicated grave danger of a serious accident on land or in the water which would involve the deaths of many; danger from mishap from conflagration or danger from sabotage; and had warned those specifically involved with working with machinery and those dealing with arms and weaponry or in control of force (in Naew Na 4 June 2526: 8). When in his next column the following week the columnist only vaguely suggested that his prediction had been seen to come true, the point was apparently accepted in relation to the helicopter crash. The prediction was discussed at one of the astrological associations, where even those not normally in favour of the columnist's type of astrology joined in the talk of his success. Rumours of the helicopter being brought down by an explosion, possibly caused by sabotage, dogged the enquiry into the mishap, although the element of sabotage was immediately denied by officials (see The Nation Review June 12 1983: 1, 3).

Another intermittent astrological columnist had also essayed predictions concerning the impact of this eclipse in Lak Thai magazine, where he carefully made a point of claiming his predictions were based purely on Thai astrology. His predictions were broadly similar to some of those of Poramet. The article was given prominent editorial support by use of the prediction headlines for the front cover; and an article accompanying the astrologer's predictions, while not directly endorsing belief in astrology discussed what conditions existed within ruling circles, particularly among the military, which could provide the catalyst for the disturbances predicted if they were to come true (Lak Thai 9 June 2526: 10-13). This prediction was later reported in the

3 Lak Thai is a weekly political and economic news magazine which appears thought to be oriented towards a military audience or viewpoint as a result of some proportion of military officer ownership.
English-language press (Bangkok Post 12 June 1983: 6), but the following week's column did not make any claims that the prediction had been "fulfilled" by the helicopter crash.  

Both of these authors exercised some caution in their political predictions. The astrological writer for Lak Thai ended dire predictions with the reassurance that any dangers would not be overwhelming. Poramet's rather more spirited approach appeared to rely on a shrewd sense of timing. His coverage of the election in April 1983 was subdued beforehand, although two weeks before the election day he warned his readers of the dangers of assassinations (Naew Na 26 March 2526: 8), hardly a "prediction" since some twenty people were killed during the two months prior to the election (Turton 1984: 59 fn. 31); and the next week he dropped a hint about rumours circulating of a coup d'état. When the new Prime Minister was known the columnist analysed how the indications for (Prime Minister) Prem Tinsulanond's horoscope were particularly strong at the time, and indeed better than those for the horoscopes of the other four main contenders (Naew Na 30 April 2526: 8); and soon after examined astrological implications for the future political career of Major General Pramarn Adireksarn (the then head of the Chart Thai [Thai Nation] Party which had just been forced into opposition) to argue that his political problems had been caused by Pramarn himself. The author predicted that Pramarn could still have a political future, but playfully questioned whether there would be a board for him to "play" politics on by the time a good opportunity came along (Naew Na 14 May 2526: 8). Both of these analyses were sprinkled with warnings to the senior leaders regarding their health and Prem was warned about a competitor and untrustworthy assistants.

This column is clearly a vehicle for analysis of and comment on current events, apparently intended to entertain as well as to

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4 This full solar eclipse had also been the subject of much scientific excitement. See for example the special publication of the Astronomical Association published for the occasion (Samaakhom Daaraasaat 2525).
inform, and its author acknowledges the limitations of not endangering the newspaper in which it appears. The columnist has maintained connections in political and business circles derived from his father, and is thus in something of an advantaged position in terms of his acquaintance with such groups in comparison with many other astrologers. His knowledge of the interests and activities of the influential individuals within these circles enables him to remain au courant with regard to current thinking. His public reputation has no doubt made his regular column viable.

Poramet's predictions on political events have also been frequently sought and published in other sections of the Bangkok press. Early in 1983, for example, his warning to the government not to hold their forthcoming election on 12 June (because of the dangers generated by the two eclipses in that month which might cause a battle between two groups of the same race) was reported in several papers (Bangkok Post 7 January 1983: 4). He has on several occasions predicted that the government of the country will be run by the army, but in spite of this pronouncement and of his military and political connections, he has a reputation among commentators as not taking political sides. He publicly reports that people bring him anonymous birth details for analysis which belong to seniors in political circles who do not even know their horoscopes are being cast. His public predictions, however, have sometimes caused the ire of 'higher-ups', who on one occasion warned him to 'speak a little more quietly' following his prediction of the length of one Prime Minister's government (Sayaam Nikorn 22 March 2523 [1980]: n.p.). Around this time he started his regular newspaper column. At the time of fieldwork he was cited as one of the most well-known and 'outspoken' of the political astrologers.

5 See footnote 15 below for details.

6 This was apparently provoked by his then recent prediction concerning the imminent downfall of Prime Minister Kriangsak, a prophecy which was fulfilled within three months (see Sayaam Nikorn 17 December 2522 [1979]: 30).
largely through his personal connections and association with the media. Other astrologers come to public attention in similar ways.

Not all astrologers who earn a public reputation by political predictions fare so well, however. Several astrologers mentioned the warnings they had received after publishing political predictions, so it appears that real sanctions are applied to those who misjudge the limitations in this field. The column dealing with political and economic issues in the journal of the Astrological Association of Thailand, moreover, does not appear to provide much comment which could be regarded as politically provocative, although the association has in the past been more actively involved in the political issues of the day, as will be seen later in this chapter.

One astrologer who publicised his predictions was, according to his own account, imprisoned several times under the Sarit regime; and his career is worth bearing in mind since it spanned a period when astrological activity appears to have been quite widespread. His first political prediction was publicised in July 1956. This concerned a coup d'etat which would lose power; and included the claims that Phibulsongkhram would have to leave the country with several other senior government ministers, and would eventually die overseas, that the house of representatives would collapse, and that there would be a new election. When "Chansin" circulated this prediction widely two newspapers published it, and he gained some recognition after the prediction was eventually substantially proved right, to the extent that people from his own town of Nakhorn Srithammarat even suggested he should stand for election there (Hai Sok 2508a: 12). However, when he then predicted that there would be another (bloodless) coup, that the 1932 constitution would be

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7 Some time after the first period of fieldwork his column ceased after having lasted around four years. Its cessation was apparently a result of widespread changes in the personnel of the newspaper, and although the columnist reopened his feature in another new newspaper, both the new column and the new paper appear to have had a very short life.
abrogated, that the government would fall as would the *Sahaphumichaatsangkhom* Party, and that after that if Sarit did not die he would go overseas again (Hai Sok 2508a: 13), Sarit had him imprisoned for six months; and even had him sent to a mental hospital in an attempt to have him declared insane (Hai Sok 2508a: 5). At the time the Astrological Association of Thailand published a critical repudiation of any links with him (Hai Sok 2508a: 14), although whether this was because of the politically dangerous nature of his predictions and the displeasure caused by them, or because his unorthodox and unexplained methods of predictions were regarded by many members as fraudulent (Hai Sok 2508a: 8) is not clear. This seer's predictions concerning the possibility of a third world war also led to his imprisonment in 1958 and the burning of all copies of the prediction (Hai Sok 2508a: 21), yet although the police and other astrologers apparently thought Chansin mad, his predictions concerning the third world war and the future of communism in world affairs was re-published in 1965 without further charges being laid against him.

During the period of fieldwork there were other astrologers who contributed astrological analyses in the media, including in some publications designed for the educated and progressive portions of the reading public. For a time Phlu Luang contributed a column in which he analysed parties and politicians of note, and 'Sisero' also contributed a regular predictive column of mundane astrology pertaining to Thailand.\(^8\) While there is not much sustained use of regular political astrological columns, however — those which do appear seem to be comparatively short-lived — the print media in Thailand gives much coverage to astrology, ranging from the near-ubiquitous personal prediction and advice columns to frequent articles and interviews on topics of interest which further serve to

\(^8\) In the early 1980s Phlu Luang contributed articles in the new general reading magazine *Kongkan*, but this magazine does not appear to have lasted more than a few years. 'Sisero' (i.e. Cicero) contributed his columns in the more news-oriented left-wing weekly, *Laeng Khaaw*, for some time.
heighten general awareness of astrological practice, and there is one magazine, *Duang Seetthii*, which is entirely devoted to astrological matters at a popular level and which combines all of these approaches. It is frequently suggested that a regular publication cannot compete on the market in Thailand without a column for personal astrological predictions; and although it is also sometimes asserted that the more progressive and serious left-wing political magazines would not find such columns suitable for publication, some of the suggested examples of these have recently commenced astrological columns, including *Matichon* weekly, which now also produces an astrological 'annual' containing brief political comments for the year. Moreover, some astrologers take the opportunity provided by events such as elections (Lak Fa 2529) or even the politically volatile month of October (when the army reshuffles are expected) (Sisero and Yodthong n.d.) to produce their own published astrological predictions which include analysis of topical political issues.

On the whole astrology appears to have an established, if sometimes precarious, place in the media coverage of political events, perhaps largely because, as one journalist put it, astrological predictions allow the media to print political suggestions which in any other form they could not publish. This appears to be particularly the case when rumours of coups abound, or when the position of particular leaders is in question, but astrological columns skilfully written can contain much food for thought and are one of the forms of allusive news writing which prosper in some sections of the print media. A final example will illustrate the role astrological analysis can be made to play in press coverage of political issues.

Several astrological comments on the rule of Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanond appeared in serious political press publications during his period in office, and such examples illustrate the utilisation of astrological analysis to influence and reflect
political opinions among the wider public. A fairly indirect approach was taken when in 1982 a weekly news magazine included an astrologer's analysis comparing the horoscopes of General Prem and his by then public rival General Arthit to see which appeared the stronger. The article reflected the common concern with the issue of the time as to which of the two was likely to hold power in the future. This article was spied by a student of one of the astrological associations, and aroused much interest among his classmates and the teachers. In 1984 the much-publicised illness suffered by Prime Minister Prem, which caused his controversial decision to seek medical advice overseas, provided an occasion for an astrologer to declare that Prem's horoscope was adversely affected by the long-term debilitation of Jupiter, causing illness, a journey overseas, or something secret; while in response to the interviewer's questions he stated that General Arthit's astrological indications were very good (Niwat 2527: 20-22). During what became his last term, when it was well known that Prem was becoming increasingly unpopular as Prime Minister with several vocal sections of the public, and was beginning to be subject to public personal attack, an article appeared in the weekly edition of Matichon discussing the fact that Prem's horoscope indicated an imminent state of duang tok (lit. fallen planets: a general period of bad luck), and pointing out the manifestations this was likely to have. The article began with the point that the stars have no influence over humanity, they only reveal the present karma of the individual; and at the end the author added for good measure that it was the astrologer's duty to give advice (hai kham naenam), while it was up to the bunkam (merit/demerit) of those analysed as to whether they believed it (Matichon sutsapdaa May 17 2530: 12-13).

More than just a statement of the nature of astrological knowledge, this was a powerful reminder, pertinent to both the subject of the article and to the audience, of the moral basis of legitimate authority according to Thai political ideals, where there is still some acceptance of the idea that incumbents of positions of...
power maintain their position because of accumulated merit. While the idea of retention of political position as a reflection of meritorious standing was used in relation to the absolute monarchy (Reynolds 1973a: 272), where the king's merit was thought to be far above that of ordinary citizens, it is subject to some critical review with present patterns of political leadership. So rumours concerning, for example, leaders' purported attempts to use supernatural techniques to maintain their position can sometimes be so politically damaging as to be unpublishable; and the suggestion that an individual's horoscope indicates political demise contains strong moral overtones casting doubt on whether the individual deserves his position.

**Astrology and the Modern Political Process**

Astrological analyses, whether primarily intended for public consumption or not, show that astrologers employ general frameworks of political assumptions in their approach to politics. The astrological associations act as a forum where political issues and analyses can be discussed in a partially public arena. Subjects as wide-ranging as political careers of eminent individuals, relationships between comets and coups, the nature of the Thai national horoscope, and forthcoming election results are all subjects of interest and discussion at both formal and informal levels, often in the form of impromptu analysis included in regular classes or lectures provided for students and other interested members, and sometimes also published in the association journals.

The role astrology is presumed to be able to offer in the analysis of the secret or unknown was evident in the analyses of two astrologers who discussed the highly controversial issue of the political involvement of an army officer found dead during a police attempt to bring him into custody over the attempted assassination of the then Prime Minister. A spirited debate ensued between these two, both of whom were officers in the army, over whether correct
interpretations of the relevant horoscopes showed that the man was a true political idealist prepared to face the consequences of his acts or a rather easily disturbed man who had finally showed a sense of honour by committing suicide.

The election in April 1983 provided a prominent occasion for the demonstration of analytical skills, and the International Astrological Association made the event the subject of a seminar open to the public, and to which a small number of press reporters turned up. The seminar was held the day before the election, and the common themes of interest announced by the speakers were apparently those perceived to be of popular concern: namely which parties would receive the most votes; who would come in as the Prime Minister; how stable the new government would be; and whether it would be secure (from a coup or change of government). Four of the more senior members of the association spoke, there were several kinds of predictive bases used, and several suggested outcomes were put forward.

Three of the speakers anticipated that General Prem would be returned as the new Prime Minister, which was suggested by one speaker to be the wish of the people; while one speaker suggested that while General Saiyud Kerdphol's horoscope was strong at the time, and he might become Deputy Prime Minister, General Arthit Kamlang-Ek had the strongest possibility of becoming the Prime Minister at the time of the election. Two of the speakers suggested that there was going to be a high voter turnout (there had been a campaign to increase voter turnout from its usual low figure prior to the campaign), with suggestions of from 40 to 70 percent in one speaker's view, and over 50 percent, especially in Bangkok, in another's. There were varied views on the expected successes of the political parties, with predictions on these issues rather inconclusive: one speaker suggested that no political party would receive enough support to establish a government, while another argued that four parties only would gain a significant vote, that
there would be a party of capitalists who were already organised to 'buy' members (after the election), and that the government would stem from a pact between two large parties. Another speaker foresaw the likelihood of a violent episode on election day, but said the army would help ensure a successful election, and that the party with the best agricultural policy (whom he identified as the Social Action Party) would win, as a result of increased voting participation of agricultural workers and other labourers. All four speakers mentioned that there would be difficulties for the government, with one suggesting a change of government (for the better) in the coming November. Only one expressed certainty over the security of the new government.⁹

There were not many "surprises" in the discussion arising out of these varied astrological analyses, since the issues raised were familiar public issues at the time. As it turned out, the election was perhaps anticlimactic, since it took quite some time for the new government to be formed, during the negotiations for which Prem at first refused to continue as Prime Minister and then was persuaded back to his position. The Chart Thai (Thai Nation) party, predicted by one of the speakers to be a certainty for the new government, was forced into opposition for the first time when the Social Action Party leader refused to be in government with it. A few weeks after the election, when Prem had been signed in as Prime Minister, one of the speakers, the President of the Association, joked about how he had reacted to the news of Prem's refusal to come back as Prime Minister, and how he felt he could reappear now that his prediction had finally been shown to have come true. On the whole, however, by the time the election was settled, there was little evident

⁹ See the newspaper account in Thai Rath 18 April 1983 or as reprinted in the journal of the International Astrological Association, Samaattha hooraasaat naanaachaat, Vol 1, No 4, June 2526 (1983): 11-12. No other paper seems to have reported the story, even though three or four reporters turned up for the presentation. The Thai Rath account did not specify the names of the political parties referred to by the speakers, possibly as a legal requirement since the account was published on the morning of the election.
discussion of the outcome and the predictions, although some bantering between the speakers occurred in the intervening period of uncertainty.

The aim of the presentation seemed to be manifold: in part there was some feeling that a public discussion would help publicise astrology itself and perhaps also the association; and indeed a number of interested outsiders came to listen to the talks. The discussion also provided an opportunity for the students to hear views on the prediction of elections. The teachers speaking displayed a variety of ways of dealing with the identification of political personalities and political parties, and a good deal of the time was spent in explaining these selections. There did not seem to be any uniformity or unanimity in how the political parties should be designated; some astrologers using numerological derivations of names in conjunction with the *duang muang* (city horoscope); others horoscopes of the founding dates of the parties; while sometimes the most important planet of the horoscope of the leader of each party was used for the party itself. This variety may merely represent a normal range of views given that the speakers were specialists in different fields; but the degree of explanation provided by each of the speakers may indicate that Thai astrology does not have clear procedures for such analysis, especially that dealing with parties, and that the problem of dealing with them astrologically is still in an experimental stage.

One of the speakers wrote an article after the election outcome suggesting how the major parties should be identified with specific planets based on the date of the new Prime Ministership (Chuay 2526). Those parties which the author thought to be closely associated with their prominent leaders, such as Kukrit Pramoj's Social Action Party and Samak Sundaravej's Prachakorn Thai Party, were identified with a particular planet of prime importance calculated from the horoscope of the leader; while others, such as the Chart Thai party, were identified on the basis of membership.
composition, in this case that of capitalist business entrepreneurs. The astrological identification of the parties on this basis would therefore presumably change with a change in leadership, or in principal membership composition. The main aim of the article appears to have been to establish a horoscope for analysis of the new government and of how well the government was likely to work. According to the author's analysis, Prem as Prime Minister would be able to control the Chart Thai party if in fact it was forced into opposition, as by then seemed likely, and the government would 'fulfil the Prime Minister's ideals and wishes' (Chuay 2526: 30, 31).

It is plausible to suggest that the weak development of the analysis of participation of the political parties, in contrast to that of the individual candidates whose future prospects are more easily dealt with in Thai astrology, reflects on the part of astrologers a perception also found generally among the Thai public, who as a whole have been 'rather ignorant of the role and function of the political party and ... generally indifferent to political parties' (Kramol 1982: 23). The explicit astrological identifications made between parties and their leaders may likewise reflect the fact of the leaders' own perceptions of parties as 'merely ... the boost for their election prospects rather than as the instrument for sustained group action' (Kramol 1982: 32). Nevertheless some of the speakers on this occasion attempted to incorporate some analysis of the policies and popular appeal of the political parties in their understanding of the astrological significance of the respective parties: such as in the idea of one speaker that the Social Action Party was the only party with a specific agricultural policy; and in the assertion that the Chart Thai party's activities could be associated with those of capitalists. Indeed, given the poor development of separate and clear policies among the various parties, and the clouding of political issues by the compulsory adherence of all parties to the vague principles of nation, religion and king - with the result that
not even the party candidates can differentiate between membership of one party and that of another (Kramol 1982: 34) - the difficulty of clearly denoting parties astrologically possibly results from the poor impact political parties have made on the development of Thai political culture in general.

Prior to the subsequent election in 1986, one of the speakers at the 1983 presentation, who had since left the association, published a lengthy prediction on the likely future Prime Minister and on which parties were likely to form the new government. The publication also included a full nation-wide list of the parties' candidates, histories of the contending parties, and a summary of the political events leading up to the calling of the election. In 1983 this author was the only speaker who had predicted someone other than Prem as having most chance to win the previous election, and this time he predicted Prem as the new head of government. The author's analysis of the likely contenders, however, mentioned others who had possibilities for promotion to higher office in the future. The publication concluded with the author requesting the pardon of those discussed in the prediction analysis, and pointing out that the analysis of individuals were based on the horoscope only of their birthday used in conjunction with the present planetary configurations; that they did not make use of their actual horoscopes (i.e. complete with the ascendant calculated according to their times of birth), since the latter were secret (Lak Fa 2529: 95-96). His emphasis on the use of non-specific horoscopes appears intended to point out that his analysis is based only on information which is accessible as common knowledge: the date of birth, and is therefore not a breach of ethics or of confidence. For the benefit of his audience the author also spoke of the 'responsibility' of astrologers to predict the outcome of elections (Lak Fa 2529: 68).

It is clear then that there is some interest among astrologers to increase public awareness of the possibilities astrology offers for perspectives on political events such as
elections, as well, of course, as taking the opportunity to gain income and perhaps a reputation in the case of publications like the one just discussed. However in general there is little publicly recognised association between astrology and elections. Supposedly astrological rumours circulate prior to elections: in 1979, for example, there was something of a joke going the rounds of Bangkok concerning a fortune-teller's "prediction" of the physical appearance of the next Prime Minister; which in fact included the distinguishing features common to the favoured candidates. In 1983 astrologers at the associations discussed appropriate dates for the election, and many seemed to be in agreement that the election would be better held on a more auspicious date close to the actual day chosen; but there was little expectation that the date of an election would actually be chosen according to astrological advice. A more usual assumption, by contrast, involves the role astrology is believed to play in coup attempts, which are thought to be arranged at an auspicious time to ensure their success in a way that elections are not.

Coups d'état are believed always to be timed in accordance with an auspicious date selected on astrological advice. The astrologers concerned are rarely known, so such beliefs are mostly a matter of rumour, conjecture or assumption. However the monk who provided the time for Sarit's coup of 1957 and his 1959 takeover of the government is apparently known (Tambiah 1984: 370-371 fn. 22), and it has also been rumoured that the only coup leader to have been executed for his coup attempt apologised shortly before his death to the astrologer whose advice he ignored in the timing of his unsuccessful attempt. It is also suggested, especially in

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10 This assertion probably refers to General Chalard Hiransiri, a former Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Army who led an attempted military coup on 26 March 1977. He was stripped of military rank and summarily executed under Article 21 of the Thai Constitution for his leadership of the unsuccessful attempt (Montri 1978: 26). The Commander of the First Army Division was shot and killed during the attempt, while the other conspirators were set free from jail sentences by the King's birthday amnesty (under another Prime Minister) later that year. The death
relation to monk astrologers, that the astrologer would not offer a
time for a coup as such, but that the client himself chooses a time
which would provide the most hope of success from more general
discussion of the astrological indications for the future. Overall,
the strength of the assumption that a successful coup is based on
skilled astrological advice is so strong that at least one coup was
so reported in the press (Krit 2529: 88).

While both elections and coups might be described as key
times when political futures lie in the balance, in the popular
imagination it is the coup which is perceived as requiring an
auspicious moment, possibly because of the excitement and danger
involved; also possibly because a coup is perceived as involving a
much more decisive change in political leadership, particularly with
the ascent of one coup leader; or perhaps because, as is sometimes
believed (Krit 2529: 86), it is necessary to have an auspicious time
for the performance of activities which are thought of as not good.

There can also be no doubt that the history of Thai politics since
the 1932 change of government, alternating as it has between coup-
introduced authoritarianism and constitutionally-based democratic
government (Kramol 1982: 37), has helped to create a perspective on
Thai politics which favours near-constant anticipation of the
interruption of governments in power. (This attitude is well
exemplified by the inclusion of predictions of the likely length of
stability of the new government which accompanied the astrologers'
pre-election predictions discussed above.) Coups are also much more
clearly associated with the political fortunes of one man or his
group than are the protracted negotiations and often provisional
arrangements which came to be associated with the aftermath of
general elections in the later phases of Prem's Prime Ministership,
when the predictions discussed above were made.

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of a general during a coup attempt and especially the subsequent execution of the
coup leader were both unprecedented in the history of (post-1932) Bangkok coups
There are indications that on occasion astrologers have actively contributed to the shaping of public opinion during periods of political instability. The journal of the Astrological Association of Thailand contained an unusual number of astrological analyses related to the then current political situation in the second half of 1976. These commenced with the reprint of a previous prediction by Poramet concerning M.R. Kukrit Pramoj's horoscope in June after his failure to be elected in the April election, and there was also analysis of why M.R. Seni Pramoj had won so well in the same election, to the extent of winning more votes than any other candidate. The second analysis on this topic was, according to its author, carried out in a spirit of enthusiasm created by the freshness of the approach to these topical issues in the journal (W. Phitti 2519: 33). In August and September Thep Sarikabutr contributed a lengthy analysis of General Kris Sivara's sudden death only days after his promotion to the position of Minister of Defense in the new Seni Cabinet. Kris had then been Army Commander, and in a crucial position to prevent the return to power of the military followers of the exiled leaders Thanom and Praphat (and indeed after his death Seni's Democrat Party's shaky

11 The following topical articles were included in Phayaakornsaan alongside the usual range of features and articles. In May an analysis of the horoscope of the then Prime Minister, M.R. Seni Pramoj, was provided (Chuay 2519), which was followed in June by another contribution on the subject (W. Phitti 2519). In June an article on M.R. Kukrit Pramoj (published the previous year by Poramet) was reprinted, ostensibly because of its relevance at the time (Poramet 2519a; and see also footnote 13 below). In July and August Thep provided a lengthy analysis of the horoscope of the former Army Commander Kris Sivara (Thep 2519b), and in November wrote an article asking when the difficulties of such hard times would pass (Thep 2519c). Throughout August to December Poramet provided articles on the current effects of transiting planets and eclipses on the city horoscope (and he claims to have predicted the events of 6th October in this journal) (e.g. Poramet 2519b; 2519c; 2519e) and on such subjects as the leadership in China (2519d). In December Thep reproduced and commented upon an article written by Kukrit on his own horoscope. This number of the journal also included Camrun's analysis of whether Thailand would fall to communism (Camrun 2519). In March of the following year Phlu Luang published his article on the developmental approach to the duang mifang (2520). Political content was not confined to astrological analysis: see the editorial comment by Camrun (the then Secretary of the Association) discussing the demise of the communist-supported student movement in the November issue of 1976.
alliance with the army factions which would prevent a coup collapsed, eventually enabling the right-wing coup of October 6 1976 [Morell and Chai-anan 1981: 267]). Shortly after his promotion Kris was taken to hospital, reportedly with heart trouble, but the unexpectedness of the illness and the timing of his death helped to prompt rumours that his death was caused by poisoning. Thep's analysis showed the astrological reasons for such a sudden death at the time, and included an explanation of why rumours of foul play were circulating (Thep 2519b).12 The analyses of the horoscopes of these eminent people was accompanied, as has been mentioned before, with a number of public seminars on the national horoscope and what was portended for the near future (Morell and Chai-anan 1981: 249). Clearly these analyses by members of the association provided a form of explanation, even of rationalisation, of what lay behind the events in what was a very turbulent, and finally very bloody political period.

The dual role astrologers have as both personal advisers to politicians and as publicly accessible experts creates certain tensions between politicians and astrologers. While many political figures are "known" to have personal astrologers in whom they place some trust, if the claims made by fortune-tellers interviewed in the press are reliable, there is also a great deal of shopping around for other opinions from well-respected experts and trusted confidants.

The question of confidentiality is an important one for those who wish to be consulted by political figures, for they stand to lose their reputation and clientele by revealing too much of what they know and about whom. Another method of protecting the privacy of eminent persons is for the client not reveal to the astrologer

12 As recently as 1984 an astrologer recalled the inauspicious coincidence of events at the end of the General's life by informing the public that he had warned General Kris that he should not rise any higher than his then present job of Army Commander at risk to his life (Sisero and Yodthong n.d.: 8).
whose horoscope he or she is being asked to examine. Foresight
concerning dangers of sudden downfalls in the political career of
the individual should logically be predictable, and forewarning
possible. It is worth noting the public comment on the pattern of
accepting astrological advice made by one astrologer, related in
particular to Field Marshal Thanom Kittikhachorn but meant also as a
general observation, namely that when political figures become
'big', many people will assure them that their horoscope is strong,
so that those who warn otherwise will be kicked out (Poramet in
Sayaam Nikorn 2522: 31).

Political figures usually attempt to prevent their birth
details from being known, supposedly for fear of political sabotage
by those who interpret their horoscope to indicate that they are
undergoing a period of weakness or who may make public statements to
this effect.\footnote{One apparent exception to this pattern is the politician and elder
statesman Kukrit Pramoj, who in the immediate aftermath of the events of 1973-1976
published the full details of his own birth details and horoscope in the newspaper
of which he was director, Sayaam Rath, together with his own analysis of the
horoscope. In characteristic style, Kukrit provided a plausible analysis of the
horoscope and the way in which he had observed the influences of the planets in
certain positions at various times in his life; but his analysis largely flew in the
face of the accepted astrological interpretations of the influences of specific
planets, and Kukrit facetiously suggested that if his experience did not accord
with the prescriptions in the treatises the astrologers could 'burn' (paen) their texts.
The article appeared on 29 October 1976, and was reprinted with a commentary by Thep
in Phayaakornsaam in December of the same year (Thep 2519c). Kukrit's horoscope had
been analysed by Poramet in his own journal according to Indian astrological methods
and it was reprinted, because of its 'strange' interpretation, in the AAT's
Phayaakornsaam in June 1976. It is not clear whether this was a prediction which
had helped prompt Kukrit to provide his own analysis. Kukrit's own counter-
interpretation was in response to the unmasked for predictions he complained of in
his introduction, but the most immediate catalyst appears to have been a prediction
of his possible death on 23rd October (1976) because of an inauspicious eclipse (see
Thep 2519d: 5-6; 9-10, and see also comments on the dangers for Kukrit from the
eclipses of this period by Poramet 2519a: 33-35). Kukrit has a reputation for having
declared publicly that he does not believe in astrological prediction, although his
own article reveals a competent knowledge of the basic methods. He is thought by
some laymen to have written the astrological column in his paper, but this is
unlikely. For an example of his witty and pointed sarcasm in relation to
astrological issues, see his comments on the highly unusual conjunction of nine
planets expected to occur on 10 March 1982 (Sayaam Rath 2525).}
press are of uncertain authenticity, and are sometimes based at least in part on speculation or hearsay. On one occasion the analysis by an association teacher of the horoscope of a political figure of some interest at the time was interrupted by his students, who informed him that at a similar discussion held at another association that morning the ascendant was said to be in the opposite house to that now being shown; virtually turning upside down the interpretation of the houses in the horoscope. The teacher readily changed his horoscope before proceeding with his analysis.

**Astrology and Particular Political Leadership**

It appears from oral discussion of the subject of the relationship of astrology to politics in Thailand that some periods are characterised by greater astrological activity than others. One journalist pointed out that when there was a leader who was strongly in favour of astrology then there tended to be an abundance of astrological rumours circulating. The periods of Field Marshal Sarit (1957-1963) and of Thanin Kraivixien (1976-1977) were mentioned as the most eminent examples, and one reason may be the attitudes towards astrology of these two leaders. Sarit had a well-known fellow army officer 'personal astrologer', as well as close connections with several other prominent astrologers, and Thanin is an astrologer and palmist himself. During Sarit's era, the much feared Police Chief Phao Sriyanond was also considered to be very close to his own personal astrologer. According to rumour he built a house for the latter in his own compound, and scarcely stirred without his advice. Sarit's tolerance of astrological prediction, however, was limited to that which was not incompatible with his own aims, as is shown by his treatment of Chansin mentioned above.

It is not clear whether the predispositions of the leader of the government towards astrology merely lessens the prohibition against the circulation of astrological rumours, or whether it
actually encourages astrological activity among those who may not have otherwise dared or wished to engage in it.

Sarit's era saw a return to many of the traditional values associated with Thai political culture. This included increased prominence of the royal family as figureheads of the country both internally and internationally; a re-establishment of many of the royal rituals associated with the welfare of the nation as a whole, such as the Ploughing Ceremony; use of traditional cultural forms to promote his own political views (Thak 1979: 319-325); and strengthened ties between the monarchy and the military (Thak 1979: 319; 333). His interest in astrology may well have formed a part of his rather traditionalist view of political culture, based as it was on a fondness for the example of the monarchy, and he appears to have taken regular advice from astrologers, including monks at Wat Mahathat who were at the time well known for their astrological skills (Mosel 1966: 198), and also from a Thammayut abbot (via his mother-in-law), from whom he is believed to have gained times for his government takeovers (Tambiah 1984: 371). Sarit's choices appear to have been shared by others: not only Sarit, but many other government officials of all ranks were also observed to make weekly visits to the monks at Wat Mahathat, either on astrological consultations of their own or possibly as an information-gathering exercise (Mosel 1966: 198). During Sarit's reign also the King and Queen are believed to have sent their horoscopes to the abbot of the Thammayut Wat Rajapradit, and this abbot later continued to be consulted by 'Army and Navy top brass, merchants and bureaucrats', and calculated the auspicious time for the wedding of the Crown Prince (Tambiah 1984: 371). The army officer doctor better known as Sarit's personal astrological consultant is suggested to have played quite an important liaison role with the press on behalf of his leader, and the interpretation of Thailand's national horoscope by

14 Sarit's successor also had a favourite astrologer, although not the same as that of his predecessor and political mentor (Tambiah 1984: 371).
another astrologer reputedly close to Sarit will be discussed in a later section.

Thanin Kraivixien, like Sarit, came to rule as a result of a coup, although he was installed by armed forces coup makers, rather than undertaking the coup himself. Thanin came into power at the end of the three-year 'democratic' era of the mid-1970s, after increasing right-wing political pressures led to political assassinations of left-wing leaders and ultimately the student massacre at Thammasat University. While right-wing Buddhist leaders and military radio broadcasts were promoting the idea that communist insurgents were posing a threat to Nation, Religion and King, the Astrological Association of Thailand held a series of seminars to discuss the possibility of a communist takeover of the country. In particular the opinion was expressed that according to the national horoscope such a fate could only be prevented if 'persons in uniform' ruled (Morell and Chai-anan 1981: 249). In astrological terms, 'persons in uniform' usually but not necessarily refers to members of the armed forces, and this was undoubtedly the reference intended in the prediction. It is still believed that when Thanin came to power he sought to activate the prediction in favour of his government by enforcing the wearing of official civilian government service uniforms by the members of the cabinet and other senior officials, 'hoping thereby that his civilian government in uniform would last as long as its predicted military counterpart' (Morell and Chai-anan 1981: 249). However the government lasted only a year before the same faction of the military who established Thanin in government staged a coup against him and once again assumed rule.15

15 This prediction concerning military rule has maintained some currency: Poramet, the astrologer who regards himself as the original author of this idea, later reiterated it, sometimes in response to direct questioning, on at least three occasions in left-wing political magazines: in 1977 (Aathit 2520a: 13), in 1979 (Sayaam Mahan 2522: 30), and in 1982 (Sayaam Mai 2525: 31). The question of the role of the military in government persists as a concern in astrological views into the 1980s.
The rule of Thanin as Prime Minister was accompanied by much speculation about the astrological basis of some of the leader's personal behaviour, and all kinds of rumours circulated to portend the removal of his government from power (Montri 1978: 1), accompanied by speculation on his reputed attempts to use supernatural means to remain in government (see e.g. Girling 1981: 141). Thanin reportedly told friends that he was 'destined' to become Prime Minister, and that the astrological indications were that his government would be politically secure for at least four years.\textsuperscript{16} After his downfall, opponents suggested that his government ought to have been removed since it had ruled through 'astrological guidance and empty words of propaganda' (Montri 1978: 4). On his visit to Japan a photograph showing him reading the palms of Mr and Mrs Fukuda was ridiculed by some (Montri 1978: 32), and matters were not helped when one of his more unpopular Cabinet ministers, Samak Sundaravej, predicted an invasion of North Vietnamese in February 1977, which he later passed off as a 'warning' to the Thai people (Montri 1978: 6).\textsuperscript{17} Rumours of many kinds were so rife during this period that Montri has suggested that one of the main duties of one minister was to 'issue denials of rumours' against the government (1978: 8); and members of the press, who considered themselves unusually silenced by the regime, were able to retaliate by focusing media attacks on the lack of stability and effectiveness of the government, criticism of which was also communicated in the exchange of remarks and rumours in the social gatherings of the time (Montri 1978: 19, 25).

It would appear then that the role which astrology was perceived to play in the regime of Prime Minister Thanin, in comparison to that of Sarit, was substantially counter-productive.

\textsuperscript{16} It has been claimed that when an astrologer gave a magazine interview predicting a shorter life for the government than that publicly announced the copies were seized and the magazine ordered closed.

\textsuperscript{17} This prediction was taken up in an examination of its possible astrological connotations: see Poramet (2520b).
for the government in that it became the subject of ridicule, and was not accepted as a basis of legitimacy of the government, although this may have been unusually influenced by the eventual unpopularity of the government (Montri 1978: 39) among many disaffected middle-class urbanites, businessmen and military factions. What perhaps serves to buttress the confidence of the individual politician, therefore, does not necessarily gain the approval and implication of legitimacy in the eyes of others. While astrological predictions serve to provide a highly-charged source of comment on current events, since the currency of astrological predictions is not universally accepted astrologically-based rumours are capable of being used both to support a position of power and to detract from it.

The two eras of Sarit and Thanin are separated by quite a few years and two very turbulent political periods; first the rather oppressive regime under Thanom and secondly the very divisive 'democratic' era. Moreover, Sarit was the first post-1932 coup leader to fall back very clearly on a traditionalist use of symbols of political legitimacy, and was thereby an unashamedly paternalistic despot (Thak 1979: 220); while Thanin was more conscious of the need to develop a new Thai political culture for Thailand's population to eventually be capable of the sustained interest which supports democracy (Montri 1978: 13-15) - even if he prevented the teaching of all political theory for a time in Thai schools (Anderson 1977: 30 fn. 104). Chai-anan has suggested that the leadership of the era of the authoritarian military rulers such as Sarit and his successors was composed of a generation of army officers who were more traditionalist than the 1932 coup promoters, having had less 'exposure to Western education and culture, and thus [being] less interested in the parliamentary process' (1982: 13). Included in this subsequently influential group together with Sarit were Praphat and Thanom, as well as Pramarn Adireksarn and Chatichai Choonhavan of the now ruling Chart Thai Party. These leaders, being imbued with Thai as opposed to Western education and military
training and values, appear to adopt the use of astrology in politics, at least as far as their own careers are concerned. This factor would not explain its use by the highly educated British-trained former judge, Thanin, but it does include many other major political figures most popularly associated with having an interest in astrology.

Perhaps some of the factors which rulers like Sarit and Thanin did have in common, however, would include a strong appeal to the use of the monarchy and its associated traditions as an integral part of the government of the country. As was mentioned previously, Sarit promoted the public image of the monarchy both at home and abroad, and considerably increased its symbolic role from what it had been after the 1932 coup. In his vision of the kind of government appropriate for Thailand, Thanin in turn made a very strong point of the importance of the idea of 'Democracy with the King as the Head of State', and placed so much emphasis on the importance of the monarchy that he was criticised for 'dragging the King into politics' (Montri 1978: 36).

Both leaders moreover subscribed to very conservative views of history. Sarit was very much influenced by and later employed the services of the ultra-national historian Luang Vichit Vadhakan (Thak 1979: 179-186). Thanin himself contributed to the debate on Thai history by claiming that '[t]he past always dictates the present and the future' (in Somkiat 1986: 544), and argued that the essential truth which linked the past, present and future for the Thais was the monarchy, which always provided leadership of, by and for the people (Somkiat 1986: 545).

Both these leaders were in power at times during which the dangers of communism in the context of regional politics were a matter of great concern and both leaders were stridently anti-communist in their rhetoric and policies. Both made use of an emphasis on the erosion of traditional Thai values as constituting a
particular vulnerability for the country in the face of this threat. It was under Sarit, who took over after the disgrace of his predecessors (who had become unpopular through their associations with the Japanese and with the regicide), that the slogan of "Nation, Religion and King" was 'transformed from placid motto to fighting political slogan, and was increasingly understood as such' (Anderson 1977: 22). Thanin was possibly made Prime Minister to avoid too-public a use of the mystical right-wing Navapol movement which became active in the anti-left developments in the 1973-1976 period (Montri 1978: 2-3), but those who supported him had much sympathy with the movement's sentiments. Many of this movement's members were aging and poorly educated university professors, according to Anderson (1977: 30 fn. 94), who were significantly alienated by the wider education and political idealism of their juniors. Thanin's Public Relations Office echoed some of the then current sentiments of 'cultural-ideological panic' when it issued a public statement soon after Thanin gained office claiming that

Our culture, upheld by our ancestors and customs [sic], was neglected, considered obsolete and regarded as a dinosaur or other extinct creature. Some had no respect for their parents, and students disparaged their teachers. They espoused a foreign ideology [that is, communism] without realizing that such action is dangerous to our culture, and did not listen to the advice of those who had much knowledge of that ideology... Anyone who expressed concern for national security was mocked and regarded as a wasted product of the bureaucratic society by those who labeled themselves as progressive-minded ....

(in Anderson 1977: 30 fn. 93)

Like many of his peers, Thanin possibly attributed the cause of such disintegration and subversion to the advent of the democratic period itself, rather than to the consequences of Thanom's dictatorship and its 'complicity with American and Japanese capitalism'.(Anderson 1977: 15).

Finally, if the regimes of Sarit and Thanin are compared with those reigns under the absolute monarchy where there is believed to have been a pronounced influence of astrology and its practice,
namely the reigns of Prasaat Thong, Narai, Rama I and Rama IV (as discussed in Chapter Two), then the most obvious feature in common between rulers of both royal and non-royal origin would appear to be the threatening proximity of outside countries at the time, and the pressing need to deal competently with friendly powers. Nevertheless, such comparisons, while suggestive, are at this level only impressionistic.

The return to the idea of a traditional culture then, including the ostensible values of Thai political culture, were prominent features of the regimes of both Sarit and Thanin since both leaders were faced with external communist threats, and internal political reconstruction. As Jackson's analysis of the prophetic Hupphaasawan cult of Suchat Kosonkittiwong shows, those in the Thai military and civilian establishment 'who felt their privileged social and political position to be under threat from communists, both in Thailand and in the neighbouring countries of Indochina' (1988b: 147) were compelled to find other sources of 'instantaneous relegitimation of their social and political position' (1988b: 152) by using supernatural beliefs after their ousting from power in the early 1970s. While those ousted chose to follow a now discredited millenarian movement, it appears that those in power have continued to have access to astrology. 19

18 Anderson (1977: 21) has pointed out the similarity of the ability of Rama IV and V, and of Sarit to realise the pinnacle of absolutism in their respective kinds of rule 'precisely when Siam was most completely at the mercy of the Europeans'. See also his comment on the similarity of Sarit and Rama I as leaders (1977: 28 fn. 72).

19 Jackson points out that within the military there is a contrast of views with, for example, those of the Democratic Soldiers and so-called "Young Turks", among whom can be found 'numerous supporters of modernist and rationalist expressions of Buddhism' in opposition to the 'more traditional forms of Thai religious supernaturalism' (1988b: 154), and while the younger generation of soldiers are more interested in political theory, and more motivated socially by a ready sympathy for the poor than the "commercial soldiers" of previous eras, their understanding of the structural constraints of economic systems and of practical politics has sometimes been poorly developed (Chai-anan 1982: 61). It is more difficult to assess the impact of beliefs such as astrology among these new
Overall, however, the fact that Sarit was able to use astrological advice in a comparatively public manner and still remain a popular figure, while Thanin's use of astrology was widely criticised, suggests that the popularity of the leader and his style of government may have much influence on the question of how well the use of astrology will be accepted by the public. Sarit's popular support was such that it even outlasted the revelations of his corruption and licentious lifestyle which emerged after his death (Thak 1979: 335; 339), while, as has been mentioned, Thanin's government did not enjoy such popular (or military) support. The disparity in the apparent acceptability of astrology in the two periods may also have resulted from the transformation of political attitudes and values among the left-wing progressives and the increasing politicisation of the mass of the population occurring over the 1973-1976 period. The increasing sophistication and dissemination of Western-influenced political culture which developed during this time are likely to have led to beliefs of supernatural sanctification such as that supplied by astrology becoming much less widely acceptable than had been the case during the preceding decades. It may also be the case that what may have been seen as Prime Minister Thanin's own interpretations of his fate were less credible than the professional advice apparently proffered to Sarit by established astrologers.

In sum, astrology still has a close relationship to the activities and attitudes of the ruling élite in a number of ways. The circulation of rumours ostensibly having an astrological basis fulfil a number of functions. The common belief that most politicians and senior army officials - or at least the more conservative and senior among them - give some credence to astrology generations in the army, since there is little public discussion of this matter. From my limited observations, however, astrology is not entirely ignored by these soldiers, and it may be that the influence of Thai traditionalist military values, including interest in astrology, still extends to some of them.
(and may well have their own advisors in this field) promotes the use of astrology in the political arena as well as more generally. Astrological discussions and rumours provide information about potential events and possible intentions of others to those within political circles, as well as beyond them; so that, as O'Connor has noted, rumours, like bureaucratic favours, are 'media of exchange that can encourage lateral connections' (1983: 91). Many of the astrologers who have been most prominent in the discussion of political issues have personal contacts with influential people, while several well-known astrologers have been in government, some for many years.20

The use of astrological rumours in the wider social arena, moreover, gives the public the opportunity to participate in the political process, providing a means of assessing or making assertions about the appropriateness of the actions of the political élite. Spivak (1985: 353-354) notes that rumour 'evokes comradeship because it belongs to every "reader" or "transmitter". No one is its origin or source'. This applies very well to astrological rumours which by their nature are allusive, and many of which very quickly become anonymous. Moreover, in a social and political climate where open political discussion can be frowned upon or even punished, astrology provides an indirect means of discussing politics which is less able to be construed as politically subversive. To some extent, therefore, the value of these rumours is independent of whether the transmitters believe in astrology themselves: as long as others can be expected to place some confidence in it astrological rumours are both informative and potentially powerful.21 The active role of astrologers as political

20 Thep Sarikabutr is one example, while other prominent astrologers in government have included Phrayaa Boriraksawetchakan (appointed) and Piam Bunyachot (elected).

21 See, for example, how press reports of the inauspicious omen of lighting over Government house were attacked by the minister in charge of government public relations soon after the Chatichai government came into power (Far Eastern Economic
advisers is still largely confined to the élite, but astrologers in their publications and associations with the press contribute to a level of discussion and evaluation of events which the public is invited to share in. Finally, of course, it should be reiterated that the role of astrologers in the political sphere is not restricted to the passive analysis of political events. As the preceding discussion has shown, astrologers are frequently involved in explicating and sometimes justifying political outcomes, as well as providing ways of conceptualising political events which are intended to be comprehensible to the lay observer.

The Thai National Horoscope and Thai Political History

There is yet another dimension to the political expression of astrology, however, which provides a final example of the political potential of prophesying: the public analysis of national events by historically oriented examinations of the national horoscope which imply trends for the future. This kind of prediction does not usually impinge on the positions of particular leaders, but it has much potential to "incite the people" since it examines events which will ultimately affect everyone in the society. Further examination of this type of political astrology will provide evidence as to how this kind of forecast is developed within Thai astrological circles and to what use it is put today.

One explication of the general fate of Thailand according to the indications of the national horoscope is that in a work published by a group of astrologers, several of whom were prominent during and soon after the Sarit period. The book, entitled Chaataa muang chaataa look (Fate of the Country, Fate of the World), provided analyses of Thailand and other major countries of interest, namely the United States of America, the People's Republic of China and Russia. Two of the astrologers, Pracuap Wacharapan and Thep

Review 15 December 1988: 30).
Sarikabutr, had been very closely associated with Sarit and the book cover also mentions the assistance of several monks from very well-known temples. This work was published a few years into the Thanom regime, in 1967, and the original edition was still on sale in 1983.

Thep's analysis of the duang mUang of Thailand is carefully argued, and worth consideration since it provides a comparatively detailed exposition of the horoscope; a rarity in Thai astrological literature. His approach is a very systematic appraisal of the effect of the positions of the planets in the horoscope explained in some depth. His astrological method incorporates emphasis on the position of each planet in relation to the governing planets of the triiyaang and nawaang (three- and nine-part divisions of the zodiac sign), as well as a consideration of the significance of the planets.

22 Thep Sarikabutr has been a very influential astrological teacher and writer for some decades, and is the nephew of another very learned astrologer, Luang Wisandarunkorn (An Sarikabutr). Thep was once referred to as having been a close associate of Field Marshal Sarit, although he is apparently not well remembered for this in the way that his former associate Pracuap is. He appears to have maintained an active association with Pracuap's son, Poramet, at least until the late 1970s when both were very active teachers and writers and apparently influential in the Astrological Association of Thailand. Thep was one of thirteen people appointed to replace members in the House of Representatives on 20th August 1957 under Phibulsongkhram as Prime Minister (Prasoet 2517: 883). A month later Sarit seized power, and Thep was reappointed to the Assembly soon afterwards (Prasoet 2517: 887). As has been mentioned in earlier chapters, Thep compiled the highly popular version of a revised ephemeris based on the Lahiri adjustments, and is well known for his knowledge of other branches of astrology (principally Indian) as well as Thai astrology. Besides his prolific writing on astrology he has also written extensively on Brahmanic beliefs, and is a much sought-after author on this subject. Thep was the head of the group of astrologers invited to find the auspicious time for the marriage of Princess Chulabhorn and her Air Force officer husband in early 1982 (Praphat Trinarong n.d.: n.p.). In late 1984 the elderly 'Aacaan Thep' was reported to be in ailing health, and largely confined to his home.

23 Apart from analysis discussing the effect of current transits on the city horoscope there appears to be little published on this subject. Moreover many articles which discuss the Bangkok horoscope do not provide interpretation of the horoscope itself, instead merely discussing technical aspects of its construction, perhaps as a way of allowing readers to draw their own conclusions. For another interpretation of the meaning of the horoscope see the poetic accounts by Piam Bunyachot in La-ong n.d.: 203-208 and in Pracuap et. al. 2510: 129-136.
from their position in the eight-part *thaksaa* system (described in Chapter Four). The details of his argument may be found in the summary translation in Appendix I.

There are a number of significant features of Thep's analysis of the *duang maang* which are worth bearing in mind before later interpretations are mentioned. The first is that the combination of methods employed by Thep enables him to argue that each of the planets is in a strong position within the horoscope of the country (2510: 176), a conclusion he draws after arguing that even those planets which appear to be in a detrimental position are in fact in a position of strength and therefore benefit the *duang maang*. The sun in particular is greatly strengthened in the horoscope, lending its strength to the ascendant of the horoscope as well as to other planets which might otherwise be sources of difficulty (perhaps a fitting position for the planet traditionally representing the king). Moreover those planets which are themselves normally dangerous or destructive by virtue of their being malefic (Sun, Mars, Saturn and Rahu) are either in a position which boosts their positive characteristics (Sun and Mars), or in a position where their negative effects are countered by the influence of benefic planets (Saturn and Rahu). This is the same for those planets which, while not in themselves dangerous, are nevertheless in a house associated with danger, or the rulers of houses which are potential pitfalls for the horoscope and nation; including the three planets in the eleventh house of destruction, and Venus as the ruler of the sixth house of enemies. Thep's analysis is thereby highly optimistic in its interpretation of the significance of the planets for their effects on the country. This optimistic reading is further enhanced by the argument that none of the planets is in a detrimental lunar asterism (2510: 158).24

24 Since Thep's analysis emphasises the skill and intentions of the original 'authors' of the horoscope, he follows their knowledge to the point of including only those planets which were known to the astrologers of the time: the eight planets (Thep 2524: 20); and discounts any possible influence from those planets
The explanation of the auspiciousness of the horoscope for
the city and nation is attributed to the skill of the early
astrological experts who had the foresight and skill to guard
against all foreseeable dangers. There is no notion of
fortuitousness in the horoscope according to his analysis: rather
wisdom and foresight have been responsible for the success which
Thailand has enjoyed and continues to enjoy, and it is made clear
that such success is extremely difficult to achieve. The horoscope
which accompanied the burial of the Bangkok city pillar was a
triumph of human intelligence, knowledge and benevolence toward the
nation, and constitutes a legacy from the time of the first reign
which merits gratitude and respect.

In this account Thep's analysis of the horoscope itself is
followed by his analysis of the significance of the conjunctions of
Saturn and Jupiter for the city horoscope, and the subsequent
development of Bangkok history into the ten eras according to these
conjunctions, thus explicating the 'shape' of Bangkok's history
according to the predictions of the first reign which has already
been discussed in the previous chapter. His apparently synchronic
reading of the horoscope is therefore given a narrative, linear
historical sequence by reference to the sequence of eras related to
the horoscope.

Thep's view of the significant aspects of Thailand's
characteristic features and history are comparatively simple.
Thailand's destiny is a long one, an independent one, and associated
with the benevolence and international standing of the king, as well
as one which sustains and promotes the standing of its Buddhist
religion. All enemies of the nation, whether outside or
conspirators within, are ultimately doomed to failure, and Thailand

which have subsequently been accepted by Thai astrologers, including Ketu and Uranus.
always has an escape route from troubles of this kind. Thailand is also blessed with a glorious, valiant and successful army which is constantly prepared to fight to protect the country and dispel all threats to national sovereignty. The army is seen to have only this defensive military role, however, nothing more. Finally the sovereign power specified as from which all seek and find protection and happiness is the king, rather than the elected government. The government of politicians can be seen to be misled if women or wives are allowed to interfere (2510: 154).25 Interestingly this comment is one of the few negative features of Thai political history attributed to the effects of the horoscope, the only other being perhaps the frequent mention of the foreigners who avail themselves of Thailand's riches, and who are in the case of the disruptive Rahu explicitly identified with the Chinese (2510: 157).

Thep's analysis, which was presumably intended for a general audience, contains very little explicit mention of topics of interest to the time of writing. Nevertheless it does implicitly reflect many of the significant features of the Sarit and early Thanom eras: the fact that Sarit's regime had greatly strengthened the importance of the king as head of state; awareness of the issue of foreign influence of various kinds (not only in the fact of people seeking to live in Thailand, but also in the effect the American presence was by then having on the economy and military capability of the country); the related optimism about the wealth of the economy engendered by the American-financed economic boom still at its height; and the long-standing preoccupation with national security which was a strong element of the nationalist doctrine propagated from Sarit's time on. Thep recognises the issue of national security as a factor which had to be contended with.

25 This reference may apply to the role which Phibulsongkhram's ambitious wife played in his ultimate unpopularity as to the scandal of the millions of baht embezzled by Sarit which was claimed by his hundred or so minor wives after his death. However this view also reflects a common prejudice which to some extent still continues about the deleterious effects wives are often thought to exercise over their politician husbands.
throughout Bangkok's history, but portrays the army as continuing to be able to defeat any outside enemies, while suggesting that divisiveness and treachery of any who plotted against the state from within Thai society would always encounter suppression. The analysis is ultimately optimistic, therefore, for while vaguely referring to the problems currently facing Thai society, Thep implies these will be overcome just as they have been before.

Thep's analysis, especially in its emphasis on the pivotal role of the monarch, is composed of a number of themes derived from the conservative tradition of conceptualisation of the nature of Thai society and history. His argument is strongly reminiscent of Sarit's addresses, such as that of December 7 1959, where he pointed out to the king that

[r]egardless of race or creed, your subjects are happy with your interest which has reduced divisive thoughts and unified the country... Referring to the hearts of the people, one could guarantee that your majesty is a king who will go down in our history as one who is truly loved and respected by the people.

(in Thak 1979: 320)

It also shows remarkable similarities with some aspects of Prince Damrong's view of history, particularly that expressed in his influential lecture on ancient Siamese government in 1927. In this he stressed the three national virtues of the love of national independence, toleration, and power of assimilation, and argued that 'the King is the patron not only of Buddhism but Christianity and Islam, among others, as well' and that the power of assimilation can be seen by the 'assimilation of the Chinese into the Thai social order, and adoption of Western civilization' (Somkiat 1986: 242). Somkiat comments that these virtues were 'present-oriented elaborations ... presented as things that have been practised up to now': they were a 'justification of the Chakri Reformation laid down by Chulalongkorn', but also an attempt to 'tidy new elements up into [Damrong's] unilinear schema of Thai historical development' (1986: 242-243). Damrong, who was named the 'Father of Thai History' in the 1930s, had an influence on the view of Thai history as 'linear,
hierarchical and dynastic rather than national' which lasted well into the ninth reign (Wyatt in Somkiat 1986: 216), and, with 'royalty as its central theme' his historical writings have, since the instability engendered by the constitutional change of 1932, provided 'a sense of stability and continuity that merges the past and present together' while he still continues to be regarded as an exemplary scholar (Somkiat 1986: 247). Thep's analysis can be seen to be founded on the same sense of continuity, and to conservatively present the horoscope as creating 'the best form of society that men can "realistically" hope for, or legitimately aspire to, for the time being' (White in Somkiat 1986: 243).

Further, Thep's account of history can be seen to have much in common with the Western-influenced nationalist historian Luang Vichit Vadhanak who was influential in the teaching of Thai history at all educational levels during his active life, and thus came to dominate the view of Thai history shared by most ordinary Thais until the late seventies (Kobkua 1977: 21). Although Vichit's nationalism served to bolster the new post-1932 ideological needs of Field Marshal Phibul's leadership, he was able to adapt it very swiftly to include Sarit's later emphasis on loyalty to the monarchy as well as the nation (Kobkua 1977: 16). Under Sarit nationalism was not primarily seen as an extension of racial pride (as it had been under Phibul), but became the major counter to communism; and the importance of history according to Vichit therefore became to illustrate the effectiveness of nationalism in this regard (Kobkua 1977: 16-17). Thus, while Vichit emphasised the need to provide historical facts for this ideological exercise, his selection was more haphazard and biased (Kobkua 1977: 18) than systematic and scholarly; to the extent that his view of history has more recently come to be seen as having only a very practical concern for the present (Kobkua 1977: 33) rather than being capable of sustaining a scientific or professional study of history, and has thus 'posed a major obstacle to the study of history at every level of Thai society' (Kobkua 1977: 41).
This use of history, which appears clumsily and irresponsibly ideological and unsystematic to the modern professional historian, lends itself rather well to the kind of astrological presentation of Thai history visible in Thep's analysis. Vichit's nationalistic conception of history (in contrast to Damrong's carefully circumstantial reasoning) was ultimately 'transcendental or anachronistic', where the 'abstract Thai race was presented ... as if there were no obstacles caused by differences of time or historical contexts' (Somkiat 1986: 340), and it can be seen that the unchanging validity of the influence of the national horoscope in analyses such as Thep's has the same timeless essentialist features, devoid of any conception of historical process as the historian knows it.

This is not to say that there is no linear sequence, for, as shown in the last chapter, Thep employs the use not only of the horoscope but also of the eras which are purportedly equally a product of the historical past, and which ensure that there is a pattern of events depicted as providing shape to the course of events over time. These are depicted as provided for by the institution of the monarchy and are not subject to social and political control as are the changes familiar to the modern historian. Moreover, so familiar are the kinds of examples which Thep brings to his discussion, and which are provided for by figures such as Vichit, that the same kind of essentialist argument could be carried out without the aid of the reference to a horoscope at all.26

26 At around the same time as Thep's article Chansin actually provided such an analysis of the Thai past, present and future, predicting the future merely by reiterating the lessons of the past. His interpretation of the 'cosmic codes' of Thailand was an astrologically unorthodox approach which enabled him to take historical examples from whatever eras desired, without the constraint of the time at which the country might be considered to have come into being (see Hai Sok 2508b). Such transcendent views of history were put forward after the development in Thailand of the influence of Western historical traditions, especially
While I have argued that Thep's view of Thai history and identity has much in common with the dominant nationalist view propagated at that time, many of the themes in his analysis are also found in many later analyses of the city horoscope, where they are elaborated upon with topical embellishments. A few other examples will illustrate this.

The political role of the military has continued to be an explicit part of many interpretations of the city horoscope. In his brief explanation of the significance of the *duang mdang* on the occasion of the 1986 election, "Lak Fa" proclaims that the military (signified by the strengthened *raachaachook* Mars in the horoscope) leads the nation, is loved by all and is depended upon by all the people. Moreover this astrologer, like most recent astrologers but unlike Thep, includes the ninth 'planet' Ketu in his analysis. This is located in the same house as Mars in the national horoscope, which, according to the author, leads to very quick and strange changes in the army, with rapid rises and descents of position, and with revolutions and coups. Ketu is further likened to the deity *phrasayaamtheewaathiraat* in its role of constantly protecting the nation from all danger (Lak Fa 2529: 70). Lak Fa also uses the strength of the sun in the horoscope to refer to the honour of the monarchy -- and hence of the country -- and the continuing role of the monarchy in the formal government of the country. He mentions the failure of enemies of the country who will be defeated by the unrivalled power of this principal planet of the solar system. He further argues that the ascendant of the country is located in a lunar asterism which indicates the great wealth of Thailand in physical resources, good will, and love of the future.

*nationalist writings originating in the nineteenth century - that 'classical age of historical narrative' (White 1987: 22).*

This author is a police officer who is an avowed supporter of the conservative social critic Anan Senakhan, and who was one of the policemen involved in the controversial raid on Kukrit Pramoj's house in 1975 (Lak Fa 2529: 96).
While Jupiter means the strength of the religion, teachers and government of the country, its location in the same house as Saturn, associated with labour, means that the government is constantly beset by labour problems. The influence of Uranus also exacerbates this relationship, so that whoever becomes the new Prime Minister will have to be able to solve the problems of farmers and workers to ensure they are not taken advantage of by capitalists and middlemen (Lak Fa 2529: 70-71).

Of Thai history in general this author cites the currently fashionable idea that 'the Thais did not come from anywhere' (that is, they are indigenous to the area they now occupy), and thus traces the origins of the Thai people back to the 'prehistoric' era of Kanchanaburi, through many historic eras to Bangkok as the fourteenth centre of Thai civilisation, and declares in a somewhat idiosyncratic use of the term, that Thais have had a 'democratic' (prachaathipatai) system of government since the time of King Ramkhamhaeng of Sukhothai (Lak Fa 2529: 69). The author also provides a potted list of features of pre- and post-1932 political events in no clear chronological order, and combines popular nationalistic ideas with astrological comments on a random range of historical issues.

Another analysis of the national horoscope with a systematic review of good and bad aspects of the horoscope was given by an astrology teacher at an association class in 1984. The teacher, an army officer, discussed what he thought were the most important planets in the horoscope by virtue of their positions, but warned against too much reliance on the thaksaa system (applied by Thep). He pointed out the strengths indicated in the horoscope, those of the nation, the religion and the monarchy, each represented by a planet in a position of great strength in his view. In this development of an argument centred on the strong representation of factors associated with the three pillars of Thai nationalism in the city horoscope he is, of course, echoing themes raised earlier by
Camrun (2519). The role of Mars as the military he portrayed as the support of the throne, and as having a necessary role in any country. On the other hand he saw corruption as an ongoing problem for Thailand which was never fully solved.

He then went on to analyse the effects of the then transiting planets and what problems they portended for the country. He suggested a list of eleven requests which the government should take heed of, but he also posed the question of what all citizens should be doing to help the Nation, Religion and Monarchy. He argued that Rahu was in a position to destroy the nation but that it would not because of Jupiter. He discussed the role of the king, saying that whenever the people in any part of the country were in trouble His Majesty went there to help them. Because of this, he said, the people must respect the monarchy with sincerity. Similarly, the government would have to have the capability and the sincerity to solve the people's problems and represent the interests of the majority of the people. Other requirements for the security and progress of the nation were that the army must have integrity in its commands and performance according to the role entrusted to it by the government; the economy must be more fully developed; the law must be respected and society must be brought into line with government policy.

On the question of the ordinary citizen's role in this process, the speaker offered by way of example his own willingness to die for the sake of the three institutions of Nation, Religion and King; an attitude which was not just a statement of the duty of a soldier, he said, but the way he actually felt. It may well have been the strength of the speaker's attitude towards his political position which prompted this analysis, for while the lecture was advertised within the association well in advance, another astrologer commented afterwards that there was not really anything much new in the (astrological) analysis itself.
We can see, therefore, that not all generally conventional analyses of the national horoscope are unilaterally auspicious: there is room for the development of particular criticisms of the way the country seems to be going which reflect at least the general concerns of the time. Moreover, there is much more agreement about the significance of the planets when the polity and society are discussed in general terms in relation to the national horoscope than there was for the analysis of the government in, for example, the 1983 pre-election predictions discussed earlier in this chapter. Although there is still some debate about the respective influences of these planets, and the way their associated sections of society are believed to be affected, the astrologers are clearly at home with the familiar categories derived from the classical texts: the king, the religion, the army, the farmers, the enemy, and so forth.

While the few examples presented here cannot necessarily be regarded as representative, being only a few accessible examples, it is clear that there is a continuing concern to express the centrality of the monarchy, and a concern with the integrity of the national sovereignty, explicitly expressed at times in the "Nation Religion and Monarchy" formula, and a certain consensus of opinion regarding the general features of the Bangkok city horoscope. If there is any discernible change over the two decades spanned, it would be what Anderson has described as an increasing confidence of the bourgeoisie in the parliamentary system (1987: 261), together with a willingness to represent the problems which must be addressed if continuity of government is to be achieved. The latter is evident in the last two examples.

There are, however, interpretations of the duang mliang which diverge significantly from the kind of analysis just mentioned. In the last chapter I discussed the way in which astrologers such as Phlu Luang insisted that astrology should pay more attention to the more recent horoscopes of political change in order to understand
current events. Phlu Luang's analysis of the Bangkok *duang muang* gives some indication of other ways in which his attitude is one of a reformatory nature. His analysis of the *duang muang* of Bangkok, published in a book on political astrology in 1975, gives some idea of his interpretation at that time. A summary translation of his argument is provided in Appendix II.

Phlu Luang's analysis is substantially different from those discussed previously. His categories of people differ for a start: in place of the King he has the young represented by the Sun providing the basis for international esteem of the country, while women also contribute to this fame. In fact, his analysis brings to the fore those groups which are rarely considered as primary in astrological analysis (even though they are recognisably related to the relevant planets in the traditional sources), in such a way as to present a new view of their significance. He thus emphasises the frequently ignored groups of the young, the people as a vital part of the polity, and women.

He also has notably different things to say about the nature of Thai society: those aspects usually lauded, such as the strength

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28 'Phlu Luang' is one of the astrological *noms de plume* of a former lecturer, artist, and now well-known historian, Prayun Uluchada, a prolific writer best known for his historical work written under the name 'N. Na Paaknam'. According to one account Phlu Luang also has a long-standing public reputation as astrologer, being very well known for his column in a leading daily newspaper as long as thirty years ago. Phlu Luang's interests in astrology are eclectic and wide-ranging, and he is one of the most original and innovative of the Thai astrologers writing at present. He has expanded the number of planets taken into consideration by using the new planets discovered after Uranus, and also including a 'hypothetical' planet not yet known to astronomy, which he calls Bacchus (for the use of Bacchus in astrology elsewhere see Gettings 1985: 40). Moreover he has incorporated these new planets into the Thai zodiacal scheme in a way not usually done. His interests also span elements of Chinese astrology and other forms of divination, and he has written extensively on many aspects of popular Thai forms of divination and associated customs. He was said to be active in an independent astrological journal, *Booraaweej*, and although he has continued to publish articles in the journal of the Astrological Association of Thailand he does not presently take a noticeable part in their other activities. His form of astrology was not taught at either of the associations discussed in this thesis.
and benevolence of the rulers for example, are made to look ineffectual, while other aspects, such as education and the arts, are shown to be consistently deprived and badly served rather than a source of national pride (Phlu Luang 2518: 19-20). Moreover his choice of historical incidents offered as examples are a quixotic representation of the past and present concerns of the country, while the usual nationalist considerations are sometimes deliberately ignored. One important exception of course, is the discussion of the army (2518: 20-21), where he is deliberately critical both of the institution and of the suggestion that it can be seen as benevolent, nation-serving and necessary (as it is usually represented in astrological analysis). In regard to this institution in Thai history, his presentation is specifically discontinuous, denying a constant historical role to the military, and there is a refusal to treat the government of kings any differently from the governments that have followed the end of the absolute monarchy, demonstrated implicitly in his selection of a royal precedent in the deleterious effect the military has had on Thai society (2518: 21). In short, he recognises the politically important categories of the time of writing by marking the distinction between desirable and undesirable, legitimate and illegitimate, civilian and military rule.

Most of all, this analysis is set within the context of the consequences of the student-led victory of 14 October 1973 when the Thanom-Praphat regime were forced into exile and a "democratic" era ensued until October 1976. Phlu Luang's view of history has much in common with the left-wing re-analysis of history which had taken place since the 1950s, and which reached an unprecedented popularity during the 1973-1976 period. The value of the 1932 coup as a 'liberation' is questioned, and one of the main enemies of the people in left-wing historical perception, the warlords (Somkiat 1986: 536), are seen to be the most destabilising factor in the horoscope. If there is little of a developed view of historical process evident in Phlu Luang's analysis, this may partly be because
during the brief period of democratic rule in 1973-1976 there was little opportunity for the development of a sophisticated historical discourse, since in the flurry of political activity of the left the present was more the focus of attention, with historical writing being rather marginal (Somkiat 1986: 532, 535). In this context, we may note that this may explain Phlu Luang's somewhat eccentric choice in defining Thailand's source of political strength; namely in youth and women. While these are negatives of the usual historical actors in conservative thought, they do not constitute social groups of any social scientific school of thought. Phlu Luang does not go so far as to adopt a class-based analysis of Thai society, but rather remains within a broadly liberal viewpoint. It can be seen from the other analyses cited above from the 1980s, however, that little of this view of history has persisted in the astrological interpretation of the duang mUang: on the contrary, most conventional analyses of the horoscope have much more in common with the kind of interpretation offered by Thep, and show no influence from Phlu Luang's argument or analysis.

Another important element of Phlu Luang's astrology in general is that it goes much further than that of most Thai astrologers in its departure from the accepted astrological conventions. Whereas Thep limited himself strictly to the intentions of the Thai astrologers of two hundred years ago in his analysis of the duang mUang, Phlu Luang includes the newer planets of Ketu and Uranus, Neptune and Pluto to significant effect in his analysis of the city horoscope. Elsewhere he also uses a revised scheme which includes these planets as an intrinsic part of the astrological schema, complete with their own houses, and thus elements, signs of debilitation, and so on. His version of astrology is therefore more removed than most examples from the earlier Thai traditions. The nearest revision of astrology in a similar vein is the German-invented Uranian astrology which, as was mentioned earlier, is disproportionately popular among Bangkok astrologers.
Phlu Luang's framework enables new categories to be introduced. He observes that the conjunction of Uranus and Jupiter, for example, portends a reform for the good, since Jupiter refers to beauty, and Uranus to reform (*kaan patiruup*). This conjunction can be seen to have occurred in Thai history on several important occasions, namely the ban on opium smoking introduced by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat in 1959, the order against gambling of Rama VI in BE 2460 (1917), and the abolition of slavery by King Rama V (Chulalongkorn) in BE 2448 (1895) (Phlu Luang in Huradawadi 2531: 12-13). The idea of 'reform' as such is a useful one for Phlu Luang to include in his analysis since his view of history is oriented towards the need for the acceptance of this. Similarly, the use of the new planet Pluto, for example, allows him to argue that the Bangkok *duang mUang* has within it the seeds of the army's own problems.

Another writer who has directly criticised Thai astrology for its "disgraceful state" has argued forcefully that the new planets ought to be included, and that Thai astrology needed developments made in astrology elsewhere in order to improve itself (Yodthong 2521). Although his stinging polemic against Thai astrologers was later coolly passed of as 'not constructive' (Sitphunong 2531: 11), there is some willingness to argue the need for open-mindedness, and for varying degrees of revision among Thai astrologers.

When the adoption of such new methods are related to the reasons for their practitioners' preferences, it becomes plausible to suggest that the new methods offer not only new techniques, but new possible interpretations. One of the advantages of Uranian astrology strongly suggested by one student was that the rules of how to interpret all of the possible relationships between the planets are laid down as rules, and one simply learned them or looked them up in order to know precisely what a horoscope revealed. This method was contrasted with the complex weighing up of factors
and spheres of influence, and the guesswork which was seen to accompany Thai astrology, where different astrologers said different things, and it was difficult to tell what was really correct. It is significant that this aspect of the new computerised forecasts is also hailed as a breakthrough: that there is no possibility of ignorance or emotions on the part of the astrologer getting in the way of the interpretation of just exactly what the horoscope 'means' (The Australian March 18 1986: 44). One writer even suggested recently that the theory of light-waves which Alfred Witte (the founder of the Uranian system) developed might ultimately be the basis upon which astrology could be allied with science and its association with siyasaat could be removed (Sitphunong 2531: 11).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to suggest the degree of impact astrologers such as Phlu Luang and Yodthong have had on astrological circles or indeed the public. Phlu Luang certainly has an established reputation in educated circles, and is of course well known in astrological circles, but such newer methods as those introduced by him do not appear to have received attention in the classes or discussions of the astrological associations. On the whole, therefore, it can be seen that the most frequent form of political prediction or interpretation based on the horoscope of Bangkok falls within the established tradition of interpretation, with a largely classically derived set of expectations about the significance of the horoscope, and only minor differences of opinion on the political interpretation placed on that meaning. Such interpretations tend to endorse the conservative approach to Thai history and society, with its emphasis on the actions of the élite, the dependence of the people on those élites, and on the consideration of the security of the nation, all of which is propagated in other sources, from government educational material to much of the popular media. In such approaches varying views of the actions of governments and the army after the 1932 change of government reveal a greater divergence of attitudes to the role and
function of these institutions than is evident with regard to the revered monarchy.

Astrology and History

In his analysis of the changing historiographic style of Thai historians during the Bangkok period, Somkiat (1986) has shown the way in which the form of writing and analysing history over the two hundred-odd years of the Cakkri dynasty has changed from a narrative, *phongsaa wadaan* type of history that in the early reigns of the Bangkok dynasty utilised a unilinear, monarchy-centred portrayal which increasingly emphasised the role of the "good kings" of previous kingdoms in its portrayal of the past, to a more radically oriented historiography that tried to broaden the basis of understanding the past in terms of universalistic, scientific laws of social development.

During the process in which both of these broad trends sought hegemony over the understanding of the past, the more traditional type of historiography consistently sought to stress the need to 'feel sympathy with the past, and see it as continuity with the present and the future', while the historical enterprise of those on the left, most openly expressed during the democratic period, was the need to 'criticize, blame and transcend the past' (1986: 516). Somkiat also pointed out that during the quiet periods under authoritarian military-led rule (1958-1973), when there was no immediate focus for nationalist sentiments, historians 'defended the status quo' with their use of social science concepts including 'development', 'social integration', and 'patron-client relations'. While the royalist unilinear framework of Thai history was strengthened when, for the first time since the 1932 change of government the monarchy was re-introduced as a pivotal political institution under Sarit (1986: 502); the 1973-1976 democratic period saw a change whereby both sides of the debate felt that history had to be either for or against something metaphistorical; followed
afterwards by something of a cooling off where critical perspectives once again returned to professional historical writing. Nevertheless, as Somkiat also points out, the more conservative type of history still predominates in the field of history-writing, especially in popularly oriented works (1986: 562, 565).

We have seen that the conventional astrological interpretation of writers such as Thep correspond very closely to the more traditional monarchist view of Thai history: that which emphasises the close association of the king with the fate and reputation of the nation, and which relies on a positive view of the past which implies a desirable continuity of these patterns in the future. In the cases cited also, there is evident a reliance on the use of such concepts as 'development' as goals suitable for the orientation of the citizenry, while the institutions of government are somewhat ambiguously treated as either sufficient or in need of minor adjustment. This conventional view of the interpretation of the horoscope, together with its associated view of history, therefore corresponds to the dominant and 'popular' view of the past which the majority of Thais are expected to share. The interpretations of the astrologers therefore offer social reassurance at a general level, while also providing specific predictions for more immediate issues and events.

The counter view posed by Phlu Luang, which stems from a quite different view of the Thai past and present, appears to have been a minority view, one which has not had much long-term impact on the view of astrologers concerning the national horoscope, and which is, moreover, associated with the systematic integration of new elements into the traditional astrological framework, just as radical historians have integrated theoretical concepts from outside the narrative structure of phongsaawadaan historiography. Phlu Luang's dissatisfactions with the past, and his vision of the need for the people to actively overcome the limitations of the past, align him with the more radical left-wing view of the past and its
relationship to the present and future, at the same time as the basis of his analysis is substantially different from the conventional astrological view in that he argues for the interpretation of the original horoscope of the city pillar in conjunction with horoscopes of subsequent stages of Thai political history.

I have already pointed out that the newer types of astrological methods have been associated with more "scientific" principles, and it remains to be seen whether these principles for envisioning society over time become more accepted. It can be noted however that there may be a fundamental contradiction in the application of astrology in conjunction with more "scientific", universalistic conceptions of historical process, since the analysis of history via the use of the national horoscope necessarily involves the analysis of the country's particular uniqueness. This, to be sure, is one of its attractions for those of more conservative political views, who tend to argue that Thailand is a unique case and cannot be understood in terms of universalistic institutions or types of historical process such as those proposed by, for example, class analysis.

Of course, it is difficult to assess to what extent the constraints, whereby even mild criticism of the monarchy is forbidden (Somkiat 1986: 573), affect the vision of the horoscope which is portrayed by astrologers in the public sphere. There are doubtless radical thinkers and astrologers whose view of their society would be based on the same horoscope but whose opinions are not published. One astrologer of left-leaning political views confided the view that according to the Bangkok horoscope the Thai people would always suffer. When I asked what could be done under this circumstance, the simple reply was: nothing. If conventional Thai astrology provides an explanation of why things are unsatisfactory under present conditions, its explanatory powers do not always provide a basis for envisaging the means of social
change, raising the question of whether it is necessarily antithetical to the progressive's need to establish distance between the present and future and the past.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed a number of ways in which astrology contributes to popular conceptions of the political process in Thailand. It is difficult to assess what impact the astrological activities discussed above have on the wider public, and on what portion of the public, of course, but it can be said that while astrological contributions in the political arena may not be regular, they do not appear to be diminishing either, and I have attempted to show that links and reactions can be demonstrated on quite a few occasions between the political sphere and astrological circles.

Astrologers contribute to the public anticipation of events in the case of both perceived instability: the rumours of coups or sudden changes at the top, for example; and to the expectations with regard to regular political events, such as — recently at least — elections. Astrological rumours also provide an implicitly value-laden idiom in which the political fortunes of political leaders can be discussed; an idiom which is understood and shared by both politicians and the public, but which can be used in a variety of ways to convey different political messages.

The final point made in this chapter has concerned the astrologer's role as public, popular historian, explicating the links between the past, present and future of the nation. It has been shown that the majority of astrologers appear to follow the conservative, monarchist view of history which continues to be the dominant historiographic tradition in contemporary Thailand as a result of a number of specific political as well as cultural factors. However, it has been seen that original reassessments of
both astrology and the national horoscope can provide astrologers with alternative points of view of Thai history, so it must be assumed that this is a culturally possible, if not widely accepted, alternative. It is not possible to say what degree of change has occurred in astrological frameworks and assumptions now that astrologers are advising the public rather than or as well as the ruling élite with regard to the Bangkok horoscope. This matter would need further historical research.

In accounting for the rigidifying of the nationalist rightist elements of Thai thought during the sixties and seventies, Anderson has argued that

...the old ruling cliques, weakened by developments at home and abroad, have been seeking new domestic allies, and have found them in the bewildered, buffeted and angry middle and petty bourgeoisie created under the old dictatorship. The crudity with which such formulations as Nation-Religion-King are being elaborated and deployed is symptomatic both of a growing general awareness that they are no longer genuinely hegemonic, and out of a real fear and hatred generated by the cultural revolution of the 1970s.

(Anderson 1977: 24)

Astrologers have on the whole elected to participate in and assist the ideological reproduction created by this alliance, and have provided their own unique contribution to the conservative tradition of the past promoted by the opponents of more progressive political aspirants.

This perhaps accounts for the general tolerance of astrology in the political arena. It seems to be the case for Thai astrologers at the associations, as it is of traditional medical practitioners, that the status of the practitioners 'is legitimised and raised' by the 'articulation of anti-communist sympathies, monarchist allegiance and Buddhist loyalty' (Irvine 1982: 75). The effect of this is effectively to disarm other state-promoted versions of reality, including modernist and scientific views (Irvine 1982: 75-76).
The radical departure in political and social thinking made possible during the 1973-1976 period was fuelled by the works of earlier writers such as Jit Phumisak, whose *Chomnaa Sakdinaa Thai* was one of the most influential works eagerly studied by the younger thinkers (Anderson 1977: 30 fn. 9). Reynolds has admirably shown the way in which Jit's essay in the developmental stages of Thai history according to Marxist historical views consistently imputed 'improper meanings' to the Thai past and thereby dismantled the dominant Thai historiographic paradigm (1987: 160-161). By contrast, the view of the past projected by Thai astrologers during the years of military-led rule, and after the 1973-1976 period, have largely sought to affirm the proper meanings utilised and propagated by the ruling élite, and have been able to further the politically useful nationalistic view by attributing these meanings to the astrologically defined unique nature and identity of the country.

Moreover astrologers have often been able to reject the narrative structures of Western historiographic traditions - such as those supplied by Marxist thinkers and other social historians - by providing instead reconstituted and revised interpretations of the Thai past as being fixed in a morally programmatic state, while acknowledging only changes or transitions which are ultimately non-social in origin and beyond human control. They have rarely challenged the conservatives' assertion of the relationship of the past to the needs of the present and future, but rather have further elaborated and mystified it.
CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

This study started with the issue of the representation of and conceptualisation of time in other societies, and the anthropological tendency to promote a duality of concepts of time: the "traditional", "cyclical" view of time presumed to be found in those societies which are considered to adhere to a view of the present and future as essentially similar to the past; and the "progressive", "linear" view of time which characterises the rapidly changing modern Western societies with which we are familiar. Geertz's formulation of the contrast between "quantitative" and "qualitative" time to some extent appears to correspond to this duality, since he has argued that the Balinese use of their calendar suggests a comparatively "timeless" temporal experience where the passage of time is not really measured in a durational sense, but rather where the supernal qualities of any particular moment can be gauged and action selected accordingly. This is, of course, a contrast with the Western experience of time which has for long been regarded mainly as a quantitative measure, with little room for the idea that different time spans might have different intrinsic qualities. Moreover, it was part of Geertz's assertion concerning the Balinese approach to time that they developed very little sense of "history" in our terms, preferring a somewhat static, cyclical view of the temporal process, a view which he argued is consonant with many other aspects of the Balinese world-view. Geertz's depiction of the Balinese view of time in relation to the calendar was not derived from his observations of the use made of the calendar, however, but rather from its form.
This study has set out to examine whether, in a case where the qualitative aspects of time appear to be paramount, such a static view and ahistorical lack of depth is an inevitable feature of temporal experience. The research which formed the basis of the thesis was an examination of the astrological tradition in contemporary Bangkok, with emphasis placed not only on the formal system of astrological categories and systems of meaning in relation to time, but also the variety of ways in which these are applied in practice. It was an explicit part of the framework in which the research findings were analysed that contemporary Bangkok must be regarded as the primary site of modernising influences in Thailand as a result of its pre-eminence in political centralisation and economic dominance. It was suggested that, from the perspective of the astrological tradition, Thailand was another Southeast Asian society where it appeared that the importance placed on the qualitative nature of time was still of great cultural importance, although this must nevertheless be studied in relation to the other linear, quantitative experiences of time.

Astrology in Thailand was, moreover, seen to operate in a Buddhist milieu where, as many scholars have noted, the overriding view of impermanence and a cyclical process of degeneration through time within a cycle of eras led to considerable cultural importance being placed on the maintenance of existing forms, and on the preservation of tradition at a certain level of consistency. This cultural emphasis on the negation of impermanence being a spur to the reaffirmation of permanency might also suggest that although there was a theoretical recognition of change over time - of time marking process in a measurable fashion - nevertheless the cultural preference in some areas would be towards the development of a stable, cyclical view of time.

The Thai astrological tradition has developed in the modern era out of the court-based tradition that supported the activities and legitimacy of the ruling tradition of the monarchy and its
associated institutions. As a result of this relationship, astrology became embedded in the cultural practices of the élite, ranging from ritual performances to the literature celebrating the world-view of the élite and its place in the society over which it exercised control. The astrological tradition was therefore not a disembodied aspect of the cosmology, but a preserve of, and basis for action of a particular group within society which served the socio-political and well as cultural needs of that portion of the society in its exercise of leadership and control.

The former astrological tradition provided a complex of temporal functions for the society in which it was preserved. Under the court-controlled society of the absolute monarchy there was little conflict between time-measurement and time-quality assessment: both were performed by the same experts within the court, where there was a close practical relationship between the noting of events indicative of the quality of time and the creation of morally and politically inspired historical narratives. Thus it would appear that there was no necessary disjunction between these two aspects of temporal experience under 'traditional' conditions: rather, they were complementary aspects of the same set of ideas, and both were affected by the Buddhist understanding of the temporal dimension of the law of karma. It can be seen from the evidence presented in this thesis that the relationship between the qualitative view of time, based on the assessment of time with regard to its auspicious or unfortunate aspects, and the explanation of events in linear durational time have continued to be combined by astrologers to provide views of the historical process in Thailand.

Astrological conceptualisation of time in its most sophisticated form is founded on the proliferation of overlapping temporal cycles of varying lengths and juxtaposed qualities, the net effect of which is to produce a need for calculations of such complexity that reliance on expert advice is a necessary corollary of astrological practice. The practical application of astrology as
a system of meaning based on the qualities of different times also requires a degree of selection of emphasis from among a number of imponderables, which not only render the individual dependent on the expert, but also requires that the expert relate the series of symbolic options available to the situation as it appears in reality. Astrological interpretation as a process must match an extensive series of generalised possibilities with a limited number of specific realities in order to locate the most practical understanding of the actual situation. This process of selection does not take place in a temporal vacuum, but is closely related to the specific experience of time in a durational sense, and often explicitly relates the experience of past, present and future according to the morality of the karmic theory of the inevitable results of action. Moreover, astrological practice does not lead to an abandonment solely to the quality of time, but seeks answers to the question of the duration of qualitatively distinct units of time. The interpretation of meaning is therefore never divorced from the context in which the attribution of meaning is being made: the context defines the scope and purpose of the search for meaning.

In the modern era integration into the modern capitalist world system saw the removal of the absolute power of the monarchy, and the limited competition for power extended among a wider section of the population, until finally in the last few decades the rising middle classes have actively been able to pursue participation in the political life of the country. Astrology has likewise been disseminated among this wider group, and has come to be part of the socio-political world-view of those who seek to justify their new aspirations by reference to past precedent, and to ally themselves with the former ideologies of political legitimacy.

It has also been suggested, however, that there has been an accompanying trend by others of similarly recent upward mobility to challenge these antecedent ideologies of power, and who have
therefore been brought into direct confrontation with the principal applications of astrological beliefs in an attempt to posit other bases of legitimacy, morality, and rationality. These groups have posited major challenges to astrology with reorientations from within Buddhism, with revised political perspectives, and by using the more systematically scientific view of the demand for rational understanding of the world as a basis for political and individual action. Examination of the astrological tradition within contemporary Thailand is thus necessarily one where astrology is one of a number of competing views or discourses concerning Thai society and the phenomenal and social world. This competition has arisen as a direct result of Thailand's incorporation into the modern world and the new economic and political imperatives which this has entailed.

The search for meaning via astrology is therefore partly a function of membership of specific socio-economic groups: it combines location in a distinct set of actual circumstances and likely priorities vis-à-vis temporal experience. The particular portions of Thai society who make most use of astrology comprise those who are most engaged in the optimisation of different qualities of time. However, these groups also have the most highly developed use of the quantitative value of time, being more tied into the maximisation of resources in relation to temporal duration; those most tied into the capitalist sector of the economy, and most tied into the notion of specific career paths i.e. involving optimal development or progress over time. The social connections on which this sector of the population depends also makes them vulnerable to the special predations of the qualitative dimension of time: they have most to lose and most chance of losing it, and they are most vulnerable to their social environments for their achievements and sources of legitimacy.

If Geertz's assertions concerning the lack of historical depth and lack of direction of the qualitative view of time he
depicts were to hold, we would expect that Thai astrologers would orientate their descriptions of reality to fixed points of reference, with deviations explained in terms of mere cyclical patterning strictly related to the original constellation of temporal qualities. However, it has been shown that in the use of astrology in the analysis of both the life of the individual and of the nation there is a constant attribution of process over time in relation to the original horoscope. In the case of the individual the concepts of ages of planetary influences, of the ages of man, and so on, all serve to accommodate the non-reversible aspects of aging and process through the social life-cycle.

In the case of the national horoscope as well, we have seen that from the commencement of the nation as it is presently defined, there have been constant attempts to impose a durational orientation in terms of length of life of the polity established, and to create an understanding of process over time based in a periodisation of that life which provides an understanding of the meaning of the course of national history. The direction in which its characteristics lead it over time is interpreted as the experience of its own particular identity. There is nothing "cyclical" or "timeless" about the eras posited for the duration of the life of Bangkok: rather they are interpreted with a certainty that they accurately depict the past and will lead to the unknown future. Furthermore over the course of time these periodisations are reviewed for their relevance to the experience of the present and the imminent future, and the significance of past periodisations are retrospectively redefined and attributed with new meanings which better match the perceptions or needs of the present. In spite of the apparently static dependence on the vision of the future defined by the horoscope of the commencement of the city as capital, therefore, in practice there have always been other interpolations which are used in conjunction with the horoscope, as a result of the recognition that irreversible changes are occurring over time or may be about to occur and that this will continue to be the case. Far
from being advocates of a qualitative view of time removed from all historical process, Thai astrologers have become historians: those who seek to explain the present and the future possibilities by reference to the patterns perceived in the past.

While in comparison with Western historiographic standards Thai astrological views of Bangkok history may appear mystical and glib in their reassurance that the present can be a time when certain kinds of action can ensure that the future can be like the past, in fact the development of Thai historiography, which has helped to create the present astrological view of the past, has itself been a product of the changes in Thai society. This is such that recent developments, particularly the re-introduced role of the monarchy in political affairs, and the instability of the new constitutional governments, can be seen to have led to the creation of the views now espoused about the continuity of the centrality of the monarchy, the unbroken traditions of military excellence in defence of the nation, and the unique talent for happiness security and prosperity which has supposedly characterised Thailand from the time of the establishment of the city pillar by the nation's royal founder. Far from being a timeless tradition of a seamless temporal experience, therefore, such views are themselves in part very recently invented traditions. They must be understood as arising out of a context where such astrological views gain meaning 'by reference to other things which have been said and done' (Hobart 1986a: 8).

'The ability to assert, and have one's assertions accepted as legitimate knowledge, are important aspects of power' (Hobart 1986a: 8), and the presentation of astrological views of the Thai past, present and future have as much to do with the assertions of the interests of particular groups in society as they do with any special interest in maintaining an aspect of a traditional world-view. Indeed, it has been suggested here that the particular views arising out of the astrological perception of history have been
subject to changes and a range of reinterpretations even within the last few decades, and it is therefore doubtful, given that astrology is resorted to at times when its use becomes particularly relevant, that there has ever been a consistently fixed explanation of history presented by the Thai astrological world-view.

In sum, the research discussed here allows one to suggest that the use made of qualitative concepts of time is much more complex than Geertz's assertions based on abstract calendrical forms would imply, and that conclusions about the kind of perception of time which a people might have cannot be made without a detailed examination of the way in which the range of concepts of time is used by the members of a society.

Sally Falk Moore has argued that one of the most important elements in processual ethnography and analysis is the need to identify changes in the making, those elements in the present which have been produced in the past, those which are producing the future, and those which are disappearing (1987: 727). While the astrologers in the associations discussed in this thesis have access to the records of their predecessors and continue to make use of them, the similarities and differences in the preoccupations and interpretations of astrologers from the 1960s to the 1980s show that the Thai astrological tradition is flexible and very much a phenomenon which is reinterpreted according to the concerns of the time. The incorporation of new elements, such as the analysis of political parties and the democratic process, also shows the degree to which astrology changes to fit new circumstances.

It may also be suggested that no understanding of a people's use of time can be gained without placing the current expression of that temporal experience in its own historical context. Geertz's assertions about the Balinese lack of history may well reflect the fact that he has in fact helped deprive them of their own history. Friedman has pointed out the way in which much recent
anthropological work has denied the relevance of history in its studies by regarding other societies as 'anti-historical, and repressive of chronological time', but that this has had rather more to do with the need for 'people without history who have become part of the mythical production of our own history' which arises naturally from anthropology's conditions of existence (1985: 170), than it has to do with the beliefs of the peoples themselves. Geertz' view of the Balinese temporal experience, like many of his other assertions, while it apparently explicates the compatibility with other aspects of Balinese 'culture' does not discuss how the Balinese view of time might have come into being. It might be said of his account of the Balinese view of time, as Ortner has remarked of symbolic anthropology in general, that it has an 'underdeveloped sense of the politics of culture, ... [a] lack of curiosity concerning the production and maintenance of symbolic systems' (1984: 131-132). It has been suggested that the qualitative view of time in Thai astrology has been especially useful for a particular group in Thai society who use it in the pursuit of certain of their goals, and that the elaboration of forms of legitimation of these goals have been increasingly made necessary by the huge growth of an educated business-oriented middle class who have proceeded to compete for political power with the older more conservative military and bureaucratic élites.

Finally, one might conclude that astrological, mystical, qualitative or supernatural perceptions of time are often not as far divorced from the everyday, durational and linear experience of time as the earlier anthropological duality of types of time - and thus of types of society - would suggest. The appositeness of the recourse to astrological explanations of events has been shown to be one which occurs within specific contexts, as one alternative kind of explanation of events which, rather than indicating the absence of other modes of temporal experience, is in fact intended to control or compete with them.
The Sun is in the position of maha-ut [exalted] in Aries with the Moon ruling the triiyaang and the Sun in control of the nawaang sub-sections, with the good relations between these planets of benefit to the Sun. In its position in the horoscope of the city pillar the Sun is strengthened in all the aspects of its precise position. The result of its rulership of the fifth house indicates its influence on the heirs to the throne, who continue the peaceful line of kings, with the effect that the Cakkri dynasty will continue down through its heirs without interruption to the line for a long time (taloot chua kaan naan). Because of the Sun's thaksaa position, people will always depend upon kingly protection (phoothisamphaan) and the king will be the refuge protecting the citizenry so they live happily for all the future. The Sun is 120° from Jupiter and Saturn, both of which therefore reinforce the Sun and help make the horoscope strong to be a place for the enshrinement of Buddhism and of calm for all His Majesty's subjects of all races and languages.

The Moon, located in its own house in Cancer, is in the sub-divisions of Jupiter and Mars. Moon and Jupiter reinforce each other, the Moon and Mars are not enemies, and the Moon is in the lunar mansion of calm peacefulness. The Moon is the ruler of the fourth house, that of the residential domain and of solidity, of wealth from land and sea. The Moon being in its own house clearly indicates that the horoscope of Thailand is of a country which is abundant with agricultural produce and food: not just plenty for the Thai people, but sufficient also so that the people of other nationalities who come into the country can be replete with food; in this it is unlike other countries, which those who have been elsewhere will know. The thaksaa position of the Moon is aayu for age ... and indicates that Bangkok will remain secure for a long time, ordaining that the Thai people will have a life of plenty; so that even if enemies come in to destroy they will not be able to bring about complete destruction. The Moon is 60 degrees from Mars. As is well known, in a person's horoscope these planets are strong in love magic and charm, and the effect for the city horoscope is the same. When one thinks about the past the effect can be seen, when in the days of the Great Kings Thailand was like a
scented flower. Powerful countries came with unremitting designs to enjoy the scent, but because of the strength of the horoscope, together with the excellent bunyaabaaramii of our kings, Thailand was the only country to survive among all of our neighbouring friends ... The violent intentions disappeared [when the invaders reached Thailand] because of the strength of charm in the city horoscope arising from the relationship of these two planets.

Mars is in Taurus in the sub-divisions of the Moon and Saturn. Mars is in the position of raachaachook [a dignity, i.e. strengthened position]. The relationship between Mars and the Moon is one of mutual reinforcement. If you look superficially at the relationship of Mars and Saturn you see they are both malefic planets which destroy each other; but this is an exceptional case. When Mars is exalted it has to be in Capricorn, which is ruled by Saturn, so when Mars enters the triiyaang of the ruler of its own exaltation house it is a case of reinforcement of the strength of Mars so that its qualities are better in the city horoscope.

The nawaang in which Mars is located is that of the Moon which is the ruler of Cancer, a house of debilitation for Mars: as they usually say, Mars is in a position of deterioration in the horoscope as a result of this. But in this horoscope it happens that the Sun is in the same nawaang as Mars: that is in the Cancer nawaang of the moon. The sun is the exalted planet of Aries, which is ruled by Mars. When Mars enters the nawaang of its own debilitation and the Sun which is exalted in the house ruled by Mars is in the same nawaang, the influence of the Sun ordains that Mars in debilitation [is transformed] from being bad to being good.

The Sun and Mars, according to the chaatween myths of the mahaathaksaa method are enemies, but in the real astrological approach to the zodiac they are close friends, being element-friends both ruling fire. The Sun is exalted in the house ruled by Mars. The position of being in the sign of exaltation and of rulership is the highest form of benefit, that is it forms major [planetary] friendships according to astrology ...

The benefic lunar mansion ... in which Mars is located provides the benefits of stability and durability over time.
Mars is the ruler of the house in which the ascendant is located, which means that Mars is an important planet in the horoscope; what is called the tanulak. It is in the second house, the house showing wealth and residence. Thus it can be seen that Thailand is a convenient and comfortable place for making a living and for accumulating wealth, to the extent of being the envy of the people of other nations who keep coming as refugees to get a living and build the foundations of their wealth.

Mars represents the peak of fearless generals. Its position in the second house shows that Thailand is a country rich in mighty troops and generals waiting to be a shining armoured shield protecting the country from danger at every opportunity.

Mars is in the thaksaa position of deet, showing might. When the ascendant is in the sign ruled by Mars it shows that the Bangkok horoscope is a horoscope with daring power and might because of which it has been able to last independently right up to this day even though there are crises and enormous dangers threatening on every side.

Mars is opposite, and thus effects, its own house of Scorpio which is the eighth house, the house of dangerous calamities. So Thailand has troops ready at all times to defend the nation and ward off all dangers.

Mars is 60° from Rahu [the northern node], so Rahu further reinforces the strength of Mars, ordaining that all the soldiers are especially ruthlessly bold of heart and they completely crush the enemy with promptness and dispatch.

Mercury is in Pisces in the sub-divisions of Mars and the Moon. Mercury is in the degree of fall (mit). The relationship between Mercury and Mars is one of not mixing, while Mercury and the Moon can get along; even though Mercury loathes the Moon, Moon still greets Mercury, and they are both benefic planets. Mercury is in a good asterism.

Mercury rules Gemini and Virgo, with Virgo stronger. Virgo is the sixth house in the city horoscope, the house of enemies, so Mercury as its ruler has the meaning of enemies in particular. That they found the auspicious time to build the capital to have Mercury in the nawaang of Mars has a very special significance, because the relationship of Mercury to
Mars is neutral but Mars cuts Mercury to pieces at every opportunity. In the city horoscope Mars means soldiers waiting to have victory over enemies; and Mercury in this horoscope means the enemies. When it enters the clutches of the army there is little hope of evasion, and especially when it is also in the twelfth house of the city horoscope, those enemies will not have any opportunity to rise up, but will only have disaster and ruin in the end—especially secret agitators. The reason for choosing the time to have Mercury in fall like this is to have the way to cut the strength of enemies... Mercury is really badly affected in this position, so when enemies come to destroy Thailand they will have their strength severely debilitated, as in the nine armies at the beginning of the Bangkok era. We Thais had very few troops, no match for the enemy, but in the end we were victorious and drove them all from our territory.

Mercury is thaksaa sri in the house of destruction. This may cause one to wonder why the astrological experts chose a horoscope with this occurrence. Since, when they began to build Bangkok it was a time when the country was shattered—at the mercy of enemies and just beginning to recover itself—they used the principle which says that the planet which is sri should be in the house of destruction so that what is lost will be recovered.

Jupiter in Sagittarius is in retrograde in the sub-divisions of Mercury and Jupiter. Jupiter is in its own house. The relationship of Jupiter to Mercury is not one of reinforcement. This Mercury is the lord of the house in which Jupiter is in detriment (pra-kaseet), but because they are both benefic planets they can get along. With that every now and then there is likely to be some event in the royal circle which appears strange. The relationship of Jupiter with itself as ruler of the triiyaang reinforces the strength of Jupiter in the city horoscope, and it is located in a good constellation.

Jupiter has very definite effects on the ninth house, that of luck, because it is the ruler of that house and is located there as well. The ninth house concerns communication with other countries, religion and so on. Because Jupiter is in its own house while in retrograde it is a very strong Jupiter, making Thailand a place for the firm establishment of Buddhism: more of a showpiece for it than in any other country in the family of those who respect Hinayana Buddhism. As for international communication, Thailand always receives good cooperation.
In the horoscope Jupiter is related to Saturn, since they are in the same *nawaang* and while both were in retrograde we can say that they were in conjunction at almost the same angle. Thailand can thus endure and struggle to escape. Because Jupiter and Saturn are together, and they are in Sagittarius, which is Jupiter's house, so Jupiter can calm Saturn and abate its malignancy.

Jupiter is in trine with the Sun, so it reinforces the strength of the Sun, making Thailand the object of respect and acceptance of all nations and it has the establishment of many important international organisations set up in Thailand. Jupiter also preserves the honour of the Monarchy throughout all directions, so it can continue up until doomsday.

Jupiter is in the position of *utsaaha*. When it enters the ninth house and is the lord as well, it helps Thailand to be an important industrial nation in Asia, and this is because of the cooperation it receives from other countries which also provide support/sponsorship.

Venus is in Pisces in the sub-divisions of the Sun and Jupiter. Venus is exalted. Neither the relationship of Venus and the Sun nor that of Venus and Jupiter is one of reinforcement. Venus has no ill-effect on Jupiter, but it is only Jupiter who chastises Venus.

Venus as the ruler of the second house in exaltation in the twelfth house leads to we Thai people being the majority [i.e. of the country's population]. Even when other peoples come in to seek royal protection they tend to be people who amass their inheritance for their descendants. Moreover Venus is the ruler of the seventh house. In a national horoscope this means that whenever anyone comes to participate in the administration of the country, if it happens that they become too sexually infatuated or believe and align themselves with the opinions of their wives, the result will be something calamitous; all because Venus is in the house of destruction.

Venus is *kaalakinii*, which means obstacles and enemies, things which are destructive. The astrologer experts who calculated the time put Venus in the house of destruction to put a complete stop to punishment and misery from enemies, and placed Venus in the
nawaang of the Sun, because the Sun is very strong in the city horoscope in the degree of its exaltation, so it can counteract all obstacles. Moreover, Venus is controlled in the triiyaang of Jupiter, a planet which opposes Venus also ... The experts have a saying [about this] which makes for the benefit of the city horoscope: enemies will be destroyed, and in the end the benefits are reinforced.

Saturn is in Sagittarius in an irregular retrograde motion in the sub-divisions of Mercury and Jupiter, which is the lord of the sign.

Saturn in Sagittarius is in no special position [of exaltation etc.]. The relationship of Saturn and Mercury is one of mutual reinforcement, but because Mercury is in fall in the city horoscope, it reduces Saturn's malefic qualities. The relationship between Saturn and Jupiter is neutral. Saturn is in a helpful constellation.

Saturn and Jupiter have divergent meanings: Jupiter presides over the benefic planets, while Saturn presides over the malefic side. When they come into the same sign, or are opposite each other, they tend to create complications for the peoples of the world, such as earthquakes, epidemics, or famine and poverty. Saturn together with Jupiter in the city horoscope were at a time when they were both in retrograde motion. If these planets were to be in another sign, especially any sign where Saturn was stronger than Jupiter, the malefic might of Saturn would be fully felt because Jupiter would be without strength. But the might and merit which come together in Sagittarius, which is a strong sign for Jupiter, [means that] Jupiter is able to withstand the power of Saturn. So even if there is any danger arising for the country, there is an opportunity to find a way out every time, as with the events of the last World War.

Saturn is muula. When it comes into the ninth house of the city horoscope like this Thailand is a country to which the peoples of other countries are willing to come and settle down and make a living because the ninth house also means foreigners.

Rahu is in Pisces in the sub-divisions of Saturn and Mars. It is in the lunar asterism of peaceful calm. The relationship of the asurin Rahu is never a friendly one with any planet other than Saturn. Therefore when Rahu is in the nawaang of Saturn they can get along. As for Mars which rules the triiyaang,
even though it is malefic, they cannot tolerate each other. But the positions of Rahu and Mars in the horoscope are 60° apart, so because of this they mutually reinforce each other.

According to the principles of establishing an auspicious time - of any kind - it is preferred to place Rahu in the sixth (enemy), the eighth (death) or the twelfth (destruction) house, since it is believed that Rahu will not cause trouble in these. So it is with the time of the building of the capital. They placed Rahu in the twelfth house as protection against its destructiveness because it is believed that Rahu is only destructive: wherever it is it destroys the meaning of that location, and when it is in an unfortunate location it gradually abates the destructive symptoms [ie. of the location]. Some experts from olden days have concluded that the establishment of the time for the building of Bangkok by having Rahu in the house of destruction was as a form of protection against the Chinese who come in to depend on royal protection in large numbers in Thailand. Thus there would not be an aggravation of any instability because they had controlled the Rahu race which is the Chinese.

And yet there are other conclusions about the position of Rahu. If it is considered to have its own house, then it is the lord of Aquarius. Because of this Aquarius is the house that Rahu controls as lord, and it is the eleventh house (lāapha) of the city horoscope, which means sudden luck, and meetings, association and so forth. When Rahu is in the house of destruction in this way, it shows that for any group of people who try to unite to undermine and destroy Thailand, in the end they will fall out, leading to their intrigues being leaked out and so their complete suppression.

It can be seen from the placing of the eight planets in the lunar mansions of the city horoscope that there is no planet in any of the asterisms belonging to the coorooroek, weesiyoroek and phetchakhaatharoek groups: they are all in beneficial roek. This is something which is very difficult to attain.

Rahu is in the position of montrii in the city horoscope. When it comes to be located in the house of destruction the results show that any high government officials [montrii] who conduct themselves with too much delusion and greed as with the vice-
enamoured Rahu himself the end result will be that they will not be able to escape destruction.

_Lakkhanaa_ (the Ascendant) of the horoscope of the burial of the city pillar of Bangkok is located in Aries, the main fire sign in the sub-divisions of Mars and Jupiter in a beneficial lunar asterism which provides the meaning of immense wealth.

Aries is a fire sign, along with Leo and Sagittarius, so the rulers of these three fire signs are planets which have an especially helpful relationship to each other: that is Mars (Aries), the Sun (Leo) and Jupiter (Sagittarius) are very important element-friends according to zodiacal astrology. Whatever horoscope has the ascendant in any of these three signs, Aries, Leo and Sagittarius, the Sun, Mars and Jupiter inevitably are planets which send much benefit to the ascendant located in any of the three fire signs.

The ascendant in the city horoscope of Bangkok is in Aries, with the Sun in conjunction with it, which is classed as affecting the Sun in the first instance; the ascendant is in the _nawaang_ ruled over by Mars, which classes it as affecting Mars in the second instance; and the ascendant is in the _triiyaang_ ruled over by Jupiter, which places it as having beneficial consequences for Jupiter in the third instance, thus including all three planets: the Sun in conjunction with the ascendant and being in high exaltation, Mars the ruler of the _nawaang_ being _raachaachook_ [strengthened] and Jupiter the ruler of the _triiyaang_ being lord in its own house. The ascendant is in _mahatthanooroek_, a beneficial _roek_ which is an immensely auspicious _roek_. It is difficult to have such a flawlessly perfect one as this, so it can be counted a result of primary importance that the Thai astrological experts of almost two hundred years ago showed such skill. It sets an example for students of the Thai astrologer’s expertise in the current period who should be investigating and studying so that they have knowledge equal to that of the respected teachers of times past.

According to what is in the _paarichaat chaadok_- a very important astrological text of the Nirayana school of astrology presently used by, among others, Indians, Thais, Burmese and so on, and which is a very ancient text thousands of years old - in the fourth chapter, the 98th sloka [verse] of this treatise it says that if Saturn and Jupiter are together in the
ninth or tenth house from the ascendant, and Saturn and Jupiter are together in the same nawaang also; if there are benefic planets sending light to Jupiter and Saturn and in that horoscope the Sun is in conjunction with the ascendant, they say the subject of the horoscope will have the longest life of all, and will be a person who lives within the religion.

From this verse we see very clearly that in the Bangkok horoscope the Sun which is in conjunction with the ascendant will be at its strongest only in Aries. As a result of the Sun being exalted, especially since in the city horoscope it has the exact degree of full exaltation, it sends benefits to the benefic planet Jupiter which is in the same nawaang as Saturn in the ninth house (Sagittarius). Jupiter is lord in its own house. Both Jupiter and Saturn are just at the angle of trine with the Sun, so that the resulting prediction from the verse shows clearly that the horoscope of Bangkok, or as it is always known, the duang muang, has planets which ordain that Bangkok will last for a long time and will be a muang which is the establishment of Buddhism extending out through all nations. Together with that the King is the grand protector of the various religions of those who have come to seek his kingly protection so they may all have peacefulness and happiness without exception.

What I have said here has been based on the meanings of the planets in the horoscope of Bangkok. This city horoscope was used by the former expert astrologers as an instrument to predict events of the country in line with the characteristics of the eight orbiting planets according to the phadeetramabhan treatise; or they used it to predict from the horoscope of the songkraan [solar new Year] of each year, the new moon and the full moon of each month as these are in relation to the duang muang, so it would be known what bad and good events would arise for Thailand. This was a very important principle for the circle of astrology experts who offered their prognostications to the King from olden times to the present.

(Thep 2510: 140-162)
APPENDIX II
Phlu Luang's Analysis of the Bangkok City Horoscope

The sun in exaltation and with the ascendant in Aries indicates excellence, fame and the ability for self-protection. This signifies that youth, those of the younger generation, will bring fame to the nation, while the older generation will not have so influential a role. ... Examples include sportsmen and beauty queens; as well as the revolutionary group who changed the form of government in 1932, who had fresh viewpoints, including Luang Praditmanuutham [Pridi Phanomyong] who was only thirty-two at the time, and who when he was older was no longer so famous, and ended up having no country.

Jupiter refers to the government members, the country, the Prime Minister, and so on. Jupiter is lord in its own house, and at the beginning governing people all start out industrious and energetic, working efficiently, but later on they waste time and change to failure and easily lose their reputation. An example is Cawphrayamahaa Srisuriyawong, the regent in the fifth reign who lost power and his good name when he was older, and this Thai pattern contrasts with 'overseas' where the older people are the more they are respected. This pattern is caused by the close conjunction Jupiter has with Saturn.

When Saturn is together with Jupiter, there is bound to be confusion, such as that in 1961 when a group of senior air force officials were killed in an airplane crash in Taipei, on another occasion when an enormous slum fire broke out in Bangkok, on another when many people were killed in an earthquake in Japan, another during a revolution in Laos ...[and so on].

The influence of the conjunction of these two planets in the city horoscope is that we Thais must experience the constant coercion (khomkhuddin) by heads of government who usually appear good when they start but end up failing. Whoever establishes his baaramii [influence] and holds power encounters catastrophe in the end. In the history of Prime Ministers experienced in Thailand almost all, if they ruled by forgetting themselves and for too long, ended up falling [from power] and with no country to live in.
Mercury refers to education, teachers, knowledge etc., and when it is in the same house as Saturn there are great problems of confusion. In the history of Thailand there has always been a problem with the Ministers of Education, none of whom have been effective. They have not had National Education plans, and they have always been unpopular.

Uranus stands for reform, research, investigation, initiation and science. When it has Jupiter and Saturn opposite it never receives the promotion it should.

The house of offspring refers to the citizens, and its position shows that most of the people help the country to progress, especially the young people. The events of the "day of great sorrow" on 14 October sent the name of Thailand all around the world for the readiness of the young and the citizens to send oppressors out of power. Thailand has great repute from this incident, when the young people caused an uprising to overthrow the government and shouted the word Thailand to arouse people to unite in strength and have the will to do it successfully.

The Moon means women. It is in its own house indicating that the business of women does especially well: they have a position of esteem. Thai women have a good reputation in Asia for beauty and fashion, and Thailand has beauty queens known the world over with a Queen whose charm and beauty are universally recognised.

The Thai business of beauty-enhancement is thus very rapidly progressing. The role of Thai women is a very broad one in society, both of good repute and of bad. The side which is not good is the matter of prostitutes, bars, nightclubs and massage parlours, which are very popular with foreigners.

Thai women have shown a strong part in the struggle to demand the right to liberty always shoulder to shoulder with the men. For example, in the events on the "day of great sorrow" [14 October 1973] women had a very close role.

Mercury means books, newspapers, communication, radio, news. Venus means the arts, beauty, things which are national art treasures. These two planets are ruined by the hold of Rahu and are also in the house of destruction, which shows the activities connected with these two planets will be oppressed by
the government, will be persecuted, will be interfered with and prevented from progressing even though no-one will come and destroy them: the people in these circles will destroy them themselves, such as by constantly killing, condemning and speaking abusively about each other.

The national art objects have no attention paid to them and are destroyed and collapse with every day that passes with every government - in any era - not paying them attention.

Rahu means larvae or insects, that is foreigners who live in Thailand and who constantly try to find opportunities to destroy Thais, who conduct their activities of secret subversion underground (the house of destruction or twelfth house means secret activities, not open to disclosure).

Mercury means commerce. Its being in the clutches of Rahu in the house of destruction reveals that commerce is in the hands of foreigners and they have power behind the national economy.

Pluto, the tanulak, is in the house of death, which is the sign of Mars, the planet of the army, and it also has the military Mars opposite it as well, which shows that the Bangkok horoscope is partly inclined so the army has a role, either hidden or seizing power all the time. And the army itself will destroy the country until it is in ruins as is evident in the way the soldiers, when they are in power, tend to forget themselves and then deceptively collect things for themselves in an amazing way, helping each other to cheat on every side. They destroy the nation and country until the economy is running low. But the people who have power of various kinds are all wealthy or millionaires.

The military planet of Mars in the horoscope is in detriment [pra], with decreased strength, and is the planet of death causing trouble in the second house of finances and the national economy, indicating that it is a direct part of the danger in the Thai horoscope.

The history that has passed has a list for us to know this truth: that when the army has power in the country the people are oppressed, the country is almost a dark country of the empire of fear: stability is wiped out, and the people and citizens have a life which is no different from that in a country which has become the slave of foreigners.
Looking back over past events, the period when the army did not hold power was in the second, third, fourth and fifth reigns. Throughout the fifth reign was a period when the country was peaceful and happy, religion flourished, the country advanced in all ways, and the Thai way of life was calm and peaceful, no different from the ancient Sukhothai period.

But when Rama VI came to power, even though His Majesty was a philosopher and a poet, he announced frankly that he was a soldier because he had had military training overseas. He wrote a manual on fighting, and established the boy scouts to have to protect the country, with the Thais beginning to be on the alert about protecting themselves from invasion from the Western superpowers who were coming to find colonies in the area. When His Majesty had passed away there was an order to lead the procession of his corpse with artillery vehicles. Since His Majesty was a soldier he intended to use the end of his life in a real military way.

From that reign onwards Thailand has entered the era of the army holding power. Especially with the change of government in BE 2475 [AD 1932] the army has had even broader powers.

The way to protect ourselves from having the army play a role - make revolts, coups or being in power again as it has been before - is by drafting a constitution to prevent the army playing a role in politics; make whoever wants to play [enter] politics leave the army; and make the army have the sole duty of being the strong wall of the country. If we are able to do this the country will never have a chance of falling into a disastrous state at all.

(Phlu Luang 2518: 17-22)
### GLOSSARY

This glossary includes key concepts or those used most frequently. The gloss is intended to indicate only those meanings referred to in this thesis.

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<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>asura</td>
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<td>bunyaabaaramii</td>
<td>august merit; prestigious virtue</td>
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<tr>
<td>bunkam</td>
<td>merit and demerit from the past (in the Buddhist sense)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bunwaatsanaa</td>
<td>fortune or fate as a consequence of previous deeds or merit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chataa, chookchataa</td>
<td>fate, fortune, destiny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dūan aai</td>
<td>the first lunar month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duang, duang chataa</td>
<td>a horoscope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duang mūang</td>
<td>horoscope of a city; in the case of the Bangkok horoscope also used as a national horoscope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hooraasaat</td>
<td>astrology; more loosely many types of prediction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phra hooraathibodii</td>
<td>Chief Royal Astrologer under absolute monarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaseet</td>
<td>the planetary rulership of the zodiac signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keet</td>
<td>the southern moon's node, Ketu; a point of influence in the zodiac in Thai astrology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khamphii</td>
<td>a treatise or textbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laap</td>
<td>luck, a windfall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lak mūang</td>
<td>city pillar used to indicate centre of power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lakkhanaa</td>
<td>the ascendant in Thai astrology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marūttayuu</td>
<td>Uranus, the tenth 'planet'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moo duu</td>
<td>fortune-teller; one who predicts the future, sometimes referring to those who do so for a living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naksat</td>
<td>constellations through which the moon passes: the twenty-seven lunar mansions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nawaang</td>
<td>one-ninth subdivision of zodiac signs: navamsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nimit</td>
<td>an omen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nit</td>
<td>position of fall of a planet (opposite of ut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patithin</td>
<td>a calendar, almanac, ephemeris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phongsaawadaan</td>
<td>dynastic chronicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phrakhro triiwai</td>
<td>system of dividing life into set timespans of planetary influences used in divination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phrasayaam-theewaathiraat</td>
<td>a powerful national guardian deity dating from the mid-nineteenth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phrommalikhit</td>
<td>lit. Brahma writing: fate, destiny; often used in deterministic sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pii naksat</td>
<td>year in the twelve year animal cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pra</td>
<td>position of detriment of a planet (opposite of rulership)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purohit</td>
<td>Brahmanic adviser to the king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raahuu</td>
<td>the northern moon's node, Rahu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>roek</td>
<td>an auspicious time; time during which the moon is passing through a lunar mansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saiyasaat</td>
<td>magical practices, especially those related to Brahmanism; sometimes used in the sense of superstition or black magic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sakkaraat</td>
<td>era used in time reckoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saksit</td>
<td>having miraculous power; holy or sacred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>songkraan</td>
<td>the solar New Year held in April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suriyaat</td>
<td>treatise on traditional astronomical calculations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
tamnaan a history; a legendary chronicle

tamraa a manual or textbook

thaksaa, mabaathaksa a system of successive periods of planetary rulerships used in divination: the Hindu dasa

theewadaa deity

traiphuum the three worlds traditional Thai Buddhist cosmology

traiphuum pharuang the three worlds cosmology composed in the fourteenth century by a Sukhothai king

triyaang one-third subdivision of zodiac signs (10°)

ut, mabaa-ut position of planetary exaltation

wai khruu to pay homage to teachers

wan naw middle day or days of the solar New Year

wan songkraan first day of the solar New Year

wan thaloengsok final day of New Year: first day of the year

wat Buddhist monastery

yaam a system of divination based on these divisions
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