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**MAKING MONEY AND MERIT: TRADERS
IN
NORTHWEST THAILAND**

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of

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Except as noted in the text, this work is the result of
research carried out by the author.



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Abstract

This thesis focusses on the townspeople in Khun Yuam - a small market town near the Burma-Thailand border. They consist of Tai, Kon Müang and Thai speakers, most of whom are traders.

Influenced by Weber, previous anthropological studies seem to agree that the Buddhists in Thailand are more concerned with the 'other-world' than secular matters. The laypeople, males in particular, are held to be more interested in seeking their own spiritual salvation than they are in making money in trade and commerce. Such an assumption leads to a conclusion that religion is separated from economic and political activities.

If one agrees with this assumption, one will not understand why the economic boom has taken place in Thailand. I argue that Buddhist beliefs, especially merit-making and the accumulation of merit, and trade are closely connected. Ordinary laypeople believe that one's own prosperity and wealth are due to one's past and present merit, so wealthy people are those who already have some merit. Without merit, one hardly achieves anything in one's life. Without money, it is almost impossible to make merit. In practice, such beliefs encourage the Buddhists to trade and make money in order to use some of their money to make merit.

Since it is widely believed that good Buddhists must be good citizens who are loyal to the country, religious beliefs are also related to the politics. Monks are active in converting the non-Buddhists to Buddhism, as well as promoting the national awareness of 'being Thai' to them. These activities are sponsored by the laypeople, who believe they are a kind of merit-making. In fact, such a political movement is also supported by the current trading and tourist booms, formal education, the

increasing influence of the Thai languages, mass media and entertainment. This national politics tries to integrate such a remoted area like Khun Yuam into the wider community - its nation-state. It seems to be a successful work. Monks and people who are involved in trade and commerce see no conflicts between their religious beliefs and political-economic practice and, to some degree, benefit from all of these activities.

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For sixteen months, day in day out, I lived in the town of Khun Yuam. Most of its residents, Tai, Kon Müang and Thai, kindly put up with me. They answered my questions and let me take photographs. They offered me cups of tea, cigarettes, drink and food. Their hospitality made me feel like I was living among close friends. Of course, they laughed at me when I mispronounced their dialects, when they thought I asked silly questions or I did something I should not do - but they tolerated my ignorance. They helped me to enjoy my time there. Without them, I would probably have nothing to write about. I thank them all.

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Notes on the Transcription

Although Tai, Kam Müang and Thai, are related, there are a number of differences among the three languages. To avoid some confusion, the system of transcription I use here is essentially that of Mary Haas in her *Thai-English Students' Dictionary*. There are some exceptions, as follows:

Mid central unrounded vowel:	oe	oe· ¹
Low front unrounded vowel:	æ	æ· ²
Mid back rounded vowel:	au	au·
Voiced velar nasal consonant:	ng	

The word *myang* is written *müang* in accordance with common usage. Place names, except names of some villages and tambon, are romanised according to published Thai Government practice. I also prefer the name 'Burma' to 'Myanmar'. However, the latter will be used only when it is quoted from other sources. Thai authors' names are left as they are spelled by the authors themselves.

¹ The following · indicates a long vowel.

² However, some place names, for example, Mae Hong Son, Mae La Noi and so on, are spelled without · at the end of the words. This is to follow the spelling imposed by Thai Government practice.

Currency Exchange Rate

My calculation of the exchange rate in this study is based on the currency exchange rate between the Australian dollars (A\$) and the Thai 'baht'. The estimate exchange rate during 1992-93 was approximately A\$1 equal to 19 baht. In 1991, on the other hand, the currency exchange rate was A\$1 equal to 20 baht (I shall later particularly indicate such differences).

Thai Calendars

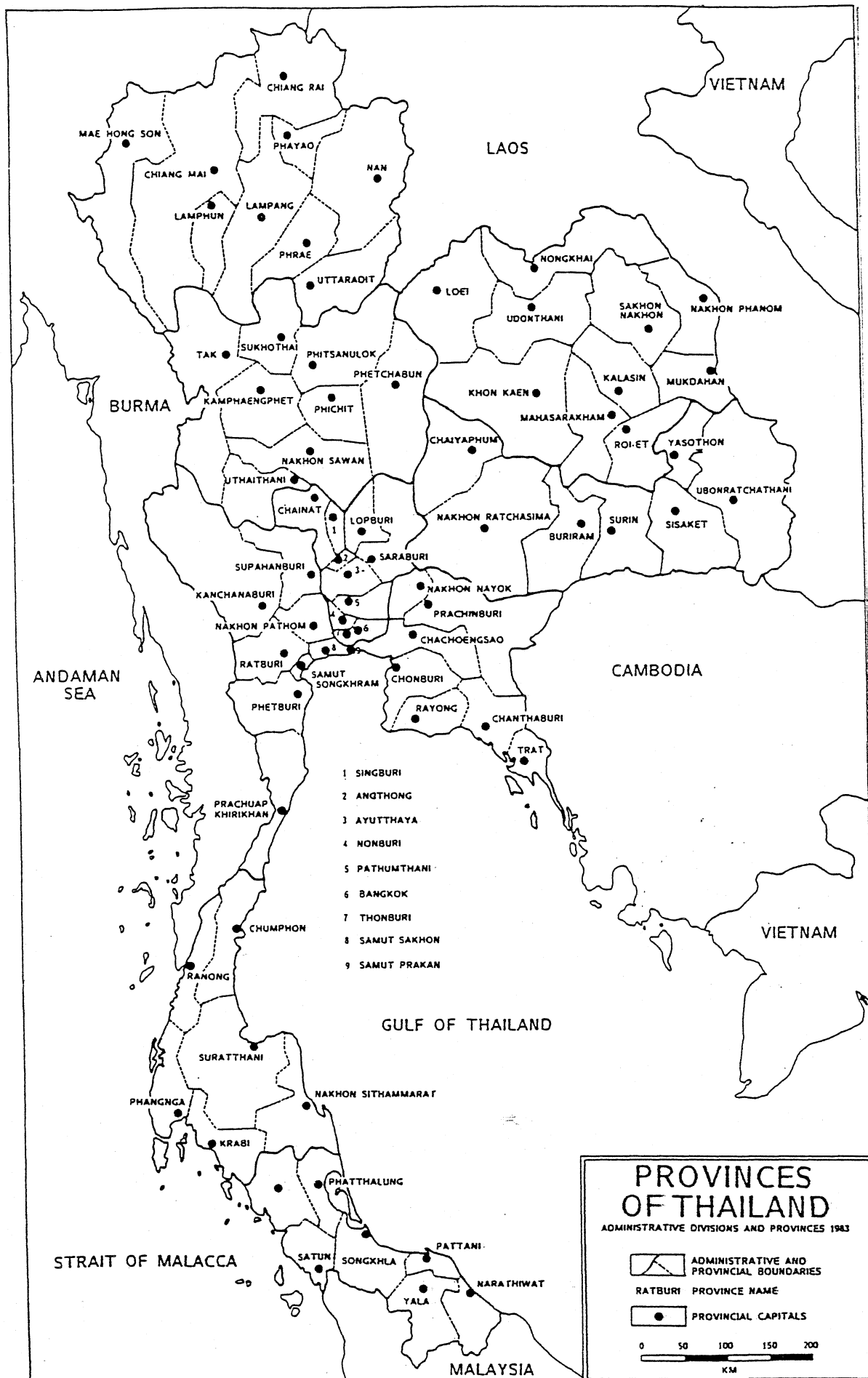
Several historical manuscripts are used in this study, particularly in Chapter Two.

Three system of the Thai calendars are indicated, as follows:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| BE | Buddhist Era, the main calendar system |
| cau· sau· | Cunlasakkaraat Sok (Era), or Lesser Era, cau· sau· ¹³ was the same year as AD 639 or BE 1182 |
| rau· sau· | Rattanakosin Sok (Era), the calendar system started when Bangkok was founded as the capital of Thailand, so rau· sau· ¹⁴ was AD 1782 or BE 2325. |

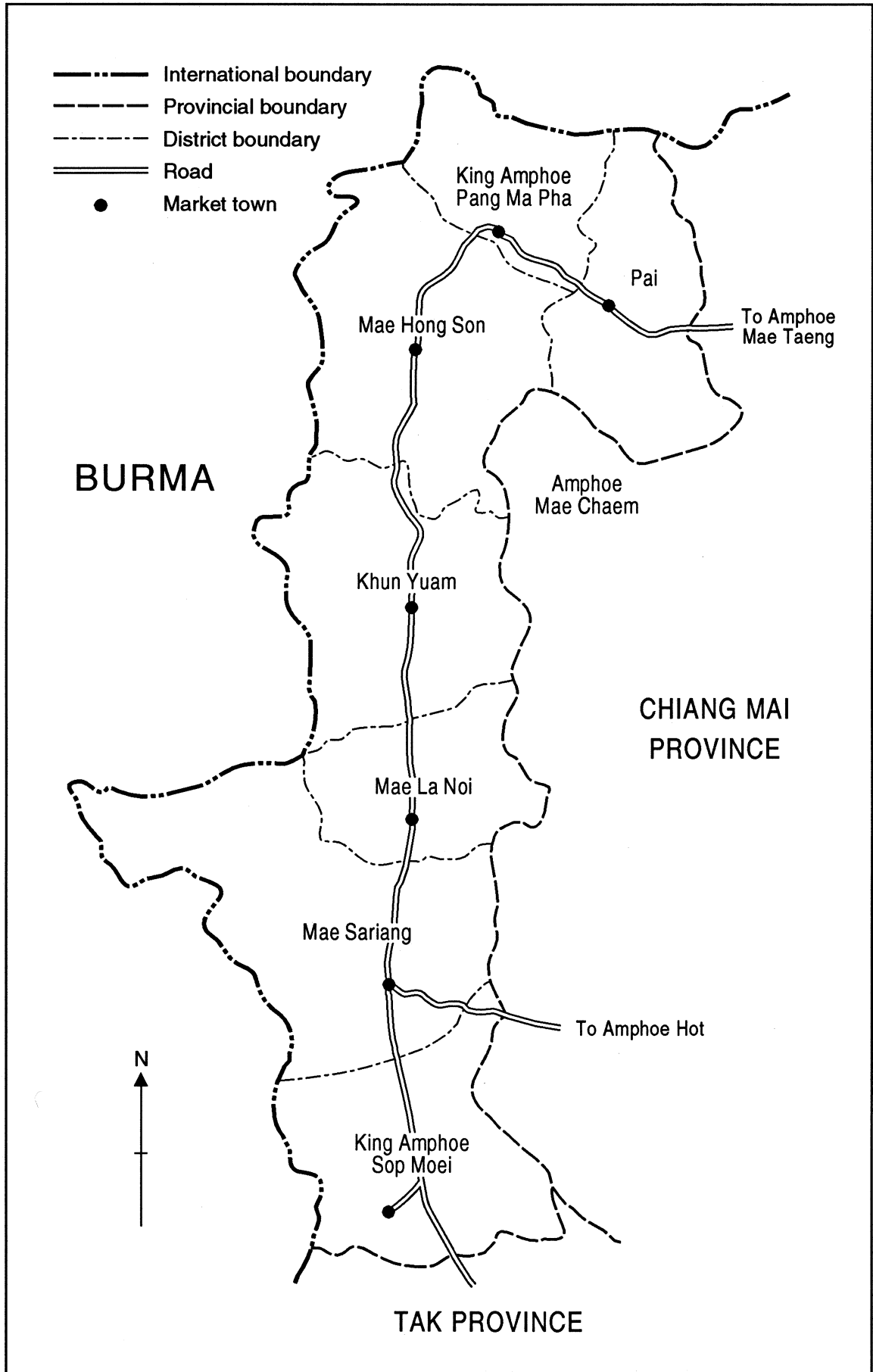
³ Elsewhere - C.S.1

⁴ Elsewhere - R.S.1

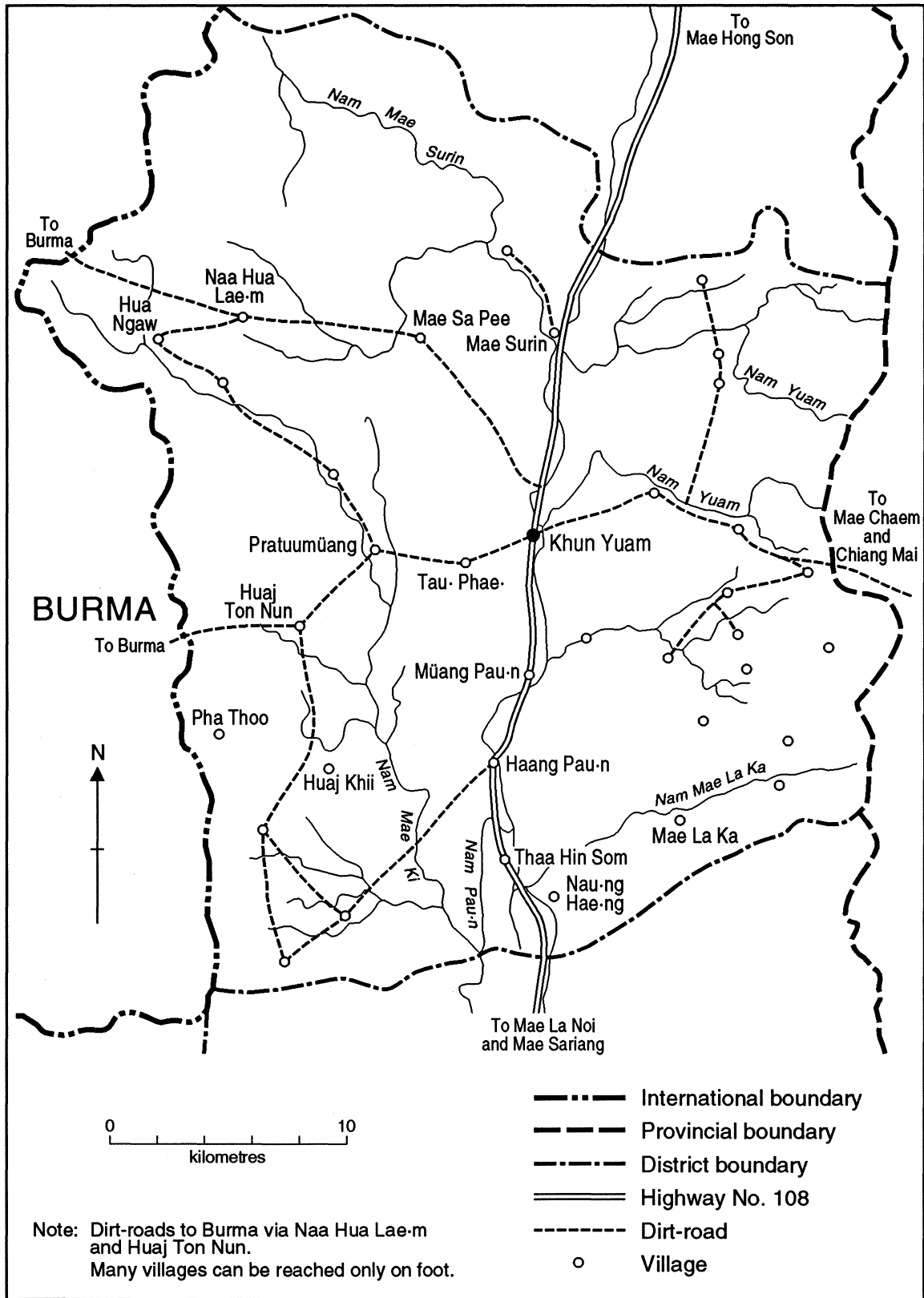


Map 1 Thailand

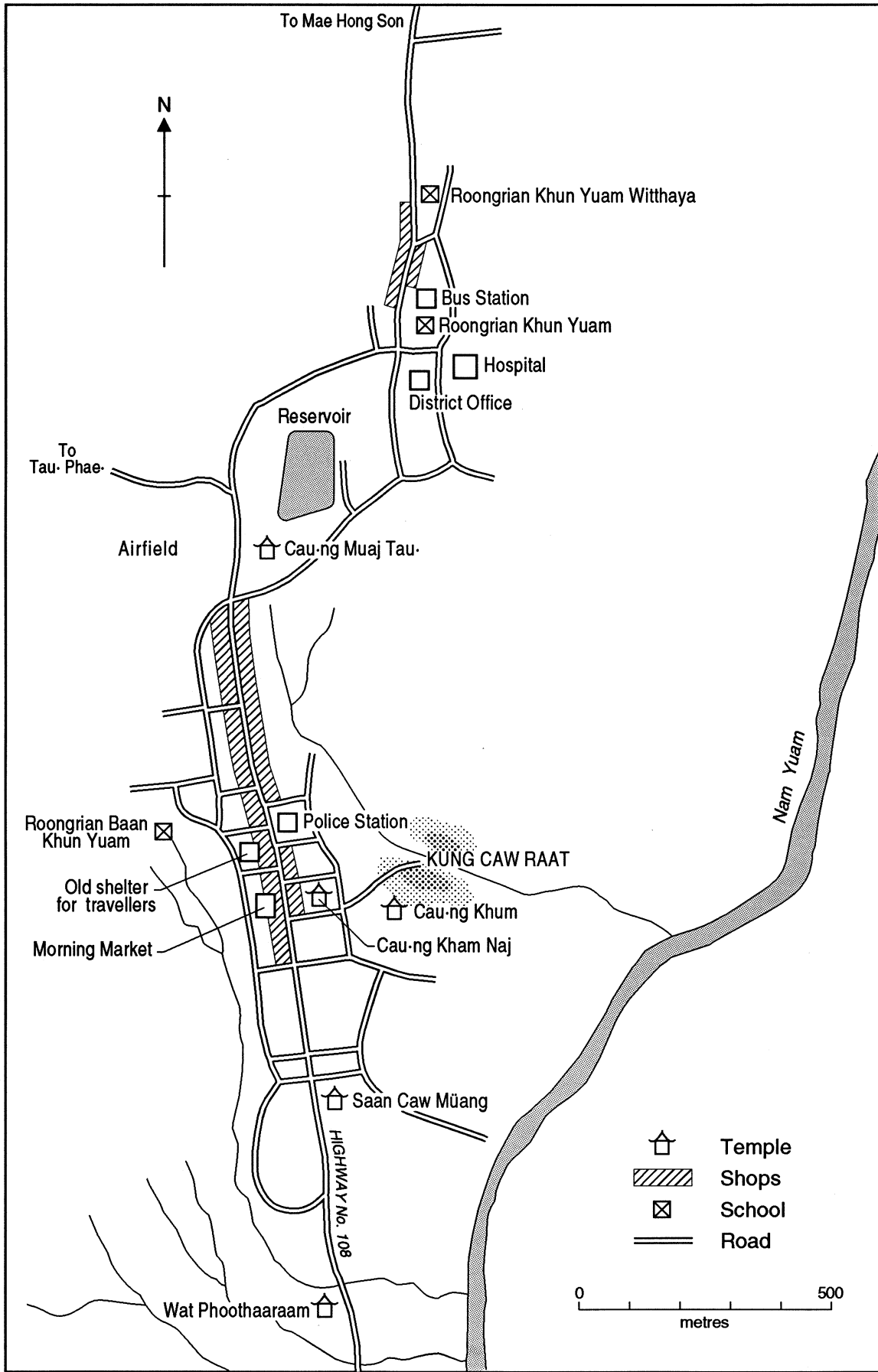
(Source: Charles F. Keyes, Thailand: Buddhist Kingdom as Modern Nation-State. Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1987)



Map 2 Districts (Amphoe and King Amphoe) of Mae Hong Son



Map 3 Villages in Khun Yuam District



Map 4 Khun Yuam Town



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Picture 13 (above) Morning market

Picture 14 (below) Butcher, mostly males, in the morning market

CHAPTER ONE

BEING A TRADER

AMONG TRADERS

When I arrived in Khun Yuam, a small market town located in the northwestern corner of Thailand, my intention was to study trading activities and traders. It was mid-November 1991, a day or two after the Buddhist Lent.¹ The residents of the town - Tai, Kon Müang and Thai speakers² - were celebrating and the town was pleasant and cheerful. These townspeople dressed in their best clothes. Houses and streets were cleaned. Theravada Buddhist monasteries, four of them, were crowded with merit-makers, armed with their offerings. There was plenty of food given to the monks and several novices and laymen busied themselves packing away the surplus dried and canned food that would last many months. Cash was accumulating in the donation boxes. At Cau-ng Muaj Tau, the main Tai temple, the celebration lasted seven days and nights. Every night, shop owners came to give more donations; this time, it was for the renovation of the old ordination hall. Their names and the amount of cash offered to the temple were written on a large blackboard; names of those who donated the largest amounts were, of course, on the top of the list. A couple of days before this celebration ended, the crew of a private television company from Bangkok arrived to shoot a documentary film about the locals and their Buddhist ceremonies.

¹ I lived in Khun Yuam town for sixteen months (I left the town in the middle of March 1993). During this period of time, there was one big novice ordination, several funerals - including two cremations of the most senior local monks, which turned the town into the location of most spectacular event of the province, and numerous religious celebrations and festivals. Even many school activities and some social gatherings were related to religion or the monasteries. The latter were often used as meeting places. Local residents consulted with the monks on various affairs. Their lives were not isolated from the monks. Neither were the latter separated from 'worldly' activities.

² I shall refer to these speakers as 'speech groups'. The Tai, Kon Müang and Thai speech groups speak the languages which are all related and categorised into the 'Tai language family'. However, there are many differences among the three languages, especially in lexis, and some examples will be provided (see below).

Five months later, three boys, two of whom were from trader's families, were ordained as novices - one of the most important events in the life of a local male. The father of one of the boys, who operated a garage, stopped working for several days to organise the ritual. He also agreed to pay the ordination expenses for the third boy, whose parents were too poor to have their sons ordained. He had saved for many years for this occasion not only because he believed that it was the greatest merit he could make (to sponsor the ordination of his own son and someone else's son), but because he thought that it should be done. It was a local tradition and it was an honour to his family, as much as to himself.

In the old days, local traders helped to build the monasteries or to renovate some buildings in a temple compound. All of them were ordained and many, until today, are still able to read the books of the *jataka* (stories of the previous incarnation of the Buddha) and to chant during rituals. They ordained their sons and/or financially supported other boys in ordination. The first primary school was established in Khun Yuam in the early decades of this century, but local wealthy traders preferred to send their children to expensive, private schools in Chiang Mai, believing that those schools offered better education. More interestingly, many offspring of traders have become schoolteachers, nurses and district officers. In Khun Yuam traders and members of their families have long been not merely the wealthiest residents, but the most educated people in the community. Religion, education and literacy, and trade are not separated from each other, nor from the everyday life of residents.

My research will demonstrate how Buddhism and formal education have long supported trading activities in Thailand. Both Buddhism and education also facilitate many socio-political changes and integrate all language groups into the national

Thai-speaking culture. I think that in everyday life ordinary Buddhists, men and women, are concerned about their welfare and security in this existence, and are less concerned about the Buddhist doctrine of the 'other world' (I shall soon return to this issue).

PREVIOUS STUDIES

To find a satisfactory explanation of one's research is always a difficult task. Mine is no exception. Many previous studies of trade and traders focus their analyses on ethnicity. They seem to agree that there are certain ethnic groups who do better in trade than others. Foster's study of the 'Mon' in Thailand (1972, 1974), for example, notes that traders of one ethnicity will be successful in trade when they are dealing with another ethnicity. In his findings, Foster states that

...my hypothesis is that the ethnic difference sets off commercial people from the society around them in such a way as to (1) minimize the stress inherent in market transactions and (2) free the merchants from the society constraints of an anti-commercial peasant society that would otherwise strangle commercial enterprises. Members of minorities, then, predominate in commerce because, as individuals, they are more successful for the above reasons (Foster 1974:439).

However, most residents of Khun Yuam engage in trade, either part-time or full-time. It is a market town, where the 'anti-commercial' attitude does not exist.

Russell (1983), who did her research among the entrepreneurs in Highland Luzon of the Philippines, suggests that, in order to understand the success in commerce of some particular ethnic groups, one has to agree that

...the interplay of economic, historical, and cultural factors is a dialectical and continuing process that can transform indigenous values, institutional adaptations to change, and ultimately the pattern of ethnic participation in commercial roles over time (Russell 1983:6).

Others, like Light and Bonacich (1988), note that the success of small businesses in the United States should be interpreted by the concept of 'immigrant entrepreneurship'. They report that immigrants, in this case the Koreans, have become successful entrepreneurs, especially in the garment industry, liquor retailing and the import-export business, because of cheap labour (that is, low wages and sometimes even using unpaid family labour), working long hours, rotating credit associations to raise capital and to offer financial aid and other kinds of mutual support among themselves. Light and Bonacich suggest that these factors offer a better understanding of the commercial success of some ethnic groups than the theory of 'middleman minorities' (see Bonacich 1973), which also focuses on immigrants. Light and Bonacich (1988:17) think that the 'middleman minorities' theory is '..too restrictive'. Yet, neither 'immigrant entrepreneurship' nor 'middle minorities' seem to be applicable to the traders in Khun Yuam.

Another major aspect that is concentrated on by some scholars is the relationships between traders. Among these relationships, one system that has been studied and re-studied is probably the mutual aid and trust between buyers and sellers known as 'suki' in the Philippines (Szanton 1972). In Thailand, it has been discovered that such relations between a trader and his peasant-customer are also essential (Preecha Kuwinpant 1980, 1984). Preecha writes that

In the marketing context a trader who assists his peasant-client with cash, rice, medicine and other household goods, becomes a patron. The client, in turn, supplies him with cash crops and political support. The relationship is characterized by acts of gift-giving and reciprocal exchanges over a period of time. Clients can be tenants or dependent farmers (*luug raj luug naa*) who are obliged to sell their agricultural produce only to the patron-traders or to the patron's agents in villages. It is an instrumental relationship based on mutual benefit and breaks down when either side is unable to fulfil its obligations. Through the marketing network each trader has his own personal network of clients, kin and friends as a domain in which to do business. Though marketing ties are initially economic, over time these single-stranded relations often expand to embrace other aspects of social life thereby becoming many-stranded or 'multiplex' (Preecha 1984:140).

Although some farmers in Khun Yuam, the Hmong in particular, sign contracts with some townspeople in order to receive financial and non-financial aid, the latter usually do not work on their own, but are the representatives of large companies outside the town.³ All the aid and agricultural supplies are transported from outside. This sort of agricultural-commercial contract is somewhat recent, and the number of farmers, mostly uplanders, joining such projects is small. Thus, relationships between local trader as 'patron' and farmer as 'client', as discussed by Preecha, are not significant in Khun Yuam. On the contrary, as we shall see in Chapters Five and Six, the co-operation between big shops in the town and small retail shops in the villages are more common than these 'trader-patron/peasant-client' relations. Nonetheless, the co-operation between big shops and many retailers does not seem to last very long because the latter go out of business from time to time. Most of those who are bankrupt often owe the big shop owners some money but do not clear off their debts. To prevent the loss of their money, therefore, the big shop owners limit such co-operation to the minimum.

Historical research, including anthropological-historical research, is another main approach that concentrates on trade and traders. For example, Bowie (1988) and Chusit Chuchart (1982, 1989) give us valuable information and excellent stories about local traders, their activities and social milieu in the northern region of Thailand in the old days. Bowie's and Chusit's interests focus on the past, not the present time, and are clearly more related to political economy than to religion. Both scholars do not answer some important questions, for instance, whether or not socio-economic activities are connected with religious beliefs. If so, how are they connected? What impact do they have on the people's lives? Unlike Bowie's and Chusit's studies, my work will show that economic activities have long been

³ For instance, a resident of the town is a local butcher who represents a tobacco firm in Lamphun and contracts local farmers to grow tobacco. Another man is an employee of one of the largest breweries who was sent to Khun Yuam to advise the farmers in barley cultivation. Barley is one of the newest crops introduced to this area.

influenced rather strongly by Buddhist beliefs and, especially, merit-making. I shall point out that local traders have long engaged in trade partly because they believe that one's own welfare - including material wealth - is closely connected with his/her virtue or merit, past and present.

Mentioned above are some examples of anthropological and historical research on trade and traders. However, it does not make a great deal of sense for some casual critical comments on selected previous works to lead into this thesis. This is due to some particular features in my research. Firstly, Khun Yuam town is an ethnically diverse community, where many locals speak two or three languages. Although the three languages spoken by the townspeople - that is, Tai, Kon Müang and Thai - are related, some of their customs, lifestyle and attitudes, are quite dissimilar. Secondly, as we shall see in Chapter Two, the town was established for economic and political reasons. Since then, it has developed its own characteristics. Thirdly, my research focuses on a number of issues that are related to trading and traders. All this makes my study different from previous works mentioned above. None of them seems to be relevant to mine.

Another problem I want to note is that most previous studies do not offer adequate information and arguments on the development of trade. However, Jiang (1968) has given us some discussion on such issues. In his article, Jiang indicates that in the past, anyone who engaged in trade was considered as a 'pariah people' in most of the traditional (or 'pre-industrial') societies. They were 'a class of people ... who were shamelessly devoted to a life of profit-making' and lacked both legal and political rights. Trade was 'a rather risky enterprise' - one of the most undesirable occupations. On the other hand, people who worked on the land (peasants and so on) were thought to be diligent and honest. This is due to the fact that 'the religious-philosophical value system in most traditional societies emphasizes 'other-

worldliness', and censures any attempt to manipulate or to revise the natural order of things'. Jiang notes that it was not until the Industrial Revolution that changes took place in many preindustrial societies, and that trading has become more acceptable. Traders and merchants have been a rather significant group of people in the society ever since.

Although Jiang provides a good discussion on the development of trade, his idea of the traditionally religious-philosophical value system which focuses on 'other-worldliness' is debatable. As I shall point out in this thesis, ordinary people are not always concerned with 'other-worldliness' in the religious value system and beliefs, but often with their own welfare, happiness, success and prestige, in the present life. In fact, it is these concerns that encourage them to engage in trade. Ordinary people have long been involved in trading activities; and many of them have done well. Both Bowie and Chusit also show us that in the past, peasants in the northern provinces were active in trade and commerce. Even very simple goods, such as fermented tea (*miang*), were traded. Many traders earned a reasonable amount of profit from it.

The main purpose of my study is to explore the connections between economic activities and the influences of religious beliefs and formal education. I shall discuss the factors that encourage ordinary people, many of whom have neither training nor former experience in trade, to become traders. The trading skill and business success are due to having an opportunity to trade, as well as learning and practising such a skill. I shall therefore provide some historical background of local trade and traders. It is also important to note that the construction of Thai nationalism is active in the region and closely related to some socio-economic factors. As I shall discuss in Chapters Three and Four, this political movement is supported by the current economic boom, the rapid popularity of Thai mass media and entertainment and the

increasing use of the Thai language. In other words, my study will suggest that economic activities have never been excluded from Buddhism and its beliefs. Economic boom and trade also play a very significant role in supporting political movements and the increasing adoption of Thai nationalism. To clarify my starting points, let me now begin with the arguments on Buddhism and trade.

THERAVADA BUDDHISM AND TRADE

As mentioned earlier, not only the way of life of the residents in Khun Yuam town, but trade and many activities are related to Buddhism and the significance of communal recognition and honour. Formal education, especially among traders, plays a major part as well. Although it is true that many anthropologists have carried out studies of Theravada Buddhism in Thailand, little has been said of the relevance of such factors. Moreover, most of such studies were conducted in rural areas. Tannenbaum (Durrenberger and Tannenbaum 1989; Tannenbaum 1987, 1989, 1990a, 1990b; Tannenbaum and Durrenberger 1988), an American anthropologist, has studied Buddhism and the local Shan, or Tai (see below), in Mae Hong Son Province.

Scholars may argue that Theravada Buddhist doctrine is intended to teach oneself the 'Way' to salvation (*nirodha*), which '...according to the Buddha is the transcendence of sentient existence and the Law of Karma, thus effecting a total cessation of suffering'. Thus, it is said that the ultimate goal of Buddhism is '...the quest for Nirvana [ultimate salvation]'⁴ (Keyes 1977:84 and 86, respectively). Keyes, citing Edward Conze, tells us that

The Buddhist point of view ... will appeal only to those who are completely disillusioned with the world as it is, and with themselves, who are extremely sensitive to pain, suffering, and any kind of turmoil,

⁴ This is a Sanskrit word. The Pali term is *nibbana*.

who have an extreme desire for happiness, and a considerable capacity for renunciation. ... The Buddhist seeks for a total happiness beyond this world (Keyes 1977:86).

Such an interpretation is clearly shared by many anthropologists. One should not forget, nevertheless, that ordinary Buddhists are concerned with the welfare of the present 'worldly' life as well. They pay more attention to the beliefs of the 'Law of Karma' (Law of Action) and 'merit-making'; or, in Spiro's term, 'Kammatic Buddhism' rather than 'Nibbanic Buddhism'. Such beliefs have influenced their behaviour as much as their way of life. There is little doubt that in order to live a better life, either in this existence or the next, a layperson must acquire as much of his or her own merit as he/she can (I shall return to this in Chapter Four).

Let me give just one example here. Kirsch (1982) suggests that

...the significant Buddhist motivation for action is to accumulate merit, not wealth, and that the reward for meritorious acts is not necessarily expected to come in this life. Wealth in this world is viewed as 'transient' (unreal), merit as 'real'. One gains merit and amasses 'spiritual wealth' through the expenditure of worldly wealth in performing meritorious acts appropriate to one's status. This spiritual wealth cannot be spent in this life but is useful in 'buying' a better future existence (Kirsch 1982:21).

He also states that '[t]he focus of Buddhist action .. is not on enjoyment of the fruits of this past merit but on enhancing one's position in the next existence(s) through continued merit-making acts' (Kirsch 1982:22). In another article, Kirsch tries to explain why Thai women are more active in trading activities than men. By contrast, the latter prefer to achieve religious merit, especially by becoming monks.

He notes that

...[t]he ideal that all men should serve for a time as a monk suggests how important the preservation of this order is for Thai society.

The ritual of entering the monkhood also displays basic themes enshrined in sophisticated Buddhist doctrine. In becoming a monk the individual not only 'gives up' his old social ties and identity, symbolized by shaving his head, donning the yellow robe, and assuming a new monastic name, but his family formally 'gives' him to

the monkhood as well, by freeing him from any claims they might make on him as a kinsman. Through the ritual the young man is transferred from the world of ordinary affairs into a higher moral realm, and he is simultaneously shifted from the class of objects counted as 'person' (*khon*) to the class of objects counted as 'mana-filled object' (*ong*) (Kirsch 1975:184).

He continues his comments that women, on the other hand,

...are deemed to be more firmly rooted in their worldly attachments than are the men; men are thought to be more ready to give up such attachments. In the secular sphere, for example, informants often claim that men are more ready to divorce or separate from their spouses and to give up their family ties than are women (Kirsch 1975:185).

Because men concentrate on religion and merit-making, women are left to engage in 'worldly affairs', especially in trade and commerce. Kirsch tries to explain why Thai women are more successful in trade than men. He seems to over-emphasise the importance of the religion in this respect.

The roles of men and women in economic activities are a complicated issue and beyond the scope of my research. An important aspect, however, is that Kirsch fails to see the connections between religion and economic activities. He follows Weber's view that Buddhism, unlike Protestantism, is more concerned with the 'other world' and spiritual salvation than with material and personal wealth (cf. Weber 1958, 1968).⁵ Kirsch, therefore, over-emphasises the significance of Buddhist doctrine and its ideology. He seems to neglect the fact that ordinary Buddhists see their religion and relations between their lives and religious activities in a very different way. I think trade and wealth are neither disconnected from the

⁵ Weber's assumptions about Buddhism are also criticised by other scholars, such as Trevor Ling (1973, 1980) and Gananath Obeyesekere (1968). For example, Ling states that there are connections between Buddhism and economic activities, especially in Thailand (Ling 1980, Chapter 7). He, citing Pfanner and Ingersoll, points out that '...there was 'an increasingly greater emphasis on comfort and material satisfaction sought through the consumption of commercial consumer goods' (Ling 1980:104, and also see Pfanner and Ingersoll 1962). In fact, consumer products have been so widely consumed that a lot of Thai people engage in this trade. In Khun Yuam, as we shall see in this thesis, these goods are traded by local and non-local traders, and are even exported to the Shan States in Burma. I raise this issue (of consumer goods trade) to indicate that even farmers are involved in trade. So if we are to agree with Weber's ideas of Buddhism, we shall not understand why people become traders.

monasteries nor, for this matter, from merit-making. In fact, men in Khun Yuam town, traders in particular, want to be wealthy as much as, or even more than, women do. The males are thus not less attached to 'worldly' existence than the females.

Spiro (1982) suggests that

...kammatic Buddhism views worldly action as soteriologically neutral. Since salvation is attained through merit, and merit is not acquired through worldly (economic, political, and so on) action, the latter is neither a means to nor a sign of salvation. But neither, on the other hand, is it an impediment, for one can acquire all the merit one wants while at the same time being completely implicated in the world. In short, in itself, the soteriology of kammatic Buddhism neither encourages nor discourages worldly action.

Nevertheless, although itself soteriologically neutral, worldly (and especially economic) action is indirectly an indispensable condition for salvation, for it is only through economic action that one can hope to acquire the most soteriologically valuable merit, the merit acquired through giving (*dāna*). To be sure, merit is also acquired through morality (*sīla*); but giving is the royal road, and (short of inheriting it) the wealth required for giving must be accumulated by economic action. The salience of the belief in *dāna*-acquired merit as a primary means to salvation provides a powerful motive for economic action.

But wealth is not only a primary (albeit indirect) means to salvation; it also provides a proof of it. In the first place wealth itself is a proof of past merit. Inherited or achieved, it represents karmic reward for merit piled up in previous existences, especially that acquired through giving. The wealthy man has both virtue and merit, the merit from the virtue of his past rebirths being converted into prestige of wealth in his present rebirth. And the very wealth which, on the other hand, is proof of a large store of past merit also augurs well for his chances of an even better rebirth (salvation); the wealthier he can become, the greater the proof that his store of past merit will continue to ensure pleasurable rebirths in the future.

But wealth provides a proof of salvation in yet another and more significant way. Since giving is the most important means for acquiring merit, and hence for achieving salvation, the conversion of wealth into *dāna* is not only a means for but a proof of one's future well-being: the more one gives, the more merit one acquires and the greater one's chances of salvation. This is the reason, of course, that so many Burmans keep merit account-books; they constitute an objective means for evaluating their chances. And since the merit acquired through giving is the means par excellence for salvation, the merit quest is a most powerful motive for the accumulation of wealth, and hence for economic action. The intensity of this motive can best be gauged by the staggering amount of money spent on *dāna* (Spiro 1982:453-454).

The beliefs in kammatic salvation and worldly action of the Burmese mentioned above are in fact shared, more or less, by the locals of Khun Yuam. I discovered that the townspeople, both men and women, especially the traders, greatly desired to make merit. The merit one makes is not only to secure one's salvation, but also to gain prestige and honour from the community one lives in. The well-to-do families are particularly keen to acquire merit. In Khun Yuam, the more wealthy one is, the more merit one wants to gain. Such an activity displays the legitimacy of the family's wealth, as well as establishing the morality of its way of achieving wealth. In other words, one is rich because one does, and did in past lives, act meritoriously (and it is quite clear that if the rich person continues to make merit, he/she may be wealthier yet in future lives). On the other hand, someone who has not accumulated adequate merit will hardly be rich, and poor people have less opportunity to make merit.

Nonetheless, Spiro emphasises that in Burmese villages spending on religion is very high. In another work, he notes that

For the average Burman, then, the choice between economic saving and religious spending is a simple one. Religious spending is a highly profitable investment for the future, as well as a source of pleasure in the present. Economic saving, on the other hand, is not only a risky, if not an unprofitable, investment for the future; it also precludes the enjoyment of those few pleasures available in the present (Spiro 1966:1168).

In Spiro's view, this attitude towards religious spending often dominates other decisions in the community. Villagers, for instance, prefer spending their money on religion rather than on education or on the construction of a local school (Spiro 1982:465-467). Unlike the Burmese villagers, traders in Khun Yuam do not tend to think that religious spending is more important or more profitable than capital accumulation or other necessary expenditure. As mentioned at the beginning (and I shall discuss the details later), traders and shop owners, in the past and at the

present time, have sent their children to schools in Chiang Mai because they think that their children will be able to obtain a better education there. It is an investment; a human investment (education, training, etc., for the children). It is an excellent opportunity for these children to build up networks for their future careers. It is also a sign of prestige that one is able to go (and that one can send one's child) to a renowned, expensive and good, private school.

At the present time, furthermore, formal education is designed to provide literacy to children and to facilitate their adjustment to 'new economic roles'. Keyes (1991) informs us that in rural areas more children, of both sexes, today have access to literacy and they, consequently, '...will find work in an occupation other than farming'. People in regional provinces speak Thai fluently and engage in temporary migration in order to find jobs in the capital (Keyes 1991:120). In my research, Keyes' statements have proved to be correct. Children who study in local schools in Khun Yuam town (as well as in Chiang Mai) are now taught both to be able to read and write and to be ready for their own future careers. Their literacy and other school training prepare them to work or find a job, particularly in trade.

More importantly, one should keep in mind that the monastery does not isolate itself from the educational institution or from 'secular affairs'. As Taylor (1993) informs us, the reform of the Thai *Sangha* (Buddhist order of monks) in the nineteenth century was closely related with political and educational reforms. Monks (ascetic forest monks - in Taylor's case) were sent from Bangkok to regional provinces to advise and help local monks to move into the new formal education. Nowadays, needless to say, many local monks in Khun Yuam town are not only educated but also support formal education and local schools in several ways. Monks are involved in the nationalist movement as well.

There are two main hypotheses in this research. Firstly, I think that economic activities and Buddhist beliefs are closely related. As noted, the Buddhists believe in the Law of Karma (that is, one's life is the result of one's own actions) and merit-making. A person who is born rich or poor, healthy or unhealthy, is depended on his/her own 'karma' in past lives. If he/she has made a lot of merit, he/she will probably born wealthy and healthy. On the other hand, if he/she has made little merit, he/she will be poor or unhealthy. Wealth, or being rich, is therefore not rejected by the Buddhists. In fact, wealth is the indication of one's merit, prestige, welfare, happiness, prosperity and success; and trade is one of the most important means to gain wealth. A trader earns more income (and is likely to make merit more often) than someone who engages in any other occupation. In the view of ordinary people, trade will possibly bring wealth to the individuals and wealth, of course, will facilitate their merit-making. The Buddhists, therefore, have long been encouraged by the beliefs in merit and wealth to engage in trade. On the larger scale, such beliefs are one of the most important factors that support the economic boom in Thailand at the present time.

Often, when a Buddhist makes merit, he also gives money to the monasteries. For example, when the abbot of Wat Phoothaaraam was awarded the *phatjot*, a celebration was held (see more detail in Chapter Four). The townspeople joined the celebration and donated cash to Wat Phoothaaraam. A group of Kon Müang shop owners decided to offered a *ton ngoe-n* (literally, money tree)⁶ to the abbot. In the *taan kuaj salaak* (offering labelled baskets) or *kin salaak* (label-eating), which is now a somewhat significant annual merit-making in Khun Yuam town, cash is always given, as well as food and other necessities (see Picture 1).⁷ Money is one

⁶ All of the new banknotes, of varying denomination, are attached to small bamboo sticks in the shape of a tree.

⁷ Davis (1984:190) notes that this festival is held '...from the full moon of the twelfth month to the end of the first month'. According to Sommai Premchit and Amphay Doré (1992), the Northern

of the most important offerings in any merit-making, thus those who are better off than others can afford to make merit more frequently and, of course, will accumulate more merit.

In the wider community, much more money is given by the rich to the monasteries and monks. It is reported in a weekly magazine that a lot of cash is offered to the monks in Thailand because at the present time, with the rapid economic growth, more people have become wealthy, especially those who are businessmen. Luang Phau· Khuun, a very famous monk, for instance, receives so many donations from his lay supporters that

...[i]n 1994, ... he gave away 63,759,812.31 baht - not counting smaller donations he makes daily to people who come to him with appeals. In January [1995], he presented 72 million baht to King Bhumibol Adulyadej for use in his charities. This year, he plans to donate another 235 million baht to build schools and hospitals.

'A lot of people come here and give me money', says Luang Poh Koon [Luang Phau· Khuun] (Fairclough 1995:54).

Luang Phau· Khuun is not the only monk who receives a lot of money. Another well-known monk is said to receive '...donations of 14 million baht in one day'

Thai twelfth lunar month is approximately during September and October. They state that it is called *taan salaak* or *kin kuaj salaak* in the North and *salaakkaphat* in Central Thai. '...In some areas it is organized every year; in other regions it might be conducted triennially. The festival is recorded to have been observed since early times when the Buddha was still alive' (Sommai and Doré 1992:274). There are two kinds of the *salaak*: small *salaak* and big *salaak*.

The former means the lot which is made in basket or container, and it is offered to dedicate merit to the dead or for the sake of oneself in the afterlife; the latter refers to the lot being made in a bigger container which is usually made of bamboo splits called '*kuai*'. It is organized by a rich person in order to accumulate merit mainly for oneself in the afterlife.

The lot which is arranged by wealthy people is called '*salak chok*,' meaning 'lucky label' because it is prepared with more varieties of offerings. In early times, the *salak chok* was made mostly in the shape of a little house furnished with all necessary articles, such as rice pot, cooking pot, bowls, plates, mattress, pillow, mosquito net, mat, broom, clothing, a set of ready-made food. Around this little house were hung bananatrees and sugar-canes. Besides, the *yot ngoen* or total money offered, which was beautifully arranged in floral form, was attached to the house (Sommai and Doré 1992:276).

The abbot of Cau·ng Muaj Tau· informs me that the *taan kuaj salaak* used to be held among the Kon Müang only, but it was introduced to the Tai people many years ago. Since then, this merit-making has been organised every year by Tai and Kon Müang residents. Needless to say, a small *ton ngoe-n* is always included in the offerings that are given to the monks.

(Fairclough 1995:55). Fairclough also makes an interesting point that '...[c]hanges in Thai society are exacerbating the effect. In the past, monks were the most learned men in the kingdom. Now that Thailand's middle class has outstudied the monks, they are among the least educated' (Fairclough 1995:55). If one follows Kirsch's assumption that the Buddhists are less concerned with wealth or being wealthy, one will never understand why economic growth takes place - and is growing very rapidly - in Thailand, and why the 'new rich' Buddhists have given a lot of money to the monks. It is clear to me that in practice, Buddhism is not an 'other worldly' religion. It is closely connected with wealth and economy.

My second hypothesis is that being a trader is not dependent on belonging to a particular language group nor does it require special skills. However, literacy facilitates engagement in trading activities. In Khun Yuam, most residents who live inside or outside the town's area, whatever ethnicity they are, are involved in trade. There are no particular groups that control or specialise in certain kinds of trade. Nevertheless, many traders are literate and worked in several jobs, sometimes labouring jobs, before they took up trading. In their view, trading offers more income, a more comfortable life and a better future for themselves and their families (and a better chance to make more merit). It also requires less physical hardship.

Difficulties in engaging in trade are eased with the help of education. Most local and non-local traders finished primary or secondary education. They read and write the Thai language rather well and know how to keep an account book, how to get trading information outside the town and how to contact outside traders and trading companies. Being able to read the newspapers, traders also have general information about the wider community, which benefits them in various ways. Normally, the traders begin by engaging in trade that requires little capital and skill, such as selling food, groceries or miscellaneous small goods. After they have

accumulated some capital and gained basic knowledge of trading, traders will trade the goods that are more profitable. Politically, as I shall show in Chapters Three and Four, education is also used as a means to integrate all language groups into the Thai-speaking community. This process is supported by the monks and the Thai *Sangha* (order of monks). Interestingly, since the Thai language is employed widely in the new trade and business boom, such a political movement and the current economy obviously support each other.

Often, a successful and wealthy trader has been involved in several different kinds of trade. Rich traders and their families are usually educated. Through their own literacy and the trading network they have access to information, inside and outside the community. Basically, traders are not conservative. They accept new things and adapt themselves to changes faster than anyone, especially if such changes will benefit them. Changes, such as new kinds of trade and goods, new technologies related to communication and mass media and even the increasing influence of the Thai language, are seen by local traders as the way to the future. In the trader's view, change is inevitable.

There are seven chapters in this dissertation. Chapter Two will provide information on the historical background and the present situation of Khun Yuam town. I shall point out that Khun Yuam has long been a trading town, though the scale of its trade has not been big. It is located on one of the trade routes and has always been visited by traders. This is a place where intermarriage between different speech groups is a common practice. The location of the town has also had strategic military and political significance. I shall show that Khun Yuam and its district are

affected by many changes and, especially, the country's economic boom in the last two decades.

In Chapter Three, there will be a discussion about the languages used in the town. Three languages; that is, Tai, Kam Müang and Thai, are spoken by the residents and visitors. While most shop owners and customers speak Tai or Kam Müang as their mother tongue, the official language is Thai. The latter is employed mainly in schools and at the district office, but it is gradually becoming significant in commercial activities. The increasing influence of the Thai language, in my view, is a result of formal education. The social, economic and educational implications of the three languages will also be discussed. In addition, my discussion will show that local Tai monks play important roles, on the one hand, by teaching and maintaining the use of the Tai language and, on the other hand, supporting the increasing use of the Thai language; for instance, by using Thai in some religious ceremonies or in meetings concerned with communal affairs held at the temples.

Relationships between trade and Buddhism, and between traders and monks, will be discussed in Chapter Four. I shall argue, in accord with previous research, that a belief in merit-making and the legend of a Buddhist monk, Phra Uppakhut, support traders and their trading activities, as well as their attempts to achieve wealth. My research indicates that the goal of merit-making is not only to acquire spiritual salvation, but to gain personal social prestige and honour. The merit of a rich person, moreover, is both a moral claim that he/she is wealthy because he/she has been a good, moral person, and an investment (at least in the social and religious context) to ensure that he/she will be rich and comfortable in the future. Also, I shall refer to the co-operation and reciprocal support between shop owners, monks and schoolteachers in certain social and political activities. In other words, Buddhist monks, local and non-local, are frequently involved in worldly affairs (more

importantly, they are fully aware of their actions and believe that it is their duty to be so).

In Chapters Three and Four, I shall also point out that the growth of current trade, the popularity of Thai mass media and entertainment and the use of the Thai language, are all connected with the increasing awareness of 'being Thai' or 'nationalism'. In fact, these socio-economic factors have accelerated the sense of 'being Thai' in several groups of the people, especially among the educated locals and well-to-do trading families. In my view, educated people and traders are very concerned with political changes and their roles in supporting religious and political activities.

Two chapters will look in some detail at the lives of certain traders. I shall tell the stories of local shop owners and itinerant traders in Chapter Five, and of the former *khaaraatchakaan* who have become full-time and part-time traders in Chapter Six. Details include their personal experiences and adventures, families, educational background and occupations. I shall discuss the mutual support and help between these traders, particularly those who are kinsmen, relations either with their neighbours, local monks or schoolteachers, and their involvements in communal activities and local politics. Shop owners and traders are literate, active and enthusiastic about the future. I shall make the point that these people benefit from their literacy and knowledge of the bureaucratic system, especially those who are former-government-officers-turned-traders.

In the conclusion, I shall argue that, unlike the previous studies, mine shows that economic activities and religion are connected. Being wealthy is a condition supported by the beliefs of the Law of Karma and merit-making. In order to achieve wealth, one may have to engage in trade. The economic boom in Thailand is

therefore not solely an issue of the economy, but is also supported by religious beliefs. In addition, trading activity is not a matter of particular ethnicity nor dependent on some particular skills. Reasons for being a trader vary, depending on family pressure, personal expectations and opportunity to engage in trade. In my view, one is not born but chooses to be a trader. I shall also discuss how economic and political changes in Thailand have integrated people of different language groups, even in a small, remote place like Khun Yuam, into the national Thai-speaking society. This process of national integration, needless to say, has been supported by the monasteries and formal education.

TAI LANGUAGE

This thesis is concerned with the people who speak various languages belonging to a language family called 'Tai'. As far as I know, however, 'Tai' often refers: firstly, to a language family, and secondly, to several groups of these speakers. Let me begin with the first meaning. As a language family, Lebar et al. (1964:187) indicate that

...the various Tai dialects are remarkably homogeneous. Historically, as today, these people appear as valley-dwelling wet-rice growers, a fact that gives to the cultures of most Tai-speaking populations a certain uniformity. Cultural differences do exist, however, possibly relating to the recency of influences from dominant traditions.

Keyes (1987:213) provides further information that

...Tai-speaking people are found throughout mainland Southeast Asia and southern China and include the Shan of Burma and southern China, the Tai Lue of northern Laos and southern China, the Lao of Laos, and various other Tai groups (such as the Tai Dam or Black Tai, Tho, Nung, and Chuang) of northern Vietnam, northern Laos, and southern China. The main Tai-speech groups found today in Thailand

are the Siamese or Central Thai, the Lao or Isan (or Northeastern Thai), the Yuan or Kon Müang (or Northern Thai), and the Southern Thai.

As mentioned earlier, I focus on three speech groups, that is, Tai, Kon Müang and Thai speakers. Li (1977) categorises the three speech groups into the Southwestern branch of the Tai language family. The three languages differ from each other in tones and a large number of lexis (see below).

However, I must note that the term 'Tai' used in my study means a particular group of Tai-speakers. These people, especially in Khun Yuam, refer to themselves as 'Tai'.⁸ Often, they are referred to as 'Shan'. Diller (1994) estimates that there are some three million people who speak various dialects of 'Shan'. He also states that the language of '...Southern Shan is traditionally written with a distinctive Burmese-like orthography which distinguishes neither tone nor certain vowel contrasts' (Diller 1994:15).

On the other hand, Thai (Central Thai, Standard Thai or Siamese)⁹ is '...spoken in the central region of Thailand'. Diller suggests that '...[d]epending considerably on definition, some 20 to 25 million speak Central Thai varieties as a first dialect, and the great majority of Thai nationals in the rest of Thailand are at least partially (passively) bidialectal in Central Thai'. Thai contains '...many Mon-Khmer and Indic loans' (Diller 1994:8 and 15).

The Kam Müang (Kham Müang or Mu'ang) language includes '...Northern Thai varieties spoken in Chiangmai, Chiangrai and nearby areas'. Diller states that Kam Müang

⁸ However, Diller notes that the 'Tai-Dam' (Black Tai) who live in northern Vietnam are sometimes referred to as 'Tai' as well (Diller 1994:15).

⁹ It is in fact probably more appropriate to refer to the language spoken by the Thai speakers as 'Central Thai' as Diller (1991) points out. My preference for using the term 'Thai', however, is because I want to draw a clear distinction between the two speech groups: Tai and Thai.

...may be used to refer to the urban speech of Chiang Mai as opposed to rural Northern varieties. (Yuan is also used to designate these varieties, but rarely by those who speak them.) A distinctive Lanna [the written language] script, similar to Lue and Khuen scripts, is still in some use and is being locally revived - also referred to as Tua Mu'ang or Tua Tham. In earlier times this variety was referred to by Central Thais and foreigners as (Western) Lao, a usage now obsolete. Approximately 6 million speakers in Thailand' (Diller 1994:11-12).

Kam Müang speakers, as far as I know, refer to themselves as Kon Müang. This term is translated by Davis (1984:23) as 'the people of the principalities'. According to Davis (1984:23), the Kon Müang people do not '...like being called Lao'. The local Tai of Khun Yuam, however, refer to the Kon Müang as *Joon* (*Juan* or *Yuan* in the Thai language), a term considered offensive by the latter.

In general, I shall refer to the language spoken by the Kon Müang and many Tai in Khun Yuam as Kam Müang. I am not concerned with the dialects of Kam Müang, which differ from place to place and from one province to another. Keyes (1987) comments that Kam Müang is as '...different from Siamese as, say, Portuguese is from Spanish, but since peoples in ... northern Thailand have been educated in government schools they are quite able to communicate in standard Thai' (Keyes 1987:15). It is certainly true that most Kon Müang in Khun Yuam, especially shopkeepers and schoolteachers, speak Thai from time to time (further discussion in Chapter Three).

LEXICAL CHANGES

In this section, I want to make a comparison between Tai, Kam Müang and Thai vocabulary, and to show the borrowing that has occurred. A lot of words in Tai and Kam Müang are similar. In addition, a number of new words have been borrowed from Thai, particularly terms for electrical appliances and other new things or products that have been introduced to Khun Yuam. Personal names and surnames

(as already mentioned) and vocabulary used in politics, administration and education, have also been borrowed from the Thai language.

I obtained the Burmese Tai words shown below from 'Tamraarian phaasaathajjaj' (Thawi Swangpanyangkoon and Phra Nanta Thanvaro 1987) and 'Laksana phaasaataj' (Kosol Srimani 1990), both of which are written in Thai, and 'Elementary Handbook of the Shan Language' (Cushing 1971; orig. publ. 1888). I also benefitted from conversations with Sao Hso Hom, a native Tai of the Shan States, gaining a great deal from his knowledge of Tai. The Khun Yuam Tai, Kam Müang and Thai words, are taken from my own fieldnotes.

Table 3.1 Comparison of some Tai, Kam Müang and Thai words

English gloss	Burmese Tai	Khun Yuam Tai	Kam Müang	Thai
motor-car	kaa	kaa	hot	rot, rotjon
coconut	maak uun	maakpaw	maakpaw	maphraaw
tobacco	jaa ¹⁰	jaa	jaa	jaasuup
cigarette	silik	silik	jaa, bulii (or mulli)	burii
funeral, cremation	n.a.	maasa, maasa maaja	ngaansop	ngaansop
taking a photograph	n.a.	pau-pung	thajhuup	thajruup
doctor	mau-jaa, salaa	mau·, mau·long, salaa	mau·	mau·, phae-t
hospital	n.a.	hoongmau·	hoongjaa, hoongmau·, hoong- phajaabaan	roong- phajaabaan

Some Tai terms given above are rarely used or known by Tai youngsters. *Kaa*, which is clearly borrowed from the English word - car, is now likely to be used by Tai elders, while *rot* has become the more common term. Another term, *maak uun* (coconut), is no longer employed by the majority of Tai people; some Tai residents do not even know this word.

¹⁰ Sao Hso Hom informs me that in his home town, Müang Pau-n, in the southern Shan States, the term *luut silik* means 'smoke a cigarette', but *luut jaa* implies to 'smoke opium'.

On the other hand, new things that have been introduced to the community, especially electrical appliances, are referred to by using Thai terms, for example, *tuu jen* (refrigerator), *taw kae-t* (gas stove), *thoorathat* (television), *witthaju* (radio), *thoorasap* (telephone), *fajfaa* (electricity), *nang* (movies), *rot mee* (buses), *aahaan krapau-ng* (canned food) and *phaatat* (medical operation). Some, such as *wii dii oo* (video) and *fae-k* (fax), are Thai words that are borrowed from English. The terms used in politics, at both local and national levels, such as *kaan lyaktang* (election) and *nak kaanmyang* (politicians) are all Thai words borrowed by local Tai and Kon Müang. The spread of the use of these Thai words is partly related to the popularity of the mass media, especially television. Thai lexis is employed by both Tai and Kon Müang residents.

Thamrong Bunphithak, a local Tai and Head of the Khun Yuam Primary Education Office, suggests that many words in the Tai language are borrowed from the Burmese. He says, for instance, that in Mae La Noi, the neighbouring district to the south of Khun Yuam, *paj ae-w* (literally, go for a trip or, often, to court a young woman - *paj ae-w saw*) is used by Tai and Kon Müang speakers, while in Khun Yuam it is considered a Kam Müang term. A similar meaning in Tai is expressed as *kwa lae. Cau-ng* (literally, 'umbrella') is another word employed by the two ethnic groups in Mae La Noi as well as by the Kon Müang in Khun Yuam, while the term *thii* is said to be a Tai word for 'umbrella'. In Khun Yuam, therefore, the Tai usually say *kwa lae* and *thii*, and the Kon Müang say *paj ae-w* and *cau-ng*. Thamrong thinks that both *kwa lae* and *thii* are borrowed from Burmese.¹¹ Furthermore, he notes that in old Tai poems, some authors often wrote the words *thii* and *cau-ng* together to mean 'an umbrella'. He assumes that it was a special kind of Tai written language.

¹¹ The Tai and Burmese cultures are similar in various ways. For instance, many locals of Khun Yuam point out that both Tai architecture, especially the buildings in the monasteries, and dances are not so different from those of the Burmese.

The terms for 'taking photographs' and 'funeral or cremation' need some explanation. Many Tai elders agree that *pau-pung* and *maasa maaja* (*maasa* for short) are Tai words, but others assume that they are Burmese. Local Tai, elders in particular, seem to think that it is polite to use the terms *pau-pung* and *maasa maaja* or *maasa*. Thus, it is most appropriate to say '*haw kwaa cau-j maasa*' ('I go to [offer my] help in a funeral'). It clearly indicates the politeness and kindness of the speaker. I, however, often heard the locals say '*haw kwaa ngaan khon taaj*' ('I go to the function of a dead man') or '*mii ngaan khon taaj*' ('there is a function for a dead man'). Both of these two sentences, it seems to me, lack formality and tend to be used by close friends or kin, indicating their close and equal relationship.

RESIDENTS OF THE TOWN

In Khun Yuam most Tai speakers are descended from the migrants who left the Shan States of Burma and arrived in the territory of Mae Hong Son Province in the nineteenth century. Their language is similar to the one spoken in the southern Shan States. Some Tai residents, however, originally came from nearby Tai villages and some from villages in the territory of Amphoe (district) Müang of Mae Hong Son. They married locals and decided to settle in the town. The Tai people are usually involved in trading, selling mainly vegetables, sweets, dried food, household and miscellaneous products. Some of them operate small eating houses. The local Tai own most of the land and buildings on both sides of the town's main road. A few of the oldest shops in this area belong to them as well. The Tai residents, except the very old ones, have received some formal education. Therefore, they are literate in the Thai language. Several of them have even acquired a higher level of education and have become schoolteachers, nurses, midwives and health care officers. Some

of these local government servants,¹² mostly to be precise primary schoolteachers, came from families with a trading background. On the other hand, the Tai residents who own small pieces of land or/and who are labourers usually have only a few years of education. These families reside in the outer circle of the market.

The Thai mainly comprise those who came from provinces in the central and eastern regions of Thailand. Their mother tongue is Thai. The Thai speakers in Khun Yuam, mostly males, are either *khaaraatchakaan* or those who have married local women.¹³ All of the former are new staff appointed to work in the district for a few years. They will then be transferred to other posts elsewhere. None of them, as far as I know, plans to settle in Khun Yuam.¹⁴ Several of the latter group, on the other hand, have resided in Khun Yuam more than twenty years. Another distinguishing difference between these two groups is that while none of the *khaaraatchakaan* speaks the Tai or the Kam Müang language, the Thai men who have local wives comprehend one of these two languages quite well, though they are not able to speak it fluently. These men make their living by running businesses, all of which are operated on the premises that their wives have inherited from their parents. Two Thai men are married to Tai women from a lower economic background. These two families work as labourers, but one of the men is sometimes hired to drive a utility carrying goods from Chiang Mai to Khun Yuam or vice versa.

Generally, it is said that the people in the central region of Thailand in the past used to refer to themselves as 'Tai Noi' (Thaj nau-j). They called (and still call) the Tai

¹² In general, government servants (Thai - *khaaraatchakaan*) include schoolteachers, staff of the hospital, district officers, staff of the post office, policemen, military personnel and so forth.

In this research, however, I often distinguish schoolteachers from other *khaaraatchakaan*. This is because many schoolteachers are local, while most other government servants are not. The former are related to the locals and make more contacts with local residents than the latter.

¹³ There is one Thai man, Wichian Krau-ngphriw, who was already married before he migrated to Khun Yuam in 1982 (see Chapter Five for details). Another man, Caruun Waaramontri, like Wichian, also operates a chemist's shop. Caruun was born in Kamphaeng Phet Province and finished the third grade of secondary education. He is single.

¹⁴ One or two Thai ex-policemen are married to local women and now live in the market town, but they resigned from the police force some time ago.

'Tai Yai' (Tai jai, Thaj jaj) or 'Ngiaw'.¹⁵ From the Thai academics' point of view, the 'Tai Yai' (literally, Greater Tai) are those who settled on the Salween and Mao (or Shwe) Deltas, and the 'Tai Noi' (Lesser Tai) refers to the people who dwell to the east, in the valley of the Mekong River, including the territories of Thailand, Laos and Vietnam (Srisakr and Suchitt 1991:89). In comparison, Wijeyewardene (1990) states that

'Tai jai' .. is a term usually applied to the people also known as 'Shan'¹⁶, and should probably include the Ahom and other Tai groups of Assam. The associated term is 'Tai noi' .. used to include, probably, all others in the southwestern branch [of the Tai speech groups] (Wijeyewardene 1990:48).

As a matter of fact, these two terms can be traced back to the seventeenth century. Simon de La Loubère, a French diplomat who visited Ayudhya, then the capital of Thailand in 1687-88, reported that

In a word, the Siameses, of whom I treat, do call themselves *Tai Noe, little Siams*. There are others, as I was informed, altogether savage, which are called *Tai Yai, great Siams*, and which do live in the Northern Mountains. In several Relations of these Countries, I find a Kingdom of *Siammon*, or *Siami*: but all do not agree that the People thereof are savage (La Loubère 1986:7; emphasis in the original).

As mentioned, nonetheless, the Tai of Khun Yuam refer to themselves as 'Tai' and not 'Tai Yai' or 'Tai jai'. To be more specific, the Khun Yuam Tai usually distinguish themselves from other Tai speakers by associating them with the locations of their dwellings, such as 'Tai Moe-ng Mae Hong Son', 'Tai Moe-ng Pai' and so on. Some of my informants, furthermore, agree that the Tai speakers of Mae Hong Son sometimes refer to themselves as 'Tai Long' (see Eberhardt 1984:27 and Tannenbaum 1990b:320, for comparison), which means the 'Greater Tai' as well. A Tai man who migrated from the Shan States of Burma and is working as a

¹⁵ The Kon Müang also use the term 'Ngiaw' when they refer to the Tai. However, this term is considered offensive by the Tai themselves.

¹⁶ This particular term is in fact a Burmese word and has been used widely by English speakers since the nineteenth century. It is still employed by some anthropologists, such as Tannenbaum (1982, 1989, 1990a-b) and Eberhardt (1984), who did their research in the north of Mae Hong Son.

panel painter in Bangkok informs me that the Tai in his home town are also called 'Tai Long'.¹⁷ On the other hand, the Tai dwellers of Khun Yuam rarely refer to the Thai speakers as 'Tai Noi', but use the same term 'Tai', for instance, 'Tai Moe-ng Kau-k' (Tai of Bangkok).

Srisakr and Suchitt, furthermore, comment that in the past the Tai of Burma's Shan States always traversed back and forth across the Thailand-Burma border and that most of the males were recognised by the locals as doughty warriors, as well as long-distance traders and travellers. Their homeland was in the valleys along the branches of the Salween River (Srisakr and Suchitt 1991:94-95). Because they had long been in contact with the Burmese, many aspects of Tai everyday life, such as language, architecture, music and so forth, were influenced by Burmese culture. At the present time, however, Burmese culture seems to have much less influence on the Tai residents of Khun Yuam than the Thai culture, particularly in relation to the Tai language.

Most Kon Müang residents in Khun Yuam town include those who are the descendants of the migrants from Amphoe Mae Chaem¹⁸ and those who recently moved from this neighbouring district. According to many informants, the Kon Müang left Mae Chaem owing to famine and drought in that area. Even if, however, there is no drought, there will never be enough rice to eat because of the soil's poor quality. This makes Mae Chaem one of the poorest districts in this region.¹⁹ In the last one or two decades, nonetheless, many Kon Müang from the provinces of Phayao, Chiang Rai, Lumpang, Nan, Phrae and other districts of Chiang Mai, have

¹⁷ Hamilton (1920:263) writes that '...The natives speak a dialect very little different from that of Siam, and call themselves Tay Loun; for the race called Shan by Mranmas [Burmese] call themselves Tay, and Loun is the specific term for this portion of that extended race'.

¹⁸ Mae Chaem is a district under the administration of Chiang Mai Province. It is a neighbouring district of Khun Yuam to the east. The locals of Amphoe Mae Chaem mainly consist of Karen, Kon Müang, Lua and Hmong speakers (Chiang Mai Provincial Office 1986:78-79). There are no Tai speakers living in Mae Chaem.

¹⁹ One document points out that 'chaem', or 'cae-m', means 'insufficient', 'scarce', 'famished' (Chiang Mai Provincial Office 1986:78).

migrated to the town of Khun Yuam. Some of them were later married to the locals. Some tried to find a better life and a new home for their families. Some, the policemen and teachers in particular, were transferred to a new post in Khun Yuam. They later decided to stay.

Like the Tai residents, many local Kon Müang earn their living by trading. They sell a lot of goods similar to those sold by the Tai traders. But it seems that more eating houses are operated by the Kon Müang women, either locally-born or recently immigrated, than by the Tai females. These eating houses generally sell Thai cuisine.²⁰ Most of the shops and eating houses run by the Kon Müang, usually also their residence, are rented from the local Tai.

Other similarities and differences

Some aspects of the townspeople's everyday life are worth noting. Food consumed by the locals is slightly different. For instance, the ingredients of Tai dishes seems to have less meat, in particular less beef, than the Kon Müang and Thai food.²¹ *Thoonaw* (thin, dried fermented soy bean cakes) is the most important source of protein and also used as the seasoning in Tai food. Many Tai dishes are similar to the Burmese ones. The Tai prefer cooked and oily food. On the other hand, several Kon Müang dishes are prepared from fresh cattle blood and raw beef mince flavoured by chillies and other spices. Unlike the Thai food, most of the Tai and Kon Müang dishes do not use coconut cream. The Tai and the Kon Müang often add garlic and fermented shrimp paste to their cooking, but the former seem to use

²⁰ By this, I mean the food that is widely sold in almost every eating house and small restaurant in the northern and, especially, central regions of Thailand. The food includes curry, hot dishes, soup, noodles, fried rice, cooked rice and so on.

This contrasts with Tai and Kon Müang food which is normally consumed at home. However, some Kon Müang dishes are sold in the shops and in the morning market, but Tai food is rarely found in the eating houses. Only one or two Tai women, as far as I know, sold a few ready-cooked Tai dishes on the stalls in front of their houses.

²¹ However, Tai younger generations at the present time consume more meat than their elders.

sesame oil and turmeric more than the latter. Both groups consume various kinds of plants, many of which are collected from the rice fields and forests. Another major difference is that the Kon Müang eat glutinous rice as their staple food, but the Tai, as well as the Thai, usually have the non-glutinous varieties of rice.

Usually, the Tai and Kon Müang go to their own monasteries to make merit and perform religious rituals, especially if it is for the sake of individual well-being, for example, asking a monk for a blessing or to drive away one's ill fortune.²² In any important annual Buddhist ceremony, however, most locals, including some Karen, will go to all of the four monasteries to make merit, pay their respect to senior monks, meet other people and celebrate the event. On such an occasion, to take part in the ceremony is much more important than one's ethnicity.²³ On the other hand, when there is an ordination of novices (see Chapter Four for more details), the boys, Tai, Kon Müang or mixed blood, are usually ordained in a Tai monastery.

It should be noted that it is not only religious activities in which the townspeople participate together. As we shall see in Chapters Three, Five and Six, social gatherings among the Tai, Kon Müang and Thai, are not uncommon. Cross-marriage between these three groups is commonly practised as well.²⁴ Young males and females select their own spouses, many of whom are not born in Khun Yuam. As far as I know, marriage is rarely arranged. Normally, after their wedding, the newlyweds will move to live with the bride's parents. However, some couples live with the grooms' parents because the latter are better off. When they have enough savings, many couples move out and make their own homes. Their new houses are

²² There are three Tai monasteries and a Kon Müang one in the town area (see Chapter Two).

²³ The funeral of a senior monk is another very important ceremony. No matter what ethnicity the monk is nor in which temple the funeral is held, all local Buddhists will participate in such an event in order to make merit (see Chapter Four for more details).

²⁴ As a matter of fact, marriage between the Tai and the Karen, or between the Kon Müang and the Karen, is practised. Unfortunately, I do not have any information about cross-marriage between the Hmong and other ethnicity.

usually built near their parents' or other older kin. Divorce or separation among the Tai and Kon Müang is common. Many townspeople, men and women, have been married twice, some men even married three or four times.

Financial and non-financial support, as well as other kinds of help, is always exchanged among kinsmen of both sides, close friends, neighbours and, often, even workmates (e.g. teachers who teach in the same school, hospital staff or contractual skilled workers who work in the same team).²⁵ Of course, reciprocal co-operation is expected. When someone is building his/her house, for example, his/her close relatives, friends and/or workmates, will come to help. The owner of the new house will provide food and drinks, including alcoholic ones. But it is well understood that the owner will have to return such 'favour' when his help is needed by the men who build his/her house. Those who have a good income sometimes hire professional carpenters or builders to do the job. If the job is done well, the former will probably treat the latter to food and alcoholic drinks to show their gratitude, as well as their generosity (see Chapter Three).

TRADING COMMUNITY

Khun Yuam is a trading town where not only most townspeople, but many upland villagers also trade. However, my research concentrates on the following four particular groups of shop owners and other kinds of traders in Khun Yuam town (details of these traders will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six). All groups comprise Tai, Kon Müang and Thai, both males and females. They include:

1. Those who own a shop, or shops, or rent one and work full-time in their shops.

²⁵ Some men who have been long-time neighbours or friends and/or were ordained as novices in the same ceremony are often very close to each other. If one of them needs help, the others will rarely refuse.

2. Former schoolteachers or government servants who are now self-employed.²⁶

3. Part-time shopkeepers or seasonal traders who work full-time as schoolteachers.²⁷

4. Itinerant traders who travel and trade in the territory of Mae Hong Son Province and some parts of Chiang Mai. Almost all of this group used to be rice farmers and now live in central and northern towns.

Shops and shop owners

Let me first give some details about the shop owners, their shops and their businesses. Shops vary in size; many of them are small, some are large. Those who own a large shop usually possess more than one shop. Some of these shop owners rent one or two of their shops to others. A few shop owners, on the other hand, may own a shop and rent another shop or two because their business has been booming. Other traders include those who do not own or possess a shop, but make their living by buying and selling or, in some cases, earn an extra income by trading. There are two groups of traders: local traders and itinerant traders. Several of the former are schoolteachers or *khaaraatchakaan* who spend their spare time trading cash crops or other goods. The latter, of course, are not local, but periodically arrive in Khun Yuam to sell their products. Some of them live in other northern provinces, but many come from the central region. Some of them are accompanied by their wives and children, some employ one or two teenagers to help them, some work with partners.

²⁶ The term 'self-employed' used here is to distinguish them from the first group. Several people in the second group work in the logging industry, pig or chicken farming, and do not own or run a shop.

²⁷ A number of local women who married policemen run a shop or eating house and their husbands help in the shops occasionally. Nonetheless, because the shops are operated mainly by the women, these policemen are excluded from this category.

Many shops have only one room and some are even smaller. These are usually general shops, selling miscellaneous goods, consumer products, vegetables, food and the like. Some are small eating houses. Several shops, on the other hand, are larger, containing an open space of two or three rooms in order to display goods to the customers and to keep their stock. They buy and sell more varieties of goods than the smaller shops.²⁸ Big shop owners are always in contact with the northern region trading agencies of Bangkok's large companies in Chiang Mai and with the salespeople who come directly from the capital with the companies' delivery trucks.

The owners or occupants of shops also live in their shops. Most shops, large or small, rented or owned, have two or three storeys, depending on the financial situation of the owners (or tenants). Two large new three-room shops, for instance, whose owners are rather well off, are three-storeyed concrete buildings. The floors, doors and windows are all made of teak. Normally, the upstairs of the shops are used as living places and as store-rooms. On the other hand, if the shop is only one storey, the owner and his or her family either live in the back of the shop or build a separate house. Almost all shops are owned or rented by Tai, Kon Müang or Thai speakers. None is run or owned by a Karen or a Hmong.

Many shop owners were not born locally. A number of them arrived in Khun Yuam as single individuals and married locally. Others came as spouses or already had a family. They mainly migrated from provinces in the northern, central and eastern regions of the country. A few used to live in the northeastern provinces and only one man, to my knowledge, was a southerner. These shop owners have settled and lived in Khun Yuam town for at least a decade. They have purchased some properties and have started to pay off their debts. Those who are doing better have

²⁸ Several big shops also supply goods to the smaller shops, both inside and outside the town area. Some shop owners, for instance, who live in Huaj Poong market town, some thirty kilometres north of Khun Yuam, occasionally come to buy goods from Moolii, the biggest shop in Khun Yuam (see below).

begun to buy a second shop or more land in the town area, thinking that their expanding businesses will be more prosperous in the future. None of them, so far, seems to plan to live elsewhere. Those who were born in Khun Yuam usually have a trading background or are familiar with trade. Most of this group have already owned a shop, or shops, for many years. Some even own several pieces of land along the town's main road where the business section is located.

Most shop owners' children go to local schools, both primary and secondary. But some children, boys and girls, whose parents can afford to pay their school fees and other expenses, are sent to secondary private schools in Chiang Mai. This is because some parents believe this will provide the children with a 'better education' and 'better social milieu' (I shall return to the second issue in Chapter Six). As a matter of fact, sending children to schools in Chiang Mai has been practised among well-to-do Tai and Kon Müang families for many years.

Morning market

People come to the town to buy and sell goods. The morning market of the town starts as early as five-thirty or six o'clock.²⁹ Chicken meat and eggs, sea food, beef and some vegetables, are brought from Chiang Mai, but a lot of goods are produced locally. Locals who grow their own vegetables, fruit and flowers, come to sell their surplus and the prices are cheaper than imported goods. Cooked food, *khawseen* (fermented rice noodles), *khawsau-j* (a noodle and curry dish) and sweets, are available as well. Garments, bags, hats, shoes, sandals, cigarettes and tobacco, incense, candles, matches, household products and miscellaneous personal items

²⁹ The butchers, selling pork mainly, arrive at the market earlier than anyone else, usually about 3.30 or 4 a.m. Pigs which have already been slaughtered at the town's abattoir are cleaned and chopped up at the market. The meat is then divided. Heads, feet, blood, hearts, lungs, entrails, etc., are also sold. Live pigs are normally supplied by the locals, but occasionally bought from Chiang Mai. I am told that the consumption of pork is increasing.

are easily found. Goods are sold until eight or eight-thirty a.m., then the market is closed for the rest of the day. Some sellers, usually from outside the town, may rent the empty stalls in front of the market and sell their goods until late afternoon. Some men, on the other hand, come to the market very early in the morning to buy pork, ready-cooked fish, vegetables, sweets and other food. They then carry the goods in their motor tri-cycles to sell from door to door in the villages outside the town. In summer they will also make frozen cordial to sell to the villagers. It is said that their business is profitable and so good that they return home at one or two o'clock in the afternoon and spend the rest of the day relaxing or meeting friends.

The sellers have to pay rent for the stalls in the morning market. Rent varies from two to ten baht a day, depending on the kinds of goods and the location and size of the stalls. For example, a small stall selling vegetables may cost two baht. A larger stall of a butcher will be ten baht.³⁰ The rent of the stalls in front of the market is also high. The northern and southern parts of the market are divided into several small shops and rented to some Kon Müang who came from other provinces and decided to settle in the town. Some of these shopkeepers sell garments, school uniforms, leather shoes and plimsolls. Others sell household and cooking utensils, umbrellas, cosmetics and other miscellaneous goods. The rents for these small shops are between 500 to 1,000 baht a month. Nonetheless, if a new seller wants to rent a stall or a shop, he/she has to pay the lease to the former tenant. The cost of the lease depends on negotiations between the former and new tenants, but is normally about 500 baht. It is worth noting that the market is owned by an elderly Tai woman, but is taken care of by her son, Wanlop Taasiti, and his wife. Wanlop used to be a teacher but now works full time at the Primary Education Office of Khun Yuam.

³⁰ Almost all of the local butchers are Kon Müang.

All kinds of traders

Trading activities continue all day, in the shops and almost everywhere in the town. Hawkers, mostly Tai and Kon Müang females, walk from door to door selling Tai or Kon Müang food or sweets. Although the government has banned the selling and buying of many forest products, they are hawked as well. Products such as wild animal meat, usually already cooked, horns, hide, honey, beehives, wild flowers and plants, cooked insects and worms, and sometimes even live wild baby monkeys and wild birds can be purchased. Some of these products are hawked by the Karen, some - meat in particular - are sold by Tai and Kon Müang women. Karen females sometimes walk down from their upland villages carrying bags of melons or other vegetables and selling them cheaply to the residents of the town. Hmong men often drive a utility truck full of cabbages to the town and sell their crop to the buyers, who will soon load the whole crop into a larger truck and transport it to Bangkok or other provinces in the central region. Some Hmong may even go directly to the markets in Chiang Mai to sell cabbages.

Outside itinerant traders occasionally come to town. Almost all of them are Kon Müang or Thai speakers. They travel by a utility truck, selling various kinds of goods. Many of them sell garments, bags and backpacks, shoes, gumboots, sandals, household and cooking equipments, musical cassette tapes, picture posters of film stars, small personal items and cosmetics, stationery and so forth. They come to Khun Yuam once or twice a month and whenever there is a fair. Once a month, one or two traders bring to Mae Hong Son fresh sea food, kept in iced metal boxes, sweets and fruit from the coastal provinces in the east or from Bangkok. They stop in Khun Yuam for an hour or so to sell the goods.

Even some large household items, for instance, mattresses and sheets, mats, pillows and pillow cases, are sold by some pedlars. The pedlars sometimes bring furniture; dressing-tables, beds, wardrobes and food cupboards, but they are rarely bought by the locals. Since teak timbers are available, and local carpenters offer a lower price, the locals prefer to have a piece of furniture made locally.³¹ Other small but more valuable items, such as expensive sets of pens and pencils, watches, jewellery and glasses are also available. The trading system of these goods is somewhat complicated.

Many pedlars purchase the goods, usually by cash, from Chiang Mai, then carry them in their utility trucks, selling them from town to town, village to village. Generally, they have little capital and usually own a second-hand utility truck, which may be bought by cash or on hire purchase. They are self-employed, working independently and making their own decisions. Some pedlars, on the other hand, work as employees of the shops in Chiang Mai, especially those which sell expensive goods. Unlike the self-employed ones, these pedlars receive a monthly salary from the shop owners in Chiang Mai and do not work independently.

Some pedlars are neither full-time employees nor independent pedlars, but they work on a contract. Under the contract the goods are supplied by the shops in Chiang Mai, but the pedlars have to use their own vehicles and receive neither salary nor any allowance for their expenses. They only earn commission in accordance with the amount of goods they sell. So their income is entirely dependent on their selling performance and they sometimes have financial difficulties. However, most of them work under contract until they have accumulated an adequate amount of capital. They will then become self-employed.

³¹ Local carpenters also make doors and door-frames, windows and window-frames and any woodwork.

Of course, not everyone is a seller. Some people come to buy. During the dry season, those who work in the logging business, many of whom are local, prepare their supplies. They purchase petrol, oil, spare parts, batteries, rice, dried and canned food, cooking ingredients, soft and alcoholic drinks, sweets, medicine, clothes, blankets, tools and equipment and other necessities. Local shop owners remark that the people who work in the logging business are among their biggest customer groups.³²

A lot of customers, moreover, also arrive from the other side of the border. The Karen and, especially, Tai, of both sexes, travel on foot in small groups from their villages in Burma to Khun Yuam in search of supplies and goods. They buy canned soft drinks, cooking oil, canned food, instant noodles, sweets, ready-made garments, small batteries, detergent powder, soap, shampoo and other consumer products.³³ Sometimes, electric appliances, for example, small radios, radio and cassette-tape player compacts and even television sets, are bought as well. After staying for a few days with the locals, whom the buyers either are acquainted with or trade with, the Karen and Tai will return to their villages in Burma, carrying all the goods in their large backpacks or on their shoulders. Some Karen men who have earned a good income working in the logging business sometimes purchase second-hand motorcycles from the locals, then ride the vehicles across the mountains back home. The buyers, as far as I know, do not make any effort to transfer the registration of their motorcycles from Thai to Burmese.

³² The logging areas are in the territory of Burma, approximately thirty or forty kilometres east of Khun Yuam town. The manager of the Krung Thai Bank in Khun Yuam told me that the logging started in 1988 under a five-year contract between the Burmese and Thai governments, but the logging was done by private sub-contracting. At the time of the interview (February 1993), he was worried whether or not the contract would be renewed after May 1993. If the new contract was not signed, and the logging had to stop, the economy in Khun Yuam would certainly decline. Many locals would become unemployed (see Chapter Six for more discussion about the logging business).

³³ Praatthanaa Anuchaj, who owns one of the biggest shops in Khun Yuam, informs me that among these goods, canned soft drinks, canned fish, instant noodles and detergent powder are the best selling products purchased by the Burmese Tai (I shall return to the details of Praatthanaa's family and her business in Chapter Five).

Many locals, Tai and Karen, trade occasionally, mainly in the dry season. They usually purchase the goods from the shops in Khun Yuam town and transport them across the border into Burma to sell. Or sometimes, they just arrange for the goods to be ready for pick up at their homes when the Tai or Karen from Burma arrive at their homes. In this case, the sellers do not have to cross the border, but must prepare accommodation and, often, food for the arrivals. (The kinds of goods they trade are not dissimilar to those mentioned in the previous paragraph.) In order to establish a long-term trading relation, some shopkeepers offer these part-time traders a special price for any item of goods they buy. Some traders who buy regularly from a shop are even allowed to take the goods first and pay off their debts later (but there are some rules applied to this). In addition, while the traders from Burma consist of both men and women, these local traders/farmers, as far as I am aware, are solely males.

CHAPTER TWO

KHUN YUAM: PAST AND PRESENT

This chapter provides general information about Khun Yuam town and its district, both in the past and at the present time. Stories of some individuals will be given. My attempts are to demonstrate the establishment of Khun Yuam and the development of the community since its early days. The information in this chapter must also be recorded because of its unique value in understanding the town as it is today. Two of the main sources of this information are from the interviews with the local elders and the records in the National Archives in Bangkok. I hope that this information, which is unpublished, would be useful for further studies about Khun Yuam and its region.

Historical records indicate that Khun Yuam was established because of its economic and political significance. Khun Yuam town is a junction for the trans-border trade between the Shan States of Burma and the northern region of Thailand, which is at the present time probably less active than it was in the old days. It is also an area where forests have been logged since the last century. Today, although the logging brings jobs, directly and indirectly, to a large number of the residents (and wealth to some), it is a dangerous business, owing to its highly valuable benefits (details in Chapter Six). In addition, in the view of the Thai government, Khun Yuam's location is somewhat important for strategic purposes and for national security. The government, therefore, has tried to integrate this region (Mae Hong Son, Khun Yuam and other towns) into the territory of Thailand and created impact on the locals and their way of life.¹

¹ The attempts of the government to create Thai nationalism in these remote areas have been successfully supported by the boom of inter-regional trade, the rapid spread of Thai media and entertainment and the increasing influence of the Thai language. These factors will be discussed in the next chapter.

Khun Yuam town, as well as its district, is inhabited by various groups of people who speak different languages. Most of them are farmers, many are traders, and a lot of them are both. Intermarriage was (and is) common among the locals of Khun Yuam. Relationships between the residents were (and are) based on economic or trading reasons rather than ethnicity per se. In the earlier days, there was fighting between the Tai and the Kayah, followed by conflicts between the Thai administration in Bangkok and the British who occupied the Shan States. In the mid-twentieth century, Japanese troops marched through Khun Yuam to Burma and returned to camp and rest in the town when they were defeated at the end of World War II. The arrival of the Japanese had some effect on the locals. Today, fighting is still found in some parts of the region, particularly along the border. Now, however, the fighting is between the Burmese army and Karen and Kayah troops. Fortunately, the fighting does not impact too negatively on the locals.

Another problem was the Thai authorities, who created troubles and hardship for the dwellers of Khun Yuam from time to time. New laws and regulations imposed by the authorities, their actions, taxes and so on, changed the lives of the people. Tensions between the locals and the authorities nowadays, however, are not as great as they used to be.

Information regarding the traders in the past and their activities are also mentioned in this chapter. In the old days, traders, males in particular, were active not merely in trading activities, but also in socio-religious ones. Most of them were literate, especially those who had received a formal education. They travelled more frequently than others in the community, and had more experience and/or information about the world. Yet, in other aspects, traders in the past differed from those of the present time (I shall clarify my points in the following chapters).

THE REGION

First of all, some details of the region should be documented. Khun Yuam is a district (Thai - *amphoe*) under the administration of Mae Hong Son Province. Mae Hong Son is described by some Thai writers as *müang naj mau-k*, or 'town in the mist', because of its location on high mountains above sea-level. In the past, it was also known as *müang neeratheet* (town of exiles), where the Thai government exiled its political prisoners (Bunchuai 1961:651-652). This was due to the fact that it is located in a mountainous area and at that time was almost inaccessible. Its hardship thus made it a perfect place to get rid of all of the government's opponents. Travelling in the old days was only done on foot or/and with cattle-caravans. Very few people travelled on horseback.²

The main road, Highway No. 108, from Chiang Mai, via Chom Thong, Hot, Mae Sariang, to Mae La Noi, was completed in the 1960s. A few years later, this route was extended from Mae La Noi through the market town of Khun Yuam to Mae Hong Son. Since then, this highway has been upgraded a few times.³ To the east of the province, the old dirt road built by the Japanese during World War II from

² Keyes (1987) remarks that from the Thai government servant's point of view, '...Mae Hong Son had long been regarded as the "Siberia" of Thailand, for even in the 1970s it was largely cut off from the rest of the country. This separation was not only geographical but also cultural'. Most interestingly, however, he continues that

...The king's visit to Mae Hong Son in 1968, the first visit to the province by any Thai monarch, thus entailed the ceremonial display of the essential elements of Thai national culture for people whose connection to the Thai state was tenuous owing to their residence in a remote border area and their ethnic distinctiveness (Keyes 1987:1).

More than two decades later, visits to the province by the members of the Royal family became almost regular. The influences of Thai culture and language in this region have also increased (this will be discussed in Chapter Three).

³ When I began my fieldwork at the end of 1991, this main highway, an asphalt-surfaced road, was being re-upgraded, but the work was not finished when I left eighteen months later. Though many locals complained of this extremely slow progress, the provincial administration seemed to take no action.

Perhaps, I should note that this main highway is so winding that its total length includes 1,864 hairpin curves. The provincial administration uses this highway as a tourist promotion by giving a certificate to any driver who drives from Chiang Mai to Mae Hong Son.

Mae Hong Son, via Pai market town, Amphoe Mae Taeng, to Chiang Mai, was also expanded and upgraded. The new asphalted road was completed at the end of 1981. It is called Highway No. 1095 (Supha et al 1985:137). However, Mae Hong Son today is one of the most popular tourist spots, especially the mountain trekking area in Pai District, northeast of Mae Hong Son town. A plane flies daily between Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son.⁴ Buses run several times a day between Chiang Mai, Mae Sariang, Khun Yuam and Mae Hong Son; and once a day between Mae Hong Son and Bangkok, also via Mae Sariang and Khun Yuam. Smaller buses operate daily between villages and from town to town as well.

The administrative territory of Mae Hong Son Province is divided into five *amphoe* and two *king amphoe* (an area usually smaller and less populated than an *amphoe*). Its total area covers 13,184.4 square kilometres, of which only 1,203.4 square kilometres, or approximately 9.13 per cent, is flat land. The rest is all mountainous (details in Table 2.1). The total population of the whole province at the end of 1991 was 175,987 people, consisting of several different speech groups, such as the Karen, Hmong, Lua, Lahu, Lisu, Tai, Kon Müang and Thai. The first five groups make up about 51.2 per cent of the total population (Mae Hong Son Provincial Office 1992:3, 4 and 9). This classification of ethnic groups is based on the census collected by the district offices.

⁴ There is a military airfield in Khun Yuam, but none of the commercial aeroplanes is allowed to land. The military captain who is in charge at the district office explains that the airfield is reserved for use in cases of military security or emergency only.

Table 2.1 Areas of each amphoe and king amphoe in Mae Hong Son Province, in order of size

Amphoe and king amphoe	Square kilometres
1. Amphoe Mae Sariang	2,497.4
2. Amphoe Müang	2,390.0
3. Amphoe Khun Yuam	2,365.0
4. Amphoe Pai	2,324.0
5. Amphoe Mae La Noi	1,337.0
6. King Amphoe Sop Muey	1,177.0
7. King Amphoe Pangmapha	1,094.0
Total	13,184.4

Source: Mae Hong Son Provincial Office (1992:3)

THE LOCATION OF KHUN YUAM

Khun Yuam, the third largest amphoe of Changwat Mae Hong Son, is located approximately at latitude 18° 49' north and longitude 97° 56' east. It is sixty-seven kilometres south of Mae Hong Son town, and 292 kilometres from Chiang Mai, the capital city of the northern region. Travelling to Khun Yuam is mainly by Highway No. 108, but in the dry season many locals, the Hmong in particular, use the dirt road of Highway No. 1295 to go to the markets in Chiang Mai to sell their crops. The latter runs to the east, from Khun Yuam to Amphoe Mae Chaem in Chiang Mai Province and covers a distance of 95 kilometres. But access to other villages in Khun Yuam district is mainly by dirt roads, some of which are often impassable in the rainy season. However, there are seven villages, all of Karen residents, that can only be reached on foot. The total area of Amphoe Khun Yuam is 2,365 square kilometres, but again the flat land comprises as little as 260 square kilometres, or

roughly 11 per cent of the total land. There are four small rivers running through the district; Nam Yuam, the main river which is about 215 kilometres in length, Nam Mae Surin, Nam Mae Pau-n and Nam Mae Ngaw (Khun Yuam District Office 1992:1-2).

Khun Yuam district administration covers forty-two villages in seven tambon, i.e., Khun Yuam, Müang Pau-n, Mae Ngaw, Mae Ki, Mae Uu Khau and Mae Yuam Noi. According to the December 1992 census, the total population was 20,266. An officer of the District Census Division estimates that slightly over half of the population are Karen speakers and the rest comprise the Tai, Kon Müang, Thai and Hmong.

Geographical features of the town

According to the district census in December 1992, the total population of Khun Yuam town was 4,411 people, 2,258 males and 2,153 females. The majority of townspeople are Tai and Kon Müang, with some Thai men. A number of Karen and Hmong, most of whom have recently moved down from their upland villages, reside on the outskirts of the town. Neither of these two groups, however, owns or runs a shop in the market town. The Hmong are all cabbage market-gardeners who seem to have more cash than any other farmers in Khun Yuam. Although some Hmong men operate small shops in their villages, they do not have any influence in the market town. The Karen and Hmong residents are thus excluded from discussion in my study.

Almost all of the shops are situated along the town's main road, Highway No. 108, which runs through the middle of the town. In the centre of the town are a number of large shops, the morning market, the bank, the police station and the two oldest

Buddhist Tai monasteries (Tai - *cau-ng*).⁵ Along the highway to the north there are more shops, the post office, the cremation grounds - one for the monks, another for ordinary people, and the so-called *sanaambin* (literally, airfield), where only military and official aircraft are allowed to land. To the northeast of the airfield is a Border Police camp. Opposite the airfield is Cau-ng Muaj Tau, a Tai temple whose abbot is also appointed *cawkhana amphoe* or the District Ecclesiastical Head of Khun Yuam. The town's water supply station, the district office, a ten-bed hospital, the bus station, one primary school, and one secondary school occupy the northern part of the town.⁶ Houses are found scattered all over this area.

About one hundred metres along the road from the centre of the market town to the south one finds the district sub-power station and a health centre. Further down the road, one can easily see three small wooden buildings of *saan caw müang* where the local Tai worship their guardian spirit every year. Then there are the district malaria prevention office, a few eating houses, and Wat Phoothaaraam - a Buddhist monastery patronised by Kon Müang speakers. Not far from here is the end of the southern part of Khun Yuam town, where two large petrol stations are situated. Behind one of the petrol stations are vast rice fields surrounded by small hills (see Map 4).

The bus service to Khun Yuam town began in the 1970s, but the main road, then a dirt road, was so bad that it often collapsed, particularly when there was heavy rain, and the bus had to stop running.⁷ It then took many years before the regular bus

⁵ Elsewhere (Cushing 1971a, Tannenbaum 1990a), this word is spelled as *kyawng*. Tannenbaum (1990a:27) explains that *kyawng* is '...the temple building ... equivalent to the Thai *wihan* or preaching hall' (italics original), which is established in the temple compound.

⁶ There are two primary schools in Khun Yuam town's area: Roongrian Baan Khun Yuam and Roongrian Khun Yuam. Roongrian Baan Khun Yuam is the oldest primary school in the town (see Chapter Three for more information).

Roongrian Khun Yuam Witthaya, the only secondary school in the district, was established in 1972.

⁷ In 1992, when the main highway was being up-graded, it collapsed several times during the rainy season. The Bangkok-Mae Hong Son bus service was cancelled a few times due to the collapse of the road.

service running between Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son was established. Water supply, operated by the local administration called 'sukhaaphibaan', is available in the town area. However, the quality of the water is low and its colour is often as red as the soil. Complaints made by the locals about this a main topic of daily conversation. Electricity is also in use, but the power will often be cut, usually for more than an hour and often overnight, when there is a thunderstorm or heavy rain. There were two public telephone boxes in 1992, and four at the beginning of 1993 where local and long-distant calls could be made. Many shops and houses had their own telephones, and at least two shops and one house, as far as I know, not including the district hospital and the district office, had facsimile machines. The post office is located in the middle of the town.

In the territory of Khun Yuam market town there are four Buddhist monasteries: three Tai *cau-ng* and one Kon Müang *wat*. The Tai and Kon Müang speakers normally prefer to conduct religious rituals in their own monasteries, but the two groups may occasionally join together in the same temple when there is an annual Buddhist festival or an especially important ceremony.

ESTABLISHMENT OF KHUN YUAM

As we shall see in this section, there is no consensus as to whether Khun Yuam was primarily established because of its important location for regional trading, logging, defence purposes or political reasons. In the first half of the nineteenth century Tai speakers migrated from the Shan States to settle in the Khun Yuam area. Other groups, such as the Karen and Pa-O, also occupied the area. The reasons for their migration varied. Some escaped the wars in their homeland, some ran away from famine and so on, but all came to find a new and better life. However, it is noteworthy that local elders confirm that Khun Yuam had long been

inhabited before the Tai and others arrived. The newcomers were peasants, but many of them earned extra money by trading and, subsequently, became full-time traders. Some engaged in logging, either working on their own or under a contract with the British or someone else. Several locals eventually made their fortune from trade, a few of them from logging. Food and other goods were traded or exchanged among the locals and with outside traders. Men and women of different speech groups courted and wedded each other. All this has been practised since Khun Yuam was established.

Srisakr and Suchitt (1991:95) maintain that Khun Yuam and Mae Hong Son were established by the Tai traders who arrived with their caravans. The two settlements were therefore closely related, historically, economically and/or politically. This is in agreement with Ratanaporn's statement (1989) that in the nineteenth century the Tai traders of the Shan States

...bought piece goods and other items in Moulmein for sale in the Northern States [of Thailand]. Some of them went over to Sukhothai [located in the southern end of the northern region of Thailand] where they purchased salted fish paste and dried fish. They also bought a considerable amount of betel to take back to the Shan States. Some Shan caravans came to Chiang Mai via Muang Fang [north of Chiang Mai] or *Mae Hong Son and a number of Shan settlements were established in those areas, particularly the latter which came to be a predominately Shan place* (Ratanaporn 1989:65-66; italics mine).

It is obvious, therefore, that in the old days, Khun Yuam was a small trading town located on one of the trade-routes between Thailand and Burma. Local traders in Khun Yuam, the Tai in particular, established trading connections with their own ethnic fellows from Burma's Shan States. Many of the local traders often travelled to Moulmein, a sea port and a trading centre in the south of Burma, for trading purposes.

There is a possibility, however, that some of the early settlers in Khun Yuam were war immigrants. According to elderly residents of Müang Pau-n, a village some twelve kilometres to the south of the town, the village was established in the nineteenth century by Tai speakers, many of whom were escaping the fighting and bandits in the Shan States. During the first several years of the settlement of Müang Pau-n, life was hard but safer than in their homeland. Other immigrants then followed their predecessors and the village of Müang Pau-n grew. Some of these newcomers moved to neighbouring villages to find a new home, and some even went as far as Khun Yuam. Today, many Khun Yuam residents recall that their kin's relationships with the locals of Müang Pau-n can be traced back several decades.

The oral history which maintains that the forebears of Müang Pau-n and Khun Yuam residents were war immigrants probably has some basis in fact. Ronald Renard, a historian specialising in the Karen, confirms that the founding of Mae Hong Son was related to the political relations between the rulers of Chiang Mai and the Red Karens, or Kayah - as they call themselves. Renard (1980b) writes,

As Chiang Mai's population grew and Red Karen strength mounted, Chang Phu'ak's successor, Putthawong, wished to survey conditions in the upper Salween. His *hona* [literally, the Front Palace, or the crown prince], Chao Mahot, sent Chao Kaeo Mu'angma to investigate the Red Karen boundary area in 1831.

After Mae Hong Son was founded, Chiang Mai's rulers

...feared Red Karen expansion towards Mae Hongson because as the Red Karens moved east of the Salween, the Kantarawaddy rulers had begun exacting tribute from peoples in areas the Thais claimed for themselves. Putthawong hoped the founding of Mae Hongson would limit Red Karen influence more effectively than the treaties he felt the Red Karens were violating.

One Red Karen group, for example, had been founding settlements in Thai territory since the 1820's. In 1836, Papaw Gyi's younger relative, Sawlasa, travelled to Chiang Mai to gain permission for Red Karens to settle on the Mae Samat stream near Mae Hongson. Putthawong was chary of granting permission himself, using the

excuse that Chiang Mai was only a vassal of Siam. He sent the Red Karens to Rama III in 1838 and the king granted the Karens settlement rights. Rama III presented silver and cloth to Sawlasa, and then, northern Thai leaders escorted Sawlasa and his followers or *phrai* to Mae Samat. Though these immigrants returned to Kantarawaddy when Sawlasa died, similar groups stayed in Thai-held regions and became an increasing source of concern to northern Thai leaders.

During the 1830's, the Red Karens also extended their influence over small Shan states on the Salween, successfully intimidating all the states except Mawksmai (Renard 1980b:129-130).

Nevertheless, the rulers of Mae Hong Son and Khun Yuam could not escape the intimidation of the Kayah's invasion and were forced to give tribute to the latter in exchange for their safety (Renard 1980b:152).⁸

Bunchuai Sisawat, a Thai author, on the other hand, claims that the growth of Mae Hong Son and Paang Muu⁹ was also related with logging activities in the area. He records that the leaders of Mae Hong Son and Paang Muu, seeing that the British Bombay-Burma Trading Company had been logging in the forests in the territory of the Shan States, realised that teak was plentiful in the Mae Hong Son area and could be logged. They thus requested logging permission from the ruler of Chiang Mai and proposed that, in return, the ruler would be given 'khaa tau-maj' (literally, the stump's price)¹⁰ from every tree that was felled. The permission was soon granted. Trees were then cut and floated down the Pai River to the saw-mills in Burma. Eventually, new settlers arrived at Mae Hong Son and Paang Muu in order to take up a logging job. Both communities grew rapidly (Bunchuai 1961:672).

In contrast, the official version of the history of Mae Hong Son and Khun Yuam given by the Thai authorities emphasises another issue. It states that in BE 2374

⁸ It is worth noting that despite the fighting, relations between ordinary Kayah and Tai were not always negative. In the old days many Kayah migrated to live in Khun Yuam. The two groups not only conducted mutual trade, but also married each other. A number of townspeople at the present time are said to be the descendants of such an intermarriage (see further).

⁹ Paang Muu is now a village several kilometres to the north of Mae Hong Son town.

¹⁰ Phornphun (1974:52-53) documents that the amounts of the 'khaa tau-maj', varying from one to three rupees per tree, depended on the size of the trees that were cut. Later, the Thai administration in Bangkok ordered the rulers of Chiang Mai to add another two rupees to each tree. The additional money was to be sent to Bangkok.

(AD 1831), Caw Kae-w Müang Maa was ordered to survey the Burma frontier and to capture wild elephants for royal use. When he and his followers arrived at Paang Muu, he appointed a local Tai named Phakaamau-ng to be the village headman. There were already some Tai speakers dwelling in this area, but the former ordered the latter to assemble all these local Tai to found a new village. Another settlement, Mae Hong Son town, was also established, and the son of Phakaamau-ng, Sae-nkoom, was appointed the headman (Mae Hong Son Provincial Office 1992:1, Maitri 1980:96-97, and Athivaro Bhikkhu 1992:31-32). The population of Paang Muu grew, so Shaankalee¹¹, a son-in-law of Phakaamau-ng, together with a number of Tai people later migrated to the south, which was at the time mainly occupied by the Lua.¹² The Tai newcomers then established their own hamlet and called the place 'Kun Jom' - 'the hills of jom'.¹³ Shaankalee was later appointed by the ruler of Chiang Mai as *khun*, the chief, of the new settlement and was titled Phraya Sihanat (Khun Yuam District Office 1992:2, Saatronnawit 1981:5-10).

Though many people agree that Mae Hong Son was founded before Khun Yuam, some elderly locals say that Khun Yuam is one of the oldest Tai settlements in the area. This argument is possibly based on the residents' sense of locality rather than on historical facts. Since not many written documents about Khun Yuam are available, it is difficult to establish the exact date of its founding. It may be suggested, however, that this settlement was fairly significant for regional trade, as well as for logging (for further information see below).

¹¹ He later re-married Nang Mia, also a Tai woman. There is no record available about his first wife or why Shaankalee decided to take a new wife.

¹² Today, none of the Lua people live in Khun Yuam area. A large number of the Lua, however, reside in the territory of Mae La Noi, a neighbouring southern district of Khun Yuam.

¹³ Saatronnawit (1981:6-7) states that 'kun' literally means hills or mountains and 'jom' is a kind of tree found abundantly in this area. The name of this place subsequently became 'Khun Yuam'.

In earlier days, life was difficult, owing to fighting and banditry, as well as epidemics.¹⁴ Fortunately, however, droughts¹⁵ and famine, as far as I know, did not occur very often.

CONFLICTS, TROUBLES AND CHANGES

Located near the Thailand-Burma frontier, Khun Yuam has suffered conflicts and fighting almost continuously. There were wars between the Tai and the Kayah; both sides wanting to occupy the land, to assemble people for labour, to control the trade routes and so forth. The rulers of Chiang Mai also tried to share control of the area. Fighting and conflicts in the area forced the Thai government in Bangkok to reform its administration at the turn of the century. Despite this, disputes continued after the reforms, particularly disputes between the British and the Thai. The latter decided to make more changes, both in the administrative and judicial systems. The following three or four decades also saw the administration trying to solve its disputes with the Tai who were British subjects. Taxes were reduced and individual land ownership was granted to the locals. For political reasons, more new settlers were persuaded to move into the area. There were new small settlements and Khun Yuam district slowly grew. In order to comprehend the physical and non-physical changes in Khun Yuam during its history, I will discuss the above issues in some detail in the following.

One document states that as early as BE 2390, or AD 1847, Khun Yuam was a small hamlet consisting of about twenty houses. The residential area was concentrated in the area between where Wat Phoothaaraam and the *saan caw müang*

¹⁴ The last cholera epidemic broke out over sixty or seventy years ago, killing hundreds of townspeople. Many residents sought refuge in Müang Pau-n and elsewhere. After the epidemic, some of them returned to Khun Yuam, some did not. But none of them forgot what happened.

¹⁵ As a matter of fact, it often rained heavily in Khun Yuam. Informants confirm that during the rainy season, the roads were always muddy; some parts of the main road were even washed away by the rain, creating large ruts on the road. It is said that once, a horse fell into a huge rut and could not get out. He finally died.

are now located (Saatronnawit 1981:6). Most of the residents were Tai peasants who probably wanted to be left alone. However, the political situation in the region was far from peaceful. The fighting along the border in the territory of Mae Hong Son-Khun Yuam had continued even after the establishment of the two communities. Owing to this fighting, many residents of Mae Hong Son fled to seek refuge. The town became almost deserted. The population of Khun Yuam, on the contrary, was slowly growing. It is reported that in 1869-70 [?]¹⁶,

Phra Cao Kawilorot, Cao Nakhon Chiang Mai, asked the present Phra Cao of Chiang Mai to go out to check on the territory around Müang Khunyuam one more time. At that time the *tambon* of Mae Höng Sön had hardly any houses. Cakamöngsan, the husband of Nang Mia, and their followers planned to set up a town at Mae Höng Sön, while Nang Mia [continued] to live in Müang Khunyuam. When the troops from Chiang Mai reached the *tambon* of Mae Höng Sön, they brought Cakamöngsan, the husband of Nang Mia, via Müang Pai, and then returned [with him] to Chiang Mai. When Nang Mia found out what was going on, she and her group followed her husband to Chiang Mai. While Nang Mia was being held in Chiang Mai, Cakamöngsan was appointed Phraya Sihanat and sent out to look after Müang Khunyuam. Nang Mia was retained in Chiang Mai for three years. Then Phra Cao Nakhon Chiang Mai released her and permitted her to join Phraya Sihanat at Müang Khunyuam.

In 1873-74 [?] Nang Mia took her group to Mae Höng Sön, where they cleared the land, prepared the soil for crops, and turned the place into a large town. ...When Nang Mia took charge of Mae Höng Sön and it grew, Müang Mai [the northern subordinate town of Mae Hong Son at that time, but now in Burmese territory] was placed under the jurisdiction of Mae Höng Sön. Two towns were then under the jurisdiction of Mae Höng Sön: Müang Mai and Müang Khunyuam (Wilson 1985:36).

Khun Yuam was under the authority of Mae Hong Son Tai rulers until 1884-85 [?], '...when Phraya Montrisuriyawong [a senior Thai official] was the governor of Chiang Mai, he split Müang Khunyuam off from Mae Höng Sön. Nang Mia did not know the reason for this' (Wilson 1985:36). Khun Yuam then had its own town ruler. Additionally, as far as the Thai government was concerned, Khun

¹⁶ Here and the next two places, I mark the dates with question marks because there is some doubt about the years in the document translated by Constance Wilson. According to a document in the National Archives (NA, R5 RL-PS vol.28) and in Saatronnawit (1981:10), Phraya Sihanat, the husband of Nang Mia, died in 1884 (cau· sau· 1246 or BE 2427), but in Wilson's paper (1985:36) it was in 1881-82, a few years earlier.

Yuam was essential since it was a militarily strategic town located at the frontier between Thailand and Burma, which was occupied by the British. The Thai ruler in Bangkok was worried about the Burmese subjects of the British who travelled into the territory of Thailand to trade and always caused trouble and headaches for the local administration. The ruler of Khun Yuam, therefore, had to be a reliable and prudent person who could be trusted by the Thai administration in Bangkok (NA, R.5 RL-PS vol.28).

After Phraya Sihanat died in 1884 (or in 1881-82, according to Wilson's manuscript), Nang Mia, who was also involved in teak logging, went to Chiang Mai for business purposes and was detained there for a while by Chiang Mai's ruler before returning to Mae Hong Son (NA, R.5 RL-PS vol.28, p.45). She was then appointed *caw müang*, the ruler of Mae Hong Son, while a local Tai man became the *khun* of Khun Yuam (Saatronnawit 1981:10). Wilson (1985) says that

...Nang Mia has divided the Shan population into two groups. One, the civilian side, is in the charge of Phraya Khanthasimarachanurak, Thao Chainamongkhon, Saen Yöt Müang Kham, and Saen Rattanarakhida. The other group, the military side, is under Phaka Khamyi, Cöngka Cheng, and Cöngka Yan. If anything happens which affects the region, the leaders meet to discuss it. If they can come up with a way to solve the difficulty, they do it, but they do not follow the law practiced by Chiang Mai (Wilson 1985:36).

Gradually, the rulers of Mae Hong Son and Khun Yuam became more independent from the *caw* (the ruler) of Chiang Mai.

In rau sau 119 (AD 1900), the 'Regulations on the Administration of the Northwestern Monthon' were promulgated by the Thai court in Bangkok,

...which integrated the five tributary states of Chiang Mai, Lampang, Lamphun, Phrae, and Nan into Thailand as one of eighteen *monthon* within the *thesaphiban* or centralized system of provincial administration (Ratanaporn 1989:255).

Khun Yuam, Mae Hong Son, Mae Sariang and Pai, were also included in the Northwestern Monthon.

...This administrative division was first called Monthon Tawantokchiangnua but later was changed to Monthon Phayap. The *monthon* office were located in Chiang Mai, the capital of the *monthon*. These units were headed by *kha luang thesaphiban* (High Commissioner) whose deputies were in charge of different departments, including justice, revenue, treasury, public works, and forestry. The *monthon* was the highest level of government in the North, being directly responsible to Bangkok and all the officials of which were Bangkok appointees (Ratanaporn 1989:255).

The titles of other officials were changed by adopting some local terms. For example, according to Phornphun (1974:160-161),

phuuwaraatchakaan müang (governor)	became	khawsanaamluang,
naaj amphoe (district head)	became	naaj khwae-ng,
kamnan (tambon head)	became	naaj khwae-n or khwae-n,
phuuajbaan (village head)	became	kae· baan. ¹⁷

In the same year the Thai government also re-organised the administration of Khun Yuam. The territory of Khun Yuam was divided into four *khwae-n* or four *tambon*, that is, *khwaen Khun Yuam*, *khwae-n Müang Pau-n*, *khwae-n Mae Ngaw* and *khwae-n Khun Yuam Noi*. *Naaj khwae-n Khun Yuam* supervised eight *kae· baan*, or the heads of eight villages, and *naaj khwae-n Müang Pau-n* looked after ten *kae· baan* of ten villages. *Naaj khwae-n Mae Ngaw* took care of four *kae· baan*, and *naaj khwae-n Khun Yuam Noi* of nine *kae· baan* or nine villages. The paddy field tax and the cattle slaughter tax as well as the passport fee were also re-issued. The two

¹⁷ According to Phrajaa Raatchasanaa (1981:8), the titles of *kamnan* and *phuuajbaan* had existed long before the changes of the administrative system. In many places, *phuuajbaan* was also called *phuuaj naaj baan* or *naaj baan*. Several decades later, however, the terms *kamnan* and *phuuajbaan* were re-issued and in use again in the northern Thai region and have been ever since.

Relics of these old titles remain in Khun Yuam. Among the Tai residents of the town and in neighbouring villages, the heads of *tambon* are still addressed as *khwae-n* or frequently as *lung khwae-n* (an elderly *tambon* head), and the heads of villages as *kae· baan*.

roads in Khun Yuam town were widened by the communal co-operation of the locals so that one of them could be used as the market place (in the past, selling and buying goods in Khun Yuam were usually done on both road-sides in the centre of the town - see further) (NA, R.5 M.58/175).

Ten years later, the local administration was re-organised. In 1910, Mae Hong Son was granted the status of a province of the northern region with Khun Yuam as one of its five amphoe (districts). Since then, *phuuwaaraatchakaan changwat* or a provincial governor has been periodically appointed by the Ministry of Interior Affairs as the head of the provincial administration of Mae Hong Son, and *naaj amphoe* as the head of the district office in Khun Yuam (Raatchasena 1981:16, footnote no.2, and Saatronawit 1981:12).

However, new conflicts emerged. Disputes among the locals or between the locals and the authorities over taxes and land or land ownership became too severe to be ignored. The Thai administration began to intervene. Eventually, the Thai made some progress. But first, let me provide some background information on the problems. D.J. Edwardes, a British man who visited Khun Yuam in the early 1870s, reported that the town was at the time

...a collection of about 100 mean-looking houses. It was situated on the side of a gentle slope, and had the defence of a double palisade. Below the town was a well-cultivated rice plain, at the edge of which ran the River Mhynelooonghee [Mae Yuam], here a very small stream.

I found from twelve to fifteen shops in the town, some of them presided over by people from Maulmain [Moulmein], and containing piece goods, silk goods, flannel cloth of English manufacture, together with goods of various kinds of Burmese manufacture. A number of pedlars from Maulmain had carried their goods to a neighbouring village, where some festival was being carried on.

The Ngiewes [Tai] here are keen traders, and traders from Maulmain experience little difficulty in disposing of their packs. The amount of trade to the Province of Mailongalay [Khun Yuam] and up the Salween must be considerable.

The inhabitants of the Province appeared to me to be much more civilized than the Laos [Kon Müang], the majority of the people being comfortably dressed in black jackets with white trousers. They wore

gay coloured handkerchiefs twisted in their hair, and had (on journeys) large broadbrimmed hats with oilskin coverings (Edwardes 1981:171-172).¹⁸

Almost two decades later, Khun Yuam had changed very little. Nai Banchaphumasathan, a native Thai who had done a survey on the Salween River in 1890, wrote that the town in those days had approximately

...105 houses and one small subordinate town; Müang Khunyuam and the surrounding area are all Shan. Müang Khunyuam was originally part of Mae Höng Sön. ...Müang Khunyuam is located on a hill on the right bank of the Yuam River [Nam Yuam], which provides a good location for trade. Most of the goods in the market have been brought here by traders who have been to Moulmein. There are Buddhist temples and beautiful *chedi* [stupa] in many of the *tambon*... The villages and towns look very comfortable and happy. In the territory of Müang Khunyuam there are many *tambon* with fertile fields. There are many small hills. The forests consist entirely of teak, which the residents cut and float down the Yuam River and the other streams until it reaches the Salween (Wilson 1985:33; italics original).

When Khun Yuam was established, Phraya Sihanat, the first Tai *caw müang* of Mae Hong Son, ordered that the land surrounding Khun Yuam and Mae Hong Son, most of which was mountainous and covered with trees, be cleared for paddy fields. To encourage the settlers, anyone could clear as much new land as they wanted. New settlers also received from the ruler some provisions, such as food and necessary equipment to clear the land (NA, MT.5.16/1). One of the first Tai settlers, Chaangnu, who migrated with his parents from the Shan States when he was thirteen years old, told the Thai authorities that when the town of Mae Hong Son was founded there were only five hundred residents living in several *tambon* of Paang Muu, Mae Sau-j and Thung Mamuang. Many Tai people also already resided in Khun Yuam. At the time, land was not purchasable. If anyone wanted a piece of land, he/she just had to clear it and begin to cultivate it. If he/she stopped utilising the land, it would be given to others who wanted it by the *caw müang*, who was in

¹⁸ In fact, the Tai, both males and females, in the Shan States in the old days wore long hair covered with turbans, '...but when they speak to a monk, or kneel to pray, they bare their heads, placing their turbans on the ground'. When leaving home, they would wear hats over their turbans as well (Milne 1970:116 and 172, respectively).

charge of ensuring that the cleared land was cultivated and to collect the land tax (NA, MT.5.16/1). In other words, one could cultivate any land as long as one kept working on it and paying the tax. However, a peasant had neither title to nor owned the land. Anyone who cultivated the land had to pay *khaa nam* (the water tax) for the irrigation water that was used in the paddy fields as well (NA, MT.5.16/1).

Disputes between the Thai authorities and the land users over land tax occurred at times. In rau·sau·131 (AD 1912), for example, four Tai land-holders, who lived in Baan Paang Muu and were also British subjects, neglected their paddy fields. Their rights to land use therefore ceased. The four men appealed to the British Consul, accusing the Thai authorities of prejudice against them. The British demanded that these four cases be re-examined. At the end of September in the same year, the Thai administration ordained that all cleared land had to be registered by the *monthon*'s authority and that a *lease contract* be signed by the land user and the authority. If the user either stopped cultivating the land or paying the rent, the lease would be terminated and the land was no longer available to the lessee (NA, MT.5.16/1).

Despite the above, disputes over land-rights still occurred occasionally. Twenty-six years later, in 1938, the Thai authorities decided to investigate this issue and discovered that the total area of the paddy fields in Mae Hong Son's and Khun Yuam's territory was approximately 735 rai, leased to 128 persons of several ethnic groups. But it was almost impossible to locate an individual land user's territory exactly. Also, the total land-lease (the manuscript used the term 'khaa chaw' or the rent) collected by the Mae Hong Son authorities at the time was only 60 baht annually. Most importantly, the Thai government was rather concerned that if the residents, many of whom were British subjects, were confronted with hardship, they might move to other places (and cause the Thai administration more troubles

with the British). The Thai government, through the Ministry of Interior Affairs, therefore, finally decided to grant the residents of Mae Hong Son, Khun Yuam and other districts along the border the right to own their land. This meant that any peasant who had leased the land from the authorities was now its owner (NA, MT.5.16/1). Since then, land ownership could be transferred from one individual to another.

Khun Yuam was said to produce more rice than any of its neighbouring districts. Vast areas of rice fields were located on the eastern and western borders of the town (Bunchuai 1961:658). Müang Pau-n was another place of local rice production. In those days, rice was the major export from Khun Yuam and Müang Pau-n to Mae Chaem, Mae Hong Son and other nearby towns.

Unpleasant experiences

Taxes and land ownership were not the only causes of disputes between the locals and the authorities. Two serious insults were inflicted during this period. One was the prohibition imposed by the Thai administration on males wearing long hair. The other was a case of sexual assault. Both created outrage among the locals, especially the Tai, and some elders still bitterly recall these incidents. Sadly, the prohibition on long hair changed this ancient Tai custom among the males forever.

Milne (1970) reports that the Tai in the Shan States of Burma in the nineteenth century were all seen to wear

...long, straight black hair, which is washed, then oiled, once a week, sometimes twice, and even three or four times. Both men and women comb their hair carefully before twisting it into a coil or tight knot on the top of the head. As no hairpins are used, the twist often becomes loose, is taken down, then arranged and rearranged many times in a day (Milne 1970:114).

Like their fellows in the Shan States, the Tai in Khun Yuam, males and females, all had long hair. Unfortunately, this custom did not last long. Several elderly local Tai residents recall the prohibition of the Tai topknot hair-style in Khun Yuam. It appears that before the end of the nineteenth century, Tai males were no longer allowed to wear long hair. This prohibition, enforced by the Thai authorities, severely saddened the Tai men because long hair was not only for the sake of beauty. The head and hair, as well as the combs, were considered *suung* (high) and sacred.¹⁹ Thus, it would not be too surprising to find that many of these men fled across the border into the Shan States to avoid the new heartbreaking regulation.

This new regulation applied to all Tai people, including those who lived in Khun Yuam, Mae Hong Son and along the Thai-Burmese border. In 1884 (or *cau sau* 1246, as recorded in the manuscript), the British Consul in Bangkok sent a letter to the Thai court protesting that the regulation was oppressive and could possibly mistakenly force many Tai from the Shan States, who were the subjects of Britain and often travelled across the border into the territory of Thailand, to have their hair cut. The Thai court replied that the introduction of this regulation was in order to distinguish the Tai of Thailand from the Burmese Tai, many of whom fled to Thailand because of the fighting and the banditry along the Thai-Burmese border.

As a matter of fact, wearing short hair was neither strange nor peculiar amongst the people of Thailand. Short hair had been traditional since ancient days. The people

¹⁹ Milne (1970:184) indicates that amongst the Tai in the Shan States, 'To throw hair combings where they might be stepped upon would bring bad luck to the owner of the hair. Combings should be pushed into the thatch of the roof of the house, or hidden in a bush'.

Hair is also considered an important part of the beginning of life. It is said that after a baby was born, his

...first hair which is cut off is very carefully kept. It is put into a little bag and hung round his neck, a sure charm to prevent him crying in the night. If the child is ill, the bag, with the cut hair, is soaked in water, and the water is used to wash his little body, or he may have to drink it as a soothing draught (Milne 1970:37).

of Chiang Mai and of other Thai towns in the northern region all had their hair cut. This regulation, therefore, also served to prevent innocent Tai immigrants from the Shan States who had fled to Thailand from being mistakenly arrested, or even hurt, by the Thai authorities. In the Thai court's view, if the Tai people wanted to be Thai subjects, they had to wear short hair like the Thai. If not, they would be considered as Burmese. This was certainly not oppression, but a matter of identity. Also, it was to learn who were the allies and who were the enemies of Thailand (NA, RL-PS vol.28, pp.48-50).

The regulation was introduced because the Tai who were British subjects were one of the Thai government's main concerns, often causing disputes between the Thai ruler and the British-Burmese administration. At the end of *rau·sau·112* (AD 1893), for instance, the British Consul claimed that many Tai speakers who had escaped from conflicts in Mawksai in the Shan States and had dwelled in Baan Mae La Luang (now a tambon of Amphoe Mae La Noi, south of Khun Yuam) for seven years, wanted to return to their home town of Mawksai because the fighting had ceased, but the Thai officials at Müang Yuam (the former name of Mae Sariang town) and Mae Hong Son would not allow them to go. The Thai government in Bangkok sent a letter to the British advising them that since these Tai residents had lived rather comfortably in Thai territory for many years, the Thai government was concerned that they might face hardship on return to their home town. Several months later, however, after being detained by the Thai officials, these Tai families were finally allowed to return to Mawksai (NA, R.5 M.58/190).

Although it is unclear why the Thai government did not want these Tai people to return to their home town in the Shan States, it seems to me that it relates to the fact that, at that time, the border between Thailand and Burma was not yet settled. The Thai government was therefore trying to establish as many settlements as possible

in the area it claimed was its territory in order to provide evidence if a dispute concerning the territory occurred with the British-Burmese administration. In addition, it could also possibly be because the Thai government hoped that the settlers who were loyal to Thailand, one way or another, would defend the Thai frontier.²⁰

However, the most grievous incident affecting relations between the rulers of Chiang Mai and of Khun Yuam, which proved to be a bitter experience to the locals of the latter, occurred at the end of 1888. Wilson (1985) refers to Nai Banchaphumasathan, who visited Khun Yuam and told the story he heard that,

...Cao Ratchaphakhinai of Chiang Mai had come to live as an official in Müang Khunyuam. *He had abducted the daughters* of the local people and *the fathers and relatives of the women* were angry. They joined together to attack Cao Ratchaphakhinai, and when he died, they fled, *leaving Müang Khunyuam for the west bank of the Salween* (Wilson 1985:33; italics mine).

But one source in Khun Yuam gives some different details about the incident; that is, Caw Raat (as he is called in the manuscript) was attracted to the daughter of Lae-ng, a very close friend of the ruler of Khun Yuam, but she did not feel anything for him. One day, Caw Raat visited the girl at home while her father was absent. Burning with his passion and losing his head, he decided to rape her. The girl's father, who was just about to enter his home, saw Caw Raat leaving his daughter's room. Guessing what had happened, he was outraged and killed Caw Raat with his sword. The ruler of Khun Yuam reported the incident to Chiang Mai, which immediately required a full investigation. Caw Raat was found guilty of sexually assaulting the girl. Therefore, Lae-ng was not punished and continued to

²⁰ Perhaps, this issue would be clearer if one considers the Karen people who dwelled along the Thai-Burmese border. Renard (1980a:23-25) suggests that in the late nineteenth century, despite the fact that the Karen residents had paid less valuable *suai* (tribute) to the Thai authorities, they were considered satisfactory since they had played a significant role in negotiating and defending the frontier of Thailand. Thus, it may not be too surprising that, learning from the Karen experience, the Thai government expected that settlements located along the border where the residents were Karen, Tai and others, would serve the Thai, in Renard's own words, '...as border guards'.

live in Khun Yuam. The body of Caw Raat was buried on a hill-top, east of the town,²¹ and was called *Kung Caw Raat* (Saatronnawit 1981:10-11).

Some locals say that Caw Raat was hiding behind the trees next to a pool. When the girls came down to take water, he came out and assaulted them. In this version, therefore, the incident took place near the pool, not in the house. In another version of the same story told by a few elderly Tai informants, Caw Raat was not an official from Chiang Mai but a leader of some bandits who robbed the locals of Khun Yuam and often abducted the women. He was finally arrested and taken to the top of a hill where he was executed.

Today, although most residents of Khun Yuam know where the hill-top of *Kung Caw Raat* is, they do not tell its story. Only some Tai elders, as far as I am aware, recall the incident. In addition, I want to point out that in Saatronnawit's 'fiction-like' version, Caw Raat abused only one girl, and the father was neither found guilty nor punished for killing a noble, which is, in my view, quite extraordinary and questionable. According to Katherine Bowie, who did her historical-anthropological research in the northern region, the peasants in the old days frequently lived in fear of the *caw*, or the lords. Bowie (1988) writes,

The peasant view of the lords was ...rather of arbitrary, capricious, petty, greedy, and even cruel figures of power and potential torment. Peasantry and elite did not share a common ideology of kingship, but rather the economic differences between peasant and court were reinforced by cultural taboos and physical sanctions (Bowie 1988:71).

Corporal punishment by the *caw* was common. For example, if a peasant was found not working hard in the rice fields or disturbing the lords, he/she would be

²¹ Its location is quite remarkable. To the south, at the foot of this hill is a vast flat land that is cultivated by the locals. Another hill-top is on the west, where *Cau-ng Khum* - one of the oldest Buddhist Tai temples in Khun Yuam - is located. Down at the bottom between these two hill-tops is a natural pool, where the water is plentiful throughout the year and is used by the locals for consumption. It thus looks like a small valley with water running in the middle. The northern parts are residential areas, where most of the occupants are Tai speakers.

whipped. Even execution was sometimes practised (Bowie 1988:302-309). Also, there were a number of taboos or rules forbidding certain conduct. For instance, a peasant was neither allowed '...to take the *chaw*'s last name as [his/her] own', nor '...to build a wooden fence around their house -- the fence had to be of no more than bamboo, or they would get 50 lashes for acting like a *chaw*' (Bowie 1988:66-67). Most importantly, it is reported that

When the *chaw* came to the village, the villagers had to bow down; they couldn't continue with their normal business. If anyone was caught craning their head to look at the *chaw*, he would be taken off and whipped. He would be whipped a minimum of 25 times -- on the bare skin. The blood would be flowing.

In those days one couldn't look the lord in the face, otherwise *one's throat would be cut*.

...[O]ne had to bend over flat on the ground in the presence of the *chaw*. Those who had frequent business had elbows that were calloused from frequent and prolonged prostration! (Bowie 1988:67; italics mine).

It is therefore hard to believe that the girl's father, an ordinary man who killed Caw Raat, would be set free and not punished at a time when people could easily be punished with death for just looking at the face of a *caw*. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the Laws of King Mangrai, dated 1852 (though this text is still debatable), state that

...[i]f a wife kills her husband, a child kills his [or her] parents, the younger kills an elder sibling, a servant kills the master, a slave kills the owner, a pupil kills the teacher - in these five cases *the punishment is heavy. The culprit should be killed and the executioner commits no crime* (Aroonrut and Wijeyewardene 1986:31; italics mine).

Such a sentence, in my view, probably applied to the killing of a noble as well. In my view, Saatronawit's attitude towards the relationship between the rulers and the peasants in the northern region is somewhat naive and probably wrong.

WORLD WAR II AND JAPANESE TROOPS

The incidents during the Second World War are memorable and recalled by elderly residents of Khun Yuam town and Tau· Phae· village. This section will provide information regarding the Japanese troops and some events that occurred during those years. I must emphasise that since there is little written documentation regarding the Japanese troops in Khun Yuam, most of my information is extracted from interviews with the locals.

The war resulted in memories of sadness and hardship for many locals, and happiness and fortune for others.²² None of the locals, however, seems to have negative attitudes towards the Japanese soldiers. My research differs from most current research and literature which focuses on the Allied prisoners of war, especially the British and Australians who were forced to construct the Burma-Thailand Railway, and who unwillingly and painfully suffered Japanese brutality. Tens of thousands of them died, and those who survived never forgot their agonies (McCormack and Nelson 1993, Davies 1991). This understandable immediate interest of Western scholars adds little to our understanding of the Japanese troops in Thailand and the way of life of their soldiers.

After the war, the Thai government paid more attention to this part of the country. As mentioned earlier, old dirt tracks built by the Japanese were upgraded several times and have now become the main highways connected Mae Hong Son and other towns with Chiang Mai Province. Airfields in the towns of Mae Hong Son, Khun Yuam and Mae Sariang, have also been constructed. The region was (and still is) very important for the strategic defence of the country. The infrastructure construction by the Thai authorities has brought other activities, such as tourism

²² As we shall see, the locals were hired by or traded with the Japanese during the war. One or two of them, for instance, Caw Maa (see Appendix 2), made their fortune and became rich.

and large-scale trade, to Khun Yuam and this region. The growing influence of Thai (education, language, media, entertainment, etc.) will be addressed in the next chapter.

Arrival of the Japanese

It is intriguing that though the movements of the Japanese troops across the Burma-Thailand border were observed intensively by the Allies, the activities of the Japanese in the Khun Yuam-Mae Hong Son area were under-recorded. For example, the route between Phitsanulok, Raheng and Moulmein that was used by the Japanese to invade southern Burma was frequently mentioned by British high ranking military officers (Kirby et al 1958:24, 28, 102 and 427). This route, where heavy fighting occurred throughout the war, was only several hundred kilometres south of Khun Yuam.

One document (Kirby et al 1969:261) states that Japanese troops only appeared in Khun Yuam several months after the end of World War II. However, elderly informants agree that the Japanese were in the area a few years earlier. Bunsii Nutcinoo, a Tai man and former kamnan of tambon Khun Yuam, told me that the Japanese troops first arrived in 1942-43, when he was about 16-17 years old, to build two roads: one was from Khun Yuam to Burma,²³ the other went via Mae Surin and Mae Hong Son to Amphoe Pai.²⁴ He was hired by the Japanese as a

²³ This route is the dirt road from Khun Yuam via Tau Phae, Pratumüang and Huaj Ton Nun, to Burma (see Map 3). During my fieldwork, it was used by logging workers to transport supplies and timber. The district officers and local traders also planned to use it as a trade route between Khun Yuam and the Shan States. It will be open officially at the beginning of 1995.

²⁴ A relic that was left on this road, to the southeast of Pai market town, is an old, military metal bridge built by the Japanese. It is today one of the most famous tourist spots in the region. In 1992, however, a new bridge was being constructed, parallel with the old one which was at the time still in use. I do not know whether or not this old bridge will be demolished. Yet, it is not certain how important, strategically and economically, these roads were to the Japanese army. What is clear is that these were two of several main routes that the Japanese used to withdraw their troops from Burma into Thailand at the end of the Second World War (Kirby et al [Volume V] 1969:254 and 261, and Somchoke 1981:86).

surveying guide, earning three baht a day, while a day's wages for an ordinary porter was 1.50 baht.²⁵ Porters usually carried provisions and equipment for the troops. Some followed the Japanese officers to Chiang Mai, which normally took more than ten days for one trip. The officers went to purchase food, mainly dried and canned, to take back to Khun Yuam. Bunsii said that while the officers went shopping in the markets of Chiang Mai, the porters from Khun Yuam waited on the outskirts of the city. The latter never visited the city's downtown. During the trips they camped in local monasteries, but cooked and ate their own food. Some of the locals worked for several months and learnt to speak a little Japanese.

Yet, not everyone was willing to associate with the Japanese for fear that they would be conscripted and forced to work for the Japanese. Bunpun Pun-uan, an elderly Tai resident of Tau Phae, said that at that time all the dwellers of Nam Maang, a small remote village near the border line, fled their homes and sought refuge in other villages. Ironically, none of the elders I interviewed had experienced Japanese brutality or hostility. In fact, they seemed to refer to the Japanese troops with some praise and sympathy. Their statements clearly contrast with the behaviour of the Japanese soldiers towards the Allied prisoners of war, especially those in the camps along the Burma-Thailand Railway (see details in McCormack and Nelson 1993, and Davies 1991).

During World War II, the money used in Khun Yuam, as everywhere in Thailand, was re-issued under an agreement between the Thai and Japanese governments. The exchange rate was fixed at approximately one baht to 1.5 yen (Somchoke

²⁵ In comparison, an ordinary *romusha*, Asian forced labourer who worked on the Burma-Thailand Railway, was promised pay of one baht daily. Headmen were to receive between 2 and 3.50 baht per person per day (Murai 1993:64). Yet, many of these former *romusha* have complained that they did not get any payment from the Japanese army (more details in Murai 1993). (The Japanese army also paid a small amount of wages to their prisoners of war [see Davies 1991:75].) On the other hand, none of the Khun Yuam residents who worked for the Japanese, as far as I am aware, said that the latter either broke their promises or failed to pay their wages.

For details about the currency used at the time, see below.

1981:107). Murai (1993:64) notes that 1 baht was equivalent to 1.6 yen.²⁶ Banknotes, in general, '...seldom exceeded 20 ticals [baht]', but a '1000 tical note' was not hard to find (Davies 1991:127).

Kae-w Chanthasiimaa and Fukuda

When the Japanese arrived in Khun Yuam in 1942-43, they mostly camped in the grounds of local Buddhist monasteries but the chief commander's camp was located near Wat Phoothaaraam.²⁷ The Japanese never occupied any private houses or land. Rice was bought from the town's residents and kept in large rice stores in the camps. This practice led one or two local traders to their fortune. Pigs were also raised by the soldiers. Most of the informants recall their impressions of a large number of mechanical devices, caterpillar tractors, lorries, oxen and carts and so on, that the Japanese had brought with them. There were about 200-300 elephants as well. Many Burmese and Indians²⁸ came with the Japanese, mainly working as labourers. It is not unlikely that these Japanese were of the engineering corps. This assumption is based on the personal history of Kae-w Chanthasiimaa, a Kon Müang woman who lived with a Japanese sergeant named Fukuda²⁹ for more than four years during World War II.

²⁶ Later, the Japanese government proposed a new exchange rate of one baht to one yen. The Thai government protested that to adjust the exchange rate would cause inflation in Thailand. But the Japanese offered, with some diplomatic and military pressure, to buy more rice from Thailand if the Thai government agreed. The Thai government finally had to accept the new exchange rate (Somchoke 1981:107-109).

²⁷ The Japanese were also stationed in other nearby villages, such as Tau· Phae· and Mae Surin, where, again, they camped in the grounds of the village monasteries.

²⁸ Actually, the latter are described by my informants as *kalaalam* - those who are dark-skinned (*lam* in Tai means dark or black). This group of people usually includes those who dwell on the Indian sub-continent. Labourers assembled from that region by the Japanese were not uncommon. Clarke (1993:43), for example, emphasises that 'a lot of Tamils' were working on the Burma-Thailand Railway during the Second World War.

²⁹ I am grateful to Eriko Nakagawa for telling me that Fukuda is definitely a Japanese surname, not a given name.

Kae-w Chanthasiimaa's father was a local Kon Müang of Khun Yuam, but at the time when Kae-w was born, in 1924, her parents were living and working in Amphoe Mae Rim, Changwat Chiang Mai. Her father and her uncle were working in the forest of Mae Rim, cutting trees for timber. Her family lived there for a number of years until her uncle was killed by a falling tree. Her parents then decided to return to Khun Yuam, where Kae-w grew up and has lived ever since. Because the land was divided between her father's siblings, there was hardly any land left for her parents. So her parents had to work as farm hands or labourers to make their living. After finishing her primary education, Kae-w began work to help her family.

When the Japanese came to Khun Yuam, Kae-w was eighteen years old. Like several local women her age, she took vegetables and sweets to the Japanese camps to sell. Kae-w informed me that

At the time, there were a lot of Japanese soldiers. Things were sold at good prices. Pumpkins were three baht³⁰ a kilogram. Green cabbages were five baht. A papaya was one to three baht. A bunch of [various kinds of] vegetables was one or two baht. A chicken was 25-40 baht [depending on its weight]. Two eggs were five baht.³¹ An ox was sold for 300-500 baht and the Japanese consumed its meat only. Other parts [such as the hide, bones, heart, and entrails] would be given to anyone if, in return, [he/she] did domestic work for the Japanese. Then, [the ox's parts] would be washed and cleaned [by him/her] and sold to the locals who had cash.

Sweets were probably the favourite purchase among the Japanese soldiers. All my informants agreed that the Japanese soldiers liked sweets. Most were made from rice flour and sugar, some covered with coconut and sesame seeds. Some were

³⁰ Note that this price was equal to two days' wages of a porter hired by the Japanese. Some informants say that bananas were the cheapest fruit [and still were in 1991-93 when I was doing my fieldwork]. Two bananas cost only 1.50 baht.

³¹ It may be interesting to note that according to Davies, a full week's wages earned by the prisoners of war who worked on the Burma-Thailand Railway could only pay for 'three duck eggs'. However, the exact amount of the wages is not mentioned. The wages are merely described as 'very tiny'. What we can assume is that the locals of Khun Yuam earned reasonably high wages and that the amount of cash flow in Khun Yuam during the war was not small.

made from sugar-cane extract. The average price, reasonably expensive, was about five baht.

Fukuda, a Japanese sergeant, began to visit Kae-w's house, helping her parents clear the land, cultivate, cut firewood and so on. He was seven years older than Kae-w. He was attracted to her and tried to impress her parents. It is possible that Fukuda was stationed in Khun Yuam the whole time of the war because he kept visiting Kae-w for more than two years. There is no explanation as to why Fukuda's commander allowed him to visit or work with Kae-w's parents. I assume that he probably served in the engineering corps (see further). Therefore, there were few restrictions on what he could do in his leisure time.

Before the end of the war, when Kae-w was about twenty or twenty-one years old, her parents finally decided to allow her to live with Fukuda. Kae-w subsequently gave birth to a baby boy, whose name was Bun-aat. Two years later, the couple had another boy and called him Sanguan.³²

Fukuda was described by his wife as very diligent, kind and generous. He frequently helped with communal activities.³³ He worked long hours in the paddy fields every day and when he arrived home in the evening he would feed the pigs. He always kept several pigs at a time. When the pigs grew bigger he would sell them alive. Fukuda never killed a pig. He also had some mechanical skills and was probably hired as a handyman whenever there was a job. While he was the breadwinner, the domestic work was left to Kae-w. He gradually learnt to speak

³² Bun-aat was born in the year of the Dog, or 1946, and Sanguan in the year of the Mouse, or 1948. Bun-aat is now a headmaster of a primary school outside Khun Yuam market town and lives in a house opposite his mother's in the town's outskirts. Sanguan works as a driver/worker at the district office.

³³ Kae-w said that, 'If anyone died, he would go and help in the funeral, sometimes until dark. I was angry with him sometimes. He was too generous'.

Kam Müang and thus began to establish some intimate relationships with the locals. He seemed to get along well with them, particularly with the Kon Müang males.

The family's situation slowly improved because of Fukuda's hard work and frugality. The couple started some savings. Relations with neighbours and friends became warmer and better. Fukuda participated in the community's activities more often. But the happiness did not last long. When Sanguan, their second son, was eight months old, Fukuda was captured³⁴ by the Thai police and sent to prison in Bangkok. The policemen told Kae-w that they only wanted to interrogate Fukuda and that he would return home within a month. In fact, he was detained to be sent back to Japan. Although Fukuda claimed that he was married with two children (the police in Bangkok phoned Khun Yuam district office to verify this), he was still not allowed to live in Thailand. Kae-w was informed later that her husband was sick in prison, then transferred to the hospital. He finally died in Bangkok.³⁵ After Fukuda was arrested, Kae-w and her children lived on their savings. The money lasted less than one year. Kae-w then began to work as a hired labourer. When she could not find any work, she would make sweets to sell to the locals. She sometimes cooked and sold noodles as well. She found that selling food and sweets provided a better income than labouring work. Kae-w no longer sells noodles, but still sells some sweets and fruit in front of her house, where she lives with her third son³⁶ and his family.

Fukuda was not the only Japanese soldier who was unwilling to surrender or return to his homeland. My informants confirm that several Japanese neither surrendered

³⁴ So it must have been sometime in late 1948 or early 1949.

³⁵ Some locals said that it was rumoured that he was shot while trying to escape from prison. However, this was not officially confirmed by the Thai authorities.

³⁶ This child, Sinthong, was born in 1970 (the year of the Dog) from another marriage. Sinthong's father was not living with them at the time of this interview. Kae-w did not tell me who he was.

to the Thai authorities nor wanted to leave Khun Yuam.³⁷ To explain what was happening, it is worth giving some background information. When the Japanese government surrendered in 1945, Japanese troops began to retreat from their bases in Burma into Thailand. It was later disclosed by the Allies that on January 1946 the 'unsurrendered Japanese were ordered to concentrate at K[h]un Yuam, ...where they were employed in *making an airstrip*' (Kirby et al 1969:261; italics mine). It is obvious that one of the routes the Japanese used to withdraw their troops passed through Khun Yuam (see Sketch 2, facing page 48, and Map 12, facing page 306, in Kirby et al 1969).

There is no report of how many of the Japanese stayed in Khun Yuam after 1945, but it is possible that there could have been several thousand of them. One document points out that '1,500 Japanese in Mawchi [in the southern Shan States] ... had no intention of surrendering' and '..were moving east into Siam'. It is also confirmed that 'some 3,000 sick and wounded [Japanese] ..had been evacuated across the Salween from Kemapyu' (Kirby et al 1969:254).³⁸ Some of these soldiers probably stopped at Khun Yuam to rest and to decide what to do next. Later, the Allies asked the Thai military and the police force for their co-operation to round up all the 'unsurrendered Japanese' who were still in hiding.

Siimau-n, an elderly Tai woman who has lived on the hill-top of *Kung Caw Raat* since she was born, said that at the time some Japanese came to see her father and offered to work for him in exchange for food and shelter. They also asked her father not to give them up to the authorities. (The Japanese communicated in broken

³⁷ It is not clear whether these runaway soldiers were afraid of being punished and jailed by the Allies or ashamed of being returned home as losers or both. Aiko Utsumi, a Japanese historian of the war and of Japan-Asian relations, indicates that Japanese soldiers strongly believed in the idea of 'Never suffer the shame of being taken prisoner alive'. Japanese civilians also shared the same belief (Utsumi 1993:135 and 139, footnote 12).

³⁸ A large number of Japanese soldiers was on the other side of the border. It is reported that until April 1946, '..there were still over 71,000 [Japanese] in Burma' and the British wanted '..to keep 50,000 [of them] in Burma [as a labour force] until the end of 1946' (Kirby et al 1969:263).

Kam Müang.) But her father refused in fear of the Thai authorities. So the Japanese left. Later, she heard a rumour that they went and hid in the bush outside the town. They made their living by hunting and gathering forest products, which they sometimes exchanged for rice and other necessities with the locals. She also heard that some locals occasionally hired the Japanese for a day or half a day. The Japanese usually required food as payment. These soldiers were said to be excellent farmhands. It was rumoured, however, that all the Japanese were finally captured by the Thai authorities and sent away. None of them was seen in Khun Yuam again.³⁹

It is not unlikely that some Japanese soldiers remained in the Khun Yuam area for two or three years after the end of the war (at least, we know that Fukuda stayed until 1948-49). Most of them were living in hiding. Only Fukuda was settled with a family. There is no doubt that some of them, perhaps including Fukuda, earned their living by 'making an airstrip' as discovered later by the Allies. These soldiers certainly possessed some knowledge and skills in this area of expertise. The machines they brought with them also made their jobs easier. According to a document of Thailand's Ministry of Interior Affairs (NA, MT.0201.2.1.43/48), the construction of Khun Yuam airfield was accomplished in BE 2491 (AD 1948).⁴⁰ Although no Japanese were referred to in the document, it is not impossible that some would have been working on the construction site because of their professionalism. The district officials also had a good reason not to mention the employment of the Japanese to the Thai authorities in Bangkok. As mentioned, after the war the Allies tried to round up the 'unsurrendered Japanese' who still sheltered

³⁹ Early in 1993, a number of Tai, Karen and Padaung (or Kèkawangdu, as they call themselves [Scott 1932:96]) escaped the fighting in Burma into the territory of Amphoe Müang, Mae Hong Son. Nurses and a doctor from the Khun Yuam hospital went to examine their health. One of the nurses informed me that there was an elderly Japanese soldier among these refugees. The old man said, in the Tai language, that after the war he had lived in the forest most of the time. He could now hardly speak Japanese. He looked greatly aged, with a pale, wrinkled face. I myself did not see this old man.

⁴⁰ The same document also reports that the airfield in Mae Sariang was completed in BE 2489 (AD 1946) and the one in Mae Hong Son town a year later.

in the northern region of Thailand and requested co-operation from the Thai authorities in this matter. From the district official's point of view, however, it would be unwise not to use the resources they had, that is, the equipment and the expertise of the Japanese. It would also be a disaster to let the Thai authorities, and the Allies for that matter, know that the 'unsurrendered Japanese' were working for them.

Siimau-n, Kae-w and other women of the same age all remember their contacts with the Japanese. When the Japanese arrived they were all in their teens. At first, they were afraid of them, but after a while they had enough courage to go to the Japanese camps. They brought with them sweets, fruit and vegetables to sell to the Japanese. The soldiers normally paid money, but those who did not have the money, or the sick or injured, sometimes snatched the food. Young and frightened, the sellers ran home and told their parents. Their parents then reported it to the commanders of these soldiers who would be angry and punished the thieves by slapping their faces with their hands or sometimes with a pistol butt. The Japanese officers would then apologise and give money to the parents. According to these women, none of the soldiers who were punished ever took their revenge on the locals. Also, young local girls were sometimes hired by the Japanese to mill or winnow the rice or to do other small jobs. In return, they would receive an amount of milled rice as their payment. None of the women reported that they were humiliated or sexually abused by the Japanese soldiers.

Elders of Khun Yuam and Tau· Phae· confirm that many soldiers exchanged their uniforms and other belongings for food and consumer goods. For example, Siimau-n told me that the Japanese sometimes exchanged an old sewing-machine for three *cauj* - approximately 4.8 kilograms - of sweets made from sugar-cane extract covered with sesame seeds. A bicycle was worth a pack of tobacco, which

cost about ten baht in the market. Some would help the locals in the paddy, transplanting, harvesting and the like, in exchange for food. A few informants said that they were told that when the Japanese retreated, they brought with them many valued objects from Burma and traded them with the locals. It is said among elderly residents, for instance, that Caw Maa, a wealthy Kon Müang who died in the early 1980s, made his fortune by trading with the Japanese (see Appendix 2).

Siimau-n described the Japanese as strictly disciplined. All the soldiers were called to line up every morning, and the officers came to review the troops. If any soldier was untidily dressed or did anything wrong, he would be immediately slapped on the face.⁴¹ But the most horrible memory she recalls is that many sick and injured soldiers, some with broken arms or legs and some amputees, were shot by their fellow-countrymen.⁴² Some of the bodies were buried on *Kung Caw Raat*, not far from her parents' house. Some were buried at Cau-ng Khum, a Tai Buddhist monastery opposite *Kung Caw Raat*.⁴³

The Thai authorities not only rounded up the Japanese, but also collected the equipment and mechanical devices that the Japanese troops brought with them. The locals insist that most of the devices that were at that time still in working order were seized. However, a lot of 'odds and ends', such as motor-parts, wheels, remnants of lorries and bicycles, etc. were abandoned in several areas where the Japanese used to camp. When news arrived that all these remains were wanted by

⁴¹ This sort of punishment, or *binta* in Japanese, was commonly practised on the Japanese troops during World War II. It is described as 'a light form of discipline, seen as an expression of our [Japanese] superior's deep interest for us [Japanese], so we received it with appreciation that we were not charged with the formal disciplinary punishments'. *Binta* means 'to slap or box about the ears' (McCormack 1993:99). See also Davies (1991:107-108), who writes that '... The Japanese code of discipline was extremely harsh: ... immediate, physical and severe. Face-slapping, blows with anything available - rifle, shovel or lump of wood'.

⁴² It is said that in many places, shortly after the Japanese surrendered to the Allies, some Japanese soldiers went from one hospital to another, shooting those who were wounded or sick. This is probably due to the Japanese feeling of disgrace if captured (Hank Nelson pers. comm.).

⁴³ As mentioned, Siimau-n is still dwelling on *Kung Caw Raat* with her husband and unmarried daughters. She says that she has never dug the ground around her house too deep for fear that she will discover some human remains.

merchants in Chiang Mai, many locals began to collect them. The news soon turned out to be true. Some merchants arrived with their lorries to buy the junk, but the prices they offered were lower than the locals expected. None of the locals, I am told, made their fortune by selling these metal parts, which seemed to disappear quickly after the buyers from Chiang Mai arrived in Khun Yuam.

TOWNSPEOPLE IN THE PAST

I shall now discuss the town and its residents in the old days. Some of my informants described the centre of Khun Yuam town at the time as being the two road-sides on the main street not far from where the morning market is now. This was where vegetables and other kinds of food, fresh and dry, all displayed on the ground, were sold in the morning, and where the women were seen selling sweets or snacks in the evening while the young males came to court the female peddlers. It was also where the older men gambled, and the women gathered to chat and exchange gossip. In fact, these scenes were rather common in most markets in the Shan States (Sombun 1984:13). Milne, who lived in Namkham - a small Tai town in Burma - for more than a year, also recognises these significant characteristics of the Tai markets. She writes:

All work in villages, except the exchange of goods, ceases on market days. ...All Shans try to be in their own village on market days, not so much for the sale of goods as for the exchange of news. The centre of the village becomes a Forum, where every subject is discussed, from the weather and crops to politics and religion (Milne 1970:131-132).

Some Tai elders told me that many predecessors of Khun Yuam residents were immigrants from Müang Nai in the Shan States, which is located on the west bank of the Salween River. In my view, it is not unlikely that others moved from Müang

Nai's neighbouring towns or villages. By comparison, a manuscript recorded in 1890 indicated that at the time the Tai '...who are residents of Mae Höng Sön have come from many places, most from Müang Nai and Müang Mökmai [Mawkmai]' (Wilson 1985:37). In fact, relationships between Müang Nai and Mae Hong Son-Khun Yuam, both politically and economically, can be traced back as early as the 1860s (Wilson 1985:34-36). Müang Nai had been one of the main centres for Tai caravan traders. They travelled and traded throughout the northern and southern provinces of the Shan States, using the Müang Nai-Chiang Mai-Kengtung route (Ratanaporn 1989:65 and 113). Some Tai traders, needless to say, probably continued their journeys to Mae Hong Son and Khun Yuam.⁴⁴

Elderly locals agree that in the past upland villages surrounding the town were mostly occupied by the Karen.⁴⁵ On the other hand, a number of the Kayah (Red Karen) settled in the western part of the town. The Kayah dressed differently from other townspeople and spoke their own language, although many of them were also able to speak Tai fluently. My informants recall stories of Kayah who married Tai and were later Tai-ised, beginning to speak Tai and participating in the Tai community. Today, no Kayah speakers live in Khun Yuam, but many residents are the descendants of Kayah-Tai intermarriages. For instance, three siblings, Bunrat, Bencamaat and Bunmii, in one of the wealthiest families in Khun Yuam, are children of Tai-Kayah parents (see Caw Maa, in Appendix 2). Bunrat and her sister and brother, needless to say, neither speak Kayah nor know anything about the Kayah culture.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ According to Sombun (1984), Müang Nai in the mid-twentieth century was a large town and was prosperous with trade and commerce. There were a number of Indians, who owned many shops and restaurants, and Burmese. Water supply and electricity were available as well as one movie cinema (Sombun 1984:82).

⁴⁵ In fact, as mentioned earlier, the Karen population still constitute the majority of uplanders in the district.

⁴⁶ In the interviews, Bunrat never mentioned that her real mother was a Kayah (see Appendix 2).

In addition, many Pa-O, who were called Taungsu by the Tai and Taungthu by the Burmese, were seen residing in the outskirts of Khun Yuam town. Like the Tai dwellers, many of the latter group were involved in trade. Intermarriage between local Tai and Pa-O, as far as I know, was not uncommon, particularly among the traders.⁴⁷ In comparison, residents of Mae Hong Son in those days also consisted of similar ethnic groups. Wilson (1985) documents that those who lived in Mae Hong Son town at the time '...are Shan, but the people who live outside the town are two-thirds Shan and one-third Töngsu [Taungsu]' (Wilson 1985:33). Many local Tai and Taungsu of Mae Hong Son, however, were at that time found working as labourers in the forests (Wilson 1985:37). Unlike the past, there are no Pa-O residents in Khun Yuam town at the present time.

My informants also indicated that in the old days, there were many Muslim men living in Khun Yuam, almost all of whom operated small shops selling cloth, household and miscellaneous goods. Some of these men married local women, but many moved to other districts after living in Khun Yuam for some time, and a few returned home.⁴⁸ Nowadays, many townspeople are the descendants of Muslim

⁴⁷ In the past, moreover, many local Pa-O were long-distance traders; Kau- Can La's father, who was a Pa-O trader, was an excellent example (see Kau- Can La, in Appendix 2).

Scott (1932) notes that the Taungthu dwellers of the Burma's Shan States

...are a much more important tribe, though it would be flattery to call them a race. ... They are also by a great deal the most enterprising of those in the intermediate strip of country, and stray over all the surrounding states, and are found well into Siam and Cambodia. Some have got as far as the lower Mekhong about Bassac, and the rapids of the Thousand Islands. They call themselves Pa-o and are all but certainly of Karen extraction (Scott 1932:29-30).

In the 1880s, another Englishman noted that the Pa-O were active in trade. He wrote that '...in fact, it is apparent that the Laos [Kon Müang] cannot compete with the Ngio [Tai] and Toungthoo [Pa-O] traders and pedlars' (Hallett 1988:210).

⁴⁸ Milne (1970) tells us that

Several natives of India living in Namkham, *some of them having married Shan wives*. I found them a quiet set of men, who spent their time in trading between Mông-Mao, in Yün-nan, and Bhamo, making Namkham their headquarters. *They had built a tiny mosque for themselves*, and their call to prayer might be heard whenever they were in the place. They were a strange mixture of races from Northern to Southern India, united only by their religion (Milne 1970:xvii; italics mine).

immigrants. Most of these descendants are males and reside in the western outskirts of the town where the majority in the area are Kon Müang dwellers. They grew up and went to school in Khun Yuam. They married local Tai and Kon Müang. They do not own land or shops and earn their living as labourers. Many of them, as far as I know, no longer practise the Islamic religion or the Moslem way of life. In fact, some of them are occasionally drunk and get into fights.⁴⁹ They are called 'khae-k' by their Kon Müang neighbours. For the Muslim descendants, this is an offensive term. There are, however, two Muslims who run shops in the town. One man, Itsara Itsarasak, was born and educated in Khun Yuam. He married a Tai woman and now rents a shop, selling garments and other miscellaneous products. Another man, Jaakoe Hussain, is an old man who migrated from Bangladesh and has dwelt in the town for many years. Stories of the lives of the two men are told in Appendix 2 at the end of this chapter.

To my knowledge, many Muslim men still dwell in the markets of Mae Sariang, Mae La Noi and Mae Hong Son. Also, there are a large number of Muslim residents in Amphoe Pai, but I am informed by the locals of Pai that most of these people migrated from Chiang Mai. In the past, many of the Muslim men who lived in Mae Sariang, Mae La Noi and Khun Yuam, were related and visited each other from time to time.

Sombun Woraphong, a Thai journalist who travelled into the Shan States in 1949, also mentions an Indian merchant who owned a large shop and spoke Burmese and Tai fluently and that most of the shops and the post office in Müang Pan were operated by the Indians (Sombun 1984:30-31 and 63).

⁴⁹ On one occasion, for example, two brothers were drinking together. After they became drunk, the two men started an argument. One brother eventually got angry and stabbed the other with a knife. Their neighbours took the wounded man to the district hospital, but he had lost a lot of blood. His condition was too critical and the hospital lacked blood and adequate equipment, so the doctor ordered the ambulance to send him to the provincial hospital. Luckily, he was saved.

LOCAL TRADERS

In the old days, local traders, in my view, did not merely trade for their own wealth. They also searched for amusement in their travels, the pleasures of companionship, the delight of new experiences, extra money for merit making and prestige. They were friends with a lot of people, many of whom were of different speech groups. They travelled and knew more about the outside world than other residents. They made contributions to the monasteries more often than ordinary locals. Most of them were literate; a few men who are alive can still read and write both Tai and Thai.

As previously mentioned, in the past many townspeople were full-time traders and others traded occasionally, particularly in the dry season. They not only traded locally, but often travelled to other towns or villages in order to involve more profitable goods. They travelled on foot. Part-time traders carried the goods themselves, but full-time traders usually employed oxen as a means of transportation. The latter were known as *phau-khaa wuataang* or 'oxen caravan traders'.⁵⁰ The oxen were all young and strong. They were looked after with great care in order to fulfil their only task, that is, to transport goods.⁵¹ Western travellers in the nineteenth century, quoted in Bowie (1988), saw some of the bullocks that were used in trader's caravans and recorded the following information about them:

The head of the animal is covered with a mask made of small cowrie shells, beads, or seeds, with two openings for the eyes, and surmounted by a high tuft of feathers from the tails of a peacock or an Argus pheasant, while an additional supply of bells is hung round the

⁵⁰ The English translation is used by Bowie (1988:164). Chusit Chuchart (1989) employs the term 'ox-train traders' and Scott (1932:32) prefers 'bullock traders'.

The goods were carried in two bamboo baskets that hung across the backs of the oxen. Carts were rarely used by these traders.

⁵¹ Oxen employed to pull carts were kept separately from these *wuataang* bullocks. They would not have to plough the land either; animals used in cultivation were usually water buffaloes.

neck and shoulders and also round the hind quarters of the beast, and one tuft of hair is suspended beneath the tail, and another on the left side of the neck ... The object of all these trapping is to protect the caravan from the assaults of evil spirits.⁵²

... These useful animals are controlled by a string through their nostrils, double paniers of cane being slung across their backs. Some have their faces covered with bear and tiger skins, decorated with shells and looking-glasses. A plume of peacock feathers finishes the head-dress. Sweet-toned bells are fixed above the paniers, and wherever one journeys the sounds for the bell are heard for miles. It is said that the bullocks know the tinkling of their own droves, and the keepers in the evening call them into the camps simply by sounding the bells (Bowie 1988:170-171).

The bullocks that led the caravans were even more important than the rest of the animals and were therefore treated specially. The animals were described in this way,

The lead ox was carefully chosen and well taken care of. The lead ox was always the strongest ox in the pack and not afraid of anything. A good lead ox could apparently lead the entire caravan straight through the middle of another caravan without hesitating. The lead carried no load, other than a large caravan bell (*phanglang*) on his back; his function was to set the pace and lead the way (Bowie 1988:170).

Each animal carried weights of between forty and sixty kilograms, but the average was fifty kilograms (Chusit 1982:18 and 1989:5). In contrast, Moerman (1975:158) states that '...Three oxen are reckoned to carry about 100 kilograms'.

Oxen caravan traders were normally better off than other traders in the town.⁵³ Many of them owned oxen, as many as thirty heads or more.⁵⁴ A few possessed horses as well. They preferred to build large houses, with particularly large living rooms at the front, to provide a living space for their trading partners or friends. At the back of their houses there were colossal rice stores to keep enough food for

⁵² Hallett (1988) witnessed similar decorations on the bullocks that were going to Kengtung, east of the Shan States. He wrote that '...The leading oxen had masks, embroidered with beads, on their faces, surmounted by peacocks' tails'. Some of the caravans travelled with '...over a hundred bullocks' (Hallett 1988:208-209).

⁵³ Bowie (1988:171) also notes that elsewhere in northern Thailand, '[o]xen caravan traders were generally wealthy, certainly among the better-off in their respective villages'.

⁵⁴ Chusit documents that some oxen caravan traders might own up to one hundred heads of oxen (Chusit 1982:20 and 1989:5).

their own consumption and guests throughout the year. They generally owned several pieces of land that were either rented by the locals⁵⁵ or cultivated by hired hands. In addition, some traders hired local or Karen women to do domestic work.

As stated earlier that unhusked rice was the main export of Khun Yuam. Rice was taken by oxen caravan traders to sell in Phaa Bau-ng, Mae Hong Son, Mae Sariang, Mae Rim and Chiang Mai. It was sometimes transported across the Salween River into the Shan States.⁵⁶ Betel nuts⁵⁷ and *thoonaw* (dried fermented soy bean cakes, usually used in Tai cooking) were, at times, also for sale. After the goods were sold, the traders purchased salt, sesame oil, shrimp paste, dried shrimps, dried fish, tea, fermented tea (Tai - *neng*, Kam Müang - *miang*),⁵⁸ tobacco, paraffin oil, clothing and so forth, and took them back to sell in Khun Yuam. Every now and then, these products were transported to Khun Yuam by outside traders who came from other towns or villages in the northern region,⁵⁹ or even from the Shan States.

During trading trips, oxen caravan traders hired a few locals to look after their animals, at least one man for every ten bullocks, plus another man to take care of the lead ox. The caravans always started to travel rather early in the morning and stopped about an hour before noon. Chusit (1989) confirms that elsewhere in the northern region oxen caravan traders also '...set out very early in the morning, about 5.30 am, and stopped about 10.30 am. That is, they travelled about five hours a day and then stopped to prepare their food and allow the oxen to graze'.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ The rent was usually paid in rice, not cash.

⁵⁶ A couple of Tai elders in Tau· Phae· informed me that they were occasionally hired by a Khun Yuam trader to accompany his caravan, carrying paddy to towns in the Shan States.

⁵⁷ Betel nuts were generally taken from Burma to Khun Yuam by Burmese Tai traders. Local traders then purchased the betel nuts and transported them to other markets. A small amount of local betel nuts was sold as well.

⁵⁸ At home, local Tai normally offered drinks and fermented tea and tobacco to their guests. When the Tai consumed fermented tea, they wrapped a bit of salt with a small mouthful of *neng* leaves and let it dissolve slowly in their mouths. They usually did not chew the leaves.

⁵⁹ Bowie (1988:169) writes about a *phau-khaa wuataang* from Mae Rim who brought fish to sell in Khun Yuam and made '...substantial gains'.

⁶⁰ Moerman (1975:158) tells us that the Chiangkham's Lue traders travelled for a similar period of time.

The caravans '...travelled at a speed of about 3 kilometres per hour, though on level ground they might travel somewhat faster' (Chusit 1989:5). They covered a distance of 15-20 kilometres each day (Chusit 1982:18). Traders and their hired men would then spend the rest of the day relaxing, while the animals fed themselves. They often had to sleep in the forest, as Moerman (1975) indicates:

...One built a sleeping shelter and, if caught in the rains, the oxen too would be provided with leaf and bamboo coverings much like those now made for carts. The rice was always kept wrapped in leaves to protect it against the hazards of the journey (Moerman 1975:158).

Traders also needed some protection from wild animals, such as tigers,⁶¹ bears and snakes as well as from humans. Saang Paang, a former oxen caravan trader, insisted that he and his trading partners were always armed with swords. He was told that many traders were very skillful in the Tai martial art (*laaj*). He also admitted that he always hid his money under the paddy in the bottom of the baskets when he travelled for fear of thieves, though he was never robbed by anyone.⁶² Another man, an elderly Tai who lives in Tau·Phae·, four kilometres to the west of Khun Yuam, was a farmer and part-time trader. He used to carry paddy to Chiang Mai once or twice a year. He recalled that when night fell, he and his friends began to make a fire and a lot of noise in order to scare the tigers. He heard that tigers often preyed on oxen in the trading caravans. Worse, as far as he knows, one or two men in his village were attacked and killed by tigers.

⁶¹ In the past, there were many tigers roaming the forests around Khun Yuam, Mae Hong Son and Chiang Mai. The names of some places, for example, Mae Ngaw, an area that covered several villages to the west of the town, were related to some characteristic of the tigers. *Ngaw* was the tiger's growling sound.

⁶² Saang Paang is the brother of Kau·Can La's mother (Kau·Can La was also a former trader - see Appendix 2) and their family has been involved in trade for several generations. Saang Paang finished the third grade of primary education from a local school. At one stage, he engaged in the logging industry, working with Saang Jiin, a local wealthy Tai who was a logging contractor. Saang Paang cut teak trees in the Kayah State, west of Khun Yuam, then floated the logs down the river to the saw-mills in Moulmein where he collected his payment. He enjoyed the logging work and spending time wandering in Moulmein.

All traders were tattooed in order to be protected from supernatural powers, harmful spirits and bad omens. Some of them even learnt the use of incantation spells. As a matter of fact, all this seemed to be practised widely by oxen caravan traders in the northern region. Bowie (1988) was informed that in trading caravans

...If anyone carried a gun, it was most likely to be the *naaj hooj* [caravan leader]. The others carried swords. All were protected by tattoos and many carried a protective cloth covered with mantras to protect against evil spirits, tigers, disease, thieves, and other misfortunes. In the words of one villager, 'any of the long-distance traders were invulnerable (*kham*); they had to be in order to make it through the forest! They also took dogs along, who barked to alert the traders if there were any problems (Bowie 1988:169-170).

None of my informants, however, refers to the use of dogs.

Traders did not always have to spend the night on the ground in the forest. When they arrived at the houses of their trading partners, who were also friends, either in a town or a village, they would be sure to enjoy the hospitality of their hosts. Meals and drinks would be served. News was to be exchanged. Traders would do nothing but relax. Their delight and happiness could be described as follows:

The former traders are quite gleeful about the occasional large profits they made, but a more dominant memory is of the fun they had, of the sights along the way, of opportunity for song and riddle. Even in boasting of their success, they talk in this way: 'I was a trading man. Whenever I made a trip, however far I went, I would sleep on a mattress every night. I never had to bring a mat or food because wherever I went, there were friends who would put me up. I would put them up when they came through here. A trading man must have a large house because he has many age-mates [*sio*]'. Adventure, fellowship, popularity, and prominence - as well as profit - rewarded the trader (Moerman 1975:158-159).

Though the satisfactory feeling and happiness described in the above paragraph can be applied to the traders in Khun Yuam, a couple of points need to be clarified. It seems to me that the trader cited by Moerman traded and travelled only short distances; perhaps between villages or small towns, rather than through the forests. He thus neither had to bring any food with him nor sleep in the forests and was able

to stay with a friend every night. Some traders, on the other hand, like it or not, always slept in the open air. Saang Paang revealed that when he and his friends arrived in Mae Rim or San Pa Tong or Chiang Mai, they never stayed in a friend's house. Since they had many oxen to feed and nurse, they normally camped in the fields outside the towns while their animals grazed and rested nearby. Their friends or trading partners who lived in the towns would bring them food, drinks, fermented tea or tobacco, as well as chatting and exchanging news to keep them company. Traders who came from Mae Chaem and other places sometimes camped on the outskirts of the towns, so it was a great opportunity to meet old trading colleagues to revive sweet memories of the past or to make new friends.

Not only did oxen caravan traders make the best out of their trading activities, but part-time traders also gained similar benefits. The old man mentioned above who lives in Tau Phae said that although his group earned little money on each trip, what he really enjoyed was the delights of the travelling, of the fantastic new experiences he gained and of the company of his trading partners and friends. Another former part-time trader and a caravan hired hand named Jaa Cing Ta was a resident of Khun Yuam town.⁶³ When he was in his twenties, Jaa Cing Ta walked, together with five or six male friends, to Chiang Mai to sell paddy a couple of times a year. Each of them carried the unhusked rice in two baskets hung from both ends of a bamboo pole laid on their shoulders. After selling all the rice, they would purchase dried fish, salted and sweetened fish and clothing, to sell to the locals in Khun Yuam. Jaa Cing Ta remarked that a Chiang Mai-Khun Yuam return trip usually took thirty to forty-five days, depending on how often the group stopped. He also confirmed that he enjoyed making some extra cash as well as travelling and, most importantly, seeing a great place like Chiang Mai. He sometimes spent

⁶³ Much to my regret Jaa Cing Ta died peacefully in his sleep at the end of February 1993, less than a month before I left Khun Yuam. He was a very kind, good-natured old man, with a great sense of humour.

several days looking around that city, searching for beautiful garments or ornaments, trying different food, etc.

Another important point is that traders in the past spent a lot of money on religion. They offered food and other necessities to the monks, built a new temple or renovated the old ones and so forth. Traders made merit more often than non-trading locals. Some members of their families even took the Buddhist yellow robes for life. An elderly kinsman of Saang Jiin, for instance, was ordained when he was young and remained in the monastery until he died⁶⁴ (I shall return to the relationships between the monastery and the traders in Chapter Four). Most local traders were also educated. Males, in particular, were ordained and learnt the Tai written language at the monasteries. Later when formal education became available (and compulsory), they went to school, either the local one or those in Chiang Mai. In contrast, not until formal education was introduced and the first primary school was established did women begin to be able to read and write. Yet, many of them, for example, Caa Mung, the wife of Kau Can La, spent only one or two years in school. She had to teach herself in order to become literate (see Appendix 2). Formal education and, of course, the Thai language have also brought changes to Khun Yuam (further discussion of this issue will be in Chapter Three).

According to Chusit (1989:5), oxen caravan trade '...was extensive till 1960'. However, trading activities have never stopped. New kinds of traders and the so-called 'salespeople' have been coming to the town with a greater variety of goods,

⁶⁴ Two of Saang Jiin's children, on the other hand, have engaged in education. Thamrong Bunphithak, his elder son, is a former teacher and now the Chief of Khun Yuam Primary Education Office. Siisa-aat Sawae-ngsii, his daughter, is the headmistress of Roongrian Baan Khun Yuam, one of the two primary schools in the town.

Elderly locals recall that Saang Jiin's family owned a colossal teak house with a huge rice store near the *saan caw müang*. The house was raised so high from the ground that elephants could walk under the house. In the old days, the family hired many Karen men to work with the elephants and in the forests, as well as Karen women to take care of domestic work. Elders described the house as always busy with people coming and going. Its kitchen had to provide food for both residents and guests day and night. Saan Jiin's family regularly gave contributions to the monks, sponsored local boys in their ordinations and helped in building and renovating the temples.

such as soft drinks, instant noodles, canned fish, monosodium glutamate, plastic household utensils, electrical appliances, motorcycles, petrol, insecticide and so on. The scale of trade has become larger.

Changes have slowly occurred in Khun Yuam in the past. Since the 1980s the town and its district have been affected by rapid changes. The main highway has been, again, upgraded to facilitate a new business, tourism. Tourists, both Thai and foreigners, armed with cameras, video cameras and Thai currency, have been visiting the area. The townspeople started to learn how to cook Thai food and new eating houses selling Thai food have been opened. The locals speak the Thai language more often than before. A new bus service has linked Khun Yuam and Mae Hong Son directly with Bangkok and the central region. Travelling by air has become rather common as well. Telephone and facsimile machines are now in use. Television is watched regularly by almost everyone. Radios broadcast Thai and Western pop music everyday (see Chapter Three). Unlike in the past, however, traders in Khun Yuam no longer have to travel as often because of the use of new technology to receive news and trade information and knowledge of the wider community. The town is also changed. For example, there are new houses and shops, new upgraded roads and more public telephone booths. Business is good, and local traders/shop owners are pleased. Some have become richer. In the following chapters, I shall look at how such factors support the local traders and their trading activities.

Relations among traders

Reciprocity was, of course, practised among the traders, both full-time and part-time. Saang Paang assured me that when traders from other towns arrived in Khun Yuam, they always received a warm welcome and local hospitality. Some of them

spent the night at his house, but many preferred to stay at the shelter near the morning market so they could look after their animals that rested in the nearby wasteland. Traders from Mae Rim normally brought fermented tea with them, and those who came from Mae Chaem would trade salt with the locals. Saang Paang would provide them with food and other necessities. He chatted and joked with them, keeping them company until they left the town. Saang Paang sometimes even gave them small gifts.

A lot of the townspeople were (and still are) related to villagers who lived outside the town, especially in the Tai villages of Tau· Phae·, Müang Pau·n and Mae Surin - some twelve kilometres to the north of the town. It is said that in the old days these people always visited each other or even spent a few days living at the houses of kin during significant religious festivals. Nowadays, as travelling between the villages is more convenient, most relatives usually return home in the evening. Nevertheless, if there is a very special ceremony, many of them may stay for a night or two. After the Buddhist Lent (Tai - *au·k waa*, Thai, Kam Müang - *au·k phansaa*) and the traditional Thai New Year Day, the local Tai always visit and exchange gifts with their kinsmen in Khun Yuam town and the three villages. All elderly kin will receive a special greeting on such days. Often, these Tai residents were in the past - some of them still are - trading partners who sometimes travelled together as far as Mae Hong Son and Mae Sariang to sell and buy goods. Some of my informants in Khun Yuam town still recall the pleasure of this trading-travelling and of their partners' hospitality when they stayed at their homes.

Residents of Khun Yuam, moreover, have established some connections, socially and economically, with the locals in Phaa Bau·ng and Huaj Poong,⁶⁵ both of which

⁶⁵ Although Huaj Poong is now less significant, it was in the past a somewhat important market for local trade. Bowie (1988) states that traders often stopped in Huaj Poong for a trading reason. At the time, Huaj Poong '...served as an entrepot for traders who then transported the goods on to Mae Hong Sorn' (Bowie 1988:167).

are small markets located between Khun Yuam and Mae Hong Son. Nonetheless, since the advent to Khun Yuam of so-called 'direct sale',⁶⁶ an English term borrowed by Thai salespeople, the locals of Khun Yuam, Phaa Bau-ng and Huaj Poong now seem to have less contacts with each other. Those who are kinsmen exchange fewer visits. An explanation given by some townspeople is that in the old days, a trip to Phaa Bau-ng or Huaj Poong was frequently for both personal and trading purposes; the two markets at the time provided some goods that Khun Yuam town did not have. While visiting their relatives, Khun Yuam residents would bring some goods with them to sell or exchange with the traders of Phaa Bau-ng or Huaj Poong. Some goods were then bought to sell in Khun Yuam. Today, on the other hand, there is everything one wants in the market of Khun Yuam town. Thus, relatives no longer go to these two towns in order to buy or exchange goods.

CONCLUSION

This chapter provided both historical background and some information of the present of Khun Yuam and its region. Oral history and historical records indicate that Khun Yuam town was established by the Tai who migrated from the Shan States. Some local sources confirm that the area was at the time already occupied by the Lua. Since then, the town and its district have been settled by several ethno-linguistic groups: the Lua, Tai, Karen, Kayah, Pa-O and Bengali in the past; the Tai, Kon Müang, Thai, Karen and Hmong at the present time. The locals at times suffered from war, banditry, the prejudice and ill-conduct of the authorities and epidemics.

⁶⁶ This means that most consumer products can be ordered and transported by the salespeople directly from the companies in Bangkok to these markets.

Khun Yuam has long served as a trading town, though the scale of the trade was sometimes rather small. The town grew, due partly to its trading activity and partly to the logging industry. Many locals were 'oxen caravan traders'. Rice was their trade, but other products, such as betel nuts, dried and fermented tea, salt and sesame oil, were also traded. Through trade, they became friends with traders in other towns or villages. They even married daughters or nieces of traders' families.

Local traders were always friendly and generous to their trading fellows. When the latter arrived in Khun Yuam, they were looked after well by the former. Food and other necessities, along with companionship and hospitality, were given to these outsiders. Goods were traded. News and, occasionally, gifts were exchanged. Traders also possessed information and knowledge about the outside world owing to their frequent travels and exchange of news. They experienced new things, tasting different food, seeing various places and meeting many people. Through trading, traders generally learnt to speak a few languages. Trading was desirable and delightful not only because traders enjoyed earning profits, but because they had extra money to make religious merit and the opportunity to travel and have adventures, visit friends and gain new experiences. Many traders became wealthy, especially during the Second World War when the Japanese came to the town. In the 1960s, oxen caravan trade was no longer active and new kinds of trade took place in this region.

In this chapter, I mentioned a number of incidents that took place in the region: the fighting between the the Tai and the Kayah, the troubles caused by the Thai authorities and the Japanese troops during the second world war. I wanted to provide some background knowledge about Khun Yuam town, its surroundings, people and history. Several incidents told in this chapter, as far as I know, have not

been written nor published before. However, the most crucial point is that ever since the conflicts between the British and the Thai government occurred in the nineteenth century, the latter has attempted to integrate Khun Yuam, in fact, the whole region, into the territory that is now known as 'Thailand'. Since its inhabitants are multi-ethnic, the region has long been extremely important for political reasons and national security.

Today, with the support of formal education and Thai Buddhist monks, which I shall discuss further in Chapters Three and Four, the government has successfully established the awareness of 'being Thai' or 'Thai-ness' in the region. Some socio-economic factors, moreover, have assisted such a political campaign to reach its goal. The growth of trading activities and Thai mass media, as well as the use of the Thai language, have accelerated the spread of 'Thai-ness'. In the last two or three decades, new products, including Thai food, entertainment and some customs, have been introduced and consumed by the locals, of all speech groups, young and old. Traders and the locals who are educated (for example, schoolteachers, nurses, trained midwives and health officers) are most likely to accept this national awareness, especially the use of the Thai language or the practice of some official ceremonies, more quickly than others. The connections of the spread of Thai nationalism in the region, the growth of current trade and the increasing influence of the Thai language and mass media will be discussed in the following chapter.

Appendix 2

Individual cases

This section focusses on the lives of a few trading families (more cases of the traders will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six). Two of the traders, who are now deceased, were successful and became quite wealthy. These traders travelled rather often in the past. They are (or were) people who often associate with or become integrated into different ethno-linguistic communities. Most of them even married women or men of other speech groups or adopted their children. They speak two or three languages. Interestingly, in most cases each individual usually identifies himself or herself with the language he/she employs most of the time. Itsara Itsarasak and Bunrat Siicae-m, mentioned below, are excellent examples of this.

Kau· Can La⁶⁷

Kau· Can La was a well-known, wealthy, local oxen caravan trader (*phau-khaa wuataang*). He was born in Khun Yuam town in 1912. His father was Pa-O and his mother was Tai. Kau· Can La had one brother and one sister; both of whom were born and lived in the town.⁶⁸ His parents owned a lot of paddy fields, a small rice mill and a shop. When he was in his early twenties, Kau· Can La worked as a sub-contractor, cutting timber in the forest areas northeast of Mae Hong Son for a foreign logging company. He had four elephants and a number of people working

⁶⁷ Kau· Can La died many years ago. All of the information about him was collected from his wife, Caa Mung.

⁶⁸ Kau· Can La's brother used to be a trader as well. When he was young, he spent many years studying at a private school in Chiang Mai. Unfortunately, I never had a chance to interview him because he was confined to bed, owing to a long-term illness. Between 1991-93, he and his wife lived in a house next to their daughter's, Sae-ngthau-ng.

Sae-ngthau-ng married Thak Thakrattanasaran, a Thai man who came from a southern province and now runs a hardware shop in the town (see Chapter Five). She works full-time at the town's post office and, at times, helps in her husband's shop. Sae-ngthau-ng and Thak have only one child, a girl, who studies at a Chiang Mai private school (the significance of sending children to private schools will be discussed later).

for him. Later, he left the logging job and began to trade rice. He carried unhusked rice on the backs of oxen (*wuataang*) from Khun Yuam town to Mae Hong Son where he sold it. He bought shrimp paste, sesame oil, paraffin oil, soap, etc., which were then brought from the towns near the Salween River to Mae Hong Son by oxen caravan traders to be sold in his parents' shop in Khun Yuam. At the time, he possessed thirty oxen and hired a few local men in order to look after the oxen during the journey and to help him in various activities. Travelling on his regular route Kau· Can La met a Tai woman named Caa Mung in the small town of Phaa Bau-ng. He subsequently married her.⁶⁹

Caa Mung was born in Phaa Bau-ng in 1915, the Year of the Rabbit. Her father was a trader as well. When she was a little girl, she went to a primary school but did not finish the four-year compulsory primary education. She then began to work. After their marriage, Caa Mung helped Kau· Can La in his rice trade and started to learn how to read and write the Thai language again.

The couple lived with Kau· Can La's parents for almost six years. They then moved out to live on their own. Kau· Can La began to change the direction of his long-distance trade. He travelled to Mae Sariang town to trade rice and other goods, while Caa Mung stayed in Khun Yuam running a small shop that sold several kinds of goods brought home by her husband. She also purchased rice from the locals and kept it in store, ready to be transported by her husband to Mae Sariang. Kau· Can La sometimes took betel nuts and other goods that had been carried from Burma by oxen caravan traders to sell at the markets in Chiang Mai. On the way home he always had some other goods with him to sell in Khun Yuam.

⁶⁹ Kau· Can La was twenty-six years old and Caa Mung was twenty-three when they married.

When the Japanese troops arrived in Khun Yuam town and began to buy rice from the locals for their own consumption, rice soon became scarce. Kau· Can La was hired by the Japanese to purchase unhusked rice in Chiang Mai and transport it back to their camps. By this time he was using seventeen or eighteen oxen to carry the rice. He worked for the Japanese until they were arrested by Thai government servants and transferred from the town. The Thai authorities also proclaimed that all money issued by the Japanese, banknotes in particular, was to be withdrawn from circulation and that the locals must hand in their money in order to exchange it for the new currency. Kau· Can La thus exchanged all the cash that he had received from the Japanese with the Thai authorities and suffered some loss, owing to the devaluation of the currency.

Sadly, Kau· Can La shot himself many years ago.⁷⁰ Caa Mung told me that he was mentally ill, but Kau· Can La's brother-in-law, Khamron Panjaakae-w, a Kon Müang and a former policeman, believed that there was another reason. At the time Kau· Can La wanted his daughter, Anong, to marry a trader, but she refused and married Thaloe-ng Krajkae-w, a Thai man who now runs a liquor agency in Khun Yuam. Kau· Can La was probably very upset and hurt by his daughter's action and, eventually, decided to kill himself. I do not know what the truth is.⁷¹

Caa Mung still runs a shop today, selling miscellaneous products. She also owns a few shops, which are rented by local traders, and several pieces of land in and around the town. She and Kau· Can La had three children, all of whom finished tertiary education. Caa Mung speaks Tai, Kam Müang and Thai, and is able to read and write some Thai, though she did not complete her primary education. Anong, her first child, works full-time at a local health centre and spends her spare time

⁷⁰ Caa Mung recalled that the incident occurred about 1970-71, but according to Khamron Panjaakae-w, Kau· Can La killed himself in 1962-63.

⁷¹ Thaloe-ng Krajkae-w confirmed that his father-in-law had committed suicide, but did not give any further comments.

running a small bakery (more information about Anong and Thaloeng will be given in Chapter Six). Caa Mung's second child, a son, is a schoolteacher, and the youngest son, nicknamed Tau-j, helps his mother in the shop occasionally. All of her husband's and her close kin are either involved in trade or work as government servants.

Maa Maniiwong or Caw Maa⁷²

Maa Maniiwong, a Kon Müang, was known as 'Caw Maa' among the locals in Khun Yuam. He was born in Ko Kha District, Lampang Province, in BE 2438 (AD 1895). It is said that when he was in his late teens, Caw Maa accompanied his brother, who had been appointed Khun Yuam's new district head (*naaj amphoe*), to Khun Yuam. He helped his brother with odd jobs for some time, then slowly became involved in local trade. Caw Maa also fell in love with a local woman named Nguaj, or Naang Nguaj, who was a daughter of a well-to-do family. Since Caw Maa was the brother of the district head, Naang Nguaj's parents did not object to him seeing their daughter. The couple subsequently married and settled in the town.

When his brother and family were transferred to another post some years later, Caw Maa decided to remain in Khun Yuam with his wife. He was a caravan trader at the time, travelling between Khun Yuam and Chiang Mai, buying and selling rice and all sorts of goods. Elderly locals said that, like other traders, Caw Maa used oxen to carry goods, but others recalled that he preferred horses to oxen. He was also involved in the logging industry for some time, cutting trees in the territory of Burma. His financial situation rapidly improved, especially during the second

⁷² The story of Maa Maniiwong's life is based on interviews with his adopted daughter, Bunrat Siicae-m and several elderly locals, as well as on some information in his tiny, four-page, cremation volume (*nangsythiiralykngaansop*).

world war when the Japanese troops arrived. Caw Maa sold rice and several kinds of food to the Japanese. He was sometimes hired by the Japanese to go to Chiang Mai to purchase other necessities. There is a rumour among elderly locals that the Japanese possessed a lot of gold and rubies, and that Caw Maa received gold and rubies as the payments of his goods.⁷³ Additionally, it is confirmed that Caw Maa purchased a large number of oxen and elephants. The animals, needless to say, were to be used in his caravan trade and logging work.

Caw Maa was a money-lender as well.⁷⁴ Many of his debtors, unable to find cash, subsequently had to sell their land to him at a rather cheap price in order to clear their debts. He sometimes also bought land from anyone who urgently needed money.⁷⁵ A couple of my informants told me that after becoming rich, Caw Maa took one or two minor wives, but his relationships with them did not last very long.

Since they had no children of their own, Caw Maa and Naang Nguaj adopted three Kayah orphans whose parents used to live in the western part of the town. They were Chaan (or Saan), a boy, and Buakhii (or Ki) and Luu, both of whom were girls.⁷⁶ According to Bunsii Nutcinoo, Saan later married a local Tai who gave birth to two children. Ki married a Tai man named Nanti. The couple had two daughters, Bunrat and Bencamaat, and one son, Bunmii. These three children later became Caw Maa's adopted children and used his surname 'Maniiwong'. When

⁷³ As mentioned earlier, banknotes were issued by the Japanese with the co-operation of the Thai government. In my view, therefore, it is not likely that the Japanese would pay anyone in gold or precious stones. It is possible, however, that the rumour was created on account of the rapid increase in wealth of Caw Maa after the World War II.

⁷⁴ None of his adopted children mentioned that he was a money-lender. Nevertheless, it is widely said that Caw Maa lent money to the locals, sometimes at high interest.

⁷⁵ One of those who sold him land was the wife of Khun Can Ta. Khun Can Ta was a wealthy Tai who earned his living in the logging industry. He lived mainly in Mae Sariang, but frequently visited Khun Yuam and Mae Hong Son for business. He used to own a lot of land both inside and outside Khun Yuam town. This land was later sold to Caw Maa. Khun Can Ta died in Taunggyi in December 1992, aged 106.

⁷⁶ According to Bunrat Siicae-m, three children were adopted, but one elderly man informs me that there were only two children, Saan and Ki.

Caw Maa died in 1982, he left a large amount of cash and many pieces of land to the three adopted children.

Bunrat is now married and uses her husband's surname 'Siicae-m'. She has built several houses and lets them to tenants, mostly government servants. She has also opened a small shop, selling newspapers, various kinds of magazines and miscellaneous goods. Her younger sister, Bencamaat, married a policeman and became Bencamaat Sae-ngbunryang. She runs a small drinking water factory⁷⁷ and is the sales representative of the bus company that operates the Bangkok-Khun Yuam-Mae Hong Son buses. She sells bus tickets to passengers who want to travel to Bangkok. Bunmii Maniiwong, the youngest brother, works full-time as a teacher at a primary school in Mae Surin village, north of Khun Yuam town.

Bunrat, Bencamaat and Bunmii speak Tai, Kam Müang and Thai. Bunrat informs me that her natural parents, both of whom died, were Tai (note that this contrasts with the fact that her mother was born a Kayah speaker). She has always thought of herself as a Tai.⁷⁸ Her daughters study in Chiang Mai, and one girl is doing a university degree. Bunrat goes to Tai temples and makes merit regularly. She also gives support to the 'Buddha Kasetra', a Buddhist organisation actively working in Khun Yuam (see Chapter Four for more details).

Jaakoe Hussain

Jaakoe Hussain is a Muslim. According to his old expired passport, he was a British subject and was born in 1910 in what is today known as Bangladesh. His father left his country when Jaakoe was a boy to work overseas. He subsequently

⁷⁷ There are two small drinking water factories in the town. The other one is operated by Tau-k, a young local man who went to secondary school in Chiang Mai and finished his education at an art college in Bangkok. His father is a Tai and mother is a Kon Müang and both are traders.

⁷⁸ I never had an opportunity to interview Bencamaat nor Bunmii.

arrived in Khun Yuam town and took another wife, a local Tai. He became a hawker, selling garments, clothes and the like. He and his Tai wife had one daughter. Jaakoe was brought up by his mother and elderly kinsmen in his village in Bangladesh. He married a local Muslim woman when he was a teenager, but they had no children. The couple made their living in farming. When Jaakoe was about twenty-five years old, his father returned home and took him to Khun Yuam. Jaakoe has lived here ever since and has not visited his home for a long time. (His wife and most of his relatives have died.)

In Khun Yuam, he hawked with his father. The two men occasionally travelled on foot to Chiang Mai via Mae Chaem, or to Mae Sariang town, to purchase their goods. The trip usually lasted fifteen or sixteen days. Two local men were sometimes hired to carry the goods. The business gradually got better and, therefore, more goods, such as household utensils, shoes and so on, were bought. During the Second World War the Japanese sometimes hired Jaakoe to go to Chiang Mai to buy paddy, dry fish, salt and other necessities. He would travel on an elephant, whose owner was also hired by the Japanese.

Jaakoe today rents a small shop owned by an elderly Tai widow near the town's morning market. He sells ready-made garments, rubber boots and sandals, bags and backpacks, household and miscellaneous goods. He lives alone, saying that he has never re-married. But according to Itsara and some elderly locals, he used to have a Kon Müang wife, a beautiful woman. She left him for another man many years ago. Jaakoe and his wife have one daughter, who is now probably in her forties. She married and lives elsewhere. He speaks some Tai, Kam Müang and Thai, but is unable to read or write. He has not become a Thai citizen and still holds an Alien Resident Status. Every now and then, he has to pay his Alien Resident Tax at the office in Chiang Mai. At times, he leaves for Chiang Mai by a morning bus to

purchase goods and returns to Khun Yuam in the evening. Moreover, he goes to the Muslim mosque in Mae Sariang town every Friday. He says that he prays five times a day and slaughters animals for food himself.

Itsara Itsarasak

Itsara Itsarasak was born in 1940, the Year of the Dragon, in Mae Hong Son town where he grew up speaking Tai and Bengali. However, he stopped speaking the second language when he was seventeen or eighteen years old. His father, who was a butcher, migrated from Bangladesh, and his mother was half-Bangladeshi, half-Tai. Both parents were Muslims. When Itsara was about six or seven years old he accompanied his father to Khun Yuam and began to live with his father's son from another wife; his father had several wives. His father then turned to another occupation, selling garments and the like. Itsara says that there were five shops operated by Bengali speakers in Khun Yuam town at the time. Itsara completed his primary education in Khun Yuam. He subsequently helped his father sell garments and, at the same time, worked as a part-time cowhand. When he was twenty-one years old, he was subject to conscription, but drew a 'black ticket'⁷⁹ so was exempted from military service. His parents then found a Tai woman to marry him.

A short time after the marriage, he and his wife migrated to Burma, where he worked as a cattle slaughterer. His wife gave birth to their first baby but, sadly, the girl died eleven days later. The couple spent two years in Burma before returning to Khun Yuam, where Itsara was issued with a new Thai identity card. Since his father had already died, Itsara decided to follow his father's occupation. He took

⁷⁹ Every male who is a Thai citizen is conscripted at the age of twenty-one. Each year, however, only a certain number of men is wanted by the Ministry of Defence. In the annual conscription process, therefore, men who pass the physical examination are allowed to try their luck by randomly drawing red and black tickets. Those who get 'red tickets' are conscripted and have to serve in the army, navy or airforce for two years. Those who have 'black tickets', on the other hand, are not subject to the conscription.

clothes and other similar goods from his kinsmen's shops and peddled them from one village to another on foot. Some customers paid him in cash, others paid him with rice, chicken or whatever they offered to exchange. He normally stayed with some locals whom he was acquainted with or with the village heads while he was hawking his goods. He later accumulated enough money to hire a *sau-ngthae-w* (a utility truck with two rows of seats in the back to carry passengers) to carry his goods hawking between the villages. None of his siblings was a pedlar nor has become a shopkeeper.

Today, Itsara and his wife live together with their elder son, a Tai daughter-in-law and their grand-daughter in the back of a small, rented one-storey shop opposite the morning market. He no longer peddles goods and spends most of the time looking after the shop. His wife and daughter-in-law also help him in the shop, selling all kinds of clothing, rain-coats, hats, bags, sandals, rubber boots, plates and bowls, glasses and cups, batteries and other miscellaneous household equipment. Every now and then, Itsara travels to Chiang Mai to purchase goods and hires a truck to transport them back to Khun Yuam. He always pays cash for the goods because, he said to me, it is cheaper than buying the goods on credit (see Chapter Five for a discussion of 'cash' and 'credit').

Itsara speaks Tai at home and is also able to communicate in Kam Müang, Thai and Karen. All of his children speak Tai, Kam Müang and Thai. He told me that since he is a Muslim he has to slaughter animals and prepare food himself. He goes to the mosque in Mae Hong Son every Friday afternoon. None of his children nor children-in-law, however, has become a Muslim. One of his sons and the daughter also rent a shop each, selling goods similar to those sold in his shop. More interestingly, his daughter, who was about eighteen or nineteen years old in 1992, married a local Buddhist. She not only regularly offers alms at a monastery, but she

and her husband also participate in Buddhist festivals and ceremonies, as well as donating money to annual alms-givings. Her close female friends, who always accompany her to the temples, are mostly Tai and some Kon Müang.

CHAPTER THREE

LANGUAGES USED IN THE TOWN

This chapter is concerned with the languages employed in the market town of Khun Yuam and their socio-economic implications. As shown in Chapter One, Tai, Kam Müang and Thai are the three languages spoken in the town area. I also provide some details about these languages and the people. None of the local-born residents is monolingual. Most of them speak two languages, many use three or more. Local Tai speakers are mostly fluent in Kam Müang, but only some Kon Müang speak Tai regularly. This means that, unlike its surrounding Tai villages, the use of Kam Müang in the town is more common than Tai.¹ Nonetheless, Tai, Kam Müang and Thai are closely related, and word-borrowing is not unusual. In this case, social circumstance, cross-ethnic marriage, occupation and educational level all play a significant role in determining which language one should use to communicate with others in everyday conversation. In this chapter, I shall discuss the inter-relationships between the three languages and the social milieu surrounding them. I shall also consider the changes brought about by the increasing influence of the Thai language and the effects of these changes on the Tai and Kam Müang languages, as well as on the locals themselves, their attitudes and lifestyle.

Tai and Kam Müang are spoken in everyday life, for instance at home, in the morning market, in shops, among relatives and friends and neighbours. Thai, the official language, on the other hand, is normally employed in primary and secondary schools, at the district hospital, the police station and the district office, as well as in any ceremony or function organised by the *khaaraatchakaan*

¹ In the past, Tai was the lingua franca of Khun Yuam. Non-Tai people, such as the Pa-O, Kayah and Karen, used Tai when they engaged in trade. Today, many of the Karen still speak Tai at times (see below). One should not, therefore, underestimate the significance of the Tai language. It is fair, on the other hand, to suggest that the influence of Thai and Kam Müang is increasing in Khun Yuam.

(government servants). The influence of the Thai language, however, has been increasing for some time. Thai entertainment, for example, television, movies, pop music and songs are somewhat popular, especially among the younger generation and schoolteachers, both Tai and Kon Müang. More importantly, through formal education, the mass media, the new communication technology, tourism and Thai salespeople who have introduced new products to the town, the Thai language has gradually become essential in the life of the locals. In fact, most of the townspeople who engage in trade are able to communicate to some extent in Thai. All teenagers, both Tai and Kon Müang, often speak Thai.

TAI LANGUAGE FAMILY

As shown in Chapter One, Tai, Kam Müang and Thai are all categorised into the Southwestern branch of the Tai language family (Li 1977), but there are some differences in lexis and tones among the three languages. On the one hand, for example, a large number of Burmese words is used in the Tai language, on the other hand, Thai has borrowed a lot of Khmer vocabulary. Tai phonemes differ from those of Kam Müang and Thai as well. For instance, *moe·ng* in Tai is pronounced *müang* (*myang*) in Kam Müang and Thai. In recent years, however, formal education, the influence of mass media, the increase of trading activities and tourism, have linked the three languages closer to each other.² Most of the local Kon Müang and Tai are literate in Thai. Contacts among the three groups have also brought changes to their languages. Many Thai words are now found in Tai and Kam Müang. To understand the new influence, I shall begin with the Thai language.

² It must also be pointed out that there has been long contacts between Kon Müang and Thai speakers. Differences between Kam Müang and Thai, therefore, are not too great.

THAI - THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Thai is not alien to the residents of the town. In order to trade with outside traders and travellers, most of local shopkeepers have to speak Thai occasionally.³ A large number of the townspeople who are not traders are also able to communicate in Thai. In the following sections, I shall discuss the use of the Thai language in Khun Yuam in various situations and places, its increasingly important role - in trading, education, distribution of information, entertainment, etc., its popularity and its status in Khun Yuam society. Thai has also served as a medium for the introduction of change to the locals; in communicating and in promoting new products, such as electrical appliances. In addition, the Thai language has assisted more women to become involved in larger scale trade or in dealing with non-local traders. As mentioned above, Thai is mostly used in schools and the government offices, so let me start from this point.

In schools and government offices

In the Khun Yuam town area, there are two primary schools, Roongrian Baan Khun Yuam and Roongrian Khun Yuam, and one secondary school, Roongrian Khun Yuam Witthaya. A record of the oldest primary school, Roongrian Baan Khun Yuam, indicates that the school was established in BE 2465 (AD 1922), but its headmistress, Siisa-aat Sawae-ngsii, stated that, based on her own calculation, the school was probably open as early as in BE 2461, or 1918.⁴ Since then, the Thai language has been taught and spoken.

³ Even elderly shop owners, for instance, Saang Paang and Caa Mung (both already mentioned in the previous chapter), understand Thai rather well.

In fact, I know of several Tai and Kon Müang elders, men and women, who are able to write Thai. These elders all engage in trade, directly or indirectly.

⁴ Siisa-aat pointed out that her mother, who was eighty-seven years old in 1992, once told her that she was among the first pupils who went to school. She was then thirteen years old; that was about 1918.

Interestingly, it is recorded that in the first year there were only four pupils. One or two pupils, however, often missed school. Siisa-aat's mother was one of them. Whenever her mother was

Thai is spoken most of the time in schools.⁵ When a teacher communicates with a pupil, whether during a school term or holidays, he/she usually uses Thai as do the pupils. The Tai and Kam Müang languages are employed only between the teachers themselves or between the pupils themselves, but rarely between teachers and pupils. When a pupil meets his/her teacher outside the school or visits him/her at home, he/she may converse in Tai or Kam Müang. So may a teacher. Interestingly, the secondary school teachers seem to use the Thai language more often than primary school teachers. To make things more complicated, I frequently heard teachers talking to their own children in Thai at school, though they usually spoke Tai or Kam Müang when they were at home. Thai is always the first language at school. Schoolteachers explained that this is because the Thai language is considered the national language (see Diller 1991) and that one of their duties is to teach the children to speak Thai. Some of them said that it would be shameful if the children could not speak Thai fluently and correctly (see further).

Moreover, most primary schools are located in, or near, the villages where the residents are either Karen or Hmong. Almost none of the teachers in these schools can speak Karen or Hmong. Since these pupils do not use Tai or Kam Müang, Thai

unable to go to school, a younger sister of hers would have to go and attend the class on her behalf to please the teacher, the only teacher at the school.

⁵ Wijeyewardene (1982) comments that it is a government policy that Thai is used in schools. He writes that

The standardization of language, and certain aspects of culture, has been part of the policy of modern Thai regimes. The system of primary schools with a bureaucratic teaching staff has up to now been its main instrument. In the past, governments have acted unwisely, though relatively mildly, in the suppression of regional cultures and dialects. It is not merely government policy, but the pursuit of social advancement, that leads to standardization. Central Thai language, a particular way of life, particular ways of eating, are prestigious, and government service, education and economic advancement recruit people to the uniformity of modern Thai life (Wijeyewardene 1982:xl-xli).

is the only language available for communication between these upland children and their teachers.⁶

Thai is also used at the hospital, but since most of its staff are Kon Müang and Tai⁷ the Thai language is not spoken as frequently as in schools. Conversations among the staff themselves, or between staff and patients, are usually in Tai or Kam Müang. At the district office, on the other hand, the Thai language is more commonly spoken than at the hospital, though many staff are Tai and Kon Müang. Thai is always employed to communicate with staff who come from other regions and when a senior *khaaraatchakaan* makes an official visit to the district office or the hospital, even if the senior officer is a native Tai or Kon Müang speaker. The Thai language is mandatory on such an occasion. In comparison with the hospital and the district office, the police station is probably an extreme example of a place where Thai is the primary language. Most of its staff have transferred from other provinces and speak neither Tai nor Kam Müang as their mother tongue. There are several reasons for government servants to use the Thai language among themselves (I will discuss these below). However, outside the schools and government offices, Thai can be used in particular circumstances, especially when officials are involved.

Announcements and speeches

Thai is always used when making an official announcement or broadcasting information concerning the administration. The district office, for instance, broadcasts daily in Thai through two huge loud-speakers, one of which is located at

⁶ Only Karen adults, mainly males, speak Tai or Kam Müang, or both. Very few Hmong men, on the other hand, as far as I know, use Tai, though many of them can communicate in Kam Müang. Many shopkeepers talk to the Hmong in Thai.

⁷ In 1992, only one doctor (there were two doctors, the other one was a Kon Müang woman) and the pharmacist were Thai. There were one Lisu dentist, who spoke Kam Müang and Thai, and one or two Karen workers. The rest of the staff were Tai or Kon Müang.

the district office itself, the other is in front of the police station near the morning market. Anything broadcast is therefore within earshot. Generally, the main message is news about the Thai government or the local administration. International news is sometimes broadcast as well, but is always brief. Local and national politics seem the most essential news.

In March and September 1992, the district office broadcast about the coming national elections for two hours, twice or three times a day.⁸ Its message included information about the electorate, who could or could not vote, how to vote, how many candidates were standing for parliament, who they were and so forth. This daily pronouncement was also to remind the locals that since no one could vote without an ID card,⁹ those who did not have one should apply at the district office a week before election day. In fact, many people, such as the *khaaraatchakaan*, schoolteachers and especially the candidate's supporters, had been involved in these events several months before the two elections.

Almost every day in March and September, a few utility trucks hired by some candidates were driven through the market town of Khun Yuam proclaiming the qualifications and merits of the candidates through large loud-speakers on the roofs of the trucks. This proclamation was usually in the Kam Müang or Thai languages, but, as far as I know, was not in Tai. One candidate claimed that his wife was a Tai and lived in Mae Hong Son, while another, a Karen, always said that he was local-born and very familiar with Tai customs. Despite this, Kam Müang was often the most prominent language used during the election campaign, particularly when the candidates themselves called from door-to-door to ask for votes. When the

⁸ The first national election, which was held on the 22nd of March, was followed by a protest by hundreds of thousands of people in Bangkok in May. The military dispersed the protestors, injuring and killing hundreds of them. The Prime Minister, Suchinda Kraprayun, a former army general, resigned and a new election was called on the 13th of September of the same year.

⁹ Anyone who is a Thai citizen and over seventeen years old must have an ID card. It contains the name, address and date of birth, of the card's owner, with his/her photograph attached. The card is all written in Thai.

candidates visited the *khaaraatchakaan* or schoolteachers, however, they talked in Thai, along with some Kam Müang.

Thai is always pre-eminent in any announcement connected with school activities. During the last week of December 1992, the secondary school, with some financial support from the District Educational Office, organised the so-called *wan kiilaa prachaachon*, 'people's sport days'. One of the aims of this activity was to encourage both students and ordinary people to play sports. Most of the participants, nevertheless, were students, teachers and some *khaaraatchakaan*. From the first day until the last, speeches and announcements were all made solely in the Thai language. This also applies to any school social function. When schoolteachers organised a get-together party on *wan khruu*, 'teacher's day', which was held on the 16th of January, Thai songs were sung and the Thai language was mainly employed throughout the night, even though most participants were Tai and Kon Müang speakers.

If a religious function or ceremony is organised by the *khaaraatchakaan* or schoolteachers, it is not unlikely that Thai will be used. The secondary school, for instance, once organised a charity appeal to build a shelter for the *phra thudong* (ascetic forest monks). These monks were practising under the supervision of Luang Phau Phawwanaa Phutthoo, a well-known monk whose base monastery was in Nakhon Pathom Province (for details see Chapter Four). On that day, a group of secondary students and teachers formed a procession, walking along the main road of the town asking for donations from door-to-door. A utility truck armed with a huge loud-speaker on its roof followed, announcing in the Thai language the purpose of the appeal.

A very interesting case of the use of Thai was at the funeral of an elderly former schoolteacher, who was a Kon Müang.¹⁰ His funeral, held in December 1992, was the first in Khun Yuam to employ the *phraraatchathaan phloe-ngsop* (literally, the Royal sponsorship cremation fire). The body was kept at home for a week, which was longer than a usual funeral, and a Buddhist ritual was performed every night.¹¹ In comparison with other funerals, the actual day of the cremation was chaotic. The *phraraatchathaan phloe-ngsop*, which was in fact a couple of candles and matches kept in a round metal container with a cone shaped top, was carried to Khun Yuam by senior officials in formal white uniforms. The *khaaraatchakaan* guests dressed up in uniforms, and the hosts were extremely scrupulous and worried that everything was correctly in place and properly conducted. A lengthy biography of the dead man was read. All speeches and announcements were, of course, in Thai.

However, there is always an exception. In December 1992, the abbot of *Wat Phoothaaraam*, the Kon Müang temple, was promoted to the higher *sangha* (the Buddhist order of monks) rank. It was probably the most graceful and honourable event not only for the abbot himself but for many Kam Müang elders. The abbot was the youngest Kon Müang monk ever to be appointed to this rank in Khun Yuam. A procession, led by a police car, a group of primary school dancers,¹² and three utility trucks, was organised by some staff of the district office and some

¹⁰ His wife is a Tai. The couple have several children, some of whom are schoolteachers or work with the government. Their children, needless to say, are bilingual, Tai and Kam Müang, and also speak Thai.

¹¹ A funeral in Khun Yuam is usually brief and rather a matter of economic concern. The Buddhist funeral ritual normally lasts 3-4 days with the body being cremated on the final day. Only well-to-do families can afford a week-long funeral, or longer. The longer the procession the more guests are invited, the implication being that the dead person is respected and well-loved. At this teacher's funeral, however, the dead man was not considered rich, but because it was a *phraraatchathaan phloe-ngsop*, an extremely formal and official ritual, the hosts, children of the dead man, a few of whom were also teachers, had to do their best. Many guests, particularly those who were high ranking officials and senior teachers, who were also the bosses of the dead man's children, had to be invited and looked after with great care.

¹² In Khun Yuam, a procession is always organised for important religious ceremonies. If the teachers take part in the procession, there are always some school dancers. A utility truck with a loud speaker is of course inevitable. The procession's usual route is along the main road of the market town, but it sometimes returns on a back road.

schoolteachers. This procession, as usual, proceeded along the road. The abbot, sitting on a big throne on the second utility truck, was blessed by people throwing flowers over him. Speeches and announcements were all in Kam Müang.

'May I watch your TV?': Coming of Thai media

Thai is not employed by the officials or schoolteachers alone. In fact, its influence in the town has gradually increased. A lot of the locals, of both sexes and all ages, do have some knowledge of the Thai language - though they may not speak it fluently. This is due to the fact that formal education has long been established in the district and the Thai language has always been part of the curriculum. The growth of inter-regional trade and tourism, but the rapidly growing mass media, especially television and radio which broadcast in the Thai language, are more influential than anything else. In this section, the roles of the Thai media and popular entertainment in Khun Yuam will be investigated.

When I arrived in Khun Yuam in November 1991, there was only one television channel. The FM radio stations were barely understandable owing to poor reception. Only a few AM stations were available for the locals who wanted to listen to the radio. Less than six months later, there were three television channels. The FM radio transmission was improved to give a better sound. Changes began to take place. Here and there, music and songs from a radio set or a cassette tape could be heard. Whenever someone was doing something, such as building a house, making a piece of furniture, repairing a bicycle, or preparing food to sell, some music was always within earshot.

Along with this is the successful selling of cassette tapes. Musical cassette tapes, most of which contained Thai songs, were at the time sold for between fifty to

seventy baht (approximately A\$2.63-A\$3.68) each. This was relatively cheap, even from the local point of view.¹³ This ready access to Thai pop songs has exposed the interest to the Thai language. Many children are beginning to sing Thai pop songs at home, on the streets and elsewhere, while the teenagers, both Tai and Kon Müang, imitate the talk of the FM station's disc jockeys, which contains a lot of Thai slang. The one and only local pop music band, whose members are secondary school students trained by the teachers of the same school, has also become popular. The band plays Thai songs when there is a social function or even when someone, say, a school head master, holds his own party. However, Kam Müang songs on cassette tapes, especially comic ones, are popular among the Kon Müang and Tai as well. Some Kam Müang songs are even broadcast on one FM station every day. In contrast, no Tai music or songs are broadcast on the radio. Although Tai music tapes are seen in many households, they are not sold locally.¹⁴

At a New Year's Eve party held by a group of teachers and *khaaraatchakaan* at the end of 1992, some primary school pupils performed the so-called 'Thai modern dance'. The pupils imitated the Thai pop singers who were shown dancing on *karaoke* video tapes (see Picture 8).¹⁵ Everyone was watching these child dancers with great admiration. Many of these dancers were in fact children of Tai speakers, whose parents had no objection to this kind of activity. I was told that some of

¹³ As a matter of fact, Thai musical cassette tapes had been sold in the market town of Khun Yuam for several years, but the price was quite high. It was only a year or two before I arrived that the price dropped.

¹⁴ Tai music tapes are usually sold in Mae Hong Son. Many of them are brought from the Shan States.

¹⁵ *Karaoke* has become popular among Thai people in the last few years. Since then, a great deal of Thai pop music has been recorded onto the *karaoke* video tape. In Khun Yuam, *karaoke* is especially popular among schoolteachers and the *khaaraatchakaan*, including Tai and Kon Müang.

The much larger screen *karaoke* video players are owned by three restaurant owners, all of whom are Tai speakers. These three *karaoke* video players are said to act as lures which attract customers to the restaurants, especially on Friday and Saturday nights and on the last day of the month, which is pay-day for those who earn a salary. In fact, many shop owners enjoy singing *karaoke* as well. Since the middle of 1992, at least two shop owners have bought video players and the devices that can be adjusted to play *karaoke* to entertain themselves and their friends. Since then, their shops, in which the owners also live, have been turned into meeting places where their friends come to drink and sing every week. No doubt, some Tai males are also seen singing in their shops. All the songs are of course Thai.

these Tai parents agreed that their children should have more outfits so that the next party could be more colourful and that one or two parents offered their houses for the children to practise in.

Live concerts performed by Thai singers and dancers are somewhat popular as well. During the eighteen months of my stay in Khun Yuam, there were four live concerts. Two of them were organised by policemen for New Year celebrations, one was sponsored by a candidate for parliament to promote himself for the coming election, and another was arranged by a well-known Thai folk singer called 'Santi Duangsawaang'. The two live concerts organised by the policemen were not successful because, it was said, the bands in both concerts played badly and, more importantly, many locals did not like the police.¹⁶ The Thai folk singer's concert, however, was a success. It took place in March 1992 at the two-storeyed wooden theatre, where movies were also sometimes shown by itinerant cinema distributors. Tickets were thirty baht for adults and ten baht for children (approximately A\$1.58 and A\$0.53, respectively). There were over one hundred in the audience, both adults and children. The concert lasted more than two hours. It then became the main topic of conversation the next day. A Tai female in her late thirties told me that it was the most wonderful concert and, because there had not been any concert in the last three or four years in Khun Yuam, it was worth the money (for a comparison, the daily wage for casual labour work at the time was fifty baht or about A\$2.63).

¹⁶ Relationships between the police and the locals, certain shop owners in particular, have never been positive, though there have been no confrontations that I know of. Several shop owners informed me that policemen always asked for credit to buy goods, but they rarely paid their debts on time. When they were asked to pay, the policemen often made excuses, some even turned nasty and did not pay their debts. Some shop owners said that they reported the matter to the police commander-in-charge, but nothing was done. These shop owners insisted that they would not do business with the police any more. None of the policemen are local.

One shop owner who was a former policeman told me that many years ago, a Thai police lieutenant proposed to become his business partner, but wanted more for his share. The lieutenant was turned down, so he threatened the shop owner and tried several times - without success - to put him in jail.

The increasing popularity of television, which swelled like an overnight flood, was even more astonishing. Within less than a year, most residents of the Khun Yuam market town owned a television set. At least two shops in the market introduced hire purchase schemes to allow customers to buy all types of electrical appliances. Not only those who earned a salary but many locals found these schemes favourable. Residents of the town were able to get extra cash by taking jobs, such as furniture makers, laundry-women, or hired house-keepers for the *khaaraatchakaan*. Others took advantage of the cheaper prices in the shops in Mae Hong Son or Mae Sariang.¹⁷ A television set, not to mention a radio tape player, has become a must in the neighbourhood.

Many houses have their television sets turned on for hours, especially during the weekend or when there is a special programme on. When men take a day off or housewives finish their everyday work, they gather in someone's house to watch television, as well as to chat, drink or even eat. Several shop owners have their television sets turned on not only for themselves as a time-killer, but also to entertain their customers and friends, who seem to come in and go out of the shops all the time. A number of business establishments, for example, a chemist, a barber's shop, a motorcycle repair shop, two large general stores and several eating houses, always have a group of people, some of whom are not customers, crowded around watching television. When there was a world heavyweight boxing championship programme on the television, I saw a big crowd watching television in a chemist's shop. Some males happened to have brought some spirits with them. The boxing match finished in about an hour, but the men still drank in the shop until nightfall. The television set was on all the time. At night, when in the past the adults always finished their evening prayers and went to bed before nine o'clock,

¹⁷ I am informed that since the logging companies started to operate in Khun Yuam a few years ago, access to cash has become easier. Then came the boom of tourism. The locals, particularly shop owners, at the present time earn more income than previously, so more electrical appliances have been bought.

almost everyone now watches television. The children stay up until late on Friday nights and/or spend the whole weekend watching television.

A Tai female elder who lived next to my house is a good example. She was very fond of watching television but her family did not own a television set. So, she would watch it in her neighbour's house, in which lived a young Kon Müang couple. One of her favourite programmes was a Thai 'soap opera' called *camloe-j-rak* (literally, the prisoner of love), which is a story about a young beautiful female who was mistakenly kidnapped by the male protagonist. He blindly wanted to avenge his beloved brother who had brokenheartedly committed suicide upon the young innocent woman. She suffered a great deal of physical and mental abuse, but her good gentle heart finally defeated the ruthless kidnapper. As usual, it was a happy ending when both fell in love.¹⁸ Every week, this Tai elder came to watch the drama in her neighbour's sitting room. When she could not follow the Thai dialogue, she would ask her Kon Müang host, of course, in Kam Müang about what was going on. She scarcely missed an episode, but if she did, she would ask her female neighbour to tell her the story in the following day.

This elderly woman is not an exception. Many housewives in the Khun Yuam market town regularly spend their free time watching television. While almost all women enjoy Thai 'soap opera' on television, the youngsters prefer Thai pop music programmes and movies. Most male adults usually watch sport programmes, especially the boxing and soccer and Chinese kung-fu movies or the sort of movies which involve gangsters. All of these programmes are in the Thai language.¹⁹

¹⁸ This popular drama, as far as I know, has been reproduced, with different groups of actors and directors, and aired several times on television. Similar 'soap opera' have been shown on Thai television for many years.

¹⁹ Movies, not only on the TV but in the cinema, are dubbed in Thai as well.

Then came the introduction of video movies. The first and only current video shop was opened in 1989.²⁰ The shop is operated by a Kon Müang woman whose husband, an offspring of Tai-Kon Müang parents, is a Khun Yuam-Mae Sariang mini-bus driver. The shop owner is under contract with a larger video shop in Mae Sariang which provides all the video tape movies for her shop every month. The business was bad in the first year, but when more workers arrived in Khun Yuam with the logging business, the video business boomed. During that period, the circulation of video tapes increased to 180 movies a month (but it was down to 100 movies in 1993). A video tape rented for a cost of ten baht per two days (approximately A\$0.53) in 1993. The customers varied, and included those who worked with the logging companies, shop owners and the *khaaraatchakaan*. Some of the video tapes in the shop are Thai comedies, but the majority are Chinese kung-fu and gangster movies. Only a few Thai and American movies are available because they are less popular than the Chinese ones. All foreign movies, needless to say, are dubbed in Thai.

Since hire purchase schemes were introduced by the electrical appliance shops, more residents have bought video tape players, despite their high prices. Those who are fond of singing have even purchased the devices and adaptors necessary to play the *karaoke*.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, one television channel broadcasts the movements of the stock market in Bangkok every afternoon. As far as I know, at least one shop owner, Thak Thakrattanasaran, spends hours watching this channel while looking after his shop. Thak has invested in the stock market for a number of years and made a reasonably large profit (I shall return to this man in Chapter Five). Such an investment is a fairly new departure for local traders, who need more time

²⁰ When I arrived in Khun Yuam in November 1991, there were two video shops. Half way through 1992, only one remained.

to comprehend the complexities of the stock market. Radio, on the other hand, broadcasts the prices and movements of commodities, agricultural ones in particular. Listeners to such programmes are probably farmers and traders who engage in cash crop trade rather than shopkeepers. All of this information is, of course, broadcast in Thai.

Reasons for using Thai

The Thai language is spoken for a number of reasons. The prime reason is that it is most appropriate for communication; many officials, including the police, the senior ones in particular, being non-Tai and non-Kon Müang. Moreover, they speak Thai to demonstrate that they are all *khaaraatchakaan* - the servants of the government and of the state. Thai is 'the official language' which they all share, not Tai nor Kam Müang. Diller (1991) provides several excellent explanations of the significance of the Thai language. He writes that it is due to the fact that Thai is, firstly, '...the norm for many religious and other ritual purposes, even where it is not the majority dialect spoken'; secondly, it is '...the official prescribed medium of instruction at all levels of public education'; and thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it is

...the leading prestige dialect favored by professionals and other high-status individuals. It is thus the variety that most parents would like to have their children learn to speak well for reasons of social mobility and occupational security (Diller 1991:99-100).

This is absolutely true as demonstrated by the case of the *phraraatchathaan phloe-ngsop* funeral of the former teacher primarily because of the Royal association. The Royal association symbolises the preferred aspects of Thai society.

Similar attitudes towards the Thai language, particularly the last one, are also shared by several shop owners, of all three speech groups. Well-to-do families or owners

of large shops in Khun Yuam normally send their children to study in secondary schools in Chiang Mai, especially the private ones. Many of them have relatives or friends living in Chiang Mai, some have even bought houses for their children there. Two shop owners, for example, one Kon Müang, the other Thai, agreed that secondary schools in Chiang Mai not only provided better education, but better opportunities for their children. As the Kon Müang father remarked,

We are all from a business family background, so our children will of course do business in the future. They will know each other from these schools and, later, when they begin to do business, they will know who they should do business with. It is good to have old school friends who do business together. Besides, these schools have better teachers. Everything is better.

In other words, these schools are meeting places for children of similar socio-economic background.

Although a lot of Chiang Mai's residents speak Kam Müang, Thai is widely used in schools and universities, when business is involved and when dealing with the administration. In any case, as far as the well-to-do families of Khun Yuam are concerned, renowned schools in Chiang Mai offer all one needs. They offer education, access to the Thai language, an understanding of a lifestyle associated with a higher social status, intimacy among the children of wealthy business families and the opportunity to gain familiarity with the urban way-of-life. Perhaps, this suggests that the better-income families in Khun Yuam market town are conscious of social mobility and the need to acquire fluency in the Thai language to achieve a higher social status after already having financial success.²¹ Very few residents of the market town would find any difficulty in learning Thai owing to the

²¹ Thanet Charoenmuang (1993) notes that many Kon Müang parents in the urban area of Chiang Mai also speak to their children in Thai, not Kam Müang. This is because they share a similar attitude towards the Thai language with those who live in Khun Yuam. As a result, many Kon Müang children in Chiang Mai cannot speak Kam Müang. Thanet sees such a phenomenon as a threat to local culture and identity.

close linguistic relationship between the Tai, Kam Müang and Thai languages, and the many long-time contacts between the three groups of speakers.

However, I neither want to mislead the readers nor to conclude that the influx of Thai has displaced local languages. It is definitely not my intention to draw such a conclusion. Although it is true that the Thai language is in use in the town, it is not the everyday language of ordinary persons. Only shopkeepers and, more especially, the schoolteachers and the *khaaraatchakaan* speak the language daily in their workplaces. This is due to the necessity of Thai in their respective professions.

TAI AND KAM MÜANG

Residents of Khun Yuam mainly speak Tai and Kam Müang in their daily life. Tai townspeople use both Tai and Kam Müang. Most Kon Müang only speak Kam Müang fluently, but those who married local Tai or have been brought up by Tai-Kon Müang parents are possibly able to speak both languages. None of the Thai *khaaraatchakaan* speak Tai or Kam Müang. Only a few Thai men who married local women, as far as I know, seem to speak Tai or Kam Müang - or both, though most of them understand the two languages rather well. On the other hand, a number of Karen and Hmong, especially males, speak Tai or Kam Müang or both.

Tai and Kam Müang are employed at home, among family's members, friends and neighbours, in the town's morning market and in shops - unless the customers or shopkeepers are Thai. In the past, the Tai spoken language was the lingua franca of Khun Yuam. It was also used by traders and travellers from Burma, Mae Hong Son and other towns. Its written language was taught among the monks, novices and learned men. However, the importance of Tai has declined, particularly in the

town area. Since many residents who live in and around the town, travellers, outside traders and salespeople are Kon Müang, Kam Müang has gradually become more important than Tai in the wider socio-economic context (as has, of course, more recently - the Thai language). If a group of friends or neighbours includes Tai and Kon Müang, Kam Müang is usually employed. Kam Müang is also spoken among Tai and Kon Müang colleagues, especially in schools and at the district hospital. On the other hand, men who live in Tai neighbourhoods and do not engage in trade often choose to speak Tai. Obviously, the use of Tai and Kam Müang reflects a relaxed, informal, atmosphere, as well as close intimacy among the speakers. I shall now concentrate on the languages spoken inside and outside the homes.

At home

The language spoken in the family is a complex issue. Although most of the residents of Khun Yuam market are bilingual, only family members of cross-ethnic marriages speak two languages at home. This is, however, not always true. Many children of Tai-Kon Müang and Tai-Thai parents do not speak Tai, though their Tai parents sometimes talk to them in Tai.²² Kam Müang is clearly preferred, especially if the children study in Chiang Mai and/or if their close friends are Kon Müang. For example, in two families, where the fathers are Thai and the mothers are Tai, the children speak Thai to their fathers and Kam Müang to their mothers. Both families own large shops, one selling liquor and the other motor parts. The parents send their children to secondary schools in Chiang Mai.

One interesting case is that of Maana Siinuukham. He is a Thai who married a local Tai and decided to settle in Khun Yuam. He operates a garage (details of his life

²² Some of these children said that they understood the Tai language but could not speak it fluently. Some knew little and could not speak it at all.

will be given in Chapter Five). Maana usually speaks Thai with a mixture of Tai words. Although his comprehension of Tai is beyond doubt, he always speaks Thai. Conversations in his home or among relatives and friends, most of whom are Tai, are always mixtures of Thai and Tai. Yet, everything seems spontaneous and comprehensible. His daughter always employs Tai to communicate with her mother and close matrilineal kin, but she talks to her father in Thai. When she is among friends of her own age, she converses in Kam Müang. Maana's son, on the other hand, prefers to use Kam Müang and Thai. He understands Tai but hardly speaks the language. This boy, like most children of wealthy shop owners, studies in a secondary school in Chiang Mai.

Since family relationships in the town are both bilineal and bilateral, the languages spoken at home are a matter of convenience.²³ For instance, in the case of a Kon Müang woman who married to a Tai, her children and grandchildren speak Tai at home because their dwelling is in a Tai speaking neighbourhood. On the other hand, a Tai man with a Kon Müang wife, despite keeping a cohesive relationship with his own kin, talks Kam Müang most of the time because his customers and trading partners are Kon Müang. There is thus no absolute rule about which side of the kin influences the choice of language(s) spoken in an ordinary family. Yet it is clear that among traders and shop owners the family's languages are closely related with trade and trading partnerships.²⁴ In such cases, the Tai language is normally used less in Tai trader's families than in ordinary Tai families.

²³ The post-marriage settlement, on the contrary, seems to be a matter of survival. A newly married couple, for example, usually prefer to live with the parents or parents-in-law until they can afford to be independent and build their own house. The couple, however, will maintain their relationship with their kin. In fact, most residents of Khun Yuam are related to each other, one way or another.

²⁴ In Khun Yuam, friendship and trading partnership are like two sides of a coin. If a shop owner holds a function at home, such as a wedding or a new house blessing, there is no doubt that his business partners will be invited. They may often get together for 'evening drinks'.

Clearly, languages spoken in one family are related to occupation, life style, friends, neighbours and workmates. There are a number of parents, especially those who are *khaaraatchakaan*, who are non-Thai speakers but who often talk to their children in Thai. A Kon Müang military captain whose wife is also a Kon Müang, for instance, always speaks to his children in Thai. His home town is in Phayao Province and he works at the district office. The captain told me that since his sons already know Kam Müang, he wants them to be fluent in Thai. He is worried that they will be embarrassed if they cannot speak Thai fluently or correctly (*phuut phaasaathai majchat*). Another case concerns a Tai father and a Kon Müang mother, both of whom work in the district hospital. They usually chat to their only son in Kam Müang and sometimes in Thai. Their Tai neighbours, who also work in the same hospital, normally talk to the child in Kam Müang and hardly ever in Tai. I am certain that this child fully comprehends the Tai language, but no one seems to communicate to him in this language. Some Tai parents, all of whom are teachers, usually speak to their children in Kam Müang and - sometimes - Thai.

Tai families of craftsmen and labourers seem more conservative about their language. Tai is obviously pre-eminent at home. Families of cross-ethnic marriage are no exception. Some non-Tai and non-Kon Müang fathers in these families found themselves in an awful situation when they began to learn Tai and were laughed at when they made a mistake, but they experienced pleasure as well.²⁵ Language is no barrier between these men and their close male kin, neighbours and friends (see below).

Some families with a Karen parent are worth noting. Many Karen speak Kam Müang and, sometimes, Thai. Some of them are even fluent in Tai. Those who speak Tai normally work or trade with Tai speakers and some may have married

²⁵ There are, as far as I know, only two or three males who are Thai, but many are Kon Müang.

local Tai. In one family, of a Tai father and Karen mother, the language employed at home is Tai. Their son-in-law, though he is a Karen by birth, speaks Tai as well. So do some of the matrilineal kin, especially when they come to visit the Karen mother. Another example is a Karen man who operates a small band of contract construction workers. He communicates in Tai because most of his hired men and friends who trade with him, who often visit his home for a few drinks or a game of cards, are Tai speakers.²⁶

Since the languages spoken at home in the town vary from case to case, it is difficult to predict which language(s) will be used based on any one single factor. In addition, in families of cross-ethnic marriage, the main language, or languages, used by families' members is not solely influenced by the parents, but is also determined by occupation, location of the home and relationships with kin, friends and/or neighbours. One of the extraordinary cases is a family where the father, a retired logging truck driver, speaks Thai and the mother who operates a small eating house is an Isan.²⁷ Their children are inclined to speak Kam Müang most of the time. While their mother seems to get along well with Kam Müang, the father scarcely speaks any language but Thai.

Another Tai-Isan couple, both of whom are *khaaraatchakaan*, speak Thai and Kam Müang at home. The Isan mother, who does not know Kam Müang, always converses in Thai, while the Tai father talks to his sole daughter in Kam Müang and to his wife in Thai. He does not use Tai with his daughter. The little girl, on the other hand, seems to be able to speak all three languages because the housemaid is a Tai. Like the military captain, this Tai father explained to me that he prefers his child to be fluent in Thai. The most distinguished case is probably Itsara Itsarasak

²⁶ The Karen in both cases are Buddhists.

²⁷ *Isan* refers to the northeastern region of the country - it usually includes the people who live in that region as well.

and his family (already mentioned in the Appendix to Chapter Two). Itsara, whose parents were Bengali and Tai, speaks Tai and Kam Müang and claims that since he has travelled and traded itinerantly for many years, he also has a good command of the Thai, Karen and Burmese languages. Everyone in his family, including his daughter-in-law and a grandchild, speaks Tai as their first language. Kam Müang and Thai are used when business is involved.²⁸

Many children of Tai fathers prefer Kam Müang as their first language. On the other hand, a number of men, including Nopphadon Phongtaa (a barber) and Iam Khamsae-n (a teacher), whose fathers are Kon Müang and mothers are Tai, favour the Tai language and associate with Tai friends most of the time. Another example is Itsara Itsarasak, who is an offspring of Bangladeshi-Tai parents. While Itsara's mother tongue is Tai, many so-called 'khae-k' men, most of whom work as labourers and live in the eastern outskirts of the town, speak Kam Müang. The latter assured me that they are Kon Müang and not 'khae-k' - a term they find offensive. One man, Pan Chookcuncya, whose father was Chinese and mother Kon Müang, also insists that he is a Kon Müang. Pan speaks Kam Müang, but married a Tai woman.

Nonetheless, there are some connections between the language(s) one speaks and one's relations with kin and friends. For instance, both Nopphadon Phongtaa and Itsara Itsarasak married Tai women and have lived in Tai neighbourhoods. Iam Khamsae-n spent his childhood among his Tai mother's kin and Tai friends, most of whom he still keeps in contact with. The three men, therefore, became surrounded by Tai speakers and have Tai as their first language. On the other hand, Pan Chookcuncya and the descendants of Bangladeshi males dwell among the Kon

²⁸ Although his wife helps in the shop, she speaks very little of the Thai language. But his children talk Thai quite fluently.

Müang. Their relatives, friends and neighbours, who are sometimes their workmates, are mainly Kon Müang. Their first language is Kam Müang.

In summary, it is possible to suggest that the most common languages spoken at home in the market town are Tai and Kam Müang, and that the Thai language is increasingly employed, especially among the *khaaraatchakaan*, schoolteachers and shop owners. Thai is also spoken at home if one of the parents is a Thai speaker. Children seem to prefer Kam Müang to Tai, particularly among their own age-group.

In the morning market and shops

All three languages are employed in the morning market and the shops. Nonetheless, the use of Kam Müang and Thai has become more frequent and significant than Tai, particularly in shops. Kam Müang is probably the most convenient and suitable language since almost all shopkeepers speak it. Tai is spoken only when the customer and shopkeeper are both Tai. If the customer is a Thai, and the shop attendant cannot speak Thai - which is very rare - he/she will fetch someone who can. While most of the Karen customers converse in Kam Müang, most of the Hmong who come to the town prefer the Thai language,²⁹ though some of them are fluent in Kam Müang.

Each shop has its own regular customers. Shop owner or shop attendant always keeps their regular customers by offering a better service or giving a discount price. Shopkeepers rarely make their customers feel ill at ease. If any goods required by a customer are not held in the shop, the owner or shop attendant will tell his/her

²⁹ Many Hmong people seem to speak Thai with an accent. This sometimes becomes a joke among shopkeepers, those who are Thai in particular. Nevertheless, since these Hmong men are regular customers, the jokes never go far enough to become offensive. Shopkeepers are well aware that they should not irritate the Hmong customers.

customer to go to other shops that sell similar products. Normally, customers of all speech groups often stop at their regular shops for a chat, to watch television or even to have an alcohol drink. There is obviously some sort of intimate relationship between shop owners/attendants and their regular customers. The two parties, needless to say, do not necessarily belong to the same speech group. Thai men who run shops do not seem to have any problem communicating with their customers. Since most of them have lived in the town for one or two decades, they fully understand Tai or Kam Müang, though they may hardly speak them at all.

During the eighteen months of my stay in the town, I did not witness any fights or quarrels among shopkeepers. As a matter of fact, they seem to have some level of co-operation. A motorcycle mechanic, for example, often goes to another garage for some spare parts he does not have. Or a teacher, who wants to buy a bottle of spirits and finds that none is left in the shop, may be taken by the shop owner on the back of his motorcycle to another liquor shop. Such incidents are common.

Social and religious functions

Languages used in social gatherings, such as weddings and funerals, depend not only on ethnicity, but also the occupation, social and financial status of the hosts or organisers of the functions.³⁰ Well-to-do families of traders and schoolteachers are inclined to speak Thai and invite non-local guests, who are often Thai senior *khaaraatchakaan*. Announcements and speeches, if any, are usually made in Thai or Kam Müang, or both. If the wedding or funeral, on the other hand, is organised by an ordinary family or a small shop owner, Thai is rarely used. On such an

³⁰ In Khun Yuam town, the issue of location is less important than in the villages. I once participated in the funeral of an old woman, who was the mother of a hospital staff member, in the Tai village of Müang Pau-n. Several Kon Müang guests, including the chief doctor, nurses and schoolteachers, were invited, but from the beginning till the end of the funeral, Tai was spoken. Announcements and speeches were all in Tai. In this case, the explanation is clear: it was a Tai village.

occasion, Kam Müang is again more likely to be employed than Tai because the host, though he/she is a Tai, may have invited some Kon Müang guests. Tai is spoken only among Tai speakers.

In 1992, for instance, there were at least three weddings held in the town area. At the first wedding, a Tai woman, who operated a small eating house, married a Tai man who was a labourer. A religious function was held in the morning, followed by a feast for the guests at lunch time. The wedding then finished. It was an ordinary wedding celebration. The guests were nearly all local Tai and Kon Müang. Only one guest was a Karen, Sombuun Khiirikaset, who was a member of the Mae Hong Son Provincial Council for Khun Yuam District (details about this man will be given in Chapter Six).³¹ Sombuun appeared to be the bride's neighbour and was invited by her parents. Not a single word of Thai was heard at this wedding. In contrast, at another wedding, of a Kon Müang schoolteacher and a Tai female, the Thai language was used for the most important parts of the ceremony. On the wedding day, the bridegroom dressed up in his formal white government official uniform and walked in the wedding procession through the middle of the town to the house of the bride's parents. Like the first wedding, the day started with a Buddhist ceremony and was followed by a feast at noon. Unlike the first, however, several guests of the bridegroom continued to drink into the afternoon. Many guests were government servants and schoolteachers. Speeches and announcements at the wedding were mainly in Thai, with some use of Kam Müang. Tai was only used by some individuals in private conversations.

The third was the wedding of a Tai woman and a Kon Müang man, both of whom worked in the Khun Yuam office of a logging company. The bride's father was Thamrong Bunphithak, Head of the Khun Yuam Primary Education Office. The

³¹ Sombuun spoke Karen, Tai, Kam Müang, Thai and a couple of other languages.

young Tai-Kon Müang couple held a Buddhist ceremony in the morning and a party at night. There were almost one hundred guests - a rather big party by Khun Yuam standards. Some senior *khaaraatchakaan*, Thai and Kon Müang, came from Mae Hong Son and Mae Sariang as the guests of the bride's father. The Kon Müang bosses of the bride and groom were also invited. When the parents of the bride and groom were asked to give a speech and bless the young couple, they spoke in Kam Müang. The bride and groom were then taken to their bedroom, where the parents gave them advice on how to maintain a happy marriage and so on. Friends and guests began to tease the couple - of course, in Kam Müang. Throughout the morning function and the night party, Kam Müang and some Thai were spoken.

The issue of which languages are used in communal religious ceremonies is less complicated than the question of which languages are employed in social gatherings. In religious ceremonies, the choice is normally related to the ethnicity of the organisers or the location of the functions. If the ceremony is held in a Tai monastery, the language is certainly Tai. When schoolteachers are the host of an annual Buddhist celebration, it is likely that Thai or Kam Müang will be used. Two very interesting cases should be noted. In 1992, two senior Tai monks were cremated.³² Both monks were born in Khun Yuam and had been ordained since they were young. In the first funeral, despite the participation of several different speech groups, all of the announcements and speeches were solely in Tai. The second was the funeral of the former abbot of Cau-ng Kham Naj. Tai and Kam Müang were used from the first day until the last - the cremation day (see details in Appendix 4). The two funerals were essential and meaningful to the locals as well as uniting them.

³² Unlike the funeral of an ordinary person, the funeral of a monk is a communal function. In addition, because the deceased were both renowned monks, who were respected by the locals and outsiders, the two funerals became public events. Participants from Mae Sariang, Mae Hong Son, Mae La Noi, Pai and Mae Chaem, came to Khun Yuam to pay their last respects.

However, Thai was also used in the two funerals. The schedules of the funerals, the details of the programme and any announcements displayed on the notice boards of the monasteries were all written in Thai. The names of those who offered their money to cover the expenditures of the funerals and the amount of money donated were all recorded in the monastery's notebooks - in Thai. As a matter of fact, Thai is the only written language that is in use. The written forms of Tai and Kam Müang are never employed publicly in Khun Yuam (I shall deal with this issue later).

Intimacy and jokes

Close friends, males and females, usually speak Tai or Kam Müang among themselves. This indicates intimacy and informal and relaxed friendships. Yet, this is not always true. As groups of schoolteachers or shopkeepers who drink together are not always all Tai or all Kon Müang, the Thai language is spoken from time to time. In fact, a few yarns or jokes are told to entertain the Thai audience. The joke about illegal Tai immigrants is a good example. In contrast, Thai is rarely spoken between townspeople who are non-*khaaraatchakaan* or non-shopkeepers. The following discussion concentrates on the male residents of the town.

Many men spend their leisure time drinking. On such occasions, food is often served and the men play cards and/or exchange yarns, jokes, or any tales - in, of course, Tai or Kam Müang. They usually invite friends or neighbours to drink at their homes. Men sometimes invite those who work for them for a drink to discuss some business (see below). Few people drink on their own. On pay-day at the end of the month, those who earn a salary sometimes get together at the eating house

owned by Itthiphon Wongwaanit,³³ which provides a *karaoke* player and sometimes a local music band. Those who do not earn a salary, such as shop owners and craftsmen, normally drink at home, but a few of the young ones who are closely related to the teachers sometimes meet at the eating house on pay-day. During the month, when their cash has run out, those who maintain 'a good name' (always pay their debts, large or small, on time) buy a bottle of 'Thai whisky' at Thaloe-ng Krajkae-w's shop. Some schoolteachers prefer to buy liquor at the retail shops owned by Suphaap Kaawi (I shall return to Thaloe-ng and Suphaap in Chapter Six), where they are always allowed to have credit for a month. While drinking and eating in someone's house or an eating house, the men will either sing songs or tell jokes. The well-known yarns are always concerned with languages, Tai in particular.

I have little doubt that all the jokes, especially the first one told below, were originally created by Tai men who were born in Thailand and understand the Thai language well. The jokes were intended to amuse the Tai men and their friends. The most popular joke told among the men while drinking is a story about Tai newcomers. It is said that: since there were too many Tai immigrants illegally crossing the border from Burma to Thailand, the Thai police were alert, trying to catch them. To distinguish the Burmese Tai from the Tai of Thailand, the police lined up all the suspects at the border checkpoint and required them to say '*nyng baat*' (literally, one baht). Many failed to say it correctly, instead they say '*nyng waat*'. This is due to the fact that the *b* sound in the Thai language is often pronounced as *w* in Tai, and only those who grow up in Thailand or are familiar with the Thai language will be able to recognise the difference. Then came a young man who managed to get it right, so the policemen let him cross the border into

³³ Itthiphon Wongwaanit, or Poong as he is known among the locals, was born in Khun Yuam, of a Thai father and Tai mother. He graduated from a teacher's college and teaches full-time at a primary school. He also helps his wife, a Karen woman, run an eating house after work.

Thailand. While leaving the border checkpoint, the man looked back, smiling, and said to himself, '*sawaaj*', which was of course the mis-pronounced form of a Thai word *sabaaj* - meaning as 'That was easy'.

Among these extraordinary yarns, *kin waan* or *het waan* is another term that is heard over and over again. The words *kin waan* in Tai mean 'delicious, delicacy', but 'preferring a sweet taste' in Thai. Thus, the story is often told of a Tai man who went into an eating house in Bangkok and ordered a '*kin waan waan*' bowl of noodles. The Thai cook, unaware of what his customer really wanted, made the noodles very sweet. (As a matter of fact, when the Tai invite friends or someone to join them in a meal, either at home, in a monastery, or anywhere, they always say to others '*kin waan waan*' - 'have a nice, delicious meal'. But in this story, the Tai man requested a 'delicious' bowl of noodles.)

Telling jokes about Tai speakers making mistakes in Thai is not merely a matter of having fun. It may also serve to distinguish oneself from others. Most of the jokes imply something about the ability of the narrator in the Tai and Thai languages and, more importantly, about their own identity. These jokes suggest that Tai men in Thailand, unlike the Burmese Tai, possess an excellent command of the Thai language. It is thus obvious that they are Thai citizens. Although their ethnicity is Tai, they also belong to the larger Thai society. Recognition of Thai identity is probably due to the increasing individual awareness of nationalism in Thailand (cf. Diller 1991).

Local males who are artisans, craftsmen and labourers have some association with Thai men,³⁴ but I have scarcely ever heard them speak Thai while drinking. Either Tai or Kam Müang is the pre-eminent language, though sometimes both are used. I

³⁴ Especially Thai men who had married local women.

once witnessed a group of these men - a few were Kon Müang, two Thai, and the rest Tai - drinking after winning at cock-fighting. I was trying to follow the conversations, which were a mixture of Kam Müang and Tai. The Kon Müang pedlar/truck driver, who treated for that day and was already drunk, tried to talk to me in a combination of Kam Müang and Thai. None of the Tai men spoken any language but Tai. The two Thai men, who had lived in the Tai neighbourhood for some time, also chatted in Tai.³⁵

Special skills sometimes draw men together and intimate friendship may subsequently develop. Before the rainy season of 1992, for instance, I observed a construction deal between Iam Khamsae-n, a Tai teacher, and several Tai builders. Iam, who wanted his new house built, asked me to go to a shop and buy a bottle of rice wine while he prepared some dishes. The host received the builders at his home and the negotiation began. Iam tried to bargain for the lowest cost while the leader of the builders tried to get the best out of the contract. Of course, while talking, they also drank and ate. Finally, both sides reached an agreement. When the house was finished four months later, Iam gave the builders another drinking party during which they emptied four or five bottles of rice wine and several dishes of food. Again, the teacher bore the cost. Then, on the day of the house's blessing, he again invited all the builders to join the feast at his new house. Iam explained that though these men were hired by him, the cost of the construction was reasonable and the house was very well-built. Besides, they were all Tai, and as he put it, 'Well-skilled builders are rare here and it is usually expensive to hire them. But these men

³⁵ One of the Thai men informed me that he had travelled and worked in many places before he met a Tai friend who persuaded him to visit Khun Yuam. He then fell in love with the man's sister and married her. He had lived here ever since. He found that living in Khun Yuam was pleasant and peaceful, and that the local Tai were friendly, despite the difficulty of learning the Tai language. He and his Tai male kin and neighbours not only worked - usually labouring or peddling some dry food - but always spent their leisure time together. At the time I met him, he was building his own house with the help of his wife's kin and neighbours, after living with his parents-in-law for several years. He said that apart from these men, he was not acquainted with other townspeople.

are good. You never know, you might need their help again'. I am thus tried to keep on good terms with these men.

Another Tai man, Nikhom Cantharakamon, bought teak window frames and door frames from some Tai carpenters. He sometimes visited the carpenters and never forgot to bring them something. Nikhom was preparing all the timber needed for his new house and wanted these carpenters to build it. His reasons for maintaining a good relationship with the carpenters were similar to those of the teacher with his builders. Unfortunately, I do not know whether or not such relationships are established among Kon Müang residents since I do not have any information on this. However, I know of one or two Kon Müang men who asked their workmates, all of whom worked in the hospital, to help them renovate their houses. While the former provided all the necessities for renovation, including food and drinks, the latter offered their carpentry skills and received no wages. It was, however, well-understood among these men that the former would, in the future, have to reciprocate in some way.

To summarise, one can say that among groups of close friends, neighbours, or workmates, Kam Müang is the most common language used because these groups are usually composed of Tai and Kon Müang. Since many Kon Müang also understand Tai, however, it is not unusual for Tai to be spoken as well. On the other hand, local Tai who are neither shopkeepers nor *khaaraatchakaan* employ Tai as the prime language among close mates, even if some of them are Kon Müang and Thai.

The uses of Tai, Kam Müang and Thai in Khun Yuam town

Tai is used

- a. in families whose members, including kinsmen of both sides, are Tai;
- b. among friends, neighbours and workmates who are Tai;
- c. between adults and children who are Tai;
- d. among children and teenagers who are all Tai;
- e. in the district hospital - when the patients and hospital staff are all Tai;
- f. in the morning market and shops, if sellers and buyers are Tai;
- g. in Tai temples or any religious ceremony that is organised by local Tai;
- h. in social gatherings whose participants are Tai.

Kam Müang is spoken

- a. among Kon Müang families or a cross-marriage family in which one of the parents is a Kon Müang;
- b. when some friends, neighbours or workmates are Kon Müang;
- c. between adults and children, if some of them are Kon Müang;
- d. among children and teenagers, if some of them are Kon Müang;
- e. in schools - among Tai and Kon Müang teachers (but not in classrooms) and among Tai and Kon Müang pupils;
- f. most of the time in the district hospital;
- g. at the district office - only among Tai and Kon Müang officers;
- h. in the morning market and shops, if some of the traders or customers are Kon Müang;
- i. in the Kon Müang temple or when a religious ceremony is organised by Kon Müang;
- j. in social gatherings whose participants are Tai and Kon Müang;

- k. in any conversation in which the participants are multi-ethnic, including local Tai, Kon Müang, Karen and even some Hmong.

Thai is employed

- a. between parents, one of whom (or both) is Thai and/or *kharaatchakaan*, and their children;
- b. among government servants at the district office;
- c. in schools;
- d. in the morning market and shops - if some of the sellers or buyers are Thai;
- e. between adults and children - if the adults are Thai;
- f. when friends or work colleagues are Thai;
- g. among government servants in social gatherings;
- h. in religious ceremonies that are organised by schoolteachers and/or *khaaraatchakaan*;
- i. in functions that are considered to be prestigious, such as the *phraraatchathaan phloe-ngsop*;
- j. in public announcements that are related to the government or school activities;
- k. in all written forms concerned with banking, trading, legal and official affairs.

WRITTEN LANGUAGE

The most significant aspect of the Thai language is that it is the only written language known and used by a large number of the townspeople. All shop names in Khun Yuam, for example, are written in Thai. A lot of Tai and Kon Müang residents have adopted Thai personal names and surnames. All of the written documents used in the banking system, business and commerce are in Thai.

Innovations introduced to the region have Thai names. In addition, Thai is used for entertainment, such as reading novels or stories in the newspapers and women's magazines, as well as for receiving information on almost every issue. This is partly due to the fact that the locals have to learn Thai at school, but mainly because of the increase of trading activities with Bangkok and the influence of Thai mass media.

In 1992, many local Tai and Kon Müang possessed a good command of the Thai language. There were three shops selling Thai language newspapers, magazines and comic books. These shops also offered a book order service for customers who wanted other books not sold in the shops - this was done by sending the orders to larger bookshops in Chiang Mai. Almost every eating house in the town provided Thai newspapers for their customers; and while the adults enjoyed reading newspapers and entertainment magazines, the children's favourites were comic books.³⁶ I know of many female residents in their thirties, not to mention the males, of both Tai and Kon Müang ethnicity who were always reading newspapers and magazines. Two Tai women in particular, who worked in the hospital, subscribed to some Thai women's magazines. After all, reading newspapers is often enjoyable because most Thai newspapers provide some serialised stories.

The level of Thai literacy among the Tai of Khun Yuam seems somewhat better than other Tai speakers in the region. Eberhardt (1984) reports that

Most adults in Huai Pha [a village located in the north of Mae Hong Son town] have at least some minimal competence in the Thai language and many can read Thai. Few but the schoolteachers are fluent, however (Eberhardt 1984:27, footnote 7).

³⁶ The influx of Thai newspapers into this region began not less than two decades ago. Maitri Limpichat, a Thai writer, who spent a few months living in a monastery in Mae Hong Son town in the mid-1970s, recalls that some of the Tai monks and novices read the Thai newspapers (Maitri 1980:257).

This is possibly owing to the fact that Khun Yuam provides its residents with more access to the Thai language, for instance, through television, radio, or other kinds of mass media. Another important aspect is that in the last two decades or so, salespeople, especially those representing companies in Bangkok, have arrived with various kinds of new products. New traders who visit the town regularly speak no other language but Thai. This has made the Thai language essential for the locals who trade with these new traders. Therefore, unlike in the past when Tai was usually spoken in trading activities, Thai is now important in the new commercial environment. It is employed not merely to speak to the salespeople, but its written form is also significant. Goods orders, company's bills, receipts, cheques together with any forms used for banking, money orders and mail orders, are all written in Thai. Information sent by fax is written in Thai as well.

This new development is crucial to local shopkeepers. Although they have to learn new skills, such as how to operate a facsimile machine and how the banking system works, they gain fantastic benefits. As mentioned previously, formal education has been available to the townspeople for many decades. Unlike in the past, local girls and women now have access to education, especially those who come from a trading background.³⁷ More females, Tai and Kon Müang, do not merely become literate. Those who engage in trade also have at least a basic knowledge of mathematics, an understanding of how to calculate the profits on goods, the ability to bargain, to set prices and to keep an account book. In the old days, women learnt all these skills by trading or working in a shop for years. Today, with the help of schooling, women acquire such skills in a much shorter time. Additionally, the Thai language makes it easier for women, as well as men, to get information about business and commerce. For example, there are several Thai business newspapers

³⁷ In those days, males were literate but most of the females were not. Boys, ordained as novices, learnt how to read and write Tai in the monasteries. Similar situations also occurred in the Shan States. Milne (1970:49-65) documents that Tai girls and women in Burma could not read or write. Only boys were educated; needless to say, they were taught by the monks.

and magazines, both weekly and monthly, available for anyone who is able to read Thai.³⁸ In other words, the Thai language, spoken and written, now serves trading purposes as well. It is not merely the prestigious language used by officials and educated people such as schoolteachers. Thai is also employed for trade between multi-lingual groups, for the exchange of information and for entertaining. In Khun Yuam town, the Thai language fulfils both political and socio-economic needs.

In addition, one should bear in mind that for many townspeople the difference between their knowledge of, and use of spoken and written Thai are great. Though many of them can speak and read Thai fluently, writing the language can be quite awkward as they have scarcely practised writing since finishing compulsory education. The difficulty of writing Thai becomes apparent when the locals contact the police or district officers. An ordinary person, Tai or Kon Müang, may find it difficult to fill in written forms at the district office or the police station. But there is a solution to the problem with forms. At the bank, its staff will fill in any form for customers who are not familiar with written Thai (all documents, including the customers' individual bankbooks, are written in Thai).³⁹

The use of the Tai written language, on the other hand, was less common. Although Tai written language has long been taught in the monasteries - from monks to novices, from males to males - not many local men are (and were) able to read and write Tai. Only senior monks and those who were ordained for a number of years are literate in Tai.⁴⁰ Most women are (and were) illiterate in Tai. It is only recently that girls have been allowed to learn from the monks, though the students are still mainly boys. The Tai written language, moreover, has been mainly

³⁸ Ordinary newspapers also provide information about trade and business, but not as much as the business ones.

³⁹ Many staff of the bank are not local, so conversations among the staff are exchanged in Thai and Kam Müang most of the time.

⁴⁰ Men who are literate in Tai are called *calee*.

employed for religious rituals. It has been read by monks to give sermons, to teach the religion - Buddhism, to emphasise what should be done and what should not, to bless the dead and those who are still alive. It has been read by local *calee* to tell the stories of the *jataka*, to allow laypeople who attend a religious function to acquire merit and to entertain them. At the local level, therefore, written Tai has been used for religious purposes only. In comparison, the Tai in Mae Hong Son normally employ their written language in traditional medical activities. Durrenberger (1983a), for example, indicates that the Tai

....writing system is used primarily to record traditional healing activities and other traditional lore. In some village practitioners use it to prepare and prescribe herbal medicines, diagnose illness, and determine auspicious and inauspicious days (Durrenberger 1983a:120).

The Tai written language has rarely been employed in trading activities. At present, many Tai parents and grandparents have co-operated with Tai monks to establish a course at Cau-ng Muaj Tau to teach the Tai written language to the children. So far, only a small group of Tai children, some of whose parents are not shopkeepers, has participated.⁴¹

The Kam Müang written language, as far as I know, is not used or taught in the town. None of the Kon Müang monks, novices, or elders is able to read or write Kam Müang. In Khun Yuam, Kam Müang is solely a spoken language.

⁴¹ Non-trader's families seem to be more concerned about their children learning the Tai language than parents who are shop owners.

Table 3.1 Positive and negative ascriptions of Tai, Kam Müang and Thai

	Positive ascriptions	Negative ascriptions
Tai and Kam Müang	associated with the preservation of local values; direct, effective, trustworthy; friendly, warm, comfortable, personal, familiar	associated with locality; backwardness; substandard, outdated
Thai	associated with power and political-economic activities and innovations; high-status, prestige; correct, modern, educated; polite, respectful, reserved	associated with threats to local values; legalistic, formal, artificially serious

Note: This table is adapted from Diller (1979:83).

CONCLUSION

In his historical research on the Karen, Renard (1980) suggests that a language indicates one's identity. He writes that

...it is impossible to be a Karen and not to speak at least one Karen dialect. However, there is one group, the Pa-Os, who, though speaking a Karen language, neither identify themselves as Karens nor are thought of as Karens by their neighbors. The language 'test,' thus, is only one way of identifying 'Karen-ness' (Renard 1980:4).

Since most locals in Khun Yuam speak two, three or even more, the language one speaks is not merely an indication of ethnic identity. Although it may be true that local Tai prefer to speak Tai, most of them, especially those who are shopkeepers and/or married to Kon Müang women, use Kam Müang as often as Tai. In Khun Yuam town, one does not always identify one's identity by the language one speaks. Rather, language demonstrates the social and economic status of the speakers, as well as the relationship between the speakers. As shown previously, the uses of the Tai, Kam Müang and Thai languages vary depending on place, circumstance, ethnicity and occupation of the speakers and their addressees.

Tai was the lingua franca of Khun Yuam in the old days. It was used when people were dealing in trade, in communal ceremonies and in everyday life. It was widely spoken by the Tai, Karen, Kayah, Pa-O and Lua, though none of the last three groups lives in the Khun Yuam area at the present time.⁴² This dominant position of Tai is clearly because the Tai people in the past took part in and eventually controlled local trade. Their language was therefore the main language of trade.

⁴² A similar situation occurred in the Shan States, where Tai was a lingua franca in the old days, among buyers and sellers in particular. Milne (1970:132) says that in the Shan States of Burma, '...Nearly all Kachins can speak and understand a good deal of Shan; indeed, the people of the different tribes use Shan as a common language'. The Palaung of Tawngpeng (see Collis 1938:214, and Lebar et al 1964:122) and several other ethnic groups also spoke Tai.

Since the Kon Müang have been associated with the townspeople (through trading and marriage) for at least two or three generations, Kam Müang is also spoken widely, and has even become more important than Tai. Kam Müang is normally spoken in Kon Müang families and in cross-marriage families in which one of the parents is Kon Müang. It is used in the morning market, in shops, in schools, at the district hospital - in fact, almost anywhere. All of the Tai children and teenagers, as well as almost all of the adults, including many Karen and Hmong, are able to speak Kam Müang.

One must not forget that Tai and Kam Müang are the mother tongues of the locals. Both languages indicate local values, intimacy, comfort, hospitality, sincerity and trust. Unlike Thai, which is often spoken in formal circumstance, the use of Tai or Kam Müang implies an informal and relaxed atmosphere. It is worth noting that almost all of the townspeople speak Kam Müang.

As we have seen, however, the influence of the Thai language is increasing rapidly, even faster than Kam Müang. Being a compulsory subject, the Thai language is taught in schools. Inside and outside the classrooms, pupils are also told to speak Thai to their teachers. The expansion of the mass media, television and radio in particular, and the arrival of Thai tourists and salespeople have all increased the use of the Thai language as well. Most importantly, females, of almost all ages, are literate in Thai. Being able to communicate with outsiders, more women engage in cross-regional trade. As Diller comments, moreover, Thai is thought to be prestigious. It is employed by the educated locals, for example, schoolteachers and wealthy shop owners, on special, formal occasions (note the *phraraatchathaan phloe-ngsop* of the former teacher).⁴³

⁴³ Another educated group is the local monks, who speak Thai at times, especially when outsiders pay a visit to the temples or a group of pilgrims come to make merit. Monks also think that it is appropriate to learn and be able to read and write Thai.

The increasing influence of Thai has some impacts. On the one hand, it supports economic and political changes in Khun Yuam, all of which are related to changes in modern Thailand. Thai provides new opportunities for the locals to take up jobs in current trade and commerce and to participate in the new social environment. Local people are able to receive all kinds of information, inside and outside their community, because they read Thai. Thai has linked such a remote area like Khun Yuam with the whole country and its capital. On the other hand, Thai is related to the loss of local identity. Owing to positive attitudes towards the language, for instance, many parents, especially those who are government servants, prefer to communicate with their children in Thai. Consequently, many of these children, whose parents are either Tai or Kon Müang, are not be able to speak Tai or Kam Müang fluently. Some children cannot speak Tai at all. Similar phenomenon occurs in other urban areas in the northern region (cf. Thanet Charoenmuang [1993]). In addition, the popularity of mass media has accelerated changes in the Tai and Kam Müang languages. As discussed in Chapter One, the influence of Thai can be seen in the use of Thai lexis in Tai and, even more, in Kam Müang. At present, many children have difficulties to understand their grandparents and elderly kin when they converse to each other in their mother tongue. Such changes in local languages have also widened the gap between the elders and young children.

To sum up, Tai, Kam Müang and Thai are all used in the town of Khun Yuam. Tai and Kam Müang are the main languages used in everyday life - inside and outside the home. They are spoken among members of the family, friends and neighbours, buyers and sellers and travellers. In the recent years, however, Thai, both spoken and written, has gradually become essential in many activities, such as trading and banking, communications, distribution of information and education. Its increasing influence is supported by the popularity of mass media and the boom of trade, new

businesses and tourism. Also, Thai is considered to be a prestigious language and is employed on formal occasions, especially among educated and well-to-do residents. The latter are so concerned with the language issue that they prefer to send their children to the expensive, prestigious, well-known, private schools in Chiang Mai, thinking that the children will get a better education, learn to speak Thai well, and associate with friends who belong to wealthy families. In other words, Thai is thought to be the language of educated people at the present time, just as Tai was in the past. In Khun Yuam town, the languages one speak clearly indicate the speaker's social and economic status as much as the speaker's ethnic identity.

CHAPTER FOUR

BUDDHIST MONKS AND THEIR SECULAR ROLES

Buddhist monk's involvement in everyday life is one of the most significant parts of way of life in Khun Yuam. My discussion in this chapter focuses on the secular roles of the monks. There are often related to local politics and administration. A major argument of this chapter relates to the way in which both monks and laypeople interpret their beliefs in religion and salvation. Personal merit, which is the essential achievement of one's life, is believed to be measurable by the prosperity and wealth of the individual. It is obvious that religious beliefs in Khun Yuam do not reject material wealth since some of this is distributed to the monasteries. Traders are praised by the monks for their financial support and other contributions to the monastery. In return, the monks sometimes give advice and help to their monastery's supporters. Thus, there is no doubt that merit, in the religious sense, can also be seen as honour, esteem and respect, in the community. Stories concerning a certain Buddhist monk also illustrate that a wealthy man who makes regular contributions to religion can later achieve prosperity, wealth and, of course, merit. In such cases, a wealthy person clearly has more opportunity to seek his/her own social reward, as well as spiritual salvation.

Monks, mainly from outside the district, also engage in politico-educational activities. Since it is believed that anyone who lives in Thailand should be a Buddhist, the aims of these activities are to convert non-Buddhist residents, Karen and Hmong children in particular, to Buddhism and to provide them with an education, which should include being able to read and write the Thai language. Although most financial support is given by donors from outside Khun Yuam, many local traders also sponsor these non-religious activities. Such assistance is thought to be an act of merit-making, as well as a demonstration of generosity and

kindness. In short, while I focus on the relationships between local traders and monks, in this chapter, my main argument is that wealth and Buddhism are related.

As mentioned earlier, almost all of the market town's residents are Buddhists. It is generally believed that much of the population outside the urban area, especially Karen speakers, are Christian, though it is not possible to estimate the relative numbers of Christian and non-Christian Karen. Such data are provided neither by the district office nor by the provincial office in Mae Hong Son.

PROPHET OF WEALTH

Let me first begin with how Buddhist beliefs support those who are better off than others in the community. I will consider the myth of Phra Uppakhut and the prospect of becoming wealthy. This legendary figure seems to occur in tales in many places in Thailand. He is known as 'Upagrutta' (Davis 1984) or 'Upagutta' (Rhum 1987) in the other provinces of the northern region, and 'Phraa Uppakrut' (Tambiah 1970) in the northeastern region.¹ He is sometimes referred to as 'Phra Upagota' (Wells 1975:114). Elsewhere, he is known as 'Upagupta' (Przyluski 1967, Strong 1983). Almost all of these versions relate Phra Uppakhut to rain making or protecting a festival against disaster², but in this case the story of Phra Uppakhut is associated with trading/traders and being wealthy. It shows, in my view, that through the interpretation of the Tai and the Kon Müang speakers, a Buddhist who seeks his or her own spiritual salvation should first ensure that he/she has acquired adequate merit. To do so, one must have a satisfactory source of income to provide offerings to the monasteries and, undoubtedly, trading is the

¹ My spelling is as it was pronounced by my elderly Tai informants. Rhum writes that in the Kam Müang language, his name is '...usually spelled **Uppagrud**', but pronounced as Uppakhut. This indicates '...a confusion with the word **garuda**' (Rhum 1987:187, footnote 22, emphasis original).

² Tambiah (1970:168-175) indicates that in the northeastern region, Uppakhut's role is connected with the *Bun Phraweet* festival in particular.

best tool to attain this aim. Thus, a trader who earns enough to contribute some of his/her surplus to the monasteries is always blessed (by the monks) not only for his/her generosity, but also because his/her prosperity - or wealth - will become greater according to the size of his/her donation.

According to Przyłuski (1967:4), Phra Uppakhut is said to have '...a merchant origin'.³ His father was a perfume merchant in Mathurā, in the north of India, and Upagupta himself helped in his father's trade for some time before he was ordained as a Buddhist monk. His story is well-known for his adventures with King Aśoka and his victory over '...Māra, the chief god of the realm of desire [kāmadhātu] who plays a somewhat satanic role as a tempter in Buddhism' (Strong 1983:16). Phra Uppakhut is also called a 'Buddha without the marks' or 'Alakṣaṇaka Buddha'. Strong (1983) explains that

...The implication is that he is like the Buddha in that he is enlightened and preaches sermons, but unlike him in that he does not possess the thirty-two major and eighty minor bodily marks of the Great Man [Mahāpuruṣa] (Strong 1983:81, footnote 27).

Phra Uppakhut, nonetheless, is a rather ambiguous and complex figure. According to Tambiah, there are at least three versions of the story of Phra Uppakhut told in the northeastern region. The first version is that Phra Uppakhut, or Tambiah's Phraa Uppakrut,

³ Strong (1983) comments that the life of Phra Uppakhut is always

...the subject of several legends. ...In a previous life, on Mount Urumunda, Upagupta is said to have been the leader of a band of monkeys who converted five hundred Brahmanical ascetics by imitating in front of them the meditative postures of Buddhist monks (Strong 1983:76-77).

The legend also continues that the current life as a son of a perfume merchant was in fact foreseen and predicted by the Buddha himself one hundred years before Phra Uppakhut was re-born (see details in Strong 1983:174-176).

In addition, though none of my informants in Khun Yuam mentioned the origin of Phra Uppakhut as a merchant's son, this seems to have some connection between Phra Uppakhut and trade/traders and wealth - see further.

...was a novice who lived in the water of the swamp (in a subterranean town). He was the son of Buddha and his mother was a mermaid. It is said that once the Buddha forced his semen ... into the water and a mermaid swallowed it, became pregnant and gave birth to Uppakrut.

The second version describes Phra Uppakhut as '...a *Naga* or serpent spirit', who '...lives in the water. ...He is invited to guard the proceedings; if he is not, then murder, storm and lightning will occur through the acts of Mara'. The third version recounts the story of Phra Uppakhut, who was then a monk practising '...water meditating',⁴ being invited to preside over '...a meeting of 1,000 monks in order to eliminate doctrinal differences. It was the third meeting of this sort since Lord Buddha's death' (Tambiah 1970:169-170).

Wells (1975) notes a story similar to Tambiah's second version in which '...King Asoka once decided to build 84,000 *ceityas* but Māra threatened to destroy them. The king appealed to the Lord of the Nāgas, Phra Upagota, to help him by capturing Māra. This the Nāga Lord did..'. (Wells 1975:114). Sathiankooset (Phya Anuman Rajadhon), a distinguished Thai scholar, notes that some versions say that Phra Uppakhut lives at the 'bottom of the sea'. He also suggests that such versions of the story seem to confuse Phra Uppakhut with the Lord of the Nagas, who also lives in the water (Sathiankooset 1965:194). A Burmese version, on the other hand, informs us that Phra Uppakhut, or Shin Upago - as he is called by the Burmese, resides '...down at the bottom of the river'. This is because

...In a former existence he carried off the clothes of a bather, and for this mischievous pleasantry is condemned to remain in his present quarters till Arimadeya, the next Buddha, shall come. Then he will be set free, and entering the thenga will become a yahanda, and attain Ne'ban [Nirvana] (Shway Yoe 1989:228-229).

⁴ A similar version is also told by Davis (1984). In this version Phra Uppakhut '...is a Buddhist ascetic whose solitary meditations at the bottom of the sea help him to achieve extraordinary psychic powers with which to vanquish violence, discord, and aggression' (Davis 1984:228).

Also note that the stories told of Uppakhut's origin in all regions in Thailand, as far as I know, are quite different from the texts studied by Przulski (1967) and Strong (1983).

All the versions of the stories of Phra Uppakhut appearing in the Kon Müang mythological tradition are similar to those mentioned above. According to Richard Davis, these versions can be re-categorised into two main types, that is, the literary and the oral. In both, '...Upagutta is connected with the aquatic world' (Rhum 1987:187. See also Davis 1984:223-225). Rhum (1987) comments that

...It is surprising that Davis does not note that in the oral tradition [which of course is the one that concerns most villagers] Upagutta is considered to be a Buddhist novice... He is not fully a monk, but he is an ordained person. He is pre-eminently concerned with the control of water and is thought to live in rivers (Rhum 1987:187).

He continues to point out that both Davis (1984) and Tambiah (1970) agree that Phra Uppakhut is said to dwell in the swamps (Rhum 1987:187, footnote 24).

Because Phra Uppakhut is best known for his triumph over Māra when the latter was trying to interfere with the former's preaching in Mathurā⁵ (see details in Strong 1983:77-78, 107-108, and 185-196), he is usually worshipped as the protector, particularly of Buddhist festivals. In his PhD dissertation, Michael Rhum states that from the Kon Müang's point of view, Phra Uppakhut's job

...is to protect the festival against the depredations of Māra and his hosts, who seek to disrupt these festivals. Their primary weapons are rain and fights amongst the festival-goers, which occur mainly between young men from different villages. Upagutta stops the rain and maintains social harmony.These festivals are major merit-making ceremonies whose theme is donation (**dāna**) by the laity to the temples. It should be noted that these festivals are not regular calendrical rites (Michael Rhum 1987:185; emphasis original).

Therefore, no matter how complex the story of Phra Uppakhut seems to be, it is clear that Phra Uppakhut lived in the water, either in the river or swamp, and is so

⁵ Note that in Strong's version, Māra interrupts Phra Uppakhut's own sermons in Mathurā, but in Davis' and Wells' versions, Phra Uppakhut is invited by King Aśoka to prevent Māra from breaking up the celebration of the '...construction of 84,000 reliquaries built in honour of the Buddha' (Davis 1984:223-224). See also Wells (1975:114).

powerful that he is always invited to protect Buddhist festivals from disasters caused by both humans and nature.

Phra Uppakhut, moreover, is associated with the rites of rain. Davis (1984) provides an excellent summary in this respect:

...Upagrutta's rites are performed in order to produce rain as well as to prevent it. His association with rain-making has been noted by a number of authorities. Phya Anuman thinks Upagrutta may be related to Phra Bua Khem, a type of Siamese Buddha image used in rain-making rites... Tambiah has interpreted the 'floating lights' festival [or *Lau-j Krathong* - see further] as an offering of thanks to Upagrutta for the rain he has produced during the preceding *vassa*, and as a means of returning him to his watery abode once the rains are over... Porée-Maspero has similarly deduced that Upagrutta is a rain deity, and that the floating of lighted vessels serves to return the forces of humidity to their ultimate source (Davis 1984:228).

A rather different version of Phra Uppakhut is told by Bunsii Nutcinoo, a former kamnan of Tambon Khun Yuam. His story begins as follows:

Once, there was a fishing village. One day, several fishermen caught a big fish, about seven metres long. But when the head of the fish was cut off, it was still alive and its stomach was still moving. The fishermen thus decided to cut open the fish's body and they found a bag in its stomach. Inside the bag, there was a baby girl. They did not know what to do with the baby, so they thought they had better brought the baby to the king, who appeared to have no children. The king received the baby with joy and rewarded all the fishermen. Then, the baby was named Naang Misa.

The baby grew up to be a beautiful girl, but there was one problem; she had a terribly unpleasant body odour. The king tried by all means to have her cured, but no doctor could do anything. Time passed and the smell of her body became worse. The king's ministers and the nobles began to complain about her. They threatened to leave the country if the king did not do anything. Finally, the king had to order that the girl be put away on a raft in the river. She was crying all the time until the raft came to the place where a *rishi* lived. The *rishi* heard her crying, so he rescued her and let her stay. He not only built a small hut for her (he himself lived in a cave), but also tried to help her to get rid of her unpleasant body odour by using the herbs he found in the forest until she was cured. As the days went by, she felt more and more grateful for his kindness until, though they had never had a sexual relationship, she became pregnant. The woman gave birth to a baby boy and she brought him up with great care and love.

One day, the *rishi* asked the woman whether or not she and her son wanted to return to her country. The woman agreed, so he accompanied them to her country. The king was very happy to see his

daughter and grandson. He accepted them into his palace with a warm welcome. The boy grew up to his teens in the palace. The king wanted his grandson to be his heir and become a king when he passed away, but his daughter wanted him to be ordained as a monk. Their argument went on for some time and upset the boy so much that one day he could no longer bear it. He jumped up into the air and began to fly to the heavens. Up there, he was ordained by *Phra In*⁶ and was named Phra Uppakhut. After the ordination, while he was flying down to the earth, he could see nothing but water. In the ocean, there was only one palace, made of gold, he thus had to land on that palace. Since then, Phra Uppakhut has lived in the golden palace in the ocean.

Unlike the stories reported by Tambiah and Davis, in this version Phra Uppakhut is not the son of Buddha and a mermaid, but of a *rishi* and a woman who is found in the stomach of a fish. Yet there are some similarities, such as that he is a Buddhist novice and resides in the water.

Bunsii went on to reveal that according to Tai belief, offerings for Phra Uppakhut are to be made twice a year, once on the full-moon day of the fourth lunar month and the other on the full-moon day of the twelfth lunar month. In the old days, Tai people would offer alms to the monks at the monasteries and listen to their sermons on the morning of the full-moon day of the fourth month. On the night of that day, mainly a gathering of the elders of both sexes would assemble at the house of an elder to listen to a *caree* reading the Buddhist *jataka* tales (Tai - *thau-m lik*).⁷ In Khun Yuam, however, the practice of this tradition has been declining, and today only a small group of the elderly Tai still listen to the reading of the book.

A bigger, more important ceremony, on the other hand, was held on the night of the full-moon day of the twelfth month. This is the night that several items, including a piece of *saang kaan* (the outer yellow robe of the monk)⁸, fruit, sweets, betel,

⁶ According to Tambiah (1970:295), Phra In is God Indra.

⁷ According to Bunsii, who himself is also a *caree*, the reading of the *jataka* on the night was neither performed by Tai monks nor at the monasteries.

⁸ This article seems to be most significant among the offerings. The outer yellow robe is needed because it is, as in Tambiah's (1970:302) words, a '...conspicuous symbol of monkhood'.

In the *Bun Phraweet* festival in some places in the northeastern region, there are even more offerings for Phra Uppakhut. These also include an alms-bowl, an umbrella, a chamber pot, a

flowers, joss-sticks and candles, are offered to Phra Uppakhut. Because Phra Uppakhut lives in the water, all of these offerings have to be put on a *phae* - a raft - built from bamboo almost six metres long. Several householders joined together and combined their contribution for the same *phae* to ensure that there would be more than enough provisions. On that night, the locals, of all ages and sexes, gathered at the monastery to listen to the monks preaching. At about midnight, the *phae*, accompanied by four Tai Buddhist monks, was carried to the river bank. Then, the candles were lit while the four monks preached to invite Phra Uppakhut to come and take the offerings. When the monks finished their sermon, the *phae* was floated on the river. In the past, especially when the harvest or trade was good, more offerings would be given and a few *phae* would be built to float on the river. Again, fewer people, mainly the elderly Tai, continue to participate in the Phra Uppakhut ceremony today. Thus, each year only a few households contribute offerings, so the size of the *phae* is gradually decreasing.

In recent years, this 'raft-floating' ceremony in Khun Yuam seems to have been replaced by the *Lau-j Krathong* festival. Rhum (1987) describes *Lau-j Krathong*, which is a term borrowed from the Thai language, as '...to float banana-leaf cups [krathong] ... containing offerings and a little candle, as an offering to Gangā and Upagutta'. He reports that these *krathong* are floated in the river on the night of the full-moon day of the second lunar month according to the Kon Müang lunar calendar⁹ (Rhum 1987:189).

kettle (Pricha 1991:69), or even a triangle-shaped cushion and a water-basin (Kasem 1973:32). Unlike the ceremony in Khun Yuam, moreover, these offerings are put on a small bamboo stool of about eye-level height.

⁹ The Tai lunar calendar differs from the Kon Müang one. The first lunar month in the Kon Müang tradition begins after *auk phansaa*, or the End of Buddhist Lent, which is approximately the eleventh lunar month in the Tai tradition. Therefore, the Tai twelfth lunar month is close to the Kon Müang second lunar month, and the Tai fourth lunar month is the Kon Müang sixth lunar month.

In the Kon Müang village where Rhum conducted his research, the celebration of *Lau-j Krathong* seems to be rather significant. There is one sermon in the morning and another at night at the village's monastery, and alms are given to the monks. Paper hot-air balloons are made and floated into the air. Small rockets and firecrackers are fired throughout the day. At night, a lot of *krathong* are floated in the nearby river (Rhum 1987:189, footnote 26). The *Lau-j Krathong* festival in the

The *Lau-j Krathong* is celebrated in Khun Yuam town as well. Many locals of Khun Yuam, the youngsters in particular, seem to think that the *Lau-j Krathong* festival is related to Naang Noppamaat, who was the second queen of King Phra Ruang of Sukhothai (see Sathiankooset 1965:183-184 and Wells 1975:114), rather than with Phra Uppakhut. This is probably owing to the influence of the Thai educational system, which only teaches about the legend of Naang Noppamaat in the school curriculum.

Although Phra Uppakhut's reputation as the guardian of the festival is well known amongst local elders of Khun Yuam, he is also much revered for his power as a wealth-giving deity. The abbot of Cau-ng Muaj Tau, *cawkhana amphoe* (hereafter referred to as Phrakhruu), informed me that the locals of Khun Yuam believe that anyone who sees Phra Uppakhut and, if he/she has been making adequate merit, feels an urge to offer him alms, will soon become rich. Several people, as far as he knows, claim that on at least two occasions they have seen Phra Uppakhut. He is described as slovenly, old monk who wears a short, dirty, old and worn-out robe. His head has not been shaved for some time and the hair long and dishevelled. He usually appears very early in the morning out of the blue, wandering at random.¹⁰

market town of Khun Yuam is no less magnificent. Although the day is rather quiet, the celebration at night is spectacular. There is a procession of trucks decorated with flowers and coloured paper, which parades throughout the town. There is then a beauty contest, followed by a huge firework display. Finally, hundreds of *krathong*, big and small, are lit and floated in the town's reservoir. There are morning and night sermons at the monasteries as well, and some elders, both males and females, spend the night there.

¹⁰ Phrakhruu confirmed that Phra Uppakhut usually appears in the morning of the full-moon day of the fourth lunar month (in the Tai calendar) and it has to be Wednesday. Bunsii, however, did not insist that the day must be Wednesday.

Both Bunsii and Phrakhruu agreed that Phra Uppakhut is, in the populace's view, 'old but not yet gone'. In other words, he has not yet entered *nirvana* - the ultimate salvation. He will be wandering in this world until the next Buddha, Phra Ariya Metta, comes. He will then pass into the state of *nirvana*. This statement is compatible with the Burmese version of Phra Uppakhut mentioned earlier, which informs us that he is to remain in this present existence and will be set free when the next Buddha comes.

It is said that many years ago, a local Tai trader named Cau-ng Ping left Khun Yuam early in the morning for his annual trading trip. Not far from the town he met an old, untidy-looking monk wandering. Because he did not expect to see monk on the route, the only thing he had to offer to the old monk was some of the betel and fermented tea that he kept for his own consumption. It is not clear whether or not Cau-ng Ping was aware at the time that the old monk might be the legendary Phra Uppakhut. He unexpectedly made a fortune from this trading trip and made even more in the following years. Cau-ng Ping is said to have been a very good person who always made offerings to the monasteries until the last days of his life.¹¹ Phrakhruu told me of another incident. In this case, a group of five Buddhist Karen females said that on the way from their village to the town, three of them saw - in the mist of one early morning - an old monk walking (the other two females did not see him). The monk then quickly disappeared behind the trees by the dirt-track. None of the three females realised that the monk was perhaps Phra Uppakhut, thus no one gave him alms. Phrakhruu told me that today these three Karen females are still poor, and the other two who did not see the old monk are even poorer.

Phrakhruu explained that these two incidents related to the merit of the individuals concerned. Cau-ng Ping, the old trader, had given alms and other offerings to the monasteries throughout his life. He had thus gradually acquired enough merit to see Phra Uppakhut who had appeared to him. Though he did not realise that the monk he saw was Phra Uppakhut, Cau-ng Ping was driven (by his own merit) to make an offering. He was then blessed because of this alm-giving action and his already existent merit and became wealthy.¹² On the other hand, although the three Karen

¹¹ Cau-ng Ping died several years ago and I did not have an opportunity to interview his children or relatives. The story about him was told to me by the abbot and some Tai elders who were Cau-ng Ping's friends and acquaintances.

¹² The story of kindhearted traders who offer alms to Phra Uppakhut and later become rich is told in many places in the northern region. In Chiang Mai, for instance, the story of Luang Anusarn Sunthorn is probably the most well-known one. Wijeyewardene (1992) writes that Luang Anusarn Sunthorn was '...a cultural and historical phenomenon in Chiangmai'. He was a very wealthy entrepreneur and philanthropist, and '...was largely responsible for the foundation of Wat Uppakut'. Wijeyewardene also notes that

females could see Phra Uppakhut, they had not yet acquired enough merit to be urged to provide him offerings. The other two females who did not see Phra Uppakhut, in Phrakhrue's view, had not even enough merit to be able to see him. The three females, therefore, did not become wealthy.¹³

Phrakhrue's explanation clearly shows that according to the local point of view, one who has been making merit, sooner or later, should be rewarded. One's reward is his/her own success and the most satisfactory one, needless to say, is wealth.¹⁴ In Cau-ng Ping's case, moreover, although he later became rich, he did not stop providing offerings to the monasteries. His good fortune, therefore, lasted at least until the day he died. In the case of the three Karen women, however, there are some grounds to believe that one day when they have accumulated adequate merit,

...It is a belief Phra Uppakut walks the streets of Chiangmai on the full moon of the ninth month as a monk seeking alms. The first one to make an offering is blessed with good fortune. There is a story in Chiangmai that the future Luang Anusarn had walked overland to Chiangmai from China and was earning his living as a pedlar on the streets of Chiangmai. He had the good fortune to *tag bat uppakut* (place alms in Uppakut's bowl) which was the start of his successful trading career. The story goes on to say that the now jewel-encrusted pedlar's pole which he used is enshrined in the *uposata* of Wat Uppakut (Wijeyewardene 1992:19).

However, Wijeyewardene comments further that

Unfortunately the truth is more prosaic, though not without its own excitement. Luang Anusarn's father was a successful businessman in neighbouring Lamphun who fell foul of the ruler, the *Caw Muang*, and fled with his young family to the protection of the Chiangmai Prince (Wijeyewardene 1992:19).

Clearly, the story of Phra Uppakhut blessing laypeople who give him alms with good fortune confirms that traders are the most likely people to be wealthy. Whatever the truth is or how a trader becomes rich is not important, the belief is that if one is a trader and makes merit regularly, one will have an opportunity to be successful and wealthy. Wealth comes after accumulating adequate merit.

¹³ 'The two women were really poor', Phrakhrue said, 'they did not even see Phra Uppakhut. The other three women were also poor, but they probably had enough merit to be able to see him - but not enough to be rich'.

¹⁴ Wealth is clearly a sign of having merit, not only for the Tai people, but also the Thai. The villagers in the central region believe that '*...a big house, a good deal of money, eyeglasses, good clothes, or good health were all obvious indications of much merit. Such signs make abundantly clear the condition of one's merit*' (Ingersoll 1975:232; italics mine). Although Ingersoll confirms that the villagers emphasise the connection between one's merit and one's mind or disposition (*chai*) (Ingersoll 1975:228), there is no doubt that wealth is one of the most significant features of merit.

In the view of Khun Yuam residents, therefore, a shop owner or trader who earns more income and owns more possessions probably has more merit than an ordinary person who has less belongings.

they may be able to be wealthy. This view is due to the belief that, on the one hand, the more prosperity one gains, the more offerings - or merit - one should make. On the other hand, the more merit one makes, the more wealth one will acquire. One must bear in mind, however, that the ability to make merit is obviously based on personal circumstances. In the populace's view, people who are born rich have more opportunity than the poor to make merit. Thus, Cau-ng Ping, who had already earned more money as a trader, had more to offer to the monasteries than the three Karen females. Also, owing to the poverty of the latter, it will take a much longer time for them to accumulate as much merit as the old trader had done. In this case, there is therefore no doubt that being a trader is one of the most favourable occupations. This is where the monasteries and trade-wealth are related.

The ability to see Phra Uppakhut, and - consequently - to become rich, is solely based on one's own merit. It implies that one who is not able to see him will not become prosperous easily. Without merit, one has to start from nothing. It is therefore essential to build up merit. A wealthy man who wants to feel secure that his well-being will last for a long time must keep donating to the monasteries. This is based on the belief that one's own merit enhances one's own prosperity - or wealth - and vice versa. According to the locals' point of view, wealth is not opposed to religious practice. While increasing worldly wealth means more comfort and well-being in this present life, merit - religious wealth - implies security for the next. This belief is also in accord with the monks' view. Monks and their monasteries will certainly not survive without the provisions regularly given by the laypeople. The latter are always blessed by the monks for their kindness and generosity. They will also be praised and told that their merit will increase in proportion to the offerings they have made to the monasteries. As a result, the religious devotees who are already satisfied with their economic situation are recognised by the monasteries and receive - at least - some kind of social status in

the community. The tale about the appearance of Phra Uppakhut confirms that those who are wealthy and regularly donate to religion are admirable and better than those who do not contribute - or do not have anything to give, such as the poor.

MAKING PERSONAL MERIT

Tannenbaum (1989), who has done research among the Shan in Mae Hong Son, argues that

...Good and bad actions in this and previous lives determine a person's position in this life. Some people are rich and powerful because they have performed considerable good deeds in past lives and are now reaping the rewards of those actions. Others are poor because of misdeeds in previous lives, and their present position is a consequence of them (Tannenbaum 1989:74).

Referring to Hanks's comments, she continues that '...the actual balance of good and bad deeds is unknowable, and its assessment changes through time as the person's fortune waxes and wanes' (Tannenbaum 1989:74). To avoid uncertainty in life, one must achieve as much merit as one can. Only one's own merit can rescue one from suffering and unhappiness in this life and can secure a better life in the next. Such attitudes are surely shared by the locals of Khun Yuam town. The views of Phrakhrui mentioned above are a good example.

So, what is merit? And how does one make merit? Merit-making in Theravāda Buddhism¹⁵ (Tai - *hed kuso*, Kam Müang and Thai - *tham bun*) is inevitable and crucial and has been one of the most significant issues studied by many anthropologists. According to Keyes (1983:261), merit-making is closely associated with *kamma* (or *karma* in Sanskrit), a belief of 'moral action with moral consequences'. He notes that

¹⁵ Keyes suggests that the term 'popular Theravāda Buddhism' gives a more correct meaning.

...[k]ammic theory provides practising Buddhists not only with a means to explain conditions that are susceptible to neither natural nor supernatural (magical) explanation or control, but also, and of at least equal importance, with an orientation for action, that is, an ethos.

Such beliefs drive ordinary Buddhists to search '...for merit' and to avoid '...actions that produce demerit'. So, in his opinion, merit-making '...is equated with religious action' (Keyes 1983:267).

Nonetheless, not everyone has an equal opportunity to earn merit. People who possess more resources can perform merit-making more easily than others. They also establish closer relationships with the monks. Khun Yuam entrepreneurs who sponsor the monasteries are not only praised by the monks as having more merit than others, but they often enjoy some privileges. For example, they are asked to host important ceremonies. They thus gain esteem, honour and prestige for themselves. It is believed that this is due to their merit that has been transferred either from the past or this existence. Nevertheless, it is certain that in the eyes of the community, the merit of such individuals is manifested by the fact that their economic condition is better than that of others.

Keyes (1983) writes that there are at least two fundamental meanings of merit-making. In the first:

...merit is seen as a form of spiritual insurance, an investment made with the expectation that in the future - and probably in a future existence - one will enjoy a relatively prolonged state without suffering. ...[O]ne's fund of merit accumulated in this life will ensure a rebirth *blessed with happiness, prosperity, and wealth.*

According to the second meaning, '...merit is also valued for the quality of virtue that a person acquires in the eyes of others through his or her acts of merit-making'. He then refers to Tambiah's statement that '...(merit-making) has certain consequences in this life: the *giving of gifts to monks* (*the act of merit-making par*

excellence) produces a happy and virtuous state of mind'. But Keyes argues that '...it is not the state of mind that is significant, although this may also be present, but *the social recognition of being a person of virtue* ' (Keyes 1983:267-268; italics mine). In other words, one's merit indicates one's well-being. The more merit one possesses, the better off one is. To maintain a happy, prosperous life, therefore, making merit regularly is essential.

Nonetheless, all merit is not equal. Neither does each person nor each act attract the same degree of merit. Lester (1973), citing Tambiah (1968), indicates that a Buddhist believes that

Some acts are more merit-full than others. In general those acts which support the monk, the monastery, and the monastic way of life are most meritorious. Tambiah orders the acts of greatest merit among Thai Buddhists as follows, from greatest value to the least:

1. building a monastery
2. becoming a monk or having a son become one
3. giving money for the repair of a wat or for kathina gifts
4. daily food-offerings to the monks
5. observance of every uposatha (Wan Phra)
6. observance of the five precepts (Lester 1973:139).

Like many places, one of the most common routine merit-making activities in Khun Yuam is the daily alms-giving to the monks. This is practised by both male and female Tai and Kon Müang speakers, mostly elderly.¹⁶ Every morning, monks and novices from the same monastery walk in single-line along the streets in the market town carrying their alms-bowls. The rows of Tai monks and novices are frequently led by two men or two boys carrying a wooden pole on their shoulders. In the middle of this pole hangs a flat, heavy brass bell. One or two boys carrying two baskets of food which will not fit into the bowls follow. The bell is beaten during this daily ritual. The residents wait in front of their houses or shops and when the monks arrive they put the food into the monks' alms-bowls. Some monks,

¹⁶ I hardly saw any Thai male, either a *khaaraatchakaan* or a shop owner, giving the food to the monks in the morning (Tai - *laung saum*, Kam Müang and Thai - *saj baat*).

however, do not take part in this daily alms-giving because residents bring food to the monasteries.

As noted above, the ordination of Buddhist novices and monks, the building of religious constructions and - particularly in the northern region - the cremation of elderly monks, are thought to result in higher merit for the merit-makers. Let me begin with ordination. Some details of the preparations for ordination will be described in the following section.

Ordination

Anyone who sponsors an ordination ceremony will achieve an equal level of merit. An excellent example is given by Keyes (1983, 1984), who discovered a text for a Buddhist sermon in Mae Sariang called *ānisong būat*, or 'the blessings of ordination'. The text tells the story of a young man ordained as a novice and then a monk, who rescued his parents from suffering in Hell. Keyes concludes that the story

...shows that even those whose personal kamma is very bad can benefit greatly by the merit transferred to them by their son through his actions of being ordained successively as a novice and then as a monk. ...[T]he text adduces that a person who sponsors an ordination can obtain merit equal to that obtained by parents (Keyes 1983:280).

The dwellers of Khun Yuam commonly hold similar beliefs.

In Khun Yuam, however, the ordination of Buddhist novices (Tai - *pauj saang lau-ng*, Kam Müang - *pauj luuk kae-w*) seems to be more important than the ordination of monk (Tai - *pauj caang lau-ng*). Chintana (1986:248) suggests that the ordination of a novice not only implies the gratitude of a son towards his parents, but in the past also provided access to education. Only at the monasteries

could novices and the so-called 'temple boys' (Tai - *kapi cau-ng*) who were sent by their parents to live at the monasteries but were not ordained learn to read and write (also see Tannenbaum 1990a:28). Milne (1970:54) also agrees that Tai boys in the Shan States were taught by the monks.

In Khun Yuam, a boy is normally ordained as a novice when he is between twelve and sixteen years old.¹⁷ It is the most important event of a male's life, whether a Tai or a Kon Müang, and the parents will do their utmost to have their sons ordained. Generally, boys of the same age are ordained in a group each year.¹⁸ The following information is mainly based on the ordination of three novices in mid-March 1992. The oldest boy being ordained in that year was almost seventeen years old. The other two boys, who were cousins and whose parents were the sponsors of the ordination, were both almost fourteen years old. All but one parent, Maana Siinuukham, who is a Thai,¹⁹ were Tai speakers. The ordination was held at Cau-ng Muaj Tau, a Tai monastery.

First, the ordination day has to be set. This is usually in March or April. Maana, one of the two fathers who sponsored the ordination in 1992, informed me that this is because this period is the summer school holiday (March-May). It is therefore the most suitable and convenient time for many boys who are still studying at secondary school level to be ordained. But according to Chintana (1986:247), the traditional date of an ordination is between the New Year Day (approximately mid-April) and the beginning of the Buddhist Lent (which is usually in July).²⁰ After

¹⁷ Because some parents need more time to save enough money for ordination, a number of boys were a couple of years older than usual. In comparison, Chintana (1986:247) indicates that elsewhere in the northern region, a *luuk kae-w* is usually ordained at the age of twelve.

¹⁸ The largest ordination of novices in Khun Yuam market town was held in BE 2524 (or 1981). There were twenty-two boys ordained. The ceremony was hosted by the town's shop owners, one of whom was Saang Paang, a former Tai trader mentioned in Chapter Two. Saang Paang's grandson and nephews also joined the ordination.

¹⁹ Further details of Maana Siinuukham will be given in the next chapter.

²⁰ It should be noted that Chintana's information regarding ordination mainly refers to the Kon Müang tradition. Ordination in Khun Yuam is influenced by both Tai and Kon Müang.

setting the ordination day, the parents will visit their relatives and friends and distribute a candle to each household as a sign of an invitation to the ordination.

Before the ordination, the boys are sent to the monks to learn how to pray on the ordination day. The Tai boys will be taught using the Tai alphabet and the Kon Müang will use the Thai one.²¹ However, owing to the load of school work and examinations, these lessons (usually on Saturday or Sunday) now only last a few weeks, and most of the boys do not remember the prayers well enough. As a result, they often pray jerkily on the ordination day. On the eve of the ordination day (Tai - *wan hae-n*, Kam Müang - *wan daa*, Thai - *wan suk dip*) the boys spend the day at the monastery, while their relatives and friends gather at the houses of the boys' parents and get ready for the following day. Many things need to be prepared, such as the offerings for the monks, food for those attending and the provisions the newly-ordained will have to take with them to the monastery. The adults also busy themselves drinking, eating, chatting, joking, singing, dancing, etc.²² On the evening of that day, the boys are brought back home to have their heads shaved and to have their dinner. After the meal they have to return to sleep at the monastery.

Early in the morning of the following day (the first ordination day)²³, the boys at the monastery are scrupulously dressed, powdered and made up, and ornamented with pseudo-jewellery, golden necklaces and bracelets as if they were little princes of ancient times. Elderly Tai informants said that this represents the legend of Prince Siddhartha and the night he abandoned his princehood to become an ascetic

²¹ The prayers are in Pali but written in the Tai and Thai alphabets. As far as I am aware, the written Northern Thai language, or the Lannathai, is not used in the Kon Müang monastery in Khun Yuam. Chintana (1986:249) writes that in the old days, the Kon Müang boys were sent to the monasteries not only to learn the prayers, but also to serve the monks. Some boys even ate and lived at the monasteries.

²² During the 1992 ordination, some male adults drank for three days. Several elderly Tai informants find such behaviour unpleasant and unacceptable. They said that in the old days, the Tai did not drink alcohol.

²³ Chintana (1986:252) points out that in several places the boys are ordained on the day after *wan daa*. In contrast, the boys in Khun Yuam may be ordained either on the following day or the day after. Ordination in Khun Yuam, therefore, normally lasts three days, or sometimes even four days.

monk (also see Chintana 1986:251). Some locals mentioned that this practice was probably influenced by the Burmese ritual. June Nash (1966), writing about the ordination of Burmese boys, indicates the similarities of the Burmese and the Tai ordination rituals.²⁴ Such Burmese traits in Tai culture is not uncommon.

From this moment the boys are called *saang lau-ng/luuk kae-w*. Still at the monastery, each boy will have to participate in the 'calling of the *khwan* [spirit essence]²⁵ of the *saang lau-ng/luuk kae-w*' (Tai - *mat myy*, Thai - *suu khwan*). The ritual is usually conducted by a lay elder who ties each boy's wrists with a piece of thin white, thread-like cotton of about twenty-five centimetres long. The lay elder runs both ends of the cotton through holy water which has been soaked with dry *Acacia concinna* before tying the boy's wrists, and blesses the boy with a sacred prayer.²⁶ Offerings in this ritual include a boiled egg, rice, fruit, sweets, flowers and a cup of water. After the ritual, one of the offerings, usually the egg, is eaten by the boys. The purpose of this ritual is to drive away bad fortune and to call the *khwan* of the boy to his body and mind (Chintana 1986:252). Tambiah (1970) provides another explanation. He states that the calling of the *khwan* is to emphasise that those who are about to enter the monkhood should fulfil '...his filial

²⁴ Nash (1966) says that such performance

...is a reenactment of the Buddha's own renunciation of the material pleasures of life in taking on the robe of the mendicant monk, the boy is dressed in rented silken clothing recalling the elaborate robes of a royal prince of the past century and, to complete the likeness, is rouged and powdered and decked out with golden ornaments. Along with his male siblings or cousins, he sits on velvet cushions before his parents, relatives, elders of the village, and most of his own and neighboring villagers (Nash 1966:121).

²⁵ This translation is borrowed from Tambiah (1970:105). See also Chapter 13 in his book for more details concerning the *suu khwan* ritual.

²⁶ Dry-*Acacia concinna* holy water (Tai and Kam Müang - *nam som pauj*) is employed in many rituals to get rid of misfortune, sickness and the like. It is an important element used in the traditional New Year festival in mid-April. At this time (New Year) the water is not only scattered over the *saan caw müang* and local participants, but is brought back to the participants' homes to worship. It is even drunk by some locals who have been sick for a period of time.

According to McFarland (1954),

...*Acacia concinna* (*Leguminosae*), a climber, the pods of which are important commercially. In India its pods are sold everywhere in the markets, and are used chiefly for washing the hair, but they are also medicinal as a mild cathartic and emetic (McFarland 1954:815: italics original).

obligations' for '...the burdens borne by his mother - during her pregnancy, at childbirth, and in bringing him up'. His further comment, nevertheless, is that the *suu khwan* '...is a prophylactic *cum* therapeutic ritual' (Tambiah 1970:105 and 243, respectively).²⁷

The *saang lau-ng/luuk kae-w* then leave the monastery, sitting on the shoulders of the adult males. (This is again the reminiscent of the legend of Prince Siddhartha who left his palace on horseback for the river's bank where he shaved his head. This episode is re-enacted in the ordination ritual by the boys riding on the shoulders of the adults along the town's roads.) The boys are followed by musicians playing drums and cymbals, and several kinsmen carrying some provisions for the boys (most of the provisions are kept at the parents' houses). The group walk along the only main road of the market town, turning themselves into a small parade. The residents, the elders in particular, come out from their houses to bless the *saang lau-ng/luuk kae-w* by throwing small white jasmine over the boys and others. Some residents offer alcoholic drinks to the male paraders. The boys' feet are not allowed to touch the ground, so several adults have to take turns to carry one boy. To do this, the new carrier has to bend his shoulders behind the back of the man who is carrying the boy on his shoulders. The other adults then have to help the boy to move backward across the head of the new carrier to sit on his shoulders.²⁸

The *saang lau-ng/luuk kae-w* first visit the other three monasteries of the town where they are blessed by the abbots of each temple. They have to pay respects to

²⁷ Others interpret the *khwan* in different ways. O'Connor, based on Tannenbaum's analysis, concludes that Tai people emphasise the individual's power and protection rather than the *khwan*. He writes '...the Shan [Tai] show little interest in the *khwan* with its communal constraints' (O'Connor 1990:15). Whether such a statement is correct or not is beyond my discussion here, but the *mat myy* is certainly one of the most crucial rituals for individuals in Khun Yuam before they are ordained. It is practised by all Buddhist residents.

²⁸ This seemed to be an awkward moment in the ordination in 1992, but the team of carriers, I must admit, did it rather professionally.

the *saan caw müang* as well. Then the group visits the homes of the boys' relatives, close friends and those who are respected by their families to have the boys *mat myy* performed by the owners of the houses.²⁹ Outside the houses, the adult males keep playing the musical instruments, dancing and, of course, drinking until the hosts offer them more bottles of spirit. After visiting all the respected adult kinsmen, the boys return to their parents' homes to have lunch, which traditionally must have thirty-two dishes, symbolising the thirty-two elements of the human body and soul. To ensure that all dishes are served and eaten, food is put into many tiny bowls and the boys just eat a very small mouthful of each dish. Chintana (1986:248) interprets the thirty-two elements to mean the virtue of the parents, so the sons should display their gratitude to their parents by being ordained. After lunch, the boys are again carried from their homes to pay respect to the rest of their relatives. The boys then sleep at home that night.

The next morning, the second ordination day, while the *saang lau-ng/luuk kae-w* are visiting some relatives, members of their families bring offerings for the monks and other necessities for the novices to the monastery. At approximately ten a.m., all the *saang lau-ng/luuk kae-w* are brought to the monastery. While the hosts and their relatives are busy preparing for the ordination in the monastery hall, some helpers cook the mid-day meal in the kitchen. Food has to be served to the monks before twelve o'clock. The boys, their family members and other guests, will then eat their meal. At two o'clock in the afternoon the boys are ordained in the ordination hall (Tai - *sim*, Thai and Kam Müang - *boot*). Only the monks and other males can participate. Women are not allowed to enter the ordination hall. (For details of the Tai monastery compound see Tannenbaum [1990a:27-32].)

²⁹ Unlike the *mat myy* ritual performed at the monastery, an individual adult attaches a one-hundred-baht banknote (about A\$5.26) to each *saang lau-ng/luuk kae-w*'s wrist. A few adults tie the boys' hands with a five-hundred-baht banknote (A\$26.32). Giving money to the boys seems to be essential in the *mat myy* ritual. I do not know the total sum of the money each boy received in the 1992 ordination, but it was certainly a large amount.

Although there were three boys being ordained in 1992, only the parents of two financially sponsored the ordination. The parents of the third ordinand, who were neighbours of the other two, were in some financial difficulty but wished to have their son ordained before he became too old to be a novice. They asked their neighbours for assistance and this was given. Such financial help between families is not uncommon.

Keyes (1983) again sees the benefit of such reciprocity. His explanation is that

...Ordination rituals often involve heavy expenditures on the part of the sponsors, primarily as a result of the costs of feasting large numbers of guests. Poor families might not be able to raise the wealth necessary to sponsor an ordination. *The promise of great merit for the sponsor of an ordination thus becomes an important incentive for those who are approached by poor people [usually kinsmen] to serve as sponsors* (Keyes 1983:280-281; italics mine).

In other words, the merit one gains by supporting the ordination of a novice is as great as the merit one gains by ordaining one's own son. Either way, such practice is described as 'merit-transference'. Keyes, furthermore, cites Gombrich's opinion that '...merit-transference can make merit appear as the common property of a social group, so that *patti* [proferring merit to others] is functional for kinship solidarity' (Keyes 1983:283). In Khun Yuam, moreover, the sponsorship of ordination sometimes extends beyond one's own kinsmen. The sponsorship sometimes covers the children of families of intimate friends or long-time trading partners. Cross-ethnic sponsorships, especially between Tai and Kon Müang families, are also sometimes practised.

Keyes is correct noting that the expenditures of an ordination are high and that this often causes some difficulties for poor families. In Khun Yuam, there are always a number of well-off families to share in the expenses of ordination, thus allowing

poorer families to have their sons ordained as well. For instance, the two families which sponsored the ordination in 1992 were rather well-off. One family, Maana and his Tai wife, operated a garage in Khun Yuam, earning enough income to send their son to a secondary school in Chiang Mai. The father in the other family, who was Maana's brother-in-law, worked with the government and the mother obtained some extra cash through trading.³⁰

Sponsors of the ordination are called *pau· khaam-mae khaam* among the Tai speakers and *pau· au-k-mae au·k* among the Kon Müang.³¹ *Pau· khaam-mae khaam* or *pau· au-k-mae au·k* imply those who financially support boys to be ordained as novices. Usually, *pau· khaam-mae khaam* or *pau· au-k-mae au·k* and parents of the boys are kinsmen or trading partners. In some cases, they are friends or neighbours. Occasionally, couples who do not have sons subsidise the ordination of other boys. By doing this, the sponsors and the boys will later become related, and the boys will call them *pau·* and *mae·*, although the sponsors of the ordination are not the boys' real parents. In general, the sponsors are better off than the families they support.

However, the relationship of the two parties before the ordination is not the most important factor. The crucial point is that, owing to the financial sponsorship, both parties become affiliated with each other and consider themselves kinsmen. The sponsors are regarded with high respect by the families they support, particularly by their sons. Mutual aid will henceforth be exchanged and joint participation in social life is common. Such associations and assistance often become permanent and bind the two parties together into future generations. For instance, the

³⁰ Although Maana did not give me the exact amount of the ordination's expenses, the estimated total given by some participants was not less than 30,000-40,000 baht (between A\$1,578.95-A\$2,105.26).

³¹ In some areas in the central region, they are called *pau· buat-mae· buat*. *Pau·* means 'father(s)', *mae·* 'mother(s)' and *buat* is 'ordination or to be ordained'. Like *pau· khaam-mae khaam* or *pau· au-k-mae au·k*, *pau· buat-mae· buat* include the adults who sponsor the ordination and are called *pau·* and *mae·* by the boys whom they have supported.

ordination in 1981 (footnote 18) was sponsored by several traders, including Saang Paang, a former oxen caravan trader. Many of these traders were related. More importantly, they had always exchanged mutual trading support. Saang Paang and a few traders ran shops selling groceries and consumer products. They sold the goods in the same prices or when a shop owner ran out of a particular kind of goods that was needed by a customer, he/she would tell that customer to buy it from another shop. In addition, non-trading or non-financial help was given among these traders as well. They often made merit together.

We may assume that from the point of view of trading families, sponsoring an ordination not only brings great merit, but also socio-economic benefit. The expenses of ordination are usually shared by a few trading families. Such a practice may well be seen by them as strengthening the business ties between these families and entails an obligation for a greater exchange of assistance, financial and otherwise. Sponsorship is also evidence of the generosity of the family seen to be in comfortable circumstances. Such meritorious acts are a means of displaying moral responsibility within the community (cf. Tannenbaum 1987:707). This display of responsibility will earn prestige and social status. In religious terms, the person may be praised for displaying a quality that is conducive to salvation in Buddhist doctrine. Sponsorship of ordination thus shows the essential social and economic support between trading families. It also enhances the individual's social acceptance, prestige and honour, and is also highly significant in terms of religious salvation.

Information from other studies indicates similar findings. In Bang Chan, a small village east of Bangkok, for example, wealthy Thai speaking families were eager to sponsor poor young village boys in the ordination ceremonies of their own children. It is reported that

...For these rites not only elevate the position of participants on the religious scale of merit mobility but also *obviously improve their secular position or social merit. Indeed, it is this latter reward which is the more tangible and immediate* (Sharp and Hanks 1978:283, footnote 1; italics mine).

However, disagreements over the sponsorship of an ordination sometimes cause a serious dispute, even between siblings.

The district administration has also played a part in the conduct of ordination in Khun Yuam. The district office proposed that a communal *saang lau-ng* ordination be held in April 1993. The residents of the town were asked to provide two hundred teen-aged boys to be ordained. The expenses would be subsidised by the district office, the balance being found by the participants. According to the *naaj amphoe* (the district head), the ceremony would help conserve Tai customs as well as promote tourism. He said that the provincial office in Mae Hong Son organises such an ordination every year. It is a big success. It attracts a large number of tourists, both Thai and foreign. The *naaj amphoe* believed that if such an ordination were held in Khun Yuam, tourists would be attracted and the town's economy would benefit. Eventually, he asked the abbots of Cau-ng Muaj Tau and Wat Phoothaaraam to persuade the locals to join the ceremony.³²

Religious buildings

The construction of religious buildings is another major form of merit-making. The people of Khun Yuam believe that engaging in such endeavours can bring the greatest merit in one's lifetime. Like the sponsorship of ordination, it is the wealthy trading families that can engage in this activity. It is only such families that have the resources to meet the cost. It is also believed that no single individual should

³² Meetings between officials and townspeople are always held in temples.

engage in such merit-making alone. Only the king could have accumulated adequate merit in past lives to sponsor the building of such religious structures alone. Anyone who wishes to seek merit in this fashion must invite others to participate as well. A Tai elder said that

One man's merit isn't great enough. Some people have more merit than others. Some have little. We must persuade other people to join us to build a religious construction, so everyone's merit, great or small, is assembled and becomes a greater merit. Then, we will be able to accomplish such a difficult task.

This is definitely a communal affair.³³

In the past all of the monasteries and their buildings in Mae Hong Son were built by its residents, led by the wealthy traders (Maitri 1980:86-90 and 175-176). Religious constructions in Khun Yuam were also established by the locals. Cau-ng Muaj Tau, for example, was built with the co-operation of well-to-do trading families and other locals. Its first wooden hall was erected in 1854 (BE 2397) on the old site of a ruined temple. Since then, more constructions have been established and renovated several times (Sat-ranawit 1981:1-4). During the time I was living in Khun Yuam, one construction was built in each of the Tai and Kon Müang monasteries. The one in Cau-ng Khum, a Tai temple, is a small stupa-like edifice containing the ashes of Phra Sommaaj, an eccentric but respectable old Tai monk who died at the end of 1991 (see Appendix 4). It is a cement structure, painted gold and surrounded on three sides by a fifty-centimetre high cement fence. The other construction in Wat Phoothaaraam, the Kon Müang temple, was designed to be a *saalaa*, a living place and a dining hall for the laypeople who come to stay at the temple on *wan phra* or when there is a religious ceremony. It is a long, single-

³³ In addition, to ask someone, a local or an outsider, 'to join to make merit' (Tai - *hed kuso cau-m kan*, Kam Müang - *tham bun tooj kan*) in an annual or big religious ceremony is the most polite, kind and generous invitation. It implies not only that the participants will acquire merit together, but also that they will be reborn in the next life as good people with prosperity and will become acquaintances or even good friends.

storey building, half wooden, half cement. Both were completed in 1992 with the help of donations, mostly from the locals, but also from people living in neighbouring districts.

It is of interest that the construction of Phra Sommaaj's memorial was entirely related to religious beliefs. Those who gave donations to build this memorial, both locals and residents of nearby communities, seemed to share the belief that the great merit of the deceased monk would give them some merit. On the other hand, the new building in Wat Phoothaaraam was built for social and political purposes. The latter is called - in Thai - *saalaa chaloemphrakiat somdet phraraachiniinaat* (The Hall of the Celebration of the Queen's Honour). It was intended to celebrate the Queen's 60th birthday in 1992. The idea to build this hall was originally proposed by the young abbot of the temple. He informed me that the purpose of the hall is not only to serve the laypeople who come to the temple, but also to salute the Queen and to wish her happiness and a long life. He believes that since he and other residents are all Thai citizens, they must display their loyalty to Her Majesty.

The expenses of the hall's construction were met mainly by the local Kon Müang and partly by the Tai. The donors' names were written on a long blackboard hung on the wall in front of the hall.³⁴ A large number of the donations were given by a few Kon Müang shop owners, who may be identified as the young abbot's kinsmen. Some of these kinsmen are local *khaaraatchakaan*. One of these men, for example, is a Kon Müang policeman. He is not a local but has been living in Khun Yuam for many years. His wife runs a general store next to the police station and is related to the abbot. The couple, whose names were also written on the hall's blackboard, regularly offer contributions and participate in the temple's activities. They are supporting laypeople of Wat Phoothaaraam.

³⁴ On the other hand, the names of the donors who helped to build Phra Sommaaj's memorial were not displayed publicly. They were written in a notebook kept at Cau-ng Khum.

In 1992, the abbot received *phatjot caw-aawaat wat-raat chantrii* (literally, Fan of the Third Ecclesiastical Rank for the Non-Royal Monastery's Abbot) and his ecclesiastical title was Phrakhruu Anusaatkooson. It was awarded to him partly because he was, and still is, a *phra nakphatthanaa* ('monk who is keen on development') and has been involved in the improvement of his temple's condition. More important was the sum of money raised for his temple over the last few years. He has brought in donations of over 1,700,000 baht (about A\$90,000). Most of the money was spent to *phatthanaa* (upgrade) his monastery, mostly on new constructions and facilities.³⁵ I have little doubt that his effort of building the temple hall to celebrate the Queen's 60th birthday was also seen by the Council of Elders as an indication of his loyalty to the monarchy, as well as to the Sangha (Thai Buddhist order of monks) - see below.

The details of this abbot's life are of interest. He was born in Khun Yuam town in 1962, of Kon Müang parents. His former name was Prasit Cajjaw. He was ordained a novice when he was twelve years old by his maternal uncle, who was at the time the abbot of Wat Phoothaaraam. Eight years later, Prasit became a monk. His clerical name was Kitti Phatthathoo Bhikkhu. During the eight years before he became a monk, he completed a secondary school certificate and the first grade of the religious qualification (*nak tham chan eek*).³⁶ In 1984, he was one of the *phra*

³⁵ Phrakhruu Anusaatkooson informed me that he keeps an account of the temple's income and expenses. He occasionally has to send a copy of the accounts to the Council of Elders, or Sangha Supreme Council (Mahaa Thera Samaakhom) in Bangkok to report on the financial situation of his temple. It seems that one of the reasons for his promotion in ecclesiastical rank was his success in raising donations for the monastery. It is not clear, however, what amount, if any, was sent to the Council of Elders.

³⁶ Mulder (1973) explains that *nak tham* (expert of the dhamma) is '[t]he system of official religious qualifications/ecclesiastical examinations ...'. There are three grades of *nak tham* and their

...courses give basic knowledge of Buddhism, its scriptures, history and rites. The third grade course is supposed to be studied by all the new entrants into the monkhood and is also popular among laymen. Higher learning consists of the study of Pali from *parian prayook* three to nine (Pali scholar degree three to nine). Pali study is almost exclusively confined to those monks and novices who intend to stay a lengthy period in the monkhood (Mulder 1973:48, footnote 2).

thammathuut saaj sii (Thammathuut Division 4),³⁷ whose task was development of the uplanders in the northern region. Since then, Kitti Phatthathoo Bhikkhu has been involved in the monastery's administrative work. He became Wat Phoothaaraam's abbot in 1987 and the Deputy *cawkhana tambon* (Tambon Ecclesiastical Head) in 1991.

As we already know, owing to the high costs of religious construction, only rich families seem to be able to make merit in this fashion. In this case, the donations for religious buildings can be seen as a display of the donors' morality, righteousness and legitimacy. Like the sponsorship of ordination, it also shows the generosity of the donors. Such activities confirm that the behaviour of the rich is proper and acceptable, and that their status in the community is high. Keyes (1973) concludes that

...the man who devotes a significant portion of his wealth to the construction of religious edifices not only accumulates merit which will improve his future kammic state, but also demonstrates that his wealth was gained as the result of past merit (Keyes 1973:96).

Merit-making, therefore, is important because it has social and economic implications in the community. Doubtless, owing to these benefits, those who are better off than others are more active in merit-making.

³⁷ The *phra thammathuut*, or *thammathuut* (literally, Dharmic Ambassador), programme was first established in 1965 by the Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education. Keyes (1971) writes that

Under this program, ... Buddhist monks travel out to the outlying areas during the dry season in order to strengthen the people's attachments to Buddhism and to provide some aid to people in need. The Sangha fully cooperated in the establishment of the *thammathut* program and took over the administration of the program from the Department of Religious Affairs in 1966 (Keyes 1971:560).

Klausner (1987:186) provides more information on monk's duties, which include '....giving sermons which incorporate citizenship training, and modern hygiene and sanitation practices, as well as moral and religious teaching'. Also see Piker (1973) who indicates that the *Thammathuut* programme was related to Thailand's national goals of becoming modernised.

It is true that according to Buddhist beliefs, the poor, who have less merit from previous lives, need to acquire more merit than the rich to improve their insufficient present lives. But, as mentioned previously, the well-to-do families in Khun Yuam claim that their wealth results from their good efforts and moral behaviour in merit-making. They thus enjoy the privileges they have in the community. By offering more contributions to the temples, their lives, both the present and the next, are assured security. All these benefits, I believe, persuade rich families to be more concerned about religion and to be devoted to it.

However, merit-making in Khun Yuam, particularly among well-to-do families, is not solely for the sake of security, in this life and the next, religious salvation, and/or social status and recognition. It is also an affirmation of identity - as a Buddhist and a Thai citizen. For example, in the opinion of the young abbot of Wat Phoothaaraam, one should be a Buddhist to consider oneself a Thai citizen, whatever one's ethnicity. In addition, because the King, as well as the Queen, is regarded as the 'protector' (and as the 'supporter') of Buddhism (Mulder 1973:21), one must be loyal to the royal couple. Without the King, or - to be precise - the monarchy, the country's religion could face unforeseen difficulties. So, it is everyone's duty to be faithful to the King and the monarchy. Celebrating the Queen's birthday is an excellent demonstration of a Thai citizen's loyalty. Such are the qualities of a good person. In the monks' view, Buddhism and the monarchy are clearly relevant. It may therefore not be incorrect to conclude that merit-making is sometimes associated with the political life of the community. This leads us to the next section.

CONVERTING NON-BUDDHISTS

According to Phra Chajjot Chajajasoo, the chairman of the Buddha Kasetra Foundation, there are six moral principles which should be taught to juveniles as basic principles of life. One must learn to be: a child who is grateful to one's own parents, an obedient pupil, a lovable friend, a loyal citizen, a faithful Buddhist, and a man who fulfils his duties perfectly. In the monk's view, a good person must also be diligent and literate; one cannot be successful without these attributes. Like the young abbot of Wat Phoothaaraam, the Buddha Kasetra Foundation believes that if one is neither loyal to the country nor faithful to religion - to be precise, Buddhism - one may fail to accomplish the ultimate goal of life, that is, to be 'a perfect human being' (*manut thii sombuun*).

As far as I know, at least three organisations of monks are active in Khun Yuam. Their main tasks include; firstly, to convert non-Buddhist children, mostly Karen and Hmong, to Buddhism and, secondly, to give them at least primary level of formal Thai education. These children are also taught to be religious, self-disciplined hard-workers. As we shall see, children who try hard are given support to enable them to continue their studies to higher levels. The three organisations will be identified as Luang Phau· Bun, Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo, and the Buddha Kasetra. All three are organised by non-local monks, mainly from the central provinces, with some assistance from local monks and laypeople.

Luang Phau· Bun

Luang Phau· Bun, or Phrakhruu Soopon Phatthanaaphirom, was about 62-63 years old in 1992.³⁸ He was born in Chon Buri, a coastal province east of Bangkok, and

³⁸ Because Luang Phau· Bun did not live in Khun Yuam at the time of the interview (October, 1992), this information was collected from his followers, both monks and laypeople. The following information is based on the temple's programme in 1992.

his temple is located in Amphoe Phanat Nikhom, of the same province. He has been *doe-n thudong*³⁹ for many years and is renowned for his magical love-power (*mettaamahaanijom*) and amulets that give good luck to the owners. He has many lay followers, some of whom are high ranking army and air force officers. My informant, Wichian Krau-ngphriw, who runs a chemist's shop, informed me that he went on a so-called 'religious tour' to India which was organised by Luang Phau· Bun and his monks in 1989. They visited several important Buddhist places. Many of this tourist group were high ranking air force officers. He was told that the tour was successful and many laypeople donated a large sum of money to Luang Phau· Bun.

Luang Phau· Bun first visited Khun Yuam district in 1988. Seeing the poverty and illiteracy of the upland villagers, he decided to search for support to help these people. He also wanted to convert them to Buddhism.⁴⁰ So, an aid programme was started in that year. A *samnak song*⁴¹ for the ascetic forest monks was established at Paang Ung, a Hmong village east of Khun Yuam.

The programme is designed to bring the upland children of poor families to Amphoe Phanat Nikhom. In 1992, there were more than ninety children, of both sexes, who voluntarily went to live in Luang Phau· Bun's temple. Most of them

³⁹ Taylor (1993) explains that *doe-n thudong* '...has long been a crucial feature of the forest monk and symbol of asceticism'. It is usually practised in the dry-season period, especially between October and April. The ascetic forest monks will wander on foot from village to village, often in the forest areas, spending most of their time meditating (Taylor 1993:165-169). These monks, therefore, are generally called *phra thudong*. Most forest monks who *doe-n thudong* to Khun Yuam are ordained in the *Thammajut nikaaj* (Thammajut order) and eat only one meal a day (see details of their ascetic practice's rules, or *dhutanga*, in Taylor 1993:326-328, Appendix C). Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo and Phra Chajjot (see further) are both of *Thammajut nikaaj* and eat only one vegetarian meal daily.

⁴⁰ I am told that many Karen are Christians and most of the Hmong are animists.

⁴¹ Taylor (1993), based on Wachirayaan's explanation, writes that *samnak song*

...is a monastic centre not classified as *wat*, although in the forest tradition it is similar in general layout to a proper *wat* except without *siimaa* ... It is thus not possible in the Thai *sangha* to carry out higher *bhikkhu* ordination ... at these centres (Taylor 1993:105, footnote 3).

were Hmong and some were Karen. At the time, just over ten children were supported in their studies at a secondary school in Phanat Nikhom district. One teenager studied at the technical college in the provincial town of Chanthaburi, south-east of Chon Buri. The rest were at primary school. The monastery provided food, accomodation and school fees for every child, but each family was asked to contribute rice, vegetables, or dried food.⁴² The children were allowed to visit home twice a year. On each trip they would be accompanied by several monks and *mae cii* - the 'white-robed' nuns - in a big coach, hired by Luang Phau· Bun's monastery. In Khun Yuam, the monks and *mae cii* usually stayed at the Paang Ung's *samnak song*. The children spent between ten days and two weeks at home. On the way back to Phanat Nikhom, they always brought rice or some food with them. Owing to the bad condition of the road to the villages, the coach had to stop in front of Cau·ng Muaj Tau· and everyone travelled between Cau·ng Muaj Tau· and the villages or the *samnak song* by utility truck.

Because the monastery emphasises self-discipline and hard work, a daily temple duty is assigned to each child. This has to be completed in addition to school homework. Personal hygiene and cleanliness and tidiness of the temple compound are also major aims of the training. In addition, the temple is concerned about the children's education. Any child who studies hard will be encouraged, as well as sponsored, to continue his or her education to the tertiary level. Above all, however, the main concern of the monastery is to convert these children to Buddhism. Both boys and girls have to perform Buddhist prayers several times a day, particularly early in the morning and before bedtime. They pray before meals as well. During the summer holiday the temple organises ordination ceremonies,

⁴² All Hmong families earn cash by growing several kinds of vegetables, such as potatoes, corn, melon, and especially, cabbage. Most Karen, on the other hand, grow rice as their main crop.

After visiting home for a week in October 1992, some children took live chickens with them on the coach to Phanat Nikhom. I heard that one or two piglets were also brought down from the village, but the monks did not allow the piglets on the coach. So they were returned with the children's parents to the village.

and the children are persuaded to participate. The boys will be ordained as novices and the girls as *mae cii*, both at least for ten days. The total expenditure on the ordination is very high. Luang Phau· Bun thus always has to ask his lay supporters, who usually come from the central provinces, to sponsor the ordination. These lay devotees also stay at the temple during the ceremonies. Most of the ninety or so children whom I saw in 1992 were already ordained.

Every year, a number of ascetic forest monks under Luang Phau· Bun's supervision wander in the hill areas of Khun Yuam. These monks are sometimes accompanied by many lay supporters, who take good care of the monks and prepare food and other necessities for them. Help and support come from the locals as well. The town's residents sometimes organise an alms-giving, using Cau·ng Muaj Tau· as the centre, offering milled rice and dried food to the ascetic forest monks. I am told that these alms-giving are successful, despite the fact that very few townspeople know Luang Phau· Bun or have seen him in person. According to his lay followers, he very rarely visits the town, concentrating much of his effort on the uplanders.

Luang Phau· Bun frequently visits upland villages, bringing with him household items, clothing and blankets that are donated to the villagers by his lay supporters. Sometimes, medicine and agricultural equipment, which are offered by some officials of the Port Authority of Thailand and of some government departments, are given. Luang Phau· Bun also distributes the Buddha images to some upland temples and amulets to the villagers. To the best of my knowledge, he does not provide household items, medicine or other necessities to the townspeople, though they sometimes go to upland villages to plead for these things, which may be given to them. Wichian Krongphriw told me that Luang Phau· Bun once ordered a big drum to be made and delivered to a Hmong village where most residents had not yet

become Buddhists. The drum was to be used in the funeral ritual. He also sent his monks to participate in the ritual and to pray for the dead. Wichian also said that Luang Phau· Bun once planned to build a secondary school at Paang Ung, but this was rejected by the government because the land belonged to the Royal Development Project.

Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo

The second organisation is led by Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo, an ascetic forest monk whose temple is located in Amphoe Sam Phran, Nakhon Pathom.⁴³ Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo is well-known amongst the townspeople and uplanders, the Karen in particular. Like Luang Phau· Bun, Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo's magical love-power (*mettaamahaanijom*) is famous among laypeople. They also believe that Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo has the magical power of sixth sense and can make accurate predictions of the future.⁴⁴ Some of his followers say that all of his power is the result of his long years of meditation (*kammathaan*).⁴⁵

⁴³ Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo was not available for interview. Information about him was gathered from his lay supporters and Thai newspapers.

It is reported in a newspaper that Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo receives donations of several million baht a month. In 1995, several buildings were under construction in his temple in Sam Phran. The estimate cost of the construction was over three hundred million baht (Khawsot, 1 August 1995, p. 10).

⁴⁴ Phanomsak Sukhantha, the Principal of Khun Yuam's secondary school, told me that many people have to see Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo asking for his predictions. For example, before the general election in September 1992, Panjaa Ciinaakham, one of the election candidates for Mae Hong Son, came to see Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo. The latter told Panjaa that he would win the election if he 'went up to the mountains' (to focus his political campaign amongst the uplanders, especially the Karen), which Panjaa did. Subsequently, he won the election.

⁴⁵ *Kammathaan* is a common practice among ascetic forest monks. Taylor (1993) writes that *kammathaan*

...means the basis of practice in relation to the traditional forty meditation subjects. In the Thai-Lao tradition it denotes ascetic meditation monks Phra Kammathaan (but strictly speaking it may apply to any meditation monk) and used in the context of a complete way of training leading to the application of *samaathi* (concentration meditation) and *panya* (insight knowledge) (Taylor 1993:22, footnote 9).

Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo was born in the northeastern region in 1949 and has been ordained since he was 12 years old. He first arrived in Khun Yuam in 1988-89 and stayed in the forest outside Müang Pau·n village. It is believed amongst his lay supporters in Khun Yuam that in a previous life Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo was the son of an elderly Tai woman and used to live in Müang Pau·n. In his present life he recalled his former existence, so he came to Müang Pau·n to see his relatives who were still alive. Several residents of Müang Pau·n who were claimed by Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo as his former relatives became his followers.

Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo comes to Khun Yuam once or twice a year. Unlike Luang Phau· Bun, he visits both lowlanders, particularly the residents of Müang Pau·n, and uplanders. He is accompanied by many ascetic forest monks, government servants and policemen. Like Luang Phau· Bun, he always distributes many necessities to the locals. I first met him in February 1992, when he arrived at Müang Pau·n's primary school. Early in the morning, hundreds of uplanders and lowlanders were already awaiting his arrival in the school playground. A lot of Hmong and Karen had travelled for several hours from their villages. Some of them came in the back of utility trucks, many of them came on foot. Lay women, both Tai and Kon Müang, were dressed in white and the *khaaraatchakaan* were in full uniform. Several fully-armed Border Policemen and local policemen were in charge of security. The religious ritual began and the monks prayed until eleven o'clock. At the back of the school's buildings, local cooks busied themselves preparing vegetarian food. Lunch was later served to everyone.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo and his monks were vegetarians. In addition, they only ate one meal a day. The cost of the food was met by the teachers. It seemed to be the only contribution that was not offered by Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo.

In the afternoon, Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo distributed hundreds of bags of milled rice, dried and canned food, second-hand clothing and blankets to the people. Buddha images, candles, brass candlesticks and joss-sticks were given to schoolteachers and other *khaaraatchakaan*. His followers, mostly lowlanders, flocked round Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo for amulets. These participants also competed over a few big jars containing *nam mon* (blessed water). They used plastic bags and glass bottles to take the water home. Those who were sick drank the holy water in the hope that it would cure their sickness. Some used it to wash their faces and hair, or to spray in their houses to drive away ill-fortune and to bring good luck to themselves and their families. In contrast, the Hmong and Karen seemed more concerned about the rice and other necessities than the amulets. This may have been because many of them were Christians.

As usual, Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo also gave financial contributions to the local schools. Iam Khamsaen, a Tai schoolteacher, told me that in that year, every school received 3,000 baht (approximately A\$157.89) apart from the school in Müang Pau-n village which got a lump sum of 90,000 baht (A\$4,736.84).⁴⁷ The money was to be used for any purpose, depending on each school's priority.

In addition, a special grant is made every year to the Khun Yuam secondary school by the *Muunnithi Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo* (Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo Foundation). The fund is made up of the interest earned from the principal which the *Muunnithi* has invested in the Krung Thai Bank of Khun Yuam.⁴⁸ Until

⁴⁷ In 1992, there were thirty-six primary schools, including the one in Müang Pau-n. Thus, the total of the money offered by Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo was approximately 195,000 baht.

⁴⁸ As far as I know, the *Muunnithi Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo*, the head office of which is based at the temple in Amphoe Sam Phran, has established several branches throughout the country. Its branch in Khun Yuam is operated by local volunteers, most of whom are Tai. These volunteers sometimes set up a committee to consider issues concerning the Foundation. One of their tasks includes making a decision about the amount of financial support for the secondary school. I have heard that the school's teachers usually get along well with the committee and they often receive what they want.

In addition, I am told that the total of the money, or - to be precise - the principal which has been deposited in the bank, is 200,000 baht (about A\$10,526.32). The first one hundred thousand

1992, this fund was spent on food for one hundred and one pupils from poor uplander families who lived in the secondary school's dormitories.⁴⁹ Other expenses, for example, electricity, were paid by the school. However, because the fund was limited, the parents of these pupils were asked to contribute fifteen kilograms of rice and one hundred baht per pupil each month. Some families could not afford to pay this and the pupils, feeling too embarrassed by their poverty, stopped coming to school. The school therefore frequently had to waive its requirements and find other means to cover the food expense for its pupils.

The school's principal raised these problems with Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo. The latter promised to find more money. I was informed that another 6,900 baht (about A\$363.16) would be added to the 1993 food fund of the school. Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo, furthermore, promised that he would try to set up some scholarships for the poor families' pupils.⁵⁰ As a matter of fact, the relations between Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo and the Khun Yuam secondary school were so close that when the former said that he would like to build accommodation for his ascetic forest monks who occasionally came to Khun Yuam, the school's principal offered to perform the task.

Before the end of September 1992, the school organised an alms-giving, *thau-t phaapaa* to raise the money to build the accommodation.⁵¹ It began with a

baht was given to the Khun Yuam branch in 1990 and the other one hundred thousand baht in 1992. This money is to remain in the bank, only the interest can be withdrawn for use.

The manager of the Krung Thai Bank in Khun Yuam is also one of Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo's followers. He often contacts Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo, both on business and personal matters.

⁴⁹ These dormitories are actually small huts built temporarily from bamboo and thatched with leaves. All are occupied by male pupils. Female pupils share a large, one storey, one room, wooden building. There are no separate bedrooms in this building. There were more boys than girls living in these dormitories.

⁵⁰ Although the school's report indicates that there were already forty-five scholarships, representing a total amount of 27,700 baht (about A\$1,457.89), available in 1992, a number of good pupils still could not receive adequate financial support to continue their studies. Some of them even had to leave school early.

⁵¹ *Phaapaa* literally means 'forest cloth' (Taylor 1993:308, footnote 15; he also suggests that its full term is probably '*phaapaachaa* - cloth discarded in the charnel grounds') or 'widerness robes'

procession of schoolteachers and pupils, followed by four utility trucks carrying a *ton ngoe-n* (money tree) and a few locals playing a drum, gongs and cymbals. Announcements informing listeners of the ceremony's purpose were broadcast at frequent intervals through an electrical loud-speaker. Teachers and pupils walked from door to door asking for donations. The town's residents, of all groups, made contributions. The procession started from the secondary school and passed along the town's two main roads. It then stopped at Cau-ng Muaj Tau, where a religious ritual was held. The donation money, together with the banknotes which were attached to the money tree, were all counted. Less than two weeks later, the first monk's accommodation was established in the charnel ground which was located behind the monk's cremation ground.

Many pupils from Khun Yuam have also been supported by Luang Phau-Phawwanaa Phutthoo to live and study in Amphoe Sam Phran, where Luang Phau-Phawwanaa Phutthoo's temple is located.⁵² They comprise mostly Karen and Hmong children, together with some Tai from Müang Pau-n village.⁵³ Many Karen and Hmong children come from non-Buddhist backgrounds. In addition, pupils who have done well are continuously supported to the tertiary level. Like the

(Bunnag 1973:117). It is a piece of 'plain white cloth', or often 'whole robes', offered to the monks. The *thau-t phaapaa* ceremony

...may be held at any time of the year outside of *phansaa* ... and an opportunity for spontaneous presentation of cloth and other items to forest monks (with minimum ritual). In this traditional mode, 'discarded cloth' ... is left for wandering monks to pick up on forest paths (Taylor 1993:308, footnote 15).

The organisers of this *thau-t phaapaa* were mostly concerned about collecting money to build accommodation for the forest monks. Therefore, the *phaapaa* and other small domestic and personal items for the monk's use were not prepared. It seems to me that the organisers intended to call it *thau-t phaapaa* to indicate its religious significance rather than to acquire all the material necessities usually provided in such ceremony.

⁵² Many upland children from Chiang Mai and other districts in Mae Hong Son have lived and studied in Sam Phran as well. These children, of course, have been financially supported by Luang Phau-Phawwanaa Phutthoo.

⁵³ Not many lowland children, Tai and Kon Müang, go to the schools in Amphoe Phanat Nikhom and Amphoe Sam Phran. Whether they are not accepted by Luang Phau-Bun and Luang Phau-Phawwanaa Phutthoo or whether they have no intention to leave home is not clear. Some locals comment that the lowland children, the Tai in particular, prefer to live at home, where it is more comfortable. This could also be because they are uncertain what to expect from and how to react to the life in the central provinces.

children under Luang Phau· Bun's sponsorship, pupils who are supported by Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo have to live in the monastery in Amphoe Sam Phran and are assigned daily duties. Also, the temple only provides vegetarian food for the children.

Pupils are persuaded to be ordained during the school summer holiday. The expenses of the ordination are paid by the monastery's lay supporters. My Tai informants noted that most children are usually ordained for a couple of months, but some accept the Buddhist faith and become ascetic forest monks. They then *doe-n thudong* to the remote areas of the northern region, searching for religious truth and spreading Buddhist beliefs. A few of them who are Khun Yuam Karen return to their home villages and try to establish Buddhist temples. Informants also remarked that many ascetic forest monks who *doe-n thudong* through Khun Yuam once a year are of different ethnic groups. Many of them speak Kam Müang and some speak Thai. Some are Karen and a few are Hmong.

In mid-1995, however, there was a very serious allegation made against Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo. It is reported in Thai newspapers (Khawsot, 1 August 1995, Mathichon, 8 and 9 August 1995) that six upland girls, aged 12 to 15 years old, were believed to be raped by Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo. The girls, who came from Chiang Mai, had lived in Wat Sam Phran and studied at Sam Phran School for some time. Several Karen girls from Khun Yuam area were also believed to be sexually abused by him (Khawsot, 28 August 1995). The monk, of course, denied the allegation. The Department of Religious Affairs and the police were then called to investigate the allegation. Later, Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo was arrested and charged for sexually assaulting girls under age and other charges, but he was soon out on bail of two million baht. Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo was also accused of being involved in fraud. It is believed that he took a

large sum of money from the donations for his own use. According to the police investigation, Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo had so far received donations of over one thousand million baht from laypeople. He gave a large sum of money to some senior, high ranking, monks every year, and some thirty million baht to Sam Phran School (Mathichon, 15 August 1995).

In early September 1995, Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo was disrobed and arrested by the police. A newspaper reported that

[Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo] was refused bail; the court determined that there were grounds for the allegations against him.

[He] has been charged on five counts of raping and molesting nine under-aged girls, between 13 to 15 years, at Wat Samphran in Nakhon Pathom (Bangkok Post, 8 September 1995).

Many lay supporters believed that Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo was guilty and the amount of donations given to Wat Sam Phran was decreasing dramatically. At the time I am writing this (November 1995), it is uncertain whether or not the project of converting upland children to Buddhism, as well as educating them, will be carried on without Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo.

Buddha Kasetra Foundation

Unlike the two organisations mentioned above, the Buddha Kasetra Foundation has established its own boarding schools where not only the pupils but the teachers are all required to live in the schools. There is one boys' secondary school in Nakhon Ratchasima Province in the northeastern region and a girls' secondary school in Chiang Mai. Two primary schools are open in Amphoe Khun Yuam. The Foundation receives donations from various sources, mostly from Buddhists in Thailand, Taiwan, Singapore,⁵⁴ Malaysia, Hong Kong and the USA. Several non-

⁵⁴ The Buddha Kasetra Foundation's newsletter of May 1992 reports of an anonymous letter to the Department of Religious Affairs. The letter, written in English, complained that Phra Chajjot led a

government organisations in Canada and Germany offer funds. The Foundation receives various kinds of help from some Khun Yuam residents as well.

The Foundation's chairman, Phra Chajjot Chajajasoo, is very active and busy and frequently has to travel overseas in search of funds. He is in his mid-thirties. He told me that he has been involved in socio-political movements ever since he became a monk. In 1978, he was accused of being a communist and had to leave his temple in Bangkok. He moved to the southern region and lived in a temple called Suan Mok. There, he learnt more about Buddhism from Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, a leading contemporary Buddhist scholar/monk of Thailand. In 1984, he founded the Buddha Dhamma Centre at Nonghaw, Chiang Mai. The Buddha Kasetra Foundation was then established in 1988. Since then, he has been promoting the idea of 'Buddha Kasetra' (literally, Buddhist agriculture), which emphasises living in subsistence level Buddhist communities in which religious ethics and morality are more important than material values.

The idea of the 'Buddha Kasetra community' (*chumchon Buddhakaset*) arose from Phra Chajjot's experience with two boys. These two juvenile delinquents from a Bangkok slum were brought to the Buddha Dhamma Centre at Nonghaw in 1986. The two boys were said to be so unruly that they had been rejected by several rehabilitation homes. After having lived with the monks and novices at the Buddha Dhamma Centre, however, the boys' behaviour changed. They became more gentle. Phra Chajjot and his monks came to the conclusion that the Buddhist way of life was probably a solution for such social problems and could rescue many homeless children from trouble. Thus, before the end of that year, the first two

group of monks begging for money in the streets of Taiwan and Singapore. Phra Chajjot received a large amount of donations, but no one seemed to know where all the money had gone. Phra Chajjot and the Foundation's public relations defended themselves, replying that no such incident had occurred. The Foundation has received donations from individuals and non-government organisations but does not publicly solicit for donations. The Department of Religious Affairs was satisfied with the result of the inquiry and no further action was taken.

Buddha Kasetra primary schools were established; one near Baan Maj Phatthanaa, about ten kilometres east of Khun Yuam town, and another in Amphoe Mae La Noi. Later, a girls' secondary school was established in Chiang Mai to help girls who had been forced to become child prostitutes to rehabilitate themselves. A boys' secondary school in Nakhon Ratchasima, on the other hand, was aimed at assisting boys who had been illegally forced into child labour. My discussion focuses on the Buddha Kasetra school at Baan Maj Phatthanaa in Khun Yuam.⁵⁵

In 1992, there were over one hundred and fifty pupils and almost twenty teachers living in the Buddha Kasetra communal primary school at Baan Maj Phatthanaa. The pupils were aged from four to fifteen years old and, like other primary schools, there were six grades taught in the school. The pupils consisted of orphans, disobedient children, children from broken homes and those whose parents were imprisoned. Some of these children came from the villages in Khun Yuam and other districts of Mae Hong Son. Many of them were upland children from other northern provinces, such as Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lampang and Phayao.⁵⁶ Many were lowlanders. Most of the teachers, of both sexes, were not local either. Some of them held a university degree and some had only finished high school.

About ten pupils and one teacher shared each house, all of which belonged to the school. Each house had its own garden where the occupants grew their own vegetables. Pupils and teachers got up very early in the morning and spent thirty minutes praying and meditating. (Evening prayers lasted one hour.) In the morning, the pupils followed lessons in general subjects according to the primary school

⁵⁵ I mentioned earlier that there are two primary schools established by the Buddha Kasetra in Khun Yuam. The other school, located on the outskirts of Khun Yuam town, was only recently opened. The school teaches only the first and second years of primary education. The effect and benefit of the school are yet to be evaluated, so it is excluded from my discussion.

⁵⁶ Sompau-ng Waanghaa, one of the teachers, said that in several remote upland villages, there were some Border Policemen who taught the children the Thai language. Unfortunately, these policemen lacked training and the best they could do was to order the children to copy the words they wrote on the blackboards. Consequently, the children could neither read nor comprehend the language. After these children arrived at the 'Buddha Kasetra' school, they had to be re-taught.

curriculum of the Ministry of Education. After lunch, they were taught techniques of self-reliance, both in terms of learning and performing. They would practise cultivation, using mainly organic agricultural methods, as well as proper techniques for home maintenance and care.

The school's curriculum included the teaching of Buddhism, emphasising both ideology and practice. Pupils and teachers prepared and cooked their own meals, which were, of course, vegetarian. The communal school also operated its own dairy farm to provide milk for the pupils' consumption. The project started in 1989, when the first three cows were bought. Until the last months of 1992, the school's farm produced an excess of milk, which was processed for sale in the market of Khun Yuam. Almost at the same time, the school's bakery began to produce bread for the town as well. Owing to financial problems, however, it was occasionally closed.

Pupils and teachers cultivated their own crops, mainly rice, corn, groundnut and sweet potato. In 1992, the school owned two sections of rice fields, one was about five *rai* (one *rai* = 0.16 hectares) near the *saan caw müang*, the other was seven *rai* next to the Nam Yuam river. Both were bought and donated by lay supporters who came to visit the school and were impressed by the school's efforts. The land, however, was not able to produce enough rice for consumption and the school had to buy rice occasionally. In mid-1992, Bunrat Siicae-m and her siblings, all of whom are adopted children of Caw Maa, one of the wealthiest residents of Khun Yuam (see Chapter Two, Appendix 2), offered sixty *rai* of rice fields to the Buddha Kasetra school for a three-year period of cultivation, free of charge. Bunrat told me that they offered the use of the land because it had neither been cultivated nor rented by anyone for some time.⁵⁷ Besides, the pupils and teachers needed

⁵⁷ They probably did not want to leave their land uncultivated for too long since the land would become overgrown with weeds and the soil become too hard to plough.

more land to grow rice for themselves. Bunrat and her siblings wanted to offer any help they could. As she said in her own words, 'it was also a meritorious action'.

Needless to say, the teachers and, especially Phra Chajjot, were delighted with the offer. They publicly praised Bunrat and her siblings for their generosity. A short time after they offered the land to the school, Bunrat was interviewed by the staff of the Foundation and her story was published in the Foundation's monthly newsletter. Bunrat was very pleased with the publication of their generous offering. She told me that if the land is still not rented by any farmer after the period of three years, she will probably ask her siblings to let the school continue to cultivate the land.

The Foundation's financial situation was badly affected by the democratic protest in Bangkok in May 1992, in which many civilians were violently killed and injured by the Thai military. The incident caused the international community to cease its support to Thailand. Consequently, aid given by Western non-government organisations to the Buddha Kasetra Foundation stopped. Donations from overseas Buddhists who visited the Foundation were also dramatically reduced owing to the smaller number of foreign tourists to Thailand. The Foundation faced great financial difficulties and was unable to pay its staff's salary for two months. Phra Chajjot asked the staff to be patient and promised to search for the money. Four or five months before the end of that year, about twelve teachers decided to ease the Foundation's financial burden. They voluntarily offered to accept a reduced salary of three thousand baht (almost A\$158) per person per month until the financial situation improved. Since some of these teachers already earned more than five thousand baht a month, the proposed salary was less than half of the normal. The Foundation happily accepted the teachers' offer. This was published in the

Foundation's monthly newsletter which expressed sincere gratitude to these teachers.

A faithful Buddhist, a perfect man

As mentioned above, three groups of monks are active in converting upland children to Buddhism, as well as providing them with education and self-training. The monks believe that to be a perfect man, one has to be self-reliant, self-disciplined, diligent and literate. Most importantly, he/she ought to be a Buddhist. Since most townspeople of Khun Yuam are Buddhists, the work of these monks is clearly appreciated. The townspeople take the view that participating in the process of converting non-Buddhists to Buddhism brings them merit as well. The locals are therefore very happy to support such an activity and get much satisfaction out of it. Although most financial sponsorship of the three groups comes from outside, Khun Yuam residents also contribute a great deal of help and support. The offer of Bunrat's paddy fields is an excellent example of local sponsorship which does not involve cash donations. A local Tai man put it this way,

In the past, they [uplanders] were all Christians. Today, we are trying to convert them to Buddhism. We are succeeding. About half of them now are Buddhists. It is good to be a Buddhist. We must support the monks. They are doing a good job.

Many monks, local and non-local, certainly agree with such statements and will encourage the laypeople to do so. Both monks and laypeople believe that converting others to Buddhism is a kind of merit-making.

Some important features must be considered. While assistance from local Tai and Kon Müang is offered to Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo and the Buddha Kasetra, Luang Phau· Bun is mainly supported by the Thai. Perhaps, as Wichian suggests, it is because Luang Phau· Bun does not concentrate his mission on the

lowlanders and hardly ever visits the market town or its residents. Of the three organisations, Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo has established the closest relationship with the locals. Not only does he contribute many necessities to the locals every year, but he has also claimed a natural affinity with the locals in his previous existence. In addition, Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo supports local schools.

There are several other differences between the three groups. For example, they differ in the ethnic preference shown in the choice of children educated in the systems of teaching and training. While Luang Phau· Bun takes mainly Hmong children to schools in the central province, Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo prefers to work with Karen children. The Buddha Kasetra school teaches and nurses children of all groups and from all backgrounds. In addition, although the two former organisations demand that the children live in their monasteries, they themselves do not perform the formal teaching task. It is left to the public schools to educate the children. The Buddha Kasetra, on the contrary, established its own schools, as well as its own curriculum. Because the schools are operated according to the philosophy of 'Buddha Kasetra community', pupils are required to learn the general subjects of the formal educational system and to practise techniques of self-reliance. They are trained to cultivate rice and other crops, to tend cattle, to cook and bake, and to build shelters. Children sponsored by Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo and the Buddha Kasetra are required to be strict vegetarians.

CONCLUSION

Since most Khun Yuam townspeople are Buddhists, beliefs in *kam* - or *karma* - and merit-making play crucial roles in their lives. Such beliefs certainly give them

spiritual refuge. They also explain socio-economic differences. As Mulder (1973) notes

...Individual merit is also a rationalization for social prestige. Status positions in Thai society popularly are explained in terms of merit. The more meritorious a previous life, the higher the position in this life. Social inequality and mobility are explained in religious terms. Furthermore, the relatively well-to-do have the opportunity to make more merit than others (Mulder 1973:6).

As in other Thai communities, the locals of Khun Yuam, particularly the well-to-do families, seek merit for similar reasons.

Yet, a few points need to be discussed. Firstly, it is about the purposes of merit-making. Tannenbaum (1987, 1989, 1990b and Durrenberger and Tannenbaum 1989) argue that the Shan of Mae Hong Son are less concerned with acquiring merit. Instead, they attempt to gain supernatural power, as well as self-protection. On the contrary, I find that the locals of Khun Yuam try to accumulate merit for several reasons. I do not deny that many Buddhists believe in supernatural power and self-protection, but my evidence indicates that regular merit-making in Khun Yuam, especially by residents who have achieved success in trading, is related to social and economic security, and - for some - to political status. Merit-making also provides security for their own spiritual lives and a comfortable hope that they will be re-born in the next existence with wealth and prosperity.

In the view of ordinary Buddhists, Buddhism is not against wealth or being rich. As a matter of fact, wealth is a sign of a person's merit. The legendary tale of Phra Uppakhut confirms that one who wants to be rich and prosperous must acquire adequate merit. The tale also shows that only those who have accumulated merit in previous lives (in other words, those who are born rich) have the opportunity to become richer. Rich people who make merit continuously ensure that they will be

prosperous in this life and the next. Those who are born poor, on the other hand, have less merit, and those who have less merit are not likely to get rich.

The stories of Cau-ng Ping and Luang Anusarn Sunthorn are good examples of traders who become wealthy because of their own merit. In Khun Yuam where most of its residents are involved in trade, the locals make merit for the sake of their own prosperity and wealth rather than to acquire supernatural power and self-protection. I think, however, Khun Yuam is not an exception. In the wider community, more people are making merit for the sake of their own business successes. Owing to the current trading boom and economic growth, a large number of people have become traders. But trading is a risky occupation. One will possibly become wealthy or bankrupt. Traders, therefore, try to make merit regularly because they believe that their merit will secure their prosperity, as well as safe them from bankruptcy. Wealthy laypeople or traders will make merit more often. On the other hand, the monks always bless their lay donors with good fortune, success, wealth and good health, all of which are indications of people who have merit. As a result, as shown in Chapter One, several well-known monks have received donations worth millions of baht everyday. Unlike in the past, monks at the present time are one of the most wealthy groups in the society. I am therefore inclined to suggest that one of the most important purposes of merit-making is to secure one's own future of wealth and prosperity.

Merit-making, moreover, is an indicator of one's, in Mulder's words, 'social prestige'. One's merit proves one's actions are just, righteous and moral. A person who always makes merit is praised by the monastery. He/she is respected and honoured in his/her own community. In Khun Yuam, mutual support between well-to-do trading families and monks is evident. While the rich offer financial sponsorship to the monks, the latter respond with religious praise, honour and

status, for their benefactors. It is clear that residents of Khun Yuam also make merit in order to acquire respect and prestige and to justify their claim that their acts are moral and legitimate.

The second point is that Buddhist monks play a significant part in converting non-Buddhist children to Buddhism and in education. They believe that the Buddhist way of life is best for anyone, and that a perfect man ought to be a Buddhist. He/she must be self-controlled and self-reliant. The children are therefore taught to be diligent, confident, intelligent, literate and faithful to the religion, as well as to their parents and the country. In 1992, there were at least three monks' organisations working in Khun Yuam. Their efforts were quite successful. The residents of the town, wealthy traders in particular, offered support and assistance of various kinds, including money and other sponsorships. Even land was temporarily lent. From the locals' point of view, this was seen as a kind of merit-making. They were not only making contributions to the monks, but were also helping others to be good people, to be Buddhists. They were doing good deeds for themselves and for the religion.

The third point is concerned with education. Monks agree that education is an important means to develop a better person since illiterate people are difficult to teach, train or discipline. Education is essential. In this regard, the attitude of the monks towards education supports economic growth at the present time. As mentioned in the previous chapter, literacy - as well as the Thai language - facilitates traders in their trading activities in the new environments of modern trade and business. A trader needs to be literate in order to communicate and to engage in larger scale trade. Literacy also helps people to acquire information on any issue. Only those who are educated will be successful and prosperous. Only those who can read and write will learn fast and develop themselves into better people, better

Buddhists. Both monks and laypeople see education as a key factor for development in religion and economy. In the next two chapters, I shall show that laypeople, especially well-to-do traders, realise the significance of education in developing both knowledge and skills of their own and their children, which will certainly benefit their careers.

Appendix 4

Cremations of Tai senior monks (*laak loe-m*)⁵⁸

At the beginning of 1992, the funerals of two well-known, senior, Tai monks were held in Khun Yuam town. The two funerals were the most magnificent spectacles I witnessed during my fieldwork. The first funeral was of an eccentric, elderly monk named Phra Sommaaj. The second was of the former abbot of Cau-ng Kham Naj who had died a year earlier.⁵⁹ Each funeral lasted about two or three weeks and on the last day, the cremation day, there was a ceremony called *laak loe-m* (literally, pulling the hearse).⁶⁰ At both funerals, announcements and speeches were all in Tai and Kam Müang.

Phra Sommaaj was born in Khun Yuam. He was ordained at a young age and spent most of his monkhood living in Cau-ng Khum, one of the oldest temples in the town.⁶¹ He was an ordinary Buddhist monk until, many years before he died, Phra Sommaaj left the monkhood and began to wear women's dress. He let his hair

⁵⁸ Since a very similar funeral was described by Keyes (1975), some details of the *laak loe-m* will be omitted. I shall only refer to the stories of the two monks and some interesting events that occurred before both cremations.

⁵⁹ In Khun Yuam, the body of a senior monk is normally kept for several months or a year before it is cremated. Keyes (1975:45) reports a similar practice in Mae Sariang.

⁶⁰ Elsewhere, this ceremony is known as *pau-j lau* or *laak prasaat*. I sometimes heard local elders refer to the *laak loe-m* as *pau-j lau*. Keyes (1975) documents the funeral of an abbot in Mae Sariang held in the early 1970s. He notes that

Local people call the funeral of a monk which includes such a ceremonial tug-of-war *poi lo*, .. lit. 'ceremony of the cart or sleigh'. While the people who participated in the ceremony were predominantly northern Thai or Yuan and while the deceased was also northern Thai, the custom of the tug-of-war is said to be of Shan origin. In fact, the *poi lo* ceremony which I observed is closely related to the usual Northern Thai funeral for a monk which is known as *lak prasat* .. or 'pulling of the *prasada*'. Both the *poi lo* and the *lak prasat* ceremonies share much with the Burmese rites for a monk known as a *pongyi byan pwe* which Shway Yoe glosses as 'the return of the great glory' (Keyes 1975:44).

As a matter of fact, the *poi lo* (*pau-j lau*) in Mae Sariang and the *laak loe-m* in Khun Yuam seem to be the same ceremony. In addition, I am informed that in the past, the *laak loe-m* was also held during the funerals of high status laypersons, who were usually either wealthy traders, teak logging contractors, or landlords. The funeral of Caw Maa (one of the wealthiest men already mentioned in Chapter Two) in 1982 was the last funeral of a trader during which the *laak loe-m* ceremony was held in the town.

⁶¹ Cau-ng Khum is located near Cau-ng Kham Naj, opposite the morning market (see Map 4).

grow longer, making a topknot in the Tai style. He stopped making the monk's daily alms-round and started to cook for himself. He also ceased referring to himself as a monk, but continued to live in one of the houses in the temple. He avoided people, trying not to receive any guests, but the townspeople still came to see him and offered him food and other necessities as they did to the other monks. No one, either monk or layperson, ever objected to his behaviour.

Rumours then spread that he practised supernatural power. It was said he could see and hear everything (but as far as I know, Phra Sommaaj himself never confirmed all this). Some locals told me, for example, that a Tai man planned to offer some fruit to Phra Sommaaj. As he was about to leave his home, his child cried and begged him for the fruit, but he refused and continued his journey to the temple. When he offered the fruit to Phra Sommaaj, the latter declined to receive the offering, telling the man to take the fruit back to his child. Not having mentioned anything about his child, the man was absolutely amazed and wondered how the old monk knew what had happened at his home. The locals who were gamblers said that Phra Sommaaj had the power to predict the 'correct numbers' and that some of them had won at gambling with those numbers. Laypeople arrived from everywhere, including the Buddhist Karen, believing that he was sacred. Gamblers wanted the 'sacred numbers' from him, the sick asked for his holy water to drive away their illnesses, and ordinary people gave him offerings to make merit. They all thought that Phra Sommaaj was a holy monk, but he ignored them and continued to live his unconventional life until the last day of his life.

Phra Sommaaj died in the last week of December 1991. His funeral was held at Cau-ng Khum where his body was kept. There was a sermon every night and a group of laypeople always attended. Nineteen days later was cremation day and the locals agreed that there must be a *laak loe-m*, as well as a tug-of-war ceremony.

Hundreds of participants, mainly Tai and Kon Müang, came from all over the district, Mae Hong Son and Mae Chaem, to pay their last respects to the dead monk. A long sermon was given in the morning, followed by the reading of the *jataka* by a local *caree*. Then followed a big feast at lunch time. From the late-morning to mid-afternoon, a band, including drums, cymbals, a violin, a banjo and an accordion from Mae Hong Son town created pleasant and joyful Tai (or Burmese?) music. Dancers from Burma also performed Tai (Burmese?) dances.⁶² Many locals watched the dances with joy. Others did not hesitate to rush in to join the dancers. Eventually, the dancers and musicians were rewarded with some cash by wealthy locals.⁶³

In the late-afternoon, the coffin, which was laid on a colossal sledge-like hearse (*loe-m*) was pulled by hundreds of participants to the monk's cremation ground, not far from the town's airfield.⁶⁴ The *loe-m* was made from two big tree trunks and was five metres long and nearly four metres high.⁶⁵ Its top (*praasaat*) was decorated with flowers, coloured papers and tiny pieces of bamboo. The pattern was very similar to the one Keyes witnessed in Mae Sariang. Local carpenters and

⁶² I put question marks in these two places because there were some disagreement among the locals. Some of them said that the music and dances were Tai, but some thought that they were Burmese.

⁶³ A Western woman who had lived in the Shan States in the 1950s-1960s participated in several Tai funerals and was amazed that the funerals

...were lighthearted, almost jovial events. Neither dress nor mood of the attending crowd had anything in common with the gloomy, mournful funerals she had attended in Austria. The Shans rejoiced that the deceased person had completed another life in an infinite cycle of death and rebirth.

She once went to the funeral of a Tai abbot and found that

...[T]housands of cheerful people milled around the special building that housed the coffin; there were no evident expressions of grief or mourning. A constant stream of devotees approached the sarcophagus to pay their final respects to the deceased abbot, just as they had revered him when he had been alive (Sargent 1994:72).

⁶⁴ In Khun Yuam, the cremation ground of the monks is separate from that of ordinary people.

⁶⁵ In the old days, according to Thamrong Bunphithak, each hearse had four wheels, but the wheels proved to be unsafe. Several accidents occurred during the tug-of-war ceremonies and some drunken men were crushed and killed under the wheels. Since then, the four-wheeled hearse has been replaced by the sledge-like vehicle. This history explains why the ceremony is called the *pau-j lau* (*lau* means 'wheels'). In Burma and the Shan States, the hearses were also four-wheeled carts (Shway Yoe 1989:586 and Sargent 1994:73).

craftsmen had spent several weeks making the hearse, all without any payment. When the hearse arrived at the airfield, the *laak loe-m* ceremony began. Both ends of the hearse were tied with long heavy ropes, while the participants, both males and females, were divided into two groups. The two groups then began their tug-of-war contest, with the hearse in the middle. Although it seemed chaotic with hundreds of people trying to take over the hearse, in the mist of dust and heat, the coffin was well-protected by men who stood on the hearse.⁶⁶ The tug-of-war lasted two or three hours. The hearse was then pulled to the monks' cremation ground and the cremation took place. As in Mae Sariang, the *loe-m* and the *praasaat* were used as the funeral pyre (see Keyes 1975:50). After the body of Phra Sommaaj was cremated, local men took turns to keep an eye on the ashes to prevent people from taking them.⁶⁷ The ashes were allowed to cool, then collected very early the following morning '...to be kept for later interment in a stupa' (Keyes 1975:54).

The funeral of the abbot of Cau-ng Kham Naj was held several weeks after Phra Sommaaj was cremated. It is said that the former was more renowned than the latter. There were more participants, including many Buddhist Karen men and

⁶⁶ Keyes (1975) puts such a spectacular event in this way

The *prasada* was oriented in an East-West direction in the middle of the field. The heavy ropes attached to each side of the sleigh were picked up by men and dragged in opposite directions. Then men, women and children ... took hold of the ropes on either side. There was no social basis for determining who chose to go on one side rather than the other and I observed many who changed sides. A number of men and even a few women had appointed themselves as coaches cum cheerleaders; several even had megaphones. These people encouraged the side they were on to begin pulling. Usually the side that began would have the advantage, but would be stopped finally as more and more people joined the other side. Sometimes the rope broke and the side having the good rope might pull the *prasada* several dozen meters before they were persuaded to stop. Flags marked the course on which the tug-of-war took place, but there were no 'goals', no points which if the *prasada* passed, one side could claim a victory (Keyes 1975:56; italics original).

In Khun Yuam, the tug-of-war of the hearse was also placed in an East-West direction. It may be worth noting that similar events in Burma and the Shan States have been recorded by Shway Yoe (1989:586-587) and by Sargent (1994:73). Interestingly, the latter notes that the tug-of-war contest '...symbolized the struggle between the worldly and spiritual forces for the karma of the deceased' (Sargent 1994:73).

⁶⁷ Phra Sommaaj's ashes, like himself when he was alive, were thought to be sacred. They would bring good luck, protect one from evil things, drive away illness and so on. So many people tried to take some of them.

women, at his funeral. On the cremation day, the tug-of-war of the hearse again took place on the grounds of the airfield and went on for almost four hours. When the contest stopped, it was already too dark for the cremation so it had to be conducted the next day. The hearse and the coffin were left on the airfield and were watched over by a number of townspeople, who killed time by gambling. As the night went by, more locals - men and women - came to join the games. The area turned into a small open-air casino. Many of them gambled until dawn.⁶⁸ The morning began with a reading from the *jataka* by learned elderly Tai men. There was another tug-of-war contest in the afternoon, which lasted about an hour or so. The hearse and the coffin were then pulled to the cremation ground and the cremation began. Like Phra Sommaaj, the remains of the abbot were kept in a stupa.

I am informed that in the past the tug-of-war ceremony normally lasted two or three days. In Mae Sariang (Keyes 1975:56) and in Burma (Shway Yoe 1989:587), the tug-of-war of the hearse was also held for a few days. Keyes explains that those who participated in this action wanted to '...gain great merit' (Keyes 1975:56). See also Shway Yoe (1989:587).

⁶⁸ In fact, from the first day of the funeral till the last, a group of males and females was seen gambling. The locals are fond of gambling; whenever a funeral, a wedding, or any gathering is held, there is always gambling.

CHAPTER FIVE

SHOP OWNERS AND ITINERANT TRADERS

This chapter and the next investigate the lives of local shop owners and traders, and their activities and relationships with others in the market town. In this chapter, however, I shall particularly focus on two groups: owners of big shops and itinerant traders. Those who run small eating houses or tiny shops selling miscellaneous goods, and those who sell vegetables, fresh and dried food in the morning market of the town are excluded from the discussion.

Local shop owners consist of Tai, Kon Müang, and Thai speakers, while itinerant traders are mainly Thai and Kon Müang. Most shop owners and itinerant traders have completed at least primary education.¹ Some passed secondary level and a few even finished a higher level. All of them, therefore, read and write the Thai language and have, at least, a basic knowledge of keeping account books. Some of them come from a business background, but many do not. Often, the latter have had several kinds of jobs or businesses. Most members of both groups travel occasionally, especially the itinerant traders, and are obviously the most mobile people in the community. They normally have established good relations with local monks and teachers and offer help and money to the monasteries (as we have seen in Chapter Four) and, at times, schools. They participate in communal activities or similar functions organised by local monks, schoolteachers and district officers. These practices are, by any measure, significant. Though many shop owners were not born in Khun Yuam, they are now accepted as members of the community. Moreover, because several shop owners are related, mainly by marriage, they frequently exchange help, either in trading or non-trading activities. Some of them,

¹ Many years ago, the minimum compulsory grade of primary school education was the fourth grade (*prathomsyksaa piithii sii*) and the maximum grade was the seventh grade (*prathomsyksaa piithii cet*). Nowadays, sixth grade (*prathomsyksaa piithii hok*) is compulsory for every child.

males in particular, seem to be concerned with local politics as well (the participation of local shop owners and their interest and co-operation in local politics will be discussed further in the next chapter).

Some characteristics of local shop owners and their shops are already mentioned in Chapter One. However, in order to clarify my discussion and to provide adequate, background information, I shall give details of several individual shop owners and itinerant traders. Information will include the personal history of the individuals, their work or business, and their relations with kinsmen, neighbours, friends and other locals. Let me begin with some shop owners who are not born locally.

SHOP OWNERS

Maana Siinuukham

Maana Siinuukham was born at the beginning of 1949 in Nonthaburi, a province near Bangkok. After he finished the third grade of secondary school (*matthajomsyksaa piithii saam*), his brother who made a living as a canal boat driver died, so Maana had to leave school to drive his brother's boat. Later, he sold the boat and worked as a latheman's apprentice for a couple of years. He then drove a bigger boat on the Chao Phraya River (he said that this was the easiest and most comfortable job he has had). Becoming bored by this work, he turned to bus driving as an occupation. He first drove on several routes in Bangkok and, later, on the routes between the capital city and the central provinces. Having worked at this job for a while, he went to report to the army for conscription, but he drew a 'black ticket' and was exempted from military service (detail of the 'black' and 'red tickets' see Chapter Two, footnote 79).

A short while after his conscription, he stopped bus driving and used his small savings to pay the 'lease' on a stall selling snacks and sweets in the market town of Chanthaburi, a coastal province in the eastern region. He followed that trade for about a year and then wanted to earn more money. At this time, his elder sister came to join him in Chanthaburi. He thus decided to let her look after the selling of snacks and sweets (which must have been quite profitable since he did not want give up the trade entirely). He himself hired a *sau-ngthae-w*, a utility truck turned into a mini-bus with two rows of passenger's seats in the back, for seventy baht a day. He drove this truck, ferrying passengers around the town area. Just as his life began to settle down and his income seemed to be better, he was robbed while driving his *sau-ngthae-w*. He was very upset by the robbery, and decided to stop working. He returned to his parents' home in Nonthaburi to be ordained as a monk but left the monkhood (Thai - *syk*) three months later.

Maana, who was at the time about twenty-three years old, then went back to Chanthaburi and tried to find a job. He did odd jobs for a while until he had saved enough money to pay for a second-hand *sau-ngthae-w* on hire purchase. He made a living by driving his mini-bus and in his spare time worked without pay as a motor-mechanic apprentice at a garage.² It was about this time that he met his future Tai wife, the sister of a friend. She was involved in the gem business. She occasionally came to Chanthaburi from Khun Yuam to purchase sapphires and other stones, then sold them in Khun Yuam. (This friend, or - to be precise - Maana's

² Although his work at the garage was hard and often involved long working hours, it was considered as learning-training practice rather than normal pay-work. So there was no payment. It was four or five years later that Maana received his first wages of three hundred baht per month from the owner of the garage. Such an experience has shaped his attitude towards work.

At the time of the interview, Maana did not employ any assistant at his garage. He mentioned that a local worker usually does not have the mechanical skill and always requests a wage of forty to fifty baht a day. So, he has to spend his time training the worker and also has to pay him. Maana believes that he earns more and works faster without an assistant, but would be willing to accept an apprentice who required no wages to work in his garage.

brother-in-law, has also been in the gem business ever since and now lives in Chanthaburi.)³

After the marriage his wife moved to Chanthaburi to live with him. While Maana still drove the *sau-ngthae-w* and was apprenticed at the garage, his wife traded in the gem business. Their first three children are girls and the fourth one a boy.⁴ Unfortunately, Maana's mini-bus was later damaged in a car accident and the repair cost was so high that he could not afford to pay. So he decided to come to Khun Yuam to borrow some money from his parents-in-law. They agreed to lend him the money. He returned to Chanthaburi and got his *sau-ngthae-w* repaired. Subsequently he sold his mini-bus and purchased a second-hand taxi which he used for several months to carry passengers outside the town area. He then sold the taxi and bought a second-hand car. By this time, while still a full-time driver, Maana spent his leisure time practising his mechanical skill. He bought a second-hand car, repaired it, used it for a while, then sold the car and bought another. He would then repeat the process.

But good things did not last long. Making a living gradually became more difficult in Chanthaburi. While Maana was trying to find the best solution to this problem, his wife received a letter from her parents. They were getting older and needed

³ Chanthaburi is renowned for its precious stones, especially sapphires. A lot of people come to this province to trade these gems and many have made their fortune. It is said that the economy in Chanthaburi is in a healthy condition and that the cost of living is high.

Also, it may be worth noting that many residents of Khun Yuam are very fond of precious stones and jewellery. Some locals earn an extra income by trading gems, but - to my knowledge - none of the residents is a full-time gem trader. Rubies and sapphires are sometimes brought from Burma by Burmese Tai to sell to the locals. It seems to me, nevertheless, that the gem business in Khun Yuam is a small-scale trade.

⁴ In 1992, the oldest girl was about eighteen years old, so she was born in 1974-75 (Maana was not so sure about the year). After finishing her secondary school education, she refused to study further and stayed at home, helping her father in the garage doing odd jobs. Another teenage daughter died not long ago. She had an argument with her parents and committed suicide. Maana was saddened by the incident, but did not reveal the cause of the tragedy. They now have only three children.

The son now studies at a secondary school in Chiang Mai and was ordained as a novice in 1992 (as related in Chapter Four).

someone to look after them and asked her and her family to return home. Maana, who at the time was about thirty years old and already had four children, and his wife eventually decided to sell the taxi and move to Khun Yuam. They spent the first few months building a new section on his wife's parents' household compound and trying to settle down to a new life. At the time, some wolfram (or tungsten) mines, which were located in the west of Khun Yuam town (on the way to Amphoe Mae Chaem), were still in operation.⁵ Most of the wolfram miners were local and travelled daily between the mines and Khun Yuam town on a hired utility truck owned by Thak Thakrattanasaran (I shall soon return to this man). While the number of miners was increasing in Khun Yuam, the truck was the sole transport available for the miners. Seeing a chance to earn money, Maana purchased a second-hand utility truck and began to carry this group of passengers. The mining went well for about three years until the price of wolfram dropped dramatically. This led to a reduction in the number of miners, so Maana finally had to find a new job.

A new opportunity came in 1982 when a local wanted to sell his garage. Maana decided to buy the garage and all of the garage's equipment for fifteen thousand baht; a price he considered very reasonable. The garage was enlarged to accommodate a new living section. Maana and his family have lived and worked in this garage ever since. He repairs anything from big trucks to small motorcycles, as well as mining equipment, rice milling machines and other mechanical devices. The garage is busy during the dry and rainy seasons, but less so in the winter.⁶ For the first few years, Maana bought all spare parts and other motor supplies from Thak Thakrattanasaran's shop - the sole hardware store in the town. But after Maana had

⁵ All wolfram mines in Khun Yuam were closed some years ago.

⁶ There were, and are, three garages in Khun Yuam. Owing to the economic boom in the last several years and the increasing number of tourists, there are now more vehicles in Khun Yuam, many of which were purchased by the Hmong and some residents of the town. Consequently, there are more jobs for these garages.

an argument with Thak over an incorrectly-sized spare part, he stopped buying goods from Thak's shop. His garage then gradually ran out of spare parts, so Maana had to sell his utility truck and spend all the money earned from the sale to purchase motor supplies from Chiang Mai.

At the time, he contacted only one hardware store in Chiang Mai and had to pay cash for every purchase. Today, he buys from three hardware stores and is allowed *credit* (or *khee* as it is known by shop owners and traders) up to a maximum amount of one hundred thousand baht (approximately A\$5,263.16) for thirty days.⁷ The direct contact with the hardware stores in Chiang Mai has proved to be a better deal. It is convenient and provides a better and faster service. If he urgently needs any spare part that he does not have in his garage, he makes an order by telephoning one of the three stores.⁸ The ordered goods will then be delivered by a Chiang Mai-Mae Hong Son bus conductor and will arrive in Khun Yuam five or six hours later.⁹ On the other hand, if he orders a lot of goods and does not need them urgently, the ordered goods will be delivered by trucks which run between Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son three or four times a month.¹⁰ Despite the transportation cost of the goods, the total cost of the spare parts is cheaper than those sold in the local hardware store. Maana is therefore earning more profit. His garage now not only has almost all the spare parts he needs, particularly those of Japanese utility

⁷ Normally, after a shop owner or a trader has contacted a bigger shop and has become trusted by the latter, he/she will be able to buy goods without paying cash immediately. The shop owner/trader is allowed to pay his or her debts within a period of time, usually thirty days and, in some cases, up to ninety days. If the shop owner/trader fails to pay his/her debts in time, the *credit* facility will be cancelled and he/she will have to pay cash for the goods. Those who have lost their *credit*, as far as I know, hardly ever regain it, so the shop owners/traders who want to keep their businesses always ensure that they pay their debts in time.

⁸ The telephone line was first connected to Khun Yuam town around the mid-1980s, but private telephones have only been available since 1990. In 1992, many shops, houses and monasteries already had telephones connected to their premises.

⁹ The Chiang Mai-Mae Hong Son buses carry both passengers and goods in small parcels. The bus conductors will deliver the goods to some central spot in each market town on the bus route, where the recipients will come to get their ordered goods. The delivery cost will be paid by the recipients.

¹⁰ There are five or six companies which operate trucks for the transportation of goods. The delivery charge is usually about twenty baht per box (of twenty or thirty kilograms) and, like the delivery by bus, is paid by the shop owners.

trucks, but also several kinds of oil and other supplies necessary for motor repairing. He believes that his garage is the best equipped of the three garages in Khun Yuam and has more regular customers than them. He is so busy that he no longer repairs motorcycles.¹¹ He now mainly repairs cars, utility and other kinds of trucks, large and small tractors and similar types of engines.

In spite of the hard work at the garage, Maana enjoys living in Khun Yuam. Although he does not speak the Tai and Kam Müang languages, he understands both pretty well. He has established an intimate relationship with many Tai and Kon Müang residents who are not his wife's kinsmen.¹² He frequently participates in communal activities, as well as offering contributions to the town's monasteries and schools. For instance, he was one of the two sponsors of the novices' ordination in 1992 (mentioned in the previous chapter). He gets along well with the Hmong who are his customers. He tries by all means to maintain good relations with his regular customers provided that the latter also try pay their debts on time. His only regret, nonetheless, is that he missed an excellent opportunity. In 1986 or 1987, a house with a block of land on the town's main road was up for sale for thirty-eight thousand baht. Because its location was good for business and the price was rather reasonable, he wanted to buy it, but at the time he had only twenty thousand baht in cash. He tried to borrow the rest from his mother-in-law, but she refused to lend him the money. She said that he should not think of or do something so big and so expensive that he could not afford. He finally did not buy it. At the time of the interview in 1992, the price of that piece of land had risen to between 100,000 and 150,000 baht; three or four times the price of a few years earlier. Although Maana

¹¹ Some motorcycle spare parts are so small that it frequently becomes time-consuming to do motorcycle repair jobs. On the other hand, the labour charges are cheaper than those connected with a car or a truck. Besides, there are already three motorcycle repair shops in the town. The business is quite competitive and even if he wanted to do motorcycle repairs there would probably not be enough jobs to go round.

¹² His wife is related to many Tai and Khon Müang families, some of whom own shops or run businesses. For example, the owner of another garage, which is located to the south of the town not far from Maana's garage, and Winaj, who operates a rice mill (see further for more details), are both his wife's relatives.

now had more cash than he did several years ago, he still could not buy the land because the price was too high.¹³

Thak Thakrattanasaran

Thak Thakrattanasaran, who was fifty-eight years old in 1992, was born in the southern province of Ranong. His family had been in the mining business for several generations. He completed a secondary school education and sat the examination for a mining certificate, specialising in survey. He had worked in the south for many years before he was hired by a Chinese mining firm in Bangkok. The firm, however, was actually not a mining firm. It usually lent money to the owners of mines (Thai - *naaj myang*) in the central and northern regions. Thak's job was therefore not only to survey new mining areas in the two regions, but also to estimate the amount of minerals produced by the mines and to examine whether the owners of the mines had correctly handled the money they had borrowed. His job involved a lot of travelling as well. In the early 1970s, he was sent to Khun Yuam to survey new mines. He lived in the town for several months before returning to Bangkok. Despite his reasonably high salary,¹⁴ he did not like his job very much. Conflicts between himself and the owners of the mines occurred from time to time, especially when he found that they had misused money his firm had lent them. He was sometimes threatened by mine owners. So, a short time after moving to Bangkok, he decided to resign from the firm and move to Khun Yuam.¹⁵

¹³ Owing to the economic boom in Thailand, the price of land in Khun Yuam was increasing quite rapidly during the time I did my fieldwork. Some details will be shown at the end of this chapter, in Appendix 5.1.

¹⁴ It was about 8,000-9,000 baht a month, which was undoubtedly rather high twenty years ago.

¹⁵ He did not tell me the reason for his return to Khun Yuam, but it is not unlikely that he was at the time in love with a local Tai woman, whom he married later. Besides, he seemed to have in mind what he was going to do for a living in Khun Yuam (see below).

Thak rented a house in the town. He then purchased a second-hand Japanese utility truck and travelled backward and forward between Khun Yuam and Burma, buying and selling raw minerals, most of which were tin and wolfram (tungsten). About a year later, he married a Tai woman named Sae-ngthau-ng, who is a niece of Kau-Can La, a wealthy long-distance trader (already mentioned in Chapter Two, Appendix 2). Thak stayed in the mineral trade for another year until the fighting between Karen and Burmese troops became very heavy and travelling across the border seemed too dangerous. He then quit the trade. Since the currency used in the mineral trade was Burmese currency, the money Thak had saved over the years was not very valuable in Khun Yuam. He thus decided to spend all his cash (Burmese banknotes) buying sesame oil, tea, and tobacco, from the traders in Mae Hong Son.¹⁶ The goods kept coming and were soon piled up in his house and over the footpath in the front of the house. He revealed that there were at the time so much goods to stock that it took three years to sell them. These were seasonal goods, the tea in particular, and they could only be transported to Khun Yuam during the dry season. So the goods in Thak's stocks were sold in the rainy season when there were no more of these goods coming from Burma.

When all of the goods were sold, he turned to a new job. Thak drove miners from Khun Yuam town to the mines, as well as carrying rice, dried food and other necessities on his utility truck to sell to the miners and the uplanders. Owing to the poor condition of his vehicle and the roads, the truck needed to be repaired four or five times a week. Since he had some mechanical knowledge, he purchased the spare parts from Chiang Mai (he went there by bus) and repaired his utility truck himself. At the time, there were another four or five utility trucks and several motorcycles in Khun Yuam, but there was neither a hardware store nor a garage. So

¹⁶ The sesame oil and tea were brought from Burma, but the tobacco was produced locally. The sesame oil was normally used for cooking by the Tai and the tea was either drunk or fermented for dissolving in the mouth.

when the other trucks broke down, their owners came to see Thak and asked to buy spare parts from him. He soon realised that selling spare parts could become an excellent occupation.

In 1977, he started to rent a small shop on the main road of the town to sell car and motorcycle spare parts, various kinds of motor oil, spark-plugs and so forth. He subsequently stocked more goods for sale, including cement, steel reinforcement, steel roof tiles, ceramic roof tiles and floor tiles, nails, carpentry tools, mechanical equipment, electric cables and plugs, light bulbs, etc. Because his was the only hardware shop in Khun Yuam, the business gradually became prosperous. Six or seven years later, he bought his own shop. This was bigger than the former one that he had rented but was still on the main road. He traded more goods, for instance, small tractor engines and spare parts, mowing machines, chain saws and water pumping machines. He even sold colour films, which were sent by mail directly from Bangkok. His business seemed to peak during 1986 and 1987. So many goods were bought that the store-room in the back of his shop had to be expanded to store all the goods.

In the first few years of his hardware business, he had to pay cash for the goods he purchased from the hardware stores in Chiang Mai. When he became a regular customer of these stores he was allowed to purchase the goods on *credit* for up to a maximum of ninety days, but he still had to pay cash for some expensive products. He began to buy some goods directly from Bangkok as well. In those days, some products, such as brake, clutch and engines oils, were packed in large tin cans. When the oils were required by the customers, they would be scooped out of the cans and poured into glass bottles for sale. Nowadays, these kinds of oil are all packed in half-litre and one-litre plastic bottles. Thak no longer has to measure them out for customers.

On the other hand, some products, especially construction related goods, are not for sale in his shop. This may seem rather contradictory in view of the fact that more new houses and shops are now being built in Khun Yuam. This is due to two reasons. Firstly, most owners of the houses/shops that are being built purchase the materials from shops in Chiang Mai because of the much cheaper prices, even though they have to pay for the cost of transportation. Secondly, some of Thak's customers are the *khaaraatchakaan*¹⁷ and policemen who always buy construction-related goods on *credit*, not cash. A few years ago, for example, the officials of the Ministry of Defence were assigned to build the roads in the Khun Yuam area. Some senior officials came to ask Thak for *credit* to purchase several items, telling him that the goods would be used for road construction. One of them owed him up to 4,000-5,000 baht. But when these officials were transferred to other posts outside Khun Yuam, none of them paid their debts. He made a complaint to the Ministry of Defence, but no one seemed to take action and the issue died away. A few local policemen owed him some money as well (he has come to the conclusion that they will never pay their debts). All this upset Thak very much. He therefore later stopped selling construction-related goods.¹⁸

In 1987 or 1988, he had another interest. He began to get involved in the stock exchange and bought some shares from the Thai Farmers Bank, where he was, and

¹⁷ Here, the *khaaraatchakaan* also include those who are temporarily assigned to do special work. This group, mostly Thai, has come directly from Bangkok to build roads, irrigation dams and other construction work. They stay in the town until their tasks are finished. Many of them owe money to local shop owners and, finally, run away.

I also refer to the policemen because relations between them and shopkeepers are often negative (see footnote 18).

¹⁸ His case is no exception. Many shopkeepers complained to me about the wrong doing and the abuse of power of government servants, policemen in particular. The *khaaraatchakaan* often neither buy goods by cash nor pay their debts on time. Some of them ignore requests to pay their debts; and it is likely that they will never pay. The situation was worse in 1988-89 when there was a scandal. The commander-in-charge of the police, who was subsequently transferred to another post, was involved in illegal logging. At that time, drunken policemen walking on the road were a common sight. Some of them even forced the shop owners to give them money to buy more liquor. Today, although the situation is getting better, there are still a few policemen who occasionally ask for money.

still is, a customer. Subsequently, he sold his shares and earned a large amount of profit. Ever since, he has spent more time and more money on the stock market.¹⁹ In contrast, he now pays less attention to his shop and buys less goods for sale. Thak says that he intends to sell his business and to use his retirement time following the stock exchange. He is retiring because the financial situation of his family is rather secure and he is getting older. He has savings and is earning a reasonable amount of income from the stock market. Also, he has only one child, a teenage girl who studies at a secondary school in Chiang Mai, and his wife is working at the post office of the town. Therefore, he has no financial problems. Moreover, shop assistants are now hard to find and a lot of the goods in his shop are too heavy for him to carry by himself. Since he does not think that his wife or daughter will carry on the hardware business, there seems to be no reason to keep his shop.

Yet, it seems to me that Thak may have another reason for retiring. He seems to be quite unhappy having to associate with those of his customers who are the *khaaraatchakaan* who always purchase the goods without paying cash and, even worse, sometimes do not pay their debts at all. He is occasionally harassed by bad officers, especially the policemen, but their superiors neither seem to be concerned nor to take any action. All of these matters upset him and are likely to be some of the main reasons for his retirement from the hardware business.

Although Thak participates in communal activities less than other big shop owners and does not have as intimate a relationship with the locals as Maana Siinuukham and other shop owners do, he contributes from time to time. This is partly because his wife is related to many residents, both traders and non-traders, and partly

¹⁹ While attending his shop, he spends hours watching the movement of the stock exchange on the television every day, and contacts his brokers by telephone when he wants to buy or sell shares.

because he is thought to be quite well-off. He is expected to offer some cash when one of his wife's kinsmen marries, dies, or holds a new-house-blessing ceremony.²⁰ He donates some money to local monasteries and the hospital from time to time and also purchased an electric fan for a primary school. Furthermore, when the district officers or the policemen organise a function, he, like other shop owners, is always asked to help, normally by giving cash.²¹ Thak informed me that he spends several thousand baht each year for charities and social gatherings.

Wichian Krau-ngphriw

Wichian Krau-ngphriw was born in 1943, in Amphoe Damnoen Saduak, Changwat Ratchaburi, in the central region. His parents opened a chemist's shop and he used to help in the shop when he was a young boy. He had also worked as a chemist's assistant in a public hospital for several years. When a position in a bank was vacant, he resigned from the hospital to work in that bank; one of his relatives who was involved in the banking business helped him to get the job. After working for twelve years in the bank and despite his high position as chief accountant, he was bored. He wanted to be independent and run his own business. Invited by some friends who lived in Mae Hong Son, he went to visit the town and fell in love with its peaceful atmosphere. He eventually decided to leave his job in the bank and move to Mae Hong Son. He did so alone, leaving his wife and two children in Ratchaburi, planning that after he settled in the new place, his family would come to join him.

²⁰ Thak usually does not join these functions, saying that he enjoys no social activity. His wife always goes.

²¹ He told me of an incident when the *naaj amphoe*, the District Head, invited every shop owner to a meeting at the district hall. The *naaj amphoe* beat about the bush for a couple of hours about a ceremony organised by the district office before deciding to conclude by asking for some contributions. In Thak's view, shop owners are always the prime target of government servants when the latter need financial support. Shop owners seem to have no option but to give.

When he left his home in Ratchaburi, however, he did not have adequate capital to start his business. He therefore organised for a group of his close friends to pool their cash and he used this as his starting capital (Thai - *len chae*). This sort of mutual financial support, known as a 'rotating credit association', is commonly practised among the shop owners in his home town (see Appendix 5.2 for more details). Today, although he still keeps in touch with his family and friends in Ratchaburi, he does not *len chae* any more. If he needs money, he now prefers to borrow from his bank. He thinks this is more convenient. Though he already owes some money to the bank, he is able to borrow more money.

In Mae Hong Son, Wichian made a request to the provincial administration to open a chemist's shop, but his application was denied because at the time there were already five pharmacies in Mae Hong Son. However, he was told that a new pharmacy would be licensed to operate either in the market town of Khun Yuam or in Mae La Noi. He arrived in Khun Yuam in 1982 and realised that the town was closer to Mae Hong Son than Mae La Noi, so he chose to stay. He rented a shop near the morning market on the town's main road. There were at the time two pharmacies, so his shop was the third. They sold mainly ready-packed, commercial non-prescription drugs, for example, pain-killers, cold tablets and first aid medicine, as well as some cosmetics and toiletries.²²

During the first few months of his stay he noticed that ice was consumed, produced and sold throughout the town, especially in summer. He thus decided to purchase

²² Wichian informed me that according to regulations, a district with a population of over twenty thousand people like Khun Yuam is allowed to have three 'ready-packed medicine type' pharmacies (*raankhajjaa praphetbancuset*) in the district town. Because there are no qualified pharmacists working in this type of pharmacy, they are able to sell only non-prescription medicine, cosmetics, sweets and soft drinks. Several kinds of drug prescribed by doctors cannot be purchased from these shops. The customers who want these drugs have to go to the shops in Mae Hong Son or Chiang Mai.

an ice making machine for his shop and started to produce ice for sale.²³ Four or five years later, he began to sell soft drinks, beer, liquor and sweets. When he first started his business in Khun Yuam he contacted two or three pharmaceutical agencies in Chiang Mai. He sent them a list of goods he wanted, enclosed with a money order, or went by bus to the agencies himself. In those days he travelled to Chiang Mai almost every month. However, since the telephone has been connected to his shop he only goes there every three or four months. Contacts with the agencies are now usually made by telephone, and a money order is periodically sent to pay them for goods received. Although he is able to buy on *credit* - of the maximum period of sixty days, he prefers to buy goods with cash because some discount is offered if payment is in cash.

Because his former shop was too small, he moved northwards along the main road to rent a bigger, two-storey shop. He believes that the new shop, where he and his family are now living, is in a better location. Since sale representatives from several pharmaceutical companies come directly from Bangkok, more goods are sold in this shop than the former one. These salespeople, who come with large trucks loaded with the companies' products, usually travel to Khun Yuam once a month. They often exhort Wichian to purchase a large amount of goods by offering him a discount, but since he cannot stock too many goods in his shop he usually refuses to buy more than he can sell. More importantly, most of his customers, townspeople and uplanders alike, prefer to buy medicine that has just been manufactured. Any drug which has been produced for some time is not wanted,²⁴ so Wichian normally stocks only a reasonable amount of goods and tries to sell them as soon as possible before he brings in new stock.

²³ In those days, ice was easily produced. The locals just poured water into plastic bags, sealed the bags with rubber bands and put them in the freezer until they became ice. The ice was then ready for sale. Almost every household that owned a refrigerator would sell ice.

²⁴ Unlike in the past, most commercial non-prescription medicine now have the expiry date printed on their packages. According to Wichian, his customers often look at the expiry date before they purchase any drug.

Wichian keeps in contact with the agencies in Chiang Mai and still purchases goods from them, although many goods are bought from the salespeople from Bangkok. This is not only because there is no difference in terms of the prices of the goods sold by the two, but because when Wichian's shop runs out of any product he can always ring these agencies and the ordered goods will be speedily sent by the Chiang Mai-Mae Hong Son bus. In addition, several kinds of goods are supplied by the agencies in Chiang Mai. Unfortunately, however, some products are only provided by one or two agencies. If they go out of business, the supply of these products stops. For example, Wichian no longer sells liquor (mainly rice wine) because his supplier in Chiang Mai is now involved in another business.²⁵ Interestingly, while almost all of the goods are supplied from outside Khun Yuam, ice, one of the best-selling and most profitable products, is produced locally. Today, four more shops in the town have bought ice-making machines to produce ice for sale. To compete with them Wichian replaced his old ice-making machine with a new larger and faster machine that can make more ice in a shorter period of time.

Wichian's wife and children now live with him in Khun Yuam. His wife, who is also a Thai and was a teacher for many years, resigned from her former job and now helps him in the shop. Their two children study in local schools. Since his family have decided to make Khun Yuam their home Wichian has thought of purchasing his shop, which he is now renting, but cannot yet afford to buy it. However, seeing the growth of the town, he was inspired to make an investment. He chose to purchase a piece of land, which is also located on the town's main road, not far from the police station. The price of his land has increased and it is

²⁵ Another reason is due to the fact that liquor is now widely sold in Khun Yuam and thus gives little profit.

Beer is the only alcoholic drink that is still available in his shop.

now up for sale. Wichian hopes that if the land is sold, he can use the money to buy his shop.

He and his family occasionally visit his relatives in Damnoen Saduak, and vice versa. He keeps in touch with old friends, most of whom are also shop owners or businessmen. Several of them reside in Mae Hong Son, selling various kinds of products, from hardware to gold ornaments, from motorcycles to electric appliances. Although Wichian neither speaks Tai nor Kam Müang, he has a good relationship with the locals. Like Thak and others, Wichian spends cash on social gatherings, such as weddings and funerals. Since he is rather concerned with religion, he also participates in and offers donations to communal ceremonies, as well as religious functions organised by non-local monks. For instance, he not only helps Luang Phau· Bun send upland children to schools in Changwat Chon Buri, but he also went to India on the so-called 'religious trip' with him (already mentioned in Chapter Four). He also assists the committees of *Muunnithi Luang Phau· Phawwanaa Phutthoo* in many activities, as well as joining with the locals and schoolteachers to organise special celebrations to raise money for communal purposes.

Aarii Prasoe·t²⁶

Aarii Prasoe·t was born in Khun Yuam in the Year of the Dog - in 1946. Her parents were Kon Müang speakers who were born in Amphoe Mae Sariang but later migrated to Khun Yuam and built a house near the *saan caw müang*. She has only one sibling, an older sister, who also lives in Khun Yuam. When she was a child her family owned some rice fields. After harvesting, the surplus of the paddy that was not consumed by the family would be sold to the locals. The family also

²⁶ In this chapter, the surnames of the three female Kon Müang individuals are their husbands'. I was not informed of their maiden names.

cultivated various kinds of vegetables for their own consumption, as well as for sale. These products were displayed on a stall which was erected in front of their house. From an early age, both Aarii and her sister had to help their parents sell rice and vegetables.²⁷ She left school after completing the sixth grade of her primary school education (*prathomsyksa piithii hok*) and became a full-time shop attendant, looking after her family's small grocery shop. More goods were gradually brought into the shop for sale. Many of these goods, such as fermented tea, dried fish, salt and monosodium glutamate were transported from Chiang Mai.²⁸ Others, such as sesame oil and tobacco, were produced locally.

In 1965, Aarii married a policeman. Prasit Prasoe-t, her husband, is a Kon Müang. He was born in Mae Sariang and worked in Lampang and Chiang Mai before being transferred to Khun Yuam. After the marriage, Prasit moved to live with Aarii in her parents' house. While he worked at the town's police station, Aarii stayed at home looking after the shop. Two years later, the couple and their first child, a girl, moved out to live on their own. They rented a shop/house on the block behind the town's main road. They traded more goods in their shop, including all kinds of cooking ingredients, paraffin oil, toiletries, stationery and other miscellaneous products in addition to those sold in Aarii's parents' shop. Some of the goods were brought by itinerant traders who came with their trucks, while others were sent directly from the agencies in Chiang Mai. By this time, no goods were carried by cattle. Aarii contacted her agencies by mail every fortnight and, like other shop owners, payments were made by money order. When the Chiang Mai-Mae Hong Son buses started to operate, either she or her husband occasionally went by bus to

²⁷ Her family only sold the unhusked rice. The customers had to take the unhusked rice to the mills to be milled. At the time, polished rice was not yet available in the shops. Since Khun Yuam district usually produced adequate rice for its own consumption unless there was a drought, rice was rarely imported from outside.

²⁸ In those days, the Chiang Mai-Mae Sariang-Khun Yuam road was no better than a dirt track. The buses did not yet run between these places. The goods were carried either by trucks or on the backs of cattle. The cattle belonged to the 'oxen caravan traders' (already mentioned in Chapter Two).

Chiang Mai to purchase goods. They stopped travelling by bus after Prasit bought his first utility truck. Later, the salespeople from Bangkok brought their companies' products to Aarii's shop.

Aarii and Prasit bought a piece of land and built their house on it in the late 1970s. The new shop/house, where the couple still live, is on the town's main road next to the police station. It is larger than the former one, so there was more space for the goods that were delivered by the salespeople from Bangkok. New products, including soft drinks, milk, sweets, package snacks, cigarettes, etc., also became available from Bangkok. Aarii and Prasit paid for the goods by either cash or credit (*khee*). Credit up to an amount of 20,000-30,000 baht was allowed within the usual period of one month. Similar conditions still apply. Today, however, several items of tiny miscellaneous goods, for example, buttons, thread and needles are no longer sold in the shop.

Aarii and Prasit's three children - all girls - live and study in Chiang Mai. One of them is doing a nursing course. Nonetheless, because many of Aarii's relatives reside in the town, the couple's lives do not seem to be too quiet. One of her close kin is Phra Khruu Anusaatkooson, the abbot of Wat Phoothaaraam - the Kon Müang monastery. Both she and her husband are not only occupied by their work, but also by many communal and social activities. The couple offer financial and non-financial support to Wat Phoothaaraam, as well as the other three Tai monasteries.²⁹ In addition, any celebration or function proposed by the abbot is often actively supported by the couple.

For instance, Aarii and Prasit donated several thousand baht to build the Hall of the Celebration of the Queen's Honour in Wat Phoothaaraam and their names were

²⁹ However, they seem to provide more contributions to the Kon Müang *wat* than to the Tai *cau-ng*.

listed ahead of other donors. When Phra Khruu Anusaatkooson was granted the Fan of the Third Ecclesiastical Rank for the Non-Royal Monastery's Abbot, Aarii and Prasit helped organise the celebration of the abbot's promotion. A lot of people and monks from Khun Yuam district and outside came to join in the celebration, which lasted two days and two nights. When the abbot was blessed in the *mat myy* ceremony by a senior Kon Müang monk from Mae Sariang, Aarii and Prasit were the first laypersons to honour him (some details are already mentioned in the previous chapter). Like other shop owners, they spend a reasonable amount of money on various ceremonies, such as weddings and funerals, especially when they are held by Aarii's kinsmen. Owing to his job as a policeman, moreover, Prasit also has to participate and provide financial aid for activities held by government servants.³⁰

Praatthanaa Anuchaj

Praatthanaa Anuchaj, who was in her early thirties in 1992, was born in the northern province of Phayao, of Kon Müang parents. Her father, a former teacher, worked as an educational official and often had to move from one district to another to take up a new position, accompanied by his family. Praatthanaa spent her teens in the provincial town of Mae Hong Son and completed the final year of her primary school education in that town. Her father was then assigned a new job in Amphoe Chun, Changwat Phayao, so the family moved there. A little while later her mother died. Her father, trying to cope with his wife's untimely death, made a request to be transferred to a teaching job in a village school.

After several months in the school, her father was sent back to his former work at the district office. The teaching position at the school became vacant. Consequently,

³⁰ The government servants, the police in particular, organise functions to raise money, for whatever reason, from time to time (see below for an example).

the headmaster of that school proposed that Praatthanaa take a job as a teaching assistant. Five or six months later, despite her pleasure in the job, she decided to leave it to marry. Her husband, Kasian Anuchaj, was born in Mae Hong Son. He went to the same secondary school as Praatthanaa so had known her since that time. When Praatthanaa and her family moved to Amphoe Chun, Kasian frequently came to visit her and, eventually, asked her to marry him. That was in 1980.

After the marriage, Praatthanaa and Kasian moved from Amphoe Chun to live in his father's shop, or Moolii - as known to the locals,³¹ in Mae Hong Son. At the time, Kasian's siblings and their own families were residing in the shop as well. Praatthanaa and Kasian began to learn how to run a business by helping in the shop. In 1982, their first child, a girl, was born. By this time the couple were thinking of moving out of Kasian's father's shop/house. This is because the place was too crowded and because they wanted to be independent since they now had their own family. So, less than a year later, the young couple and their daughter moved to live in Mau-k Cam Pae-, a Tai village located some twenty kilometres north of Mae Hong Son town. They opened a small shop, selling groceries supplied exclusively by Moolii. Praatthanaa informed me that there were several difficulties when they established their first shop. There was, for instance, not enough capital. Fortunately, the problem was partly solved when Kasian's father gave them some money. The shop was also not well located causing some inconvenience to many customers. In addition, communication was sometimes difficult because her command of the Tai language was quite poor, although she had begun to learn the language when she and Kasian lived in Mae Hong Son. It took her many months to

³¹ Moolii is one of the largest shops in Mae Hong Son. It was established by Kasian's father, who is a Chinese, some decades ago. Nowadays, the shop sells a lot of goods, including rice, eggs, canned and dried food, cooking necessities, tea, coffee, sweets, milk, alcohol and soft drinks, cosmetics and toiletries. Moolii is operated by Kasian's siblings. It provides supplies to the residents of Mae Hong Son town and many shops within and without the town area. Moolii is so well-known, I am told, that most salespeople from Bangkok who come to Mae Hong Son to sell his/her company's products contact the shop.

become fluent in the Tai language. Kasian, on the other hand, is bilingual in Tai and Kam Müang.

Their lives gradually settled down in the new place. They became prosperous when they started to get involved in the agricultural commodity trade. As well as trading groceries sent from Moolii, the young couple purchased soy bean, garlic, shallot, sesame seeds and a few other cash crops from the locals and sold them to some merchants in Mae Hong Son and Chiang Mai. The trade was booming. So was their financial situation. In spite of the quietness of the village life, the family were never short of money, and Praatthanaa and Kasian planned to make Mau-k Cam Pae their home. The couple eventually decided to borrow some money from the bank to purchase a piece of land on which they built a new larger shop/house to provide more space to stock agricultural and non-agricultural goods. They also bought a utility truck and, later, a bigger six-wheeled truck, to transport the crops from the village to the markets. In 1985, Praatthanaa gave birth to twin sons and the family's business was still going well.

Kasian's father later suggested that the couple should move to the market town of Khun Yuam. This was mainly because he wanted Kasian and Praatthanaa to come and clear one of his customers' debts. At the time, Duangdyan, a Kon Müang shop owner in Khun Yuam, owed an amount of money to Moolii which she could not pay back. Duangdyan proposed to Kasian's father that he open a new shop in Khun Yuam by renting her shop. One-eighth of the rent was to be deducted every month to pay off her debts. If he agreed, she and her family would move out and rent a smaller house/shop. Kasian's father had no option but to accept her proposal, and he sent Kasian and his family to Khun Yuam. At first, Praatthanaa did not want to leave Mau-k Cam Pae, but she and Kasian found it hard to refuse his father. They and their three children finally arrived at Khun Yuam in 1986 or 1987 and lived in

Duangdyan's shop, which was located on the town's main road opposite the morning market. Praatthaanaa then began to take five hundred baht off the monthly rent and sent it to Moolii in Mae Hong Son as payment of Duangdyan's debt, which was completely paid off within a year.

Unlike settling in Mau-k Cam Pae-, Praatthanaa and her family did not face too many difficulties in establishing their lives and business in Khun Yuam. Owing to the excellent location of the new shop, which was also called Moolii, business went well. Many items sold in the shop were at the time supplied by Moolii of Mae Hong Son, and many were provided by agencies in Chiang Mai and, later, by salespeople from Bangkok. Consequently, more new products became available in Moolii of Khun Yuam. Because of the limitations of manpower, however, Praatthaanaa and Kasian had to give up trading agricultural commodities and emphasised products related to personal needs.

The grocery business gradually grew. The couple borrowed some money from a bank in Mae Hong Son town to buy a piece of land - only twenty metres or so from their shop - and built a three-room, three-storey concrete building. In 1990 the Anuchay family moved into the new shop/house, where they have lived ever since.³² The shop has again been named Moolii.³³

Today, Moolii of Khun Yuam not only supplies groceries³⁴ to the residents and other shops in the town, but also to many small shops in the villages around the district, many of which are run by Hmong and Karen speakers. Even some small

³² Duangdyan and her family moved back into her own shop/house after the Anuchay family left.

³³ In the same year, the first bank, a branch of the Krung Thai Bank, was established in Khun Yuam town. It is located opposite Moolii.

³⁴ Although most of the products sold in Moolii are groceries, it is not possible to call Moolii a 'grocery shop' because several items of goods, such as cement, roof tiles, paint and other products for construction are available as well. As a matter of fact, it seems normal for different kinds of products to be sold in one shop. For instance, Thak's hardware shop also sells goods for construction, and Wichian's pharmacy provides soft drinks, beer, ice and sweets for any customer.

shop owners who live as far north as in Huaj Poong area are Moolii's customers. Since the latter possess limited capital, they sometimes owe Moolii some money. Some of them clear their debts in a month or two, some take a longer time. According to Praatthaanaa, two or three shop owners who live in the villages outside the town have owed her money for almost a year, and she realises that they will probably never pay off their debts. Every winter, some Burmese Tai, males and females, travel to Moolii to purchase goods and take them back to their villages or towns. They usually buy canned soft drinks, canned fish, instant noodles, sweets, sugar, cooking oil, soap, detergent powder and small batteries. Praatthaanaa informed me that the Tai residents of Tau· Phae· sometimes buy these goods from her shop and sell them to the Burmese Tai. On account of the wide range of customers, therefore, Moolii has to be prepared to offer various kinds of products to satisfy their needs, even though some items are less profitable than others.

During my stay in Khun Yuam, Moolii's business was mainly operated by Praatthaanaa. Since 1990 Kasian has been involved in another activity - building a resort on the hill of Mae Uu Khau·, east of Khun Yuam town. This project had begun two years earlier when a renowned Buddhist monk from Phayao travelled through the town and stopped to have a rest in front of the morning market, opposite Moolii. The monk told Praatthaanaa and Kasian about his dream of a wonderful and peaceful place on the hill, where there was a water-fall, beautiful birds, flowers and trees. He said to the couple that they should find that place and turn it into a holiday resort. It would offer a fantastically profitable return. The couple believed that the monk's dream could be true and started to search for such a place. Several months later they found a spot on the hill of Mae Uu Khau·, where there was a small water fall surrounded by wild flowers and bushes. They decided to purchase that piece of land (approximately seventeen *rai*), which belonged to a

Karen. Then they began to develop the land. A building of several bedrooms was constructed, walking tracks were leveled, a number of roses and other flowers were planted and so on.

When the King's sister visited Khun Yuam in 1991, Praatthanaa and Kasian invited her to the resort and presented her with the flowers grown there. She seemed rather pleased. This eventually convinced both Praatthanaa and Kasian that such an effort was worthwhile. Thus, while Praatthanaa took care of the business of the shop, Kasian spent most of his time looking after the development of the resort, which had been progressing rather slowly. However, Praatthanaa thinks that when the resort is finished, it may attract many tourists who enjoy natural beauty or prefer having a holiday in a mountain environment.

Their three children study in a primary school not far from their shop/house. Although Praatthanaa and Kasian are too busy to spare time for school activities, they frequently give financial support to the school, as well as providing food and drinks when feasts are held by the teachers. They also offer donations to the Tai and Kon Müang monasteries. Despite the fact that they are neither locally-born nor have any relatives in Khun Yuam, Praatthanaa joins a social function, such as a wedding or a funeral, from time to time, especially if it is organised by Moolii's customers.

Somphau·n Ekkalakrungryang

Somphau·n Ekkalakrungryang was born in *muu* 2 of Khun Yuam town in 1955. Her father is a Kon Müang from Amphoe San Kamphaeng who was transferred to work at the post office in Amphoe Mae Chaem. There, he met her mother who is also a Kon Müang. They later migrated to settle in Khun Yuam. Somphau·n

finished her primary school education at Baan Khun Yuam School and went to Mae Hong Son and worked in a general store for five years. She then returned to Khun Yuam and opened a small shop on the road, selling miscellaneous goods and sweets.

A couple of years later, she married a policeman. Her marriage lasted only two or three years because her husband became an alcoholic. When she separated from him she had their first child, an eight-month old daughter, with her. She earned a living by running her small shop. Then, a salesman from Bangkok named Camnong Ekkalakrungryang began to court her. Camnong, who was working for a giant agro-industrial company,³⁵ was at the time transferred to the branch office in Chiang Mai. He periodically visited Khun Yuam to sell his company's products, which included live baby chicken, eggs, fresh chicken meat, animal food and protein and other by-products. Somphau-n married Camnong in 1983 or 1984,³⁶ but the latter still had to travel backwards and forwards between Chiang Mai and Khun Yuam. Somphau-n started to sell several products of Camnong's company (hereafter **CP**) in her shop, as well as other fresh and dried food and some miscellaneous goods. Subsequently, the business of the shop grew rather fast, particularly because of the profit earned from the **CP**'s products, and the financial situation of the family became more secure.

On account of the increasing number of vehicles in Khun Yuam, however, Somphau-n and Camnong decided to invest in a new business, while still keeping the shop open. In 1987 or 1988 the couple built a petrol station with automatic

³⁵ The company is called Charoen Pokphand Group Co., Ltd., generally known as **CP**. Its head office is located in Bangkok. In recent years, it has become a transnational corporation, investing in several kinds of business, such as agro-industry, fertilisers, seed supply, feed milling, livestock, fisheries, textiles, metals and finance (for background on the company see Hewison 1983:265-269 and 386-387).

³⁶ Somphau-n does not remember the exact date.

pumps.³⁷ They employed several employees to attend the petrol station so that it could be open twenty-four hours, seven days a week. In spite of the large investment, which was partly borrowed from a bank, and some legal problems,³⁸ business at the petrol station has been excellent and the profit return has been satisfactory. In 1989 the couple built a new three-room, three-storey concrete house. The house was also used as a shop, selling all kinds of dried and canned food, rice, noodles, cooking ingredients, sweets, soft drinks and, most importantly, CP's products. Nevertheless, the shop was closed down before the end of 1992 because the couple were too busy to look after it. Both Somphau-n and Camnong have since concentrated on the petrol station and CP's products. In addition, Somphau-n and one or two of her employees bring chicken meat, eggs and other fresh food to sell at the morning market every morning. She does this in order to keep up with her customers and other traders so that she will not miss any news or information important for her business.

Somphau-n and Camnong now work as an agency under contract with CP. The company has established chicken and pig farms in several districts of Chiang Mai Province in order to supply 1,600 live chicken and pigs³⁹ a day for the markets of Mae Sariang, Khun Yuam, Mae Hong Son and Pai. Thus, every night, Camnong and his employees have to drive three empty trucks to the farms and transport the animals to the abattoir in Mae Sariang to be slaughtered before delivering them to the markets. It is understood that if the farms fail to provide the animals, CP has to pay compensation to Somphau-n and Camnong. On the other hand, if the latter

³⁷ Before 1987 or 1988 there were two small petrol stations in Khun Yuam town. The fuel was contained in three small metal tanks, one of which was diesel and two petrol, and the pumps were operated by hand. These two hand-pumped petrol stations were still in operation during 1991 and 1993.

³⁸ In 1992 it was rumoured among the townspeople that Somphau-n and Camnong were accused of illegally adding paraffin oil to the petrol and selling it at the petrol price. The allegation forced the couple to close their petrol station for some months. It was, however, finally re-opened. During my interviews, Somphau-n did not mention anything about the matter, nor was Camnong available to make any comment.

³⁹ CP has not yet fully invested in pig farms in Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son areas. Most of the pork sold in the markets is produced locally.

trade animals from non-CP farms, they will be fined. In addition, Somphau-n and Camnong agreed not to re-establish their own farms; the couple used to run thirteen chicken farms, but the farms were closed down after they signed the contract with CP. Camnong frequently goes to the CP office in Chiang Mai to attend meetings. Somphau-n, however, is in charge of looking after the petrol station and the selling of CP's products in Khun Yuam.

The family's businesses have grown fast. The couple purchased a piece of land in Mae Hong Son town in 1992 to build another large shop/house. Construction was completed during my stay, and would be open soon to sell CP's products. They also planned to build a new petrol station in the northern area of Mae Hong Son where a lot of vehicles travel from the town to Pai district and Chiang Mai Province and vice versa. Nevertheless, the family has not yet thought of moving out of Khun Yuam. Somphau-n's daughter from her first marriage is studying in the town's secondary school.⁴⁰ She and Camnong have two children. The older child, a boy, studies in a primary school and the younger one, a girl, was only five years old and had not yet attended school in 1992. Somphau-n gave a five-hundred-baht scholarship to the secondary school's scholarship scheme which supports students of poor families. It is not unlikely that she provided another scholarship the following year. She used to offer food, sweets and drinks to local schools whenever there was a school feast organised by the teachers. Since the shop closed down, however, only chicken meat and eggs have been contributed.

Somphau-n is a member of *Klum Maebaan pracam changwat* (literally, Provincial Housewives Group)⁴¹ and was selected the 'Woman of the Year of Mae Hong Son

⁴⁰ It is of interest to point out that while some well-to-do families in Khun Yuam often send their children, both boys and girls, to study in Chiang Mai, Somphau-n and Camnong prefer to have the eldest daughter study in Khun Yuam. Besides, the couple give much support to local schools.

⁴¹ The members of this group usually include the wives of government servants, police and army personnel, well-to-do shop owners and businessmen, but many members of the group, like Somphau-n herself, are businesswomen.

Province' in 1992. She was also awarded a Royal medal in the same year. It seems to me that the award was granted to her on account of her donations to several charities, especially those to the foundations under the patronage of the Royal family. Somphau-n told me that, unlike Thak and some other shop owners, she has not yet been 'squeezed for money' by the police. On the other hand, she always offers 'some contributions' to them. For example, she ordered her employees not to charge any officer of the highway patrol for petrol when he comes to buy petrol at her petrol station.⁴² Since her trucks travel to and fro on the Chiang Mai-Mae Hong Son Highway everyday, such a free-of-charge service is not merely to display her good will towards the authorities, but also to ensure that the highway patrol will return a satisfactory service to her drivers and will not be 'too hard' on them if they break traffic regulations. Moreover, when she is required to help in celebrations or feasts held by the district officers or the police, several free bags of chicken meat are always distributed to them.

Like other shop owners, Somphau-n regularly gives alms and donations to the Tai and Kon Müang monasteries. She told me that she is pleased that the shop was closed, in a way, because this means she can spend more time going to the temples to make merit (*sabaaj caj, mii weelaa paj wat*). Since Camnong has a Chinese background, Somphau-n also has to worship and celebrate according to the Chinese religious tradition. Since she is neither Chinese nor speaks the language, she has to consult a Thai version of the Chinese annual religious calendar. Camnong's father who lives in Bangkok occasionally rings her up to advise her which Chinese deity must be worshipped on which day of which month as well. The couple and their children have to visit Camnong's family in Bangkok at least once a year to celebrate the Chinese New Year Day or the Chinese Ancestor Worship Day. On such

⁴² She said that the policemen sometimes ask for a receipt for the petrol even if they have not paid for it in order to claim for a reimbursement from their offices. The receipts are always provided.

occasions, all of Camnong's siblings, their spouses and children, also join the celebration at his father's house.

Winaj Ciinabut

Winaj Ciinabut, or Pyyd - as he is known among his relatives and friends, was twenty-nine years old in 1992. He was born in Khun Yuam, of a Tai father and a Kon Müang mother, and is closely related to Maana's wife. Winaj is married to a Kon Müang woman. Like many townspeople, he is bilingual, speaking Tai and Kam Müang. His parents sent him to Chiang Mai to study in a secondary school, then a technical college. After college he returned to Khun Yuam. In 1985 he took over a small rice mill from his mother. She had previously owned and run one rice mill after another for thirteen years before she handed over the business to Winaj. By employing his mechanical skill and knowledge, he replaced the old machine with a new, more powerful one and developed the productive capacity of the mill to the maximum. He believes that his rice mill is the most efficient and fastest one in Khun Yuam.⁴³ The mill normally earns a small service charge from the customers who want their rice milled, as well as receiving the by-products left from the milling process, such as rice bran. His parents also own some paddy fields which are rented to the locals. The rent is usually paid in the form of unhusked rice; one-fifth of the total amount of rice harvested from the fields.

Winaj trades rice as well. He buys paddy from the locals, then mills the rice and sell it. The rice trade, however, used to be more profitable than it is today. Many of his customers were *khaaraatchakaan* from the Defence Ministry who came to build the roads and those who worked in the logging business. The former have been transferred elsewhere and many of the latter have finished their logging contracts,

⁴³ There are five rice mills located within the Khun Yuam town area.

so his customers are now fewer. Interestingly, Winaj mentioned the business of the 'milled rice alms' (Tai - *lau-ng sau-m*, Thai - *takbaat khawsaan*). Every year after the Buddhist Lent, all townspeople participate in the annual alms-giving by offering uncooked rice,⁴⁴ dried and canned food, other necessities and money to the temples, both Tai and Kon Müang. So much rice is offered to the monks that they sometimes give some of it to the students who live in the secondary school's dormitories or exchange it for cash with some of the rice mill owners. The monasteries need cash to pay their electricity and water supply bills and other expenses. It seems that the price of rice sold by the monks is lower than the market price so that the mill owners can earn a reasonable amount of profit by re-selling it to their customers. Winaj is one of the mill owners who sometimes purchases rice from the monasteries.⁴⁵

Seasonally, he trades soy bean, garlic and a few other crops, but his main income is earned from the rice mill. He has been thinking of getting involved in the pig trade for some time but has neither enough time nor capital to start the trade yet. He was once elected as a member of the *sukhaaphibaan* (local government at the district level), but despite his confidence and efforts in the next election campaign he and his team lost their seats in the 1992 election.⁴⁶ Many members of his team, as well as of the other team, either own a shop or are involved in some sort of trade. His job as a member of the *sukhaaphibaan* inevitably strengthened his relations with the district officers. Yet, the defeat did not stop his participation in communal activities.

⁴⁴ In the old days only cooked rice was contributed to the monasteries, but since there was always too much rice, most of which soon became putrid, the monks and laypeople subsequently agreed that giving uncooked rice was a better alternative.

Maitri (1980:312-313) indicates that the *takbaat khawsaan* has also been practised among the residents of Mae Hong Son town at least since the 1970s.

⁴⁵ Nonetheless, Winaj believes that he is making merit by buying rice from the monks. Since his family and himself also *lau-ng sau-m*, either the rice or the money is a contribution to the monasteries.

⁴⁶ The *sukhaaphibaan* is elected every four years. It consists of eight members, who are normally nominated and elected as a team. In 1992, Winaj and all of his colleagues, who called themselves *thiim khon num* (the Youths' Team), lost the election to *thiim khon kae* (the Elders' Team), many of whom had experience in administrative work (more details of the *sukhaaphibaan* will be discussed in the next chapter).

He continues to provide financial and non-financial contributions for religious ceremonies and social gatherings, as well as for his own kinsmen, both Tai and Kon Müang. This may partly be due to the fact that he plans to run for the position of a village head (*phuujaajaan*) in the future. He is therefore trying to gain some support from the locals. Whether this speculation is correct or not, however, remains to be seen.

ITINERANT TRADERS

Most itinerant traders are Thai. Their homes are in Kamphaeng Phet, Chai Nat, Nakhon Pathom and other provinces in the central region. Some of the traders are Kon Müang from Chiang Mai, Lamphun, etc., but none is a Tai. Most of them come from a farming background and, at one stage, used to farm themselves. They gave up their former occupation because of harvesting failure or low prices of crops or illness caused by chemicals used in farming or other personal reasons. Some were casual labourers before becoming itinerant traders. All of them, however, completed at least the fourth grade of primary school education (*prathomsyksaa piithii sii*). Each one of them drives a utility truck, carrying the goods in the back of his vehicle, and is normally accompanied by his wife and, occasionally, children. Some itinerant traders employ one or two teenagers to help them. Some of them work with partners, normally friends or kinsmen.

Many itinerant traders sell clothes, such as shirts, trousers and jeans. Some carry bags, rubber boots, leather shoes, stationery and so-called 'gift shop' items (i.e., cosmetics, cheap jewellery, plastic ornaments and tiny miscellaneous products). A few of them sell musical cassette tapes and posters of pop stars. Some even provide hardware equipment. The goods are obtained by sieging opportunities as they may arise. For instance, when Thai traders visit their home towns, usually every three or

four months, they will make a trip to Ayutthaya Province, which is not far from their home, to buy goods, garments in particular, because of cheaper prices. They sometimes travel even further to Bangkok to purchase goods from some agencies. On the other hand, if they need the goods urgently or have not returned home for some time, they will seek supplies from the large shops in Chiang Mai. While many Kon Müang traders obtain their supplies in Chiang Mai, some of them, like the Thai, may go to Bangkok for cheaper products. On account of their itinerant lifestyle and limited capital, these traders are normally required to pay cash for their purchases. If credit is granted by a supplier, the amount they can owe is not large and has to be cleared soon. Many traders, nevertheless, prefer paying cash to credit because there is always some discount if the payment is in cash.

In addition, almost all traders owe some money, small or large amounts, to the bank. This money is needed to buy a second-hand utility truck, goods, or other purposes. Failure to pay one's debts could mean the loss of everything a trader has, including his/her own career. In the second half of 1992, for example, there was gossip that some Chai Nat traders had failed to make their monthly payments to the banks. They would therefore probably lose their utility trucks and might have to turn to other occupations.

Several traders, especially the Kon Müang, form a temporary 'rotating credit group' (Thai - *klum chae*·) to pool their cash (Thai - *len chae*·), mainly for investment purposes. A *klum chae*· may be either composed of only traders or of shop owners and traders. Thawin Upbaalii, a Kon Müang trader, for instance, at one time put his money into two *klum chae*· ; one with some shop owners in Chiang Mai, another with those in Mae Hong Son. Thawin commented that most shop owners always pooled their money on time and, most importantly, did not cheat or run away with the funds.

During trading trips itinerant traders stop mainly in the market towns, but some of them may try to sell their goods in the villages. They regularly camp in the grounds of local monasteries or on some public grounds.⁴⁷ They come to Khun Yuam once a month and whenever there is a fair or a religious festival. Here, they camp at the military airfield opposite Cau-ng Muaj Tau, a Tai temple, where they can use the bathrooms. The goods are displayed on removable wooden stalls under a large tent which protects the traders and their goods from the sun and rain. During the night some traders sleep in the trucks while others sleep on the stalls. A small gas stove located at the back of each tent is used for cooking and boiling water. The electricity they use is provided by the regional electricity authority and its cost is certainly expensive. On each trip itinerant traders stay in Khun Yuam for a few days before either moving north to Mae Hong Son or south to Mae La Noi. The longest stay, as far as I know, was almost two weeks long when there was a fair organised by the police at the end of January 1993. Below is the story of a Thai itinerant trader who now lives with his family in Mae Sariang.

I must note that conflicts between shop owners and itinerant traders occur at times. Fortunately, no violence has yet broken out between the two. The former often complain to the district office that the latter compete unfairly by reducing their prices⁴⁸ and, as a result of this, the shops have lost many customers to these traders. As one female shop owner told me, 'They [itinerant traders] snatch away our customers' (*jae-ng luukkhaa*). The itinerant traders argue that the customers benefit from the competition over prices. Moreover, since their goods are sold at low prices, they only make a little profit from each item. Some shop owners want

⁴⁷ During winter which is a holiday season, the monks in several temples in Mae Hong Son allow the tourists to stay over night in the temple halls. Often, meals are also provided. The tourists, mostly Thai, are asked to make some donations. This, of course, is believed to be a kind of merit-making.

⁴⁸ This allegation, in my opinion, is untrue. In fact, the prices of goods set by shop owners and by itinerant traders seem to be only slightly different. Besides, some of the goods sold by itinerant traders are not found in the shops and vice versa.

the itinerant traders to be banned from hawking in Khun Yuam, but neither the district office nor the police has agreed to institute such a sanction. Thawin Upbaalii, a Kon Müang itinerant trader, informed me that shop owners in Mae Sariang town occasionally make a complaint about the loss of their customers to itinerant traders. Like in Khun Yuam, however, the authorities in Mae Sariang have not prohibited itinerant traders from trading.

Unlike many shop owners, none of the itinerant traders complained about the problems created by the police. No one, as far as I know, has been irritated or squeezed for money or any goods by local policemen. Neither is anyone robbed by a criminal. Many traders agree that hawking and travelling in this area are safe. One can camp almost anywhere. This is possibly not only because itinerant traders trouble neither the locals nor the police, but also because many policemen have gained some benefit from their relations with these traders. As mentioned earlier, the police earn a reasonable amount from the camping fee paid by the traders whenever they organise a fair. Thus it is clear that for the best benefit of both sides, the police do not want to irritate the itinerant traders.

Li Dyan-um

Li Dyan-um was born in 1951 in the town of Nakhon Pathom. He left school to find a job after spending four years at primary school and worked in a number of jobs in many places. Subsequently, he became a construction labourer, then a concrete worker, before he was conscripted. He was dismissed after serving in the army for two years. He went back to his former work, a concrete worker in a construction company based in Bangkok. Li was sent to work in several provinces. He was eventually promoted by the company to a supervisory job. In approximately 1981 the company won a contract to construct a building for the secondary school

in Mae Sariang. Li, along with other workers, was therefore sent to work in Mae Sariang where he met his future wife. She was a Kon Müang living in the town and working as a labourer at the construction site. Late that year they got married. Both of them were transferred to another place when the building at the school was finished. Several months later his wife fell pregnant, so she returned to Mae Sariang while Li continued working with the company.

When his first child, a boy, was three months old, Li came home to see his wife and baby. At the time, his wife's brother who was an ice-cream pedlar wanted to sell his business and go to work in Bangkok. Wanting to be with his family, Li decided to stay in Mae Sariang; he and his family lived in his parents-in-law's house. He bought an ice-cream maker, some other equipment and a motorcycle from his brother-in-law.⁴⁹ He recalled that when he began to sell ice-cream in the streets of Mae Sariang town, he was rather embarrassed because he had never hawked goods before. So the first few days before he left home to sell the ice-cream, he drank a couple of glasses of rice wine to overcome his embarrassment.

In 1985 or 1986, a piece of land located in the *sukhaaphibaan* area of Mae Sariang was up for sale for one hundred thousand baht. Li had saved forty thousand baht so he had to borrow another sixty thousand baht from a bank to purchase the land. After a rough wooden structure with a thatched roof was built on the land, he and his family moved out from his parents-in-law's house to their own home. His immediate desire now is to build, in his own words, a new 'real' house.

Li paid off his debts to the bank within two or three years and still had some savings to buy equipment to make *khanombyang*, *khanom tangtae-k* (two kinds of sweet pancake). He then started to sell *khanombyang*, *khanom tangtae-k* at night,

⁴⁹ The ice cream container was attached to the motorcycle so that the goods could easily be carried to sell anywhere in the town.

especially when there was a festival or a funeral at a temple. He continued to hawk ice-cream during the day-time. Apparently, his trade became profitable, but he wanted to make even more profit. Li again borrowed money from a bank and used this, plus some of his own savings, to purchase a second-hand utility truck to replace his motorcycle. He could then travel and hawk ice-cream and *khanombyang*, *khanom tangtae-k* over longer distances. He hawked everywhere throughout Mae Hong Son Province. If sales were good, he would stay in one place for a few days and probably earned more than ten thousand baht on such occasions. Another benefit of being a pedlar is that he started to learn how to run other businesses by talking to other traders. He was encouraged to try some other trades.

He began to sell small miscellaneous items, such as belts, needles, thread, small batteries and torches. These were supplied by a large shop in Chiang Mai. (He drove to Chiang Mai twice a month to get his supplies.) His new business went well, so he decided to sell more goods, including leather shoes, plimsolls, slippers, hats, bags and umbrellas. He travelled to almost every village in the areas of Mae Sariang, Mae La Noi, Khun Yuam, Mae Hong Son and Mae Chaem of Chiang Mai. He camped and slept in monastery grounds, public grounds or some local household compounds. At the same time Li did not entirely neglect his former business. He took his mother, who at the time resided with his brother in Rayong, to Mae Sariang to look after his young son so that his wife would have time to sell ice-cream and *khanombyang*, *khanom tangtae-k*. Unfortunately, his mother disliked living in Mae Sariang and later returned to Rayong.

Li now prefers to hawk between the market towns and makes fewer visits to the villages. His goods are similar to the ones he has always sold, plus 'gift shop' products which, in his opinion, are profitable. His wife still sells ice-cream and

khanombyang, *khanom tangtae-k*, but only when there is a festival or a fair and only in the area of Mae Sariang town. When Li goes to Khun Yuam, he normally either camps at the *sanaambin*⁵⁰ or in front of a wooden shelter about a hundred metres north of the airfield. This shelter is a snooker room, belonging to Tuj, a young Kon Müang man whose home town is Mae Sariang. Tuj has known Li since he started selling ice-cream. Li camps here sometimes to avoid possible trouble with the military captain. In spite of the fact that Tuj does not ask for rent, Li pays him with cash or goods each time he camps there. Like other itinerant traders, he always makes a donation to Cau-ng Muaj Tau in return for the use of the temple's bathrooms.

Li likes trading. It is an independent job; no one tells him what to do. He can start working any time and finish any time he pleases. Most importantly, it is profitable. He said that his proudest moment was when he was invited by a teacher at the Mae Sariang secondary school to talk to the students about his hard work and his efforts to be successful. The teacher hoped that his students might be encouraged by his success and become more diligent. However, he was overwhelmed by the embarrassment. Li said that he neither had much education nor knew how to present in front of a large audience, and refused to go.

⁵⁰ During my stay in Khun Yuam the military officer-in-charge, a Kon Müang captain, was ordered to keep the airfield clear at all times for emergency landing, so he forbade the itinerant traders from camping there. (He was also in charge of conscription in Khun Yuam district.) The traders, however, complained that there was nowhere else for them to camp and promised that on each trading trip, they would not stay long and would keep the ground clean and tidy. The captain had no option but to let them camp there, but he requested a camping fee of ten baht per day per tent. The money would be spent to hire someone to look after the airfield. However, tensions arose again when several policemen wanted to organise a fair during the last week of January and the first week of February 1993 to raise money (for what reasons, I do not know). They expected to have musical bands, Thai boxing and tents selling all kinds of goods in the fair. The police requested permission of the district head to use the airfield, not the military captain who was in charge of the airfield. The captain was irritated by the incident. The police tried to cool him down by inviting him to a feast, but the captain was still unhappy. The fair eventually went on, but according to the traders who joined the fair, it was not very successful. There were less fair goers than was expected and less goods were sold. The police, on the other hand, earned the entrance fees paid by the fair goers and a handsome amount from the camping fee of seven hundred baht per tent which the itinerant traders had to pay. The military captain received nothing.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that shop owners and itinerant traders share some similarities and some differences. Many shop owners, males in particular, lived in several places before settling in Khun Yuam. The itinerant traders are, of course, also very mobile. Members of both groups, except those who have a business background, did several different jobs before turning to trading. They have acquired their trading skill by working. There also seems to be an informal information network among them. They exchange information about the price of goods, the movement of the markets, news of their personal lives and families, financial situation, habits, etc. This information becomes significant, especially when a shop owner or an itinerant trader has to do business with another. Many of them, moreover, sometimes even exchange help and financial support. The rotating credit groups formed between shop owners and itinerant traders in Mae Hong Son and Chiang Mai are an excellent example.

Non-locally-born traders who have connections with the locals settled their businesses quicker and faced less problems than those who have no connections at all. For instance, Maana and Thak have received great benefits from their wives' kinsmen, while Wichian has been supported by friends who have settled their businesses in this region long before his arrival. Thus, traders who migrated into Khun Yuam town always try to make friends with the locals, hoping that they will later receive some support from these local friends. Even those who married local women keep making friends who are not related to their wives. Maana is a good example. He has many male friends who are sometimes hired by him, but - often - help him in various ways without payment. They, of course, drink together occasionally.

There seem to be fewer confrontations and less competition among shop owners. As a matter of fact, co-operation between some shop owners are not uncommon. Goods are supplied to smaller retail shops by larger shops; the former are even sometimes allowed to buy on credit. Perhaps this is partly because many shop owners are kinsmen, and partly because Khun Yuam is such a small town that conflicts with another shop owner may lead to one's own business failure. As Praatthanaa remarked that 'if one cannot make up one's mind to accept the situation, one will not be able to live [in Khun Yuam]' (*maj tham caj kau juu maj daj*). For instance, although Maana stopped relations with Thak after the dispute, there has not been a single fight between the two. Both men get on with their own businesses.

However, some important issues must be raised. The first issue is the function of Buddhism that supports traders and their trading activities. As I already mentioned in the previous chapter that in the view of ordinary people, a Buddhist is not forbidden to engage in trade or to become rich. In fact, wealth is the sign of one's merit, past and present. In this chapter, I referred to several shop owners who always provided offerings for the monks. For instance, Maana and his wife financially supported the ordination of novices in 1992. Wichian assisted Luang Phau· Bun in sending upland children to school in the central region and converting them to Buddhism. He also gave donations to Luang Phau· Bun and went with him on a pilgrimage to India. Aarii and Prasit organised the celebration for the young Kon Müang abbot of Wat Phoothaaraam. The couple also donated several thousand baht to that temple. Winaj offered uncooked rice to the monasteries, then bought it back. He was happy that he had made merit and the monks received both rice and money. The dream of a well-known, non-local, monk encouraged Praatthanaa and Kasian to build a recreation resort. The young couple believed that such a dream and the construction of the resort would bring them a new profitable investment.

These shop owners/traders make merit regularly. They offer help and support, financially and non-financially, to the monasteries. As shown in Chapter Four, even non-religious activities run by the three non-local monks have also been funded by local traders. In other words, every activity that is related to the monasteries or religion is thought to be merit-making and, therefore, supported by shop owners/traders.

Relations between the monks and the shop owners/traders are reciprocal and usually positive. The former receive financial support and other necessities. The latter earn blessing, praising, social prestige, happiness - especially for their minds⁵¹ and hope for becoming wealthy or - those who are already wealthy - wealthier. More interestingly, even an idea of a new investment, such as building a resort for the tourists on the hill, is sometimes created by a monk. Whether or not this new investment will be profitable remains to be seen, but both Praatthanaa and Kasian, the investors, have been quite happy and positive about it. Local monks also allow itinerant traders to camp on the temple grounds and to use the facilities of their temples occasionally. In return, the traders always make donations to the temples. The former have a place to camp, as well as a chance to make merit. Furthermore, some monks are also related to local traders, for example, the young abbot of Wat Phoothaaraam and Aarii and Prasit. Whenever the temple organises a ceremony or any activity, religious or non-religious, the abbot normally asks the couple for their opinions or suggestions (and, of course, some donations). To sum up, it is clear that local and non-local traders and monks have reciprocal relationships. Both support each other and play significant roles in several important communal affairs, both religious and non-religious activities.

⁵¹ For example, Somphau-n said that she would rather work less and spend more time to make merit.

The second issue is concerned with education. Most traders in Khun Yuam, local and itinerant, finished at least primary education, some even completed a higher level. All of them are able to read and write and to keep some business accounts, at least the basic ones. They employ their knowledge to create networks to exchange information essential to their occupation.

There is some correlation between being a trader and formal education. The latter facilitates the growth of trade and business at the present time. It provides literacy, as well as some basic knowledge for trading. It also gives ordinary people an opportunity to find other kinds of jobs. With basic knowledge and some capital, a farmer, male or female, can start his or her own small business. If he/she determines to work hard and is frugal, he/she can be successful. Li Dyan-um, a Thai itinerant trader, is a good example. Anyone who is literate no longer has to be a farmer for the rest of his/her life. Education and, of course, literacy offer an excellent alternative for those who want to be a trader.

Relationships between shop owners or traders and schoolteachers or other government servants is the third issue I want to raise. In this chapter, I have noted that education encourages mutual support between shop owners or itinerant traders and local schoolteachers as well. While shop owners like Somphau-n and Praatthanaa are praised by local teachers for their financial support to the schools, an itinerant trader like Li is honoured for his diligent effort and determination to be a successful trader. The latter also shows that economic success is one of the main goals that formal education tries to instill in individuals. Shop owners and itinerant traders, on the other hand, are clearly aware that their financial and non-financial support to local schools - as well as to the monasteries, as we already know - is inevitable. For them, these are important means not only to be recognised but also to gain respect in the community. This is, in a way, a social investment.

In addition, schoolteachers, like the local monks mentioned in the previous chapter, act as agents with legitimate authority to grant prestigious reputations to shop owners and itinerant traders. However, local schoolteachers do not merely play a role in promoting the success of shop owners/traders. Many teachers own shops or are part-time traders (details will be discussed in Chapter Six). Like other shop owners/traders, these teachers take advantage of education to gain financial benefit.

Some schools are more favourable than others and, consequently, become a meeting place of the children who are more likely to be successful than others. Owners of large shops in Khun Yuam send their children to the secondary schools in Chiang Mai because they think that these schools provide better education. These schools, as Winaj remarked, are considered to be more prestigious than the local secondary school. Sakchaj Suphaasaa, a shop owner (I shall return to this man in the next chapter), indicated that children of wealthy shop owners and businessmen in Chiang Mai and other northern provinces all go to these schools. Children from Khun Yuam will therefore have excellent opportunities to be friends with these well-to-do children. This may provide access to a wider business community if, later in their lives, they choose to become shop owners or businessmen.

Local and itinerant traders and other government servants, such as the police, also need each other. I referred to Somphau-n who gives free petrol and, sometimes, a cash receipt for the highway police in exchange for their neglect of duty, particularly when her truck drivers break the traffic rules. Local police earn a reasonably large sum of money as 'camping fees' from itinerant traders whenever they organise a fair on the ground of the airfield. In return, itinerant traders can hawk and trade freely and quite safely. None of them, as far as I know, have ever been harrassed or

threatened by policemen or robbed by criminals. Many local traders also married policemen, some of whom even trade occasionally or help in their wives' shops.

Additionally, some traders have settled in highly profitable businesses through their relationships with the government officials in both district and provincial levels. Some of these traders who are involved in local politics use such relationships to benefit their political lives, often to win election at the local level (details will be discussed in Chapter Six). However, not every trader is happy with government servants. Shop owners like Thak and Thaloe-ng Krajkae-w (I shall return to this man in the next chapter) have been abused and cheated by police or officials from the central administration. In short, the reciprocity between local/non-local traders and schoolteachers/government servants is another important issue. Both sides gain benefits from each other. But those who have done extremely well include traders who used to be government officials and schoolteachers who trade part-time. They are not only familiar with the bureaucracy and have connections with some senior officers, but also use their status as teachers or government servants to benefit their occupations (further discussion will be in the next chapter).

APPENDIX 5.1

Land prices in Khun Yuam

In 1992, the 'evaluated price' of land in Khun Yuam district estimated by the Mae Hong Son Provincial Office of Lands varied, for instance, the land

- | | |
|---|---|
| a) within forty metres from the main road (Highway No. 108) | |
| (around the town's centre area) | 400,000 baht per <i>rai</i> , ⁵² |
| b) within forty metres from the main road | |
| (southwards from the morning market to | |
| Wat Phoothaaraam) | 300,000 baht per <i>rai</i> , |
| c) around small lanes behind the <i>saan caw müang</i> | 250,000 baht per <i>rai</i> , |
| d) along the town's second main road | |
| (which parallels the main road) | 200,000 baht per <i>rai</i> , |
| e) along the Nam Yuam River | 200,000 baht per <i>rai</i> . |

On the other hand, the 'market price' of the land at the time was usually higher than the above 'evaluated price'. For example, a 116-*taaraangwaa*⁵³ piece of land located on the town's main road near the police station which belonged to Wichian Krongphriw, was put on sale for five hundred thousand baht, more than four times the 'evaluated price'. A sixteen *taaraangwaa*⁵⁴ piece of land opposite the bus station at the north-end of the town was purchased for thirty thousand baht by Suphaap Kaawi, a teacher/shop owner (see the next chapter for details of his life). In spite of its very high price, Suphaap at the time thought that the land was located on an excellent spot and that a new shop, which was built within a few months after he bought the land, would return a high profit to him. This eventually became true.

⁵² One *rai* is equivalent to 0.16 hectares.

⁵³ Four hundred *taaraangwaa* of land is equivalent to one *rai*. So the 'evaluated price' of this 116-*taaraangwaa* of land was only 116,000 baht.

⁵⁴ The evaluated price of this piece of land, on the other hand, was sixteen thousand baht, about half the price Suphaap paid for.

APPENDIX 5.2

***Len chae* : Rotating credit groups and capital accumulation**

First of all, I would like to indicate that elsewhere, the term 'rotating credit association[s]' is commonly used to refer to the practice of cash pooling or, in a way, capital accumulation (see for example Geertz 1956, Light 1972, Wu 1974). However, I suggest that the term 'rotating credit group[s]' is more appropriate since in Khun Yuam, such a practice is temporary. Most shop owners and itinerant traders participate in this activity for a short period of time and only occasionally - when there is a need for a lump sum of cash. Besides, it is not unlikely that many of them may quit or find new partners whom they think are more trust-worthy than the former ones. Thus, I prefer the term 'rotating credit group[s]'.

The practice of cash pooling, or using a 'rotating credit group', is usually found in market towns in the central region. Kobkul Putaraporn (1971), who did her research in Ayutthaya, translates the term *len chae* as 'shares game'. I do not think it is a 'game'. Clearly, *len chae* is a method of access for people who run small businesses to achieve an amount of cash when they urgently need it or to obtain some capital for their businesses, but they cannot borrow it either from a financial institute or an individual. People need the money for various reasons, depending upon each person. For instance, Wichian Krongphriw said that he formed a rotating credit group and asked his friends to pool their money because he wanted some capital to start his business in Khun Yuam. On the other hand, Thawin Upbaalii, a Kon Müang itinerant trader, joined a *klum chae* (*klum* means a group or groups) because he needed cash to pay his debts and the expenditure of his mother's funeral.

Kobkul (1971:102-103) suggests that *len chae* was first practised among the Chinese immigrants in Thailand. The Thai were therefore probably influenced by the Chinese and have participated in this activity ever since. Such an assumption seems to have some ground. Kulp (1925:189-196) notes that in the area of southern China where the locals speak the same language as those who migrated to Thailand, that is, Teochew, the townspeople always get together to pool money whenever they want some cash. Many Teochew terms are used in relation to this activity, such as *taw* (literally, the head or first) and *buaj* (the last) (Kobkul 1971:102-103). The practice, moreover, is also popular among the overseas Chinese in America (Light 1972:23-27) and Papua New Guinea (Wu 1974).

In Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son, according to Wichian Krongphriw and Thawin Upbaalii, the *len chae* systems are similar to the ones used in the market towns in the central region. A *klum chae* is a rather loose, temporary group. Normally, there are ten holders (or partners) in one *klum chae*, so each *klum chae* will last about ten months. The holders are not required to put up collateral security to join the group, so they must be known and trusted by the first holder. If a holder leaves the group, a new holder can join in immediately. The group will agree about the amount of cash everyone will have to deposit in the cash pool, the period of time the money will be deposited and withdrawn, at what time who can withdraw the money and the interest rate. After everything is agreed, each holder will deposit the same amount of cash in the cash pool every month until the tenth month. Anyone who wants to withdraw the money has to pay the interest, except the first holder who is in charge of running the *klum chae* and responsible for anything that goes wrong. Each holder is able to receive or withdraw the cash only once.

For example, if someone wants ten thousand baht, he/she will ask the other nine partners to pool one thousand baht each, plus another thousand baht of his. So,

there will be a total sum of ten thousand baht being deposited in every month, for a period of ten months. This person is called *thaw chae* and is the first holder who receives the first ten thousand baht (in the first month). To do this, he/she has to hold a feast, usually at a restaurant, and invite the others to join the feast. The *thaw chae*, of course, pays the expenses of the food and drink, but he/she does not have to pay interest on the borrowed money. In the following month, any one of the other nine holders who needs the cash can request to withdraw the total amount of the cash and offer to pay interest to the others. If there is more than one person who wants the money, the one who proposes the highest interest rate will be able to withdraw the money.

There are two kinds of interest. The first kind is interest that is already abstracted from the principal before the money is pooled (*dau-k hak*). The second is interest that has to be paid separately from the principal (*dau-k taam*). Kobkul (1971:105-106) writes that generally, the holders in the rotating credit groups prefer that each holder proposes his/her interest rate every month so that others who do not yet want to withdraw money will always earn the highest amount of interest. This is very complicated. In order to avoid some confusion, I will concentrate on the fixed interest rate.

Say, for instance, the interest rate is set at one-tenth of the principal.⁵⁵ In the second month, the other eight holders, except the *thaw chae* and the second holder, will put only nine hundred baht into the cash pool. The other one hundred baht is interest which each of the eight holders earn in the second month. Since the *thaw chae* does not pay interest, he will not earn any either, so he will have to put one thousand baht into the cash pool. In this case, the second holder will receive a lum

⁵⁵ I do not think that 'ten per cent' is a suitable percentage to employ here because in this complex rotating credit group's system, it turns out that the second holder is the one who pays the highest interest rate while the last partner receives the highest one (see below).

sum of eight thousand two hundred baht and in the following months, he must deposit one thousand baht into the cash pool every month until this rotating credit group is finished. In the third month, each one of the other seven holders will pool another nine hundred baht and the first and second holders will have to deposit one thousand baht each. The third holder will receive eight thousand three hundred baht. A similar practice will be repeated every month until the tenth holder receives his money. This is called *chae· dau·k hak* (see details in Table 5.1).

In *chae· dau·k taam*, on the other hand, the holders who have already withdrawn the money pay interest in the following months until the practice is finished. For instance, the second holder receives a lump sum of nine thousand baht from the other nine holders, but he will have to pay back one thousand baht plus interest of one hundred baht each month. The other partners will have to add another one hundred baht a month after they have withdrawn money as well. But the *thaw chae·*, again, neither earns nor pays interest and is responsible for the expenses of the feast (see Table 5.2). Nevertheless, the amount of interest the holders pay or earn in the *chae· dau·k hak* are not dissimilar from those in the *chae· dau·k taam*. That is, the second holder will pay interest of eight hundred baht, the third will pay six hundred baht, the fourth four hundred, the fifth two hundred, and the sixth will not pay or earn any interest. In contrast, the seventh holder will earn two hundred baht, the eighth will earn four hundred baht, the ninth six hundred baht, and the last holder eight hundred baht.

Apparently, some holders run away with the money at times, so personal trust is very important. The *thaw chae·* of each *klum chae·* must not only be an honest person whom other holders trust, but he also has to provide a financial refund to everybody if the money is lost. However, one should bear in mind that it is the

thaw chae who chooses the partners in the group. He thus always selects people whom he too can trust.

If one of the partners wants to quit before the rotating credit group is finished, he/she has to find another person to replace himself/herself. He/she also asks the new partner to give him/her the amount of the money he/she has already deposited into the cash pool. In some cases, the new partner may bargain to pay less than the amount the original holder wants if the new partner knows that the person needs the cash urgently.

Table 5.1 Time schedule and the amounts of cash of *chae dau-k hak*

	1st month	2nd month	3rd month	4th month	5th month	6th month	7th month	8th month	9th month	10th month	Total cash
1th holder <i>thaw chae</i>	R.9,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	T.9,000bh
2nd holder	P.1,000bh	R.8,200bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	T.9,000bh
3rd holder	P.1,000bh	P.900bh	R.8,300bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	T.8,900bh
4th holder	P.1,000bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	R.8,400bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	T.8,800bh
5th holder	P.1,000bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	R.8,500bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	T.8,700bh
6th holder	P.1,000bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	R.8,600bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	T.8,600bh
7th holder	P.1,000bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	R.8,700bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	T.8,500bh
8th holder	P.1,000bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	R.8,800bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	T.8,400bh
9th holder	P.1,000bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	R.8,900bh	P.1,000bh	T.8,300bh
10th holder	P.1,000bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	P.900bh	R.9,000bh	T.8,200bh

Notes: P. = money put into the pool per month per person
R. = total amount of cash each holder receives
T. = total amount of cash each holder has put into the pool
bh = baht (Thai currency)

Table 5.2 Time schedule and the amounts of cash of *chae· dau·k taam*

	1st month	2nd month	3rd month	4th month	5th month	6th month	7th month	8th month	9th month	10th month	Total cash
1st holder <i>thaw chae·</i>	R.9,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	T.9,000bh
2nd holder	P.1,000bh	R.9,000bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	T.9,800bh
3rd holder	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	R.9,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	T.9,700bh
4th holder	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	R.9,200bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	T.9,600bh
5th holder	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	R.9,300bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	T.9,500bh
6th holder	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	R.9,400bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	T.9,400bh
7th holder	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	R.9,500bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	T.9,300bh
8th holder	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	R.9,600bh	P.1,100bh	P.1,100bh	T.9,200bh
9th holder	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	R.9,700bh	P.1,100bh	T.9,100bh
10th holder	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	P.1,000bh	R.9,800bh	T.9,000bh

Notes: P. = money put into the pool per month per person
R. = total amount of cash each holder receives
T. = total amount of cash each holder has put into the pool
bh = baht (Thai currency)

CHAPTER SIX

SELF-EMPLOYED MEN AND PART-TIME TRADERS

This chapter continues to discuss the lives of traders in Khun Yuam town, so my main discussion is similar to that in Chapter Five. I shall focus on two groups of people who engage in trade: former *khaaraatchakaan* who are now self-employed and men who trade part-time. The former includes those who used to be schoolteachers or government servants and now own a shop, or shops, or do not possess any shop but operate their own businesses.¹ All of those who trade part-time are full-time schoolteachers, but they or their spouses earn an extra income from trading.

Like the shop owners mentioned in Chapter Five, many of these two groups are male immigrants who married local women. They participate in communal activities and functions held by their kinsmen, friends and neighbours. Most of their children study in schools or some tertiary education institutes in Chiang Mai. The differences between them and ordinary shop owners, nonetheless, are notable. Most of the self-employed men and the part-time traders have a higher level of education than ordinary shop owners. They know and comprehend many government regulations, as well as having better access to information and other resources. All these factors benefit their businesses greatly. For example, some of the former group have taken over some particular businesses which earn them an excellent income. They have now become sole agents for these products in Khun Yuam. Several of them, moreover, have been involved in local politics. One is a former member of the provincial council for Amphoe Khun Yuam, and two are present members. The latter are quite influential in making decisions about important activities and local administrative budgets. The following is based upon several individual cases.

¹ Two examples of the latter are Sombuun Khiiriikaset, who was a logging contractor, and Sompau-ng Phuangthim, who is a pig and horticultural farmer (see further).

SELF-EMPLOYED MEN

Sakchaj Suphaasaa

Sakchaj Suphaasaa was born in Amphoe San Kamphaeng, Chiang Mai, in 1956. His parents were money-lenders and owned a shop and a rice mill. He completed his secondary education at Montford, a renowned private school of the province, but failed the university entrance examination. He thus enrolled in evening courses at the Chiang Mai Teacher's College and worked as a tourist guide during the day. He finished his degree three years later and got a teaching job at the primary school in Mau-k Cam Pae, Mae Hong Son, in 1977. A year later he met his wife, a Tai from Khun Yuam who was also a teacher. They married in 1980. He taught at the Mau-k Cam Pae school for about four years, then was transferred to a school in Amphoe Fang of Chiang Mai. Because his wife lived and worked in Khun Yuam, Sakchaj made a request to be transferred from Amphoe Fang. He got a new job at a primary school in Khun Yuam in 1982 or 1983. He and his wife, both of whom taught at different schools, lived with her parents in the market town and had to travel between their home and work everyday. Later, he had several disputes with the school headmaster over his promotion and his rate of salary. Consequently, Sakchaj resigned from his teaching job.²

Sakchaj then borrowed some money from his parents to establish his own business, and he turned their house into a shop. He bought a utility truck on hire purchase and many groceries, such as dried and canned food, cooking oil, sugar, salt, instant milk powder, coffee, toiletries and charcoal, from the shop of one of his friends in

² According to several informants, the disputes were severe. On one occasion, Sakchaj argued with the headmaster so heatedly that he subsequently lost his temper and threw a chair at the latter. Fortunately, the headmaster was not injured but a committee was appointed by the Primary Education Office of Mae Hong Son Province (*samnangkaan kaanprathomsyksaa changwat Mae Hong Son*) to investigate the incident. Some locals said that after the inquisition, Sakchaj was left with two options, either to be dismissed or to resign voluntarily. In my interviews, however, Sakchaj did not refer to such details.

Chiang Mai.³ He drove to Chiang Mai once a week to get the goods. He brought rice from his parents' rice mill in San Kamphaeng to sell in his shop as well.⁴ The business grew gradually. In the second year he began to act as a supplier, providing goods to smaller shops in many villages. In order to cope with the increasing amount and variety of goods, Sakchaj replaced his vehicle with a larger, six-wheel truck. But his business was soon to meet with some difficulties.

After Moolii was opened in 1986 or 1987, it started to take over the grocery business in Khun Yuam. Faced with new competition, Sakchaj was now worried about the future of his shop and tried to find a new business. He gradually traded less grocery goods and, at the same time, began to get involved in the sale of construction products, such as cement, steel enforcement, floor and roof tiles, plastic tubes, paint, nails, etc. All of the goods were supplied by a store in Amphoe Hot, Chiang Mai, whose owner he used to work with. His new business, nevertheless, was not without competition. Thak Thakrattanasaran's hardware shop was at the time already open. In order to compete with Thak, Sakchaj offered a delivery service for his customers. (Today, he no longer owns the grocery shop.)

Along with his new business, he also worked as a middleman for construction contracts. This opportunity opened to him because he had been a member of the Primary Education Committee of Mae Hong Son Province (*khanakammakaan prathomsyksaa changwat Mae Hong Son*) since 1984. One of the committee's responsibilities was to allocate Khun Yuam district's education budget, a large amount of which was to be spent on construction of school buildings and other infrastructure. As a member of the committee, he realised that he ought to be

³ The owner of the shop was an old friend from secondary school who let Sakchaj buy goods on credit.

⁴ As a matter of fact, Sakchaj had been selling rice as a source of extra income while he was still a schoolteacher. At the time he also provided a delivery service to every household by using his motorcycle to carry rice.

involved in the construction projects and slowly made friends with other members, as well as increasing his influence upon the committee's decisions.

In 1987 or 1988, he began to operate his own building contractor's group. He signed small contracts with the committee for projects such as building the schools' toilets and the rainwater tanks which stored drinking water. He then gave the jobs to sub-contractors, most of whom are *phuuajajaan* (village heads) or *kamnan*. As a result of such a practice, he seemed to benefit greatly. On the one hand, he neither has to do the jobs himself nor employ his own builders to accomplish them,⁵ on the other hand, he earns a reasonable amount of commission based on the total cost of the construction contract. In addition, most importantly, he has established an intimacy and a sort of informal reciprocal relation with the sub-contractors, several of whom later gave him support and help in many ways, particularly in his election campaigns to be a member of the Provincial Council for Khun Yuam District (see below). Normally, he signs about three or four contracts a year with the Primary Education Office of Mae Hong Son Province.

In 1989 or 1990 while his hardware store business was going well, he also became the sole agent in Khun Yuam district for Nijomphaanit, a large trading enterprise in Chiang Mai. He, therefore, established another shop opposite his hardware store, selling motorcycles, spare parts, all kinds of motor oil and the like. Since all of the goods were supplied by Nijomphaanit, none of his own cash was required to be invested in the shop, but he earned a reasonable amount of commission. However, he had to hire a few new employees to attend the automotive shop.

⁵ Sakchaj confirmed that he himself rarely takes over a contract. There have only been a few cases in which the contracts were not completed by sub-contractors and he had to organise a group of carpenters and builders to finish the jobs himself. He prefers, nonetheless, that the contracts are subcontracted to locals.

Interestingly, the new business created a new possibility in the town's trading activity. Hire purchase was introduced to the residents of the town. Payment could be made within a three, six, twelve or more, month period. As a result, the sale of goods was so successful that it met the demand of the company. Sakchaj was rewarded with a free package tour to Australia for seven days. (Two or three years later, Sakchaj bought another piece of land at the southern end of the town and built a rather large garage. The new garage was also under a contract with Nijomphaanit which supplied the spare parts and all the necessities the garage needed. It was looked after by his sister.) Some locals told me that Sakchaj once owned a small wood handcraft factory (see also Mae Hong Son Provincial Office of Commerce 1991:43), but he did not refer to it in his interviews with me.

Sakchaj began his political life as a member of the *sukhaaphibaan* of Khun Yuam. There are eight members, all of whom are elected by the residents of the town (as mentioned in the previous chapter). Their duties include managing the town budget,⁶ looking after the basic infrastructure of the town, co-operating with the district officers and so on. He received a lot of help and support in the election campaign from the locals who were his sub-contractors, as well as from his wife's kinsmen and friends. According to him, being a member of the *sukhaaphibaan* was significant and worthwhile. It not only provided him with experience in local politics but also with a circle of friends and colleagues, many of whom played an important role in two elections for the Provincial Council for Khun Yuam District (*samaachiksaphaa changwat Mae Hong Son, amphoe Khun Yuam* - hereafter the *sau cau*) some years later.

⁶ Winaj, the owner of a rice mill mentioned in the previous chapter, informed me that the main sources of the town's income are the rates, the water supply and the rubbish collecting charges. There are disputes between some members of the *sukhaaphibaan* and the district officers, the *naaj amphoe* in particular, over misuse of the town's income. Because the district office does not earn any income, but occasionally has to receive and entertain many guests, especially high ranking officers from the provincial level and the central administration, a large amount of the town's income is often spent on such activities.

In 1985, Sakchaj was a candidate for the *sau· cau·*, but was defeated by Thaloeng Krajkaew, another candidate (I shall return to his man later).⁷ Nonetheless, Sakchaj learnt from his mistakes and beat Thaloeng in the following election in 1990. Two of the main sources of support and assistance in his election campaigns, he noted, were the sub-contractors and his colleagues.⁸ These people enthusiastically persuaded the local Tai and Kon Müang to vote for Sakchaj.

In 1992, the chairman of the *sau· cau·* resigned to run for Member of Parliament for Mae Hong Son Province. Sakchaj has been the chairman ever since. His job as the chairman of the *sau· cau·* has kept him busy and often away from home.⁹ He goes to Mae Hong Son twice a month to chair the meetings of the provincial council. He has been involved in the cattle breeding programme, which is a pilot project first established in Khun Yuam in 1992. If the pilot project becomes successful, other districts are expected to follow the Khun Yuam pattern (see details in Appendix 6.1).¹⁰ He is responsible for the management of the budget for Khun Yuam, the development of the district and so on. Being a *sau· cau·*, he has to participate in communal ceremonies as well as social gatherings held by individuals in Khun Yuam.¹¹

⁷ The members of the Mae Hong Son Provincial Council are elected every five years. The number of representatives of each district is based on the population of that district. Amphoe Khun Yuam has two representatives. Because the majority of the district are Karen, one of the representatives has always been a Karen speaker. There was therefore only one seat left for Sakchaj and Thaloeng to compete for in 1985.

⁸ One of his colleagues was Winaj Ciinabut (mentioned in Chapter Five). Winaj used to work with Sakchaj in the *sukhaaphibaan* of Khun Yuam.

⁹ The shops are usually taken care of by his employees. His wife at times examines the account books.

¹⁰ Sakchaj claims that this programme was originally proposed by him and other members of the *sau· cau·*, but according to the deputy district veterinary officer of Khun Yuam, the programme was introduced by the district veterinary office. Whose statement is correct, I do not know. I suppose, however, that Sakchaj is using such a claim for the benefit of his political campaign.

¹¹ During my stay in Khun Yuam, I saw Sakchaj participating in such functions less often than Sombuun Khiirikaset, another *sau· cau·* who was a Karen. Some townspeople, moreover, seemed to be fonder of Sombuun than Sakchaj. They say that the former was sincere, helpful and not too boastful, and was a much nicer man before he became *sau· cau·*. Sadly, Sombuun was killed by the police in May 1993 (see below).

Sakchaj has also co-operated with local merchants and businessmen to expand the trade across the border to Burma. On behalf of the Mae Hong Son Provincial Council, for instance, he and some thirty-five members of the Chambers of Commerce of Mae Hong Son, Chiang Mai and Lampang planned to travel to Rangoon at the end of 1992. They wanted to talk with the Burmese authorities on some particular issues, such as opening up the border for trade in the Khun Yuam area, more investments by Thai businessmen in Burma and so on. They expected to spend a week in the capital of Burma.¹² I should note that the Chambers of Commerce in Mae Hong Son, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Lampang, and wealthy traders and local politicians in these provinces have established mutual business and political connections. Together, they represent one of the most influential groups in the economy and politics of the northern region. They have played an extremely important role in re-opening the Thailand-Burma border trade.

Sakchaj's wife is a full-time teacher who works at a primary school in the town area. She occasionally helps in his shops. His eldest son studies at a private secondary school in Chiang Mai. As Sakchaj himself used to be a student of that school, he believes that it provides a better education for his son than the secondary school in Khun Yuam. Besides, since the school has been long established most of its students are children of well-to-do shop owners or successful businessmen from Chiang Mai and other northern provinces. He anticipates that his son, like himself, will one day become a businessman, so it is a great opportunity for him to associate

¹² In October 1994, Khun Yuam district officers re-negotiated with the Burmese authorities to open the border for trade. A group of the *khaaraatchakaan* even travelled across the border to inspect the area that would be used as the border checkpoint. It was agreed by both sides that the border would be open officially in January 1995. The route both sides agreed to use was the dirt-road from Khun Yuam, via Tau Phae, Pratumüang and Huaj Ton Nun to Nam Maang in Burma. The official opening of the border crossing was reported in a newspaper (Bangkok Post, 10 January 1993 and 13 January 1993).

It is worth noting that according to Trii Amaattajakun (1972), the road from Huaj Ton Nun to Nam Maang is approximately 30 kilometres in length. Another route, from Mae Surin to Baan Maj, is about 50 kilometres long (Trii 1972:no page number). The Mae Surin-Baan Maj route, though it has been used by the locals and traders from Burma, as far as I know, has not been officially opened.

with these children, many of whom will also be involved in trade when they become adults. He is certain that such intimacy will be useful for his son in the future.

Sakchaj thinks that one day he will run in the national election. He wants to be a Member of Parliament for Mae Hong Son, but at the present time he neither has adequate money for the election campaign nor powerful backers.

Sombuun Khiiriikaset

Sombuun Khiiriikaset was born in a Sgaw Karen village, west of Khun Yuam town, in 1954. He had two brothers and three sisters. He spent only two years in the village primary school where the pupils were taught by the Border Policemen.¹³ A teacher then took him to live in the town. He continued his primary education and completed grade seven in one of the town's schools. At the time he wanted to go to Chiang Mai but could find no one to support him. Sombuun thus returned home and worked in his father's rice fields for two years before deciding to find a new job. He was offered a logging contract, supplying timber for one of the government's saw-mills. After working in the forest in Mae Hong Son area for one or two years his elephant died. Sombuun had to stop cutting the trees.¹⁴

Sombuun was about eighteen or nineteen years old when he started to work on an upland development project subsidised by the Department of Public Welfare. He

¹³ In the past, primary schools in upland villages were established by the Border Police who were also the teachers. Some of these policemen had little teacher training, but many were not trained at all. So a lot of upland children, after spending three or four years in the schools, could neither read nor write the Thai language (see also the comments made by Sompau-ng Waanghaa in Chapter Four).

Sombuun recalled that when he was a boy, the Karen villagers were afraid of the policemen and government servants. Whenever they came to the village, all villagers but the old would leave their houses and disappear into the forest. The policemen often helped themselves to food or anything else they found in the village.

¹⁴ The job was hard and difficult. He and his friend had to work with an elephant and axes. Both of them felled only eight or nine trees a day.

was responsible for an education programme and occasionally had to help in local primary schools, teaching upland children. As a result, he was transferred to several upland development centres in Mae Hong Son area. At the same time Sombuun studied by correspondence and finished the third grade of secondary education some years later. Another benefit he gained from his job is that he is able to speak Hmong and a little Lahu; not to mention Karen, Kam Müang and Tai, all three of which he has spoken since he was young.

When he was twenty-five years old, he married a Kon Müang woman who was born in Mae Sariang district. He continued working in the same job but the situation at work was not always pleasant. Two or three years after his marriage problems with his boss occurred. He had been assigned to do construction work by the head of the centre, his former boss, and had been given a paper to sign which recorded that he had spent some three thousand baht on materials. Several months later, a new head of the centre was appointed to replace the former head who was transferred to another post. An investigation was then set up, which subsequently discovered that the paper signed by Sombuun indicated that he had received an amount of twelve thousand baht. On the other hand, Sombuun maintained that he was given only three thousand baht.¹⁵ He was found guilty of misconduct and the sentence of the investigation was that he would not be granted the usual annual salary rise the following year. He was very upset, insisting that he was misjudged, but could not clear his name. Nonetheless, he worked in the project for another several years.

Sombuun sometimes had to act as a mediator between the villagers and the outsiders, some of whom were entrepreneurs. For instance, when he was stationed near Huaj Phaen, a Karen village northwest of Khun Yuam town, some investors

¹⁵ Sombuun believed that the former head corruptly took the rest of the money but could provide no evidence.

were permitted by the government to do logging in the forest near the village, but the local Karen protested the logging. Because Sombuun had a good relationship with the villagers, the investors invited him to join them, on the assumption that he could negotiate with the locals. He declined their offer, but proposed to them that he would negotiate with the villagers if the investors employed the village head to work with them and offered some contributions, such as timber, steel roof tiles and cement to the locals to build a school building. Such a proposal would benefit everyone. The village head as well as some local men would have jobs. The village would have a new school building. On the other hand, the investors could go ahead with their logging job. On this basis, the investors and the villagers finally reached an agreement.

After some sixteen years working on the upland development project, Sombuun eventually decided to resign from his job in 1989. He became involved in the logging industry. He found no difficulties in doing such a job because he had had some experience before and knew several people in the business. He became a sub-contractor (or *luuk chuang* - as known in this business) of a logging company which was granted permission to work in the forest in Kayah State, Burmese territory, some thirty or forty kilometres west of Khun Yuam town (see details in Appendix 6.2). He then hired some Karen men and their elephants and started his new job. It went so well that he soon had to employ more workers and drivers. He bought more logging equipment, utility trucks and heavy vehicles. The price of logs also went up rapidly, from an average of seven hundred fifty baht per cubic metre to four thousand one hundred baht.

Sombuun won the local election and became a *sau-cau* for Khun Yuam in 1990.¹⁶ Most of his vote came from the Karen speakers. He became an important supporter

¹⁶ Sakchaj Suphaasaa was also elected in the same year.

of the Member of Parliament for Mae Hong Son, Bunloe-t Sawaangkun, who was also a Karen.¹⁷ Despite his recent success, serious trouble came a year later. One of Sombuun's kinsmen and a friend were threatened and asked to pay five hundred thousand baht for 'protection' to the 'Daw Dae-ng' (Red Star),¹⁸ one of the independent Kayah military forces whose bases were located near the border (see Appendix 6.2). Both men were partners working as sub-contractors in an area of the forest next to Sombuun's. They tried to negotiate with the 'Daw Dae-ng', but both parties failed to come to a conclusion. A short time after the failure of the third negotiation, both men were shot dead in the forest. There was a rumour that Sombuun was involved in the murder of the two men because he wanted to take over their logging contract. He, therefore, became a suspect and was arrested for murder. He was put in the Mae Hong Son prison but was allowed out on bail five days later. Eventually, the case against him was dismissed because the police had inadequate evidence.

Sombuun insisted that he was wrongly accused by the superintendent of the Mae Hong Son police station, a Kon Müang named Caroe-n Maniiwong. Caroe-n also invested in the logging industry and wanted to get rid of him. If Sombuun was in jail, Caroe-n would become one of the biggest sub-contractors and would be able to do logging in several areas of the forest. He also said that Caroe-n offered to help him, but Sombuun had to pay him five hundred thousand baht (as a bribe). He consulted with Kawii Wiirasamit, the *naaj amphoe* of Khun Yuam. Kawii told him not to pay.¹⁹ Sombuun thus did not give any money to Caroe-n, but lived in fear of

¹⁷ However, in the national election in September 1992, after winning three elections, Bunloe-t lost his seat to Panyaa Ciinaakham, a former teacher and government servant. (Mae Hong Son Province has only one MP.) Sombuun consequently realised that there were different opinions about politics among the Karen who voted for him. If he still supported Bunloe-t the Karen who did not vote for Bunloe-t might be upset by this. He subsequently stopped all his contacts with Bunloe-t.

In July 1995, Bunloe-t Sawaangkun won the national election and became the Member of Parliament for Mae Hong Son again.

¹⁸ 'Daw Dae-ng' is the Thai name.

¹⁹ Sombuun seemed to have good relations with Kawii. The latter once told me that the former always supported the tasks of the district office. Sombuun provided financial aid to several new

his life for some months until Caroe-n was transferred from the Mae Hong Son police station. But bad luck did not go away easily. In February 1992 he was kidnapped by the 'Daw Dae-ng' and held hostage in the mountains. The 'Daw Dae-ng' wanted a ransom of two million baht, otherwise, he would be killed. He was very scared because after being held a hostage for two days, '[the Daw Dae-ng] started digging [his] grave'. Luckily, his elder brother succeeded in asking the boss of Sirin Technology, the company which Sombuun signed his logging contract with, to transfer the money to the bank in Khun Yuam.²⁰ His brother then took the money to the 'Daw Dae-ng' in exchange for the release of Sombuun.

Sombuun had three sons and no daughters. The eldest boy studies in a secondary school in Chiang Mai. His wife has a university degree and now teaches at the primary school in Mae Surin village. At the time of the interviews in 1992, his logging business was so profitable that he employed as many as four hundred men and fifty elephants. His monthly expenditure in the business was almost two million baht. He and his family were all Buddhists, so they usually participated in the religious ceremonies at the monasteries. He had a good relationship with the townspeople, especially his neighbours. If he happened to be in town,²¹ he would join their social gatherings. For instance, when the daughter of one of his

development projects that were proposed by the district office but lacked adequate subsidies from the central government.

²⁰ Sirin Technology is one of the biggest companies that have been granted logging permission in Burma (see Appendix 6.2). Its owner, Bunchuu Triithau-ng, also invests in computer, telecommunication and other businesses. He was born in Mae Hong Son, went to school in Lampang and finished a degree in education in Bangkok. Between 1992 and 1994 he was a deputy minister in the Thai cabinet. He was heavily criticised by the Opposition for his involvement in the logging industry and corruption.

I must point out that Sirin Technology also advanced money to Sombuun when his kinsman and friend were threatened by the 'Daw Dae-ng', but the two men, according to Sombuun, wanted to keep the money for themselves. They did not give it to the 'Daw Dae-ng'. However, although Sirin Technology never seemed to refuse Sombuun's requests for money, it is unclear what the relationship between him and this company were.

²¹ He spent many months every year living in the forest where his men did the logging. He also had to go to meetings of the Mae Hong Son provincial council twice a month, as well as visiting upland villagers from time to time. When he was at home, many Karen might come to see him, either to ask for favours or about the logging business. (Often, during the interviews, some Karen men came into his house and interrupted us in order to discuss logging with Sombuun. The languages used in the conversations were Karen and Kam Müang.)

neighbours, a Tai family, married, Sombuun was invited to make a speech at her wedding party. He also gave provisions, such as rice and food, blankets and other necessities to upland villagers, both Buddhists and Christians.²² The Karen sometimes asked him for money or jobs. Some of them needed his help to lessen their troubles with the police or the authorities, normally over a dispute over land. In short, he seemed to get along well with the uplanders and the townspeople.

Sadly, Sombuun was shot dead by the police in May 1993, less than two months after I left Khun Yuam. It is said that the police, a special force sent from Bangkok, accused him of being involved in the illegal trade of military weapons (four guns were found in his vehicle). He was 'justifiably killed' (*wisaaman khaatakam*)²³ by the police on the road between Tau· Pae· and Pratumüang. However, it is somewhat contradictory since, according to the residents of the town, none of the local policemen was aware, or ever mentioned, that Sombuun traded illegal firearms. The *naaj amphoe* of Khun Yuam, moreover, wrote a eulogy in the cremation volume for Sombuun which says that he was a good man who always helped other people. Kawii Wiirasamit does not believe that Sombuun was guilty of such a crime because his income from the logging was so high that it is impossible to imagine that he wanted to get his hands on 'merely a little profit of [selling] four guns'.²⁴ Another two short eulogies are written by the *cawkhana amphoe* (the

²² Since he was a *sau· cau·*, his support, financial and non-financial, to the Christian Karen was obviously related to his political career. A lot of Christians voted for him in the 1990 election.

²³ *Wisaaman khaatakam* actually implies to 'justifiable killings'. It is, I suppose, a common excuse used by the Thai police when someone is killed by the police during an arrest. The dead man is then accused of a crime and the killer (or killers) is (are) normally not punished. This may sound unbelievable to many readers, but the *wisaaman khaatakam* in Thailand is rather common. The Thai police are so powerful that when a *wisaaman khaatakam* occurs, none of the policemen, as far as I know, is ever accused of murder or sentenced to imprisonment.

This shooting is suspicious. Sombuun had a logging contract in the areas where fighting, kidnapping and killings frequently happened. There were severe disputes between him and Caroen Maniwong, a former superintendent of the Mae Hong Son police force. He also seemed to have close relations with Bunchuu Triithau·ng, a well-known and wealthy businessman-turned-politician. Why the police suspected him of being involved in the illegal firearms trade and how the four weapons were discovered in his vehicle are not clear.

²⁴ My translation is based on a few pages of a photocopy that a Tai friend in Khun Yuam sent me. Unfortunately, I do not have a copy of the cremation volume for Sombuun, so I do not have any more information concerning this.

District Ecclesiastical Head of Khun Yuam) and a Tai abbot, praising Sombuun for his virtue, his help to the poor and his great support and contributions to religion. What lies behind his death is still a mystery.

Thaloe-ng Krajkae-w

Thaloe-ng Krajkae-w is the sole agent for the sale of the government-controlled rice wine in Khun Yuam district. He was born in the coastal province of Rayong in 1938. After finishing his secondary education in Chanthaburi, he went to Bangkok to study in a college for a commerce diploma, but dropped out before completing his third year. He then returned to Rayong, only to find that his father, who was angered by his delinquent lifestyle and failure, had expelled him from the family. Thaloe-ng, unable to get a new start in his home town, began his itinerant life. He travelled from one province to another, working in many odd jobs. Around 1961, he went to visit one of his older friends, who taught agricultural subjects at a college in Chiang Mai. The latter gave him a recommendation to work at the government tobacco farm in Li District, Lamphun Province. The job was hard. Thaloe-ng later had some disputes with one of the staff, so he was thinking of quitting this job. The opportunity came when some of his friends who worked in the Department of State Highways took him to work with them in Amphoe Chom Thong, Chiang Mai.

In 1963 the Department started upgrading the Mae Sariang-Mae Hong Son-Pai-Chiang Mai route, then a dirt-road. Thaloe-ng was transferred from Amphoe Chom Thong to work on the new job. The working party on this project was divided into two teams. One of these was assigned to improve the route from Mae Sariang to Khun Yuam, the other from Chiang Mai's Mae Ma Lai to Khun Yuam. Thaloe-ng worked with the latter team as a surveying apprentice. The tasks of both teams were accomplished when they arrived in the Khun Yuam area a year later. Thaloe-ng,

who at the time was married to a Tai woman and lived in the village of Thaa Hin Som, south of Khun Yuam town, was therefore out of job. He and his wife thus decided to move to the market town. He rented a small shop/house and spent all of his savings to establish a grocery business selling dried and canned food, instant milk powder, soft drinks, cooking necessities and other miscellaneous goods. He purchased the goods for his shop in Chiang Mai. Since the bus service was not yet available in those days, he had to go to Chiang Mai with the Department of State Highways staff who travelled by a big, old, four-wheel drive to collect their monthly salaries at the Chiang Mai office. These were the Departmental staff who still did some road work in Khun Yuam district.

In 1971 Thaloe-ng separated from his first wife, with whom he had two children. Over a year later, he married another Tai woman named Anong. She is the daughter of Kau· Can La and Caa Mung (mentioned in Chapter Two, Appendix 2) and is a qualified midwife.²⁵ Thaloe-ng kept on running his shop, while his wife worked (and still does) at one of the local health centres. He subsequently began to be interested in local politics. With the help of his friends in the Department of State Highways and of his wife's kinsmen and family friends, he was elected as a member of the Provincial Council for Khun Yuam District (*sau· cau·*) in 1975. He won again in the 1985 election, but lost the 1980 and the 1990 elections. While he enjoyed his political life as a *sau· cau·*, his income came mainly from his grocery shop. He ran his shop until about 1987 or 1988, two or three years after he became a *sau· cau·* for the second time. A friend of Thaloe-ng who was also a *sau· cau·* but represented another district then induced him to become the liquor agent of Amphoe Khun Yuam. This man owned a large liquor store and was the agent for

²⁵ Anong's family is not merely one of the most well-known traders in the town, but its members have also been acquainted with both local administrative and educational staff. One of Anong's brothers, for example, is a schoolteacher; and a cousin, Sae-ngthau-ng, who is Thak Thakrattanasaran's wife, has been working in the district post office for many years. Her uncle, Khamron Panjaakae-w, is a former policeman and his children work in the police force and other government departments as well. One or two relatives and close friends, furthermore, teach in several local schools. These were the support that helped Thaloe-ng win two elections.

his district.²⁶ Lured by its prosperity, Thaloe-ng had little hesitation in switching to the new business.

He gradually sold off his grocery goods and began to establish the liquor business in his shop. He signed a contract with the agent in Mae Hong Son, agreeing that the provincial agent in Mae Hong Son town would provide him the liquor and spirits he needed. Thaloe-ng, for his part, had to sell rice wine (to the retailers) at not less than the minimum sales target of ten *thee*²⁷ a month and pay a business bond of sixty thousand baht to the provincial agent. If he failed to reach the minimum sales target he would be fined one hundred eighty baht per *thee*. There was also a liquor licence fee of fifteen hundred baht per year (which he still pays every year). In the first several months, it was difficult for Thaloe-ng. He was new in this business so had to pay cash for any products he wanted to trade,²⁸ and he had only a limited amount of capital. His new trade, nevertheless, got better slowly and he was soon allowed to purchase the goods on *credit*.

His contract has now been renewed. The minimum sales target for rice wine is set at two hundred *thee* a month. However, Thaloe-ng said he usually sells up to two hundred sixty *thee*, or more, of rice wine every month. The fine of one hundred

²⁶ The Department of Excise, Ministry of Finance, controls and licenses the selling of all liquor and spirits, especially those produced and manufactured in Thailand. Normally, each district has only one agent which controls the selling of all liquor and spirits, except the imported ones, within its own district. (These alcoholic drinks are mainly rice wine which contains up to twenty-eight and thirty-five per cent alcohol. The alcohol in the so-called 'Thai whisky', on the other hand, is about thirty-five to forty-three per cent.) Retail shops must therefore only buy the liquor from their district agent. It is illegal for the retailers to bring the beverage from another district, despite the cheaper prices, to sell in the shops. These regulations make the business less competitive. Besides, it is rather difficult to get into this business. Anyone who wants to be a district agent needs strong recommendations from someone who is himself an agent and a large amount of cash to pay the bond and to use as business capital. It is, as far as I am concerned, almost impossible for a new investor who does not know anyone in this business to become an agent.

²⁷ One *thee* is equivalent to approximately thirty-two bottles of rice wine. Each bottle contains about seven hundred fifty millilitres of liquor.

The contract covers the selling of rice wine only. The minimum sales target is not applied to the selling of 'Thai whisky' or other alcoholic drinks.

²⁸ There were different brands of rice wine and 'Thai whisky'. Thaloe-ng had to stock several brands in his shop for the customers.

eighty baht per *thee* if he cannot make the minimum sales target still applies to him. The selling of 'Thai whisky', beer,²⁹ all kinds of soft drinks and UHT milk are excellent as well. His monthly working capital is approximately two million baht. Thaloe-ng prefers to make payments in cash in order to please the Mae Hong Son provincial agent, as well as to keep healthy reciprocal relations with the proprietor. He told me that it is an obligation of his 'because he [the provincial agent] used to support me' (*phrau khaw khoej chuaj raw*).

Thaloe-ng then pointed out some differences between the grocery and liquor businesses. The former is more profitable than the latter, but it also requires a lot of capital. It is a very competitive business. He sometimes had to reduce the prices of his goods in order to defeat his competitors. The liquor business, on the other hand, needs less capital and more physical work. It is less competitive and the prices of liquor and spirits are fixed.

Thaloe-ng works on his own and believes that it is good for his health because he does some exercise by working.³⁰ Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, for example, he delivers alcoholic and soft drinks to small shops in many upland villages. He loads and unloads all of the crates containing alcohol and soft drinks in the back of his four-wheel-drive utility truck by himself. He does not trust anyone, being afraid that an employee might cheat him or steal his money when he is not in the shop. Like Thak Thakrattanasaran, Thaloe-ng has problems with the police. He in fact strongly dislikes them, scorning them for being 'most brazen-faced' (*naadaan thiisut khyy phuak tamruat*). Several policemen owe him money and it is not unlikely that they will never pay off their debts. Many district officers and some

²⁹ Beer, canned and bottled, is sent from the agents in Chiang Mai, not from the agent in Mae Hong Son. Soft drinks and UHT milk, on the other hand, are brought to Khun Yuam town by the salespeople from Bangkok.

³⁰ Thaloe-ng does not employ anyone to assist with his liquor wholesale business, but one or two young girls are employed by his wife to help in the bakery.

small shop owners in upland villages, moreover, have not yet paid him their debts either. For business reasons, however, he has to be flexible with the latter. Retailers who usually pay off their debts on time will be allowed to buy goods on *credit* for a short period of time.

He has now given up his interest in politics, although he thinks that he would still be able to get support from many locals. He said that he is too old and wants to be with his family. His wife works as a midwife and health care officer. She spends her free time running a bakery, selling cakes and some sweet bread. She bakes in a room behind Thaloeng's shop and displays the goods in the window at the front of the shop.³¹ Thaloeng and Anong have only one child, a teenage boy who now studies at a boarding school in Chiang Mai.

Thaloeng still has good relations with many residents of the town and his wife's relatives. He occasionally joins with them in social gatherings. He reckons that he spends over three thousand baht every year on such functions. His wife contributes a reasonable amount of cash and other offerings to local monasteries as well.³² She participates in religious functions more often than Thaloeng.

Sompau-ng Phuangthim

Sompau-ng Phuangthim is a year older than Thaloeng Krajkaw. Both men were born in the same town and have been long-time close friends. When Sompau-ng

³¹ As a matter of fact, this shop/house used to belong to Anong's parents and has now been inherited by her. It is located on the town's main road, next to her mother's shop/house and a few shops owned by her kinsmen. On the other side of the road lie some shops owned by her mother and brother.

³² Anong goes to a temple only when there is an important ritual, but her mother, Caa Mung, is a regular temple-goer and sometimes spends a night at the temple. On such an occasion, Caa Mung will dress in white and keep *sila pae-t*, the eight precepts. (Usually, ordinary Buddhists only retain *sila haa*, the five precepts [also see Keyes 1977:117-118]. *Sila pae-t* are mostly kept by elderly Tai and Kon Müang, normally when they spend a night or two at the monasteries during important religious days.)

was a boy, he had to help his parents work in the rice fields. He also learnt carpentry from his father. Unlike Thaloe-ng, however, Sompau-ng's formal education is only a primary one. After leaving school, he worked in many different jobs and travelled from one place to another. He came to Khun Yuam in 1969, several years after Thaloe-ng had settled in this town. He first stayed with Thaloe-ng, hoping to find a job, but was unemployed for some time. Sompau-ng eventually got a job, working as a security guard in a surveying camp of the Department of State Highways near Mae Surin. He lived with a local Tai woman, but their marriage lasted less than a year.³³

Because he had carpentry skills, he was offered a new job, building wooden houses for the workers in a construction camp site near Phaa Bau-ng, north of Khun Yuam. Here he met and lived with another Tai woman named Pun or Praanii Chajmung who is now his wife. The couple lived in Phaa Bau-ng for seven or eight months until Sompau-ng was out of a job. They then returned to Khun Yuam, where Sompau-ng found a security guard job. He spent his leisure time making furniture for sale, almost all of which was made from teak (see Appendix 6.2 for the prices of teak timber). For the next four years he continued making wooden furniture as a second source of family income.

In 1972, while he was still working as a security guard and a part-time furniture maker, Sompau-ng began to be interested in pig farming. He bought black piglets from the Karen to raise and sold them when they became fully grown. In the following year Sompau-ng together with many locals participated in a free pig breeding training course given by the officers of the Department of Agricultural Promotion from Bangkok. The training took place at the camp site of the

³³ Sompau-ng had been married once before but there were too many problems owing to financial difficulties and personal differences. He finally divorced his former wife before moving to Khun Yuam.

Department of State Highways in Khun Yuam. After the training, he gave up his old pig breeding methods and purchased some breed piglets from the Department of Livestock to raise in an open space at the Department of State Highways' camp site. The breed piglets were fed with a mixture of rice bran and high-protein food and consequently grew quickly. A breed piglet would normally weigh about one hundred kilograms in six or six and a half months and be ready for sale. His business of pig farming therefore developed faster than he had expected. He bought, raised and sold several generations of piglets and swine in no time and earned a large amount of profit.

However, troubles came five or six years later when the district veterinarian made a complaint to the provincial administration that Sompau-ng's pig farm at the camp site was a health hazard to both human beings and animals. The provincial administration then ordered the animals to be moved out of the camp site within fifteen days. But Sompau-ng's pig farm was at the time already very large, raising more than one hundred piglets and fully grown pigs. So he asked the authorities to extend the deadline to ninety days to allow him enough time to find a new place for the animals. His request was denied. Fortunately, he found a piece of land of about eight *rai* near the forest reserve, north of Khun Yuam town. Sompau-ng moved out from the camp site of the Department of State Highways and established his new pig farm in this area.³⁴

After settling into the new place, he heard that some surveyors from the Department of Land were coming to demarcate the boundary of the forest reserve. Sompau-ng was fully aware that he could gain some benefit from this land demarcation. He and his wife, with the help of his friends, cleared more land in the forest reserve area. When the surveyors arrived and inquired about the size of his land, he deceived

³⁴ Sompau-ng paid over ten thousand baht for this piece of land.

them. He told them that he owned all of the land that had been cleared and cultivated. The surveyors, unaware that the land was part of the forest reserve, extended the boundary of Sompau-ng's land into the forest reserve. He was thus given title to over twenty *rai* of land, and a document certifying his ownership was subsequently given to him.³⁵ Six months later he mortgaged his land to the Krung Thai Bank in Mae Hong Son. He spent the money on expanding the business of his farm. He also named his farm *Faam Müang Maj*. That was in 1978.

Since that time Sompau-ng has expanded *Faam Müang Maj*. More piglets are purchased and fed. There are now approximately five hundred piglets and fully grown swine. He prefers to sell live pigs to the butchers and rarely slaughters the animals himself. However, he slaughtered many pigs in 1985 when the price of live pigs dropped dramatically. He then hawked the meat and other products from door to door in the town area. When the price of the pork was back to normal six or seven months later he stopped hawking and slaughtering. It is unclear why he does not like slaughtering the animals.

Sompau-ng also keeps a boar and a wild sow, which has produced some wild piglets, but he is not certain what to do with them. He has also done some horticulture. He employs many locals to work on the farm. Over two hundred *rai*, some parts of which are in the forest reserve area, are cleared and cultivated. He divides the land into plots and orders his employees to plant mangoes, coconut trees, sweet tamarinds, jack fruit, custard apples and other fruit trees. The majority of the fruit is sold, some is consumed by his family. Pools have been dug and some freshwater fish are kept in the pools. Animal waste is used as fertiliser, as well as

³⁵ In Khun Yuam disputes over land and problems of unclear land demarcation were and continue to be quite common. Some areas of the forest reserve in the north of the town, for instance, have been cleared and settled by many locals for some time. Local authorities, to avoid confrontations with the residents, let them stay. Consequently, more land is gradually cleared and more houses are built in the forest reserve. Many of these new occupants are Karen and Hmong speakers who moved down from their upland villages to live in the town area.

food for the fish. Chicken and ducks are also kept for consumption, but some of them are sometimes sold for cash.

In addition, Sompau-ng is now a member of the *sukhaaphibaan* of Khun Yuam. His team includes another seven members, some of whom were born locally. They were elected before the end of 1992. According to some informants these eight men won the election because the townspeople were disappointed with the former committee, all of whom were younger than the new elected team. The latter have proved themselves to be active and efficient. Household rubbish is collected regularly. The town's ditches have been cleared and the streets are cleaner. The committee is also trying to upgrade the quality of the water supply and other services provided by the *sukhaaphibaan*. Sompau-ng is in charge of maintenance of the water supply channels, as well as of the improvement of its system.

Although Sompau-ng's wife was not born in Khun Yuam nor has any relatives living in the town, she has made friends with local women, whom she goes to the temples with. She offers donations and makes merit. She regularly participates in both communal and individual gatherings. Though Sompau-ng joins in functions less often than his wife, he rarely forgets to make a contribution. For example, he gives one or two swine to the district office to celebrate the New Year party every year.

PART-TIME TRADERS

Niran Kantharyt

Niran Kantharyt works full-time as a teacher and owns a small rice mill. He trades cash crops seasonally as well. He was born in Khun Yuam and grew up in his parents' house which is next to Chaan Phoowong's parents' house near the town's

main road. Both men have been friends ever since, but the former is a few years younger than the latter.³⁶ Niran's father, a Kon Müang, is a former policeman who was transferred to the police station in Khun Yuam and married a local Kon Müang. Niran spent his childhood in Khun Yuam, then went to an agricultural college in Trat Province in the eastern region. He finished his study and got a certificate from the college when he was about twenty or twenty-one years old.

He returned home and started to teach at the primary school of Naa Hua Lae-m, a Karen upland village northwest of Khun Yuam town. He also owned a second-hand utility truck which he drove from his home in the town to work. He then put two rows of seats in the back of his truck and began to take passengers between Khun Yuam town and Naa Hua Lae-m twice a day.³⁷ Later, he became too busy with his job, so he hired a local to drive his truck. But within less than a year, he found that the truck did not earn as much money as he had anticipated. As a result, Niran eventually decided to sell his truck. Niran told me that he suspected that the driver took some money for himself, but he did not have enough evidence. Besides, the man was also a resident of the town. He did not want to cause any trouble between himself and the man. He thought that it was better for him to give up the truck.

Niran spent some of the money gained from the sale of his truck to dig a small pool on his parents' land on the outskirts of the town. He then bred some freshwater fish in the pool. However, after a while things did not seem to be right. He asked a

³⁶ Chaan Phoowong is a Tai who was born in the Year of the Dragon (in 1952). He was educated in Khun Yuam and completed third grade of secondary education by correspondence. He used to be employed by the *sukhaaphibaan* of Khun Yuam and later became one of the eight members of the *sukhaaphibaan*. He was in the same team as Winaj Ciinabut (mentioned in Chapter Five) before they lost the election to Sompau-ng's team. Chaan has worked in Khun Yuam, Mae Sariang and Burmese territory wherever logging was active (see also Appendix 6.2).

Niran Kantharyt recalled his early days when Chaan's mother babysat and nursed him. He also calls her 'mother' (*mae*·) and visits her sometimes. He does not speak Tai but is able to comprehend it rather well.

³⁷ That is, every morning when he went to work and in the afternoon when he returned home.

friend who had a degree in fishery to come and investigate his fish pool. The problem was that there was not adequate food for the fish, so Niran fed them special food. Unfortunately, the cost of the food was too high, so he decided to open a small rice mill and started to mill rice for anyone. The charge for his service was small. He only wanted the by-products of the rice, such as rice pieces and bran, to feed the fish. When the fish were ready for sale, nonetheless, their price was so low that it hardly covered all the expenses spent on feeding them. He soon stopped working on the fish pool and thought of making more income from his rice mill. While he still provided a milling service in exchange for a small service charge, he began to sell polished rice to the townspeople.³⁸ As a result of this, the capacity of the mill was upgraded and the machine had to be replaced. In order to reduce maintenance costs, Niran repaired all the machinery himself.³⁹

The rice mill is nowadays operated by his wife most of the time,⁴⁰ while Niran teaches full-time at the school. Since there are several rice mills in the town, the charge for the milling service is small in order to compete with others. Polished rice is of course sold in his rice mill.⁴¹

³⁸ Like Winaj Ciinabut, Niran Kantharyt purchases unhusked rice from some locals. The unhusked rice is then milled and put up for sale. Niran also provides a delivery service for his customers.

³⁹ Niran also repairs his utility truck and his daughter's bicycle. His mechanical skills are so good that before he took up the business of his rice mill seriously, he used to run a small bicycle repair shop. At the time there was no repair shop in Khun Yuam, so whenever his daughter's bicycle had a problem he had to do the repairing. He thus bought some bicycle spare parts which some locals later requested to purchase. He sometimes repaired their bicycles as well. He consequently saw an opportunity to run a bicycle repair shop. However, the shop lasted just over a year. This was because his teaching job occupied most of his time and, though he let his sister look after the shop, she did not know much about repairs, so some of his customers stopped coming. He finally closed the shop.

⁴⁰ Niran's wife used to cook and sell Tai noodles at home. At first business seemed to be going well. It was evaluated by the district revenue office as a good business. The result was that the estimated sales tax she had to pay was rather high, so she finally stopped selling the noodles.

⁴¹ There are different kinds and grades of polished rice sold in the shops and rice mills. In order to compete with the competitors, however, the prices of these rice differ slightly from one shop to another, or one rice mill to another. Also, to keep a customer buying regularly, the owners of the shops and rice mills usually provide a delivery service. If the customer is considered honest, he/she will be able to pay his/her debts monthly or whenever depending on an agreement between the seller and buyer.

Occasionally, Niran also trades garlic, shallots and soy bean. The three crops are usually harvested and sold in the dry months of March and April. When he first started to trade cash crops, he did not have enough capital. He thus contacted a merchant in the market of Chom Thong, Chiang Mai Province, and informed the latter that he wanted to trade with him but he needed some cash to start with. In order to assure the merchant, Niran decided to hand him the registration document of his utility truck as 'collateral evidence' and borrowed thirty thousand baht from the merchant to buy soy bean. The merchant lent him the money. Niran has been trading cash crops with this merchant ever since.

According to Niran, a farmer usually does not sell all of his crops at once, but sells when prices are high or when he needs some cash urgently.⁴² During such periods, therefore, he drives his utility truck from one village to another,⁴³ going from door to door, buying a crop from the farmers. Often, he cannot fully load the truck with the crop in one go, but has to spend several days travelling backwards and forwards between his home and the villages collecting the crop. When he has a stock of crop

⁴² Niran told a story of his experience when he once wandered among the villages in Huaj Poong, north of Khun Yuam, trying to buy soy bean from the farmers. The price of soy bean at the time was quite high, about 115 baht per *tang*. He went into one village, where the villagers refused to sell him the crop. They anticipated that if they waited for a while, the price of soy bean would be even higher. He came out empty handed and met one of his friends, who was also a trader and complained to him. His friend then thought of a trick. He told Niran to go back the village and offer the farmers 155 baht for a *tang* of soy bean. But he must tell the villagers that he could buy only two *tang* because he was in hurry, having to go to Mae Hong Son, but he would come back in a week or so to purchase more soy bean. He should then visit another farmer, again requesting to buy two *tang* of soy bean and telling the same lie. Niran did as his friend told him. A week later his friend visited the village, wanting to buy soy bean. But no one sold him any, knowing that if they sold the crop to Niran they would make more profit. They asked him whether or not he knew Niran. His friend told them that he heard that Niran was busy preparing for the transportation of the soy bean and would return to the village. So the villagers believed him and did not sell their crop, expecting that they would get an excellent price when Niran returned. Niran, of course, never returned. Eventually, the price of soy bean went down to 100 baht per *tang*. His friend then revisited the village, offering to purchase soy bean. At this time every farmer had to sell him all the crop they had before it became too old and too rotten. Niran and his friend earned some profit that summer, but, needless to say, they would never go to that village again. Niran confessed that he also wanted to get even with the villagers because they refused to sell him the crop at the beginning.

⁴³ Niran usually purchases a second-hand utility truck and uses it for a while. When the vehicle needs a big repair job, he will sell it. He will then find another second-hand truck. He has been doing this for a number of years.

of approximately 1,500 kilograms or more,⁴⁴ he will load the crop into the back of his utility truck and drive it to the market in Amphoe Chom Thong to sell.

Niran, accompanied by one or two employees, normally goes to the market and returns home on the same day. They sometimes have to queue up and wait to unload the crops into the merchant's store-houses because there are many traders bringing crops to the market. In this situation he and his employees often have to spend a night in Chom Thong. They will either sleep in one of the store-houses or in the back of the truck in order to save the cost of a hotel rooms. On the way back home, the truck is empty. Niran used to purchase some construction materials, such as cement roof tiles, and carry them back in the truck. In Khun Yuam he would sell the materials to the locals at a cheap price, enough to earn small profit. However, he no longer buys and sells these materials because they are now available in several shops in the town.

Each crop is traded separately. When Niran trades garlic, for instance, he will fully load his utility truck with garlic only. Sometimes, however, if he is unable to purchase enough garlic, he will also find another crop, usually soy bean. So in this situation, there will be both garlic and soy bean fully loaded in the back of his truck when he drives to the market in Chom Thong. In addition, many traders come from Chom Thong and other districts of Chiang Mai to purchase the crops directly from the farmers. The prices of the crops offered by local and non-local traders do not differ much, and whether the prices are higher or lower depends on the prices at the regional markets in Chiang Mai.

⁴⁴ Although it is well known in Khun Yuam that the carrying capacity of a utility truck is 1,000 kilograms (or one ton), local owners often overload their trucks. Some residents, who trade crops seasonally, sometimes load up to 1,800 or 1,900 kilograms of crops on their trucks.

Niran informed me that when a trader and a merchant make contract to trade, usually verbally, the merchant will purchase any crop from the trader at the price both sides have agreed.⁴⁵ There are two kinds of prices: the daily price and the market price. The *daily price* of the crop goes up and down every day, determined by the demand and supply of the goods and the movement of the market. If the price increases, the trader will earn more profit. If the price decreases, he/she will of course earn less or even suffer a loss if the price of the crop decreases dramatically. The *market price*, on the other hand, is a fixed price. It is evaluated and agreed to by the merchant and trader at a level which satisfies both sides. The benefit of the *market price* is that the trader is able to calculate his profit, or his loss, of the sale. When the *daily price* goes down, the trader who has chosen to trade at the *market price* will not suffer a big loss, but if the *daily price* increases, he/she will not be able to make a lot of profit either. After the merchant and the trader have agreed to buy and sell at the *daily price* or the *market price*, the decision cannot be changed as long as the two parties continue to trade with each other. If the trader wants a better price, he probably has to break his agreement with the present merchant whom he trades with, and find another merchant, perhaps in another market. But this cannot be done easily.

Niran, furthermore, remarked that if he had some sort of a connection with a merchant in Saraburi, a central province, he would be able to transport crops to that market and sell them for a more profitable price than the one offered at the market in Chom Thong. Without a connection, however, a trader like him can never sell the crops for a better price. This is due to the fact that in the markets, whether it be in Chom Thong, Chiang Mai, Saraburi or elsewhere, crops are bought and sold only

⁴⁵ My intention here is to distinguish a merchant from a trader. A *merchant* means one who is based in a larger market, buying (or, in some cases, selling) cash crops from, or to, the traders. There is no doubt, however, that the market in Chom Thong is smaller than the one in Chiang Mai or Saraburi and that the financial situation of the merchants in the latter market(s) is better, but such issues are beyond the scope of this thesis.

among those who trade with each other regularly. A new trader must thus first establish his relations with a merchant (or merchants) in the market before he/she will be able to sell or buy crops. Although anyone is allowed to trade in the markets, a trader who neither has a connection with nor is known by a merchant will normally be offered the lowest prices for his/her crops. All merchants are fully aware that such a trader has no choice but to sell his/her crops at the offered price because he/she will also be given the lowest prices in the next market. Neither can the trader bring the crops back to his/her home because they will certainly be rotten. This sort of unwritten rule is to ensure that the traders will not go from one market to another searching for higher prices for their crops, and that the merchants will not risk having an inadequate supply of different crops for the market(s) in Bangkok. The established traders, on the other hand, are assured that their crops will be sold at certain prices according to the agreements they have made with the merchants.

Niran and his wife have done some cultivation as well. They used to grow garlic on his parents' land outside the town. Unfortunately, the price of the garlic was so low that the couple only made a little profit after they sold their crop. So they changed the crop and started to cultivate soy bean. Niran eventually realised that being a cash crop trader was more profitable than being a grower. He and his wife have now stopped growing any crops. However, he does not trade cash crops every year. He sometimes stops trading and spends more time helping his wife in the rice mill. He commented that his job at the school is sometimes rather busy and he also has to run the rice mill in the evenings and on weekends after finishing work. He finds that the maintenance work of the rice mill takes up a lot of his time. He frequently feels very tired from over-work.

One of his future plans is to open a motor shop, selling spare parts for cars and motorcycles if he can raise enough capital. He is convinced that it will be a good

business because more utility trucks and motorcycles have been purchased by the locals. Motor maintenance and repairing will thus become more and more necessary. Yet there is only one shop, Thak's, that sells spare parts. Niran believes that if he provides a good service and the prices of the goods he sells are reasonable, the shop will surely make a large amount of profit.

Suphaap Kaawi

Suphaap Kaawi is in his early thirties. He was born in Amphoe Mae La Noi, of Tai parents. His father, who has been a *kamnan* (the head of a *tambon*) for many years, owns a rice mill and is a money-lender.⁴⁶ Suphaap has a degree from a teacher's college. His first job was a teacher at a primary school in Mae La Noi district in 1980. Roughly a year later he began to earn an extra income by trading rice. He bought the rice from his father's rice mill and sometimes from his siblings' rice mills,⁴⁷ and sold it to the villagers who resided outside Mae La Noi town or to the *khaaraatchakaan* who lived in the town. Many of his customers usually paid him at the end of the month when they received their salaries. Some customers, normally villagers, sometimes run out of cash and offered him a bag or two of charcoal as payment. After paying his debts to his father and two siblings (he paid them only when he got the money from his customers), he still made some profit. He used to sometimes mix an expensive, fragrant, good quality rice with a lower-grade, cheaper rice and put it up for sale. Suphaap informed me that many of his customers enjoyed eating such mixed rice because of its nice smell. But he no

⁴⁶ Suphaap's father is a former long-distance trader who transported his goods by cattle train (*phau-khaa wuataang* or *khaa wuataang* - already mentioned in Chapter Two). He used to carry tin to sell at the markets in Chiang Mai and on the way back home he bought salt, dried fish and pieces of metal (to supply local blacksmiths so that they could make knives and other tools) to sell to the locals in Mae La Noi. He used to sell rice and groceries as well. Today, only rice is sold at his rice mill. Suphaap says that his father knew many *phau-khaa wuataang* in Khun Yuam and used to trade with them.

⁴⁷ Suphaap's brother and sister, who live in Mae La Noi, also own a rice mill each. Another sister runs a hotel in the town of Mae Sariang. She sells food and drinks as well.

longer sells this kind of rice. He later purchased a second-hand utility truck and started to trade rice outside the territory of Mae La Noi.

Around 1982 or 1983, Suphaap developed a new interest - cash crop trade. He drove his vehicle from one village to another in the areas of Mae La Noi and Khun Yuam buying fresh garlic from the villagers. When his truck was fully loaded with garlic (usually about 1,800 kilograms) he would travel to the market in Amphoe San Pa Tong, Chiang Mai, to sell the crop. Later, he would sometimes go further to as far as the market in Lamphun Province because the price of the garlic in that market was higher. After selling the crop, if the price of the crop in that season was good, he would make another trip back to Khun Yuam to buy more garlic. On such a trip, he would stop at his father's or his siblings' rice mill to collect rice and transport it to Khun Yuam to sell. Suphaap said that in those days the locals of Khun Yuam grew rice for their own consumption and only a few townspeople opened shops to sell rice. It was therefore not easy for those who were non-local residents, particularly the *khaaraatchakaan*, to purchase rice.⁴⁸ Sometimes, however, when the rice in his father's and his siblings' stocks had run out, Suphaap had to travel to Chiang Mai to buy rice to sell to his customers. Today, owing to the increasing number of residents and tourists, a lot of rice is brought to Khun Yuam from Chiang Mai and Bangkok for sale (I shall return to this point later). Also, most of the grocery shops, small or large, sell rice.

Garlic was not the only cash crop Suphaap traded. At times, he traded soy bean, shallot, groundnut and honey as well. Like Niran, Suphaap commented that soy bean usually gives more profits than garlic or any other crop.⁴⁹ Furthermore, he

⁴⁸ Most of his customers in Khun Yuam in those days were the *khaaraatchakaan*. Several years later, Suphaap had more customers when those who worked in the logging industry came to live in the town.

⁴⁹ He remarked that cash crop traders who are insincere and cunning sometimes create troubles for the farmers. For instance, if a trader has bought nearly the amount of garlic he wants, but he still needs, say, another twenty kilograms, he will then offer a higher price to a farmer. If the price of garlic is usually eight baht per kilogram, the trader will offer to pay nine or ten baht a kilogram.

stated that if he bought crops from the farmers in the Mae La Noi area, he would not have to worry about whether or not he had enough cash to pay the farmers. Most of them would let him take the crops first and pay for them after he had sold them at the market. He noted that the farmers trusted him. They believed that he would not cheat them, and that he would return to the villages and give them their money because he was a teacher. His status as a schoolteacher has been a great help to his trading job.

Suphaap married in 1983. His wife is also a Tai and a teacher. She was born in Khun Yuam town, but got a teaching job at a primary school in Mae La Noi where she met Suphaap. After their marriage the couple continued to live and work in Mae La Noi. At the time, Suphaap continued to trade rice regularly, and traded garlic and soy bean every summer. Several years later, his wife wanted to return to her home town, so she decided to make a request to the Education Office in Mae Hong Son to be transferred to a primary school in Khun Yuam. Her application was eventually granted. She and their first daughter moved to live with her parents in Khun Yuam town. Suphaap later made a request to be with his wife and daughter. Another reason of moving to Khun Yuam was that he anticipated that this town was a better place for trading than Mae La Noi. In 1989, he arrived in Khun Yuam to be united with his family. They rented a small house in the town. Both Suphaap and his wife travelled from the town to work every day. The couple taught at different schools, located in two upland villages. In the same year, he sold his utility truck and purchased another second-hand one.

In Khun Yuam, Suphaap again began to trade rice as a second source of income. He, moreover, tried another trade: selling foreign liquor, mainly Scotch whisky. He

But he will buy only twenty kilograms and tell the farmer that he will later come back to buy more garlic. The trader leaves the village in a utility truck fully loaded with garlic and he, of course, will never return. Normally, such traders come from other provinces.

purchased this from his sister and friends who run shops in Mae Sariang town. He thus had to find another house that was suitable for his new business. Subsequently, a piece of land located on the main road of the town next to the police station was up for sale. He decided to purchase the land and to build a one-and-a-half-storey concrete house/shop. After it was finished in 1991,⁵⁰ Suphaap still had some cash left, and he spent it on buying more Scotch whisky. His new product sold so well and so quickly that he soon had enough income to purchase other kinds of goods for his shop, including Thai whisky, beer, soda-water and other soft drinks and cigarettes - both Thai and foreign. The business went well and his shop became rather busy. Since he and his wife had to teach at the schools (besides, his wife was about to have their second child), Suphaap barely had time to look after his shop. He thus chose to foster a few Karen teenagers from the upland village near his school. They, both boys and girls, came to study at the secondary school in the town and lived in his house. He provided food and some pocket-money for them in exchange for their help in the shop.

A short time later, he realised that there was a new product that would be very profitable: ice. Although ice was sold widely in Khun Yuam, its consumption had increased rapidly. In the middle of 1992, therefore, Suphaap bought an ice-making machine on hire purchase from a shop in Chiang Mai.⁵¹ At the same time, he heard that a local was thinking of opening a shop to sell foreign liquor in the northern part of the town. In order to beat his competitor, he decided to sell his land in Mae La Noi⁵² and use the money to buy a small piece of land opposite the bus station at the

⁵⁰ The price of the land was 500,000 baht and the construction cost of his house/shop was about 470,000 baht (a total of approximately A\$48,500 based on the currency exchange rate of A\$1 = 20 baht in 1991). Suphaap told me that some of the money was his own savings, some was borrowed from the bank and some came from his parents.

⁵¹ Suphaap told me proudly that his ice-maker is the largest machine in Khun Yuam town. It produces ice faster than any other ice-maker in the town. (There are three or four ice-making machines which have been bought by shop owners to produce ice for sale.)

⁵² This piece of land was given to him by his parents.

north end on which he built a small shop.⁵³ Since then, it has been attended by a Karen teenage boy who also lives in this shop. Suphaap only examines the account book occasionally and ensures that the stock of the shop never runs out.

Suphaap informed me that he used to trade cattle, mostly water buffaloes, for a few years, but he quit after learning that some of the animals were stolen. He was scared that he might be shot by their owners if they mistakenly thought that he was involved in the cattle-stealing. He also bought and sold teak furniture at times, but stopped doing it sometime ago. Suphaap nowadays neither trades rice nor any cash crop because the liquor and other products in his shops are so profitable.⁵⁴ He also wants to spend more time with his two children, who are growing up, as well as in his liquor business. His wife, moreover, needs some spare time to accompany her mother to local Tai temples.⁵⁵ There are also social gatherings, such as neighbour's weddings and kinsmen's funerals, in which she must participate, though she sometimes lets Suphaap go. In spite of having to pay his debts to the bank, Suphaap's family live somewhat comfortably on their income, which includes his and his wife's salaries and the money earned from his two shops.

Suphaap anticipates that commercial drinking water will be an excellent trade in the near future. After he pays off all his debts, he will probably try this new business.

⁵³ In comparison with the cost of his first house/shop, the price of the land and the construction cost of the new shop are much higher than his first one. Besides, his second shop is very small. Suphaap is aware of its high cost, but in order to keep his competitor out of his way, he thinks that it will be good for him in the long run.

⁵⁴ In order to reduce transportation costs, Suphaap sometimes drives his utility truck to Chiang Mai to buy liquor, soft drinks and cigarettes. He prefers to pay cash because he will be offered a discount price for all the goods he purchases. Despite the cost of petrol and other expenses, he assured me that this is the cheapest option to transport his goods. This means that he will earn more profits. He usually leaves Khun Yuam on Friday evening and arrives in Chiang Mai very early the next morning. He will rest in his truck until the shops open, he then does his shopping. In the afternoon he will drive back to Khun Yuam. It is a long trip and he often sleeps until late on Sunday.

⁵⁵ Suphaap's mother-in-law earns her living by selling cooked Tai food. She and her elderly relatives visit the monasteries and offer food to the monks regularly. They give donations from time to time as well.

He is certain that although a commercial drinking-water-maker is quite expensive, he will earn a lot of profit.

Khwanryan Sapjajut

Khwanryan Sapjajut is a Kon Müang. She was born in a large village not far from Amphoe Chiang Kham,⁵⁶ Changwat Phayao, in 1954 - the Year of the Horse. Her parents own several pieces of land. Some of the land is cultivated by her family, some is rented by local villagers. Khwanryan had a primary school education and used to be a hairdresser. She learnt the skill from a small hairdressing school in the central province of Saraburi many years ago. At the time, she was living with her siblings, who still work and live in that town. After completing her course, she returned to her home in Chiang Kham and opened her own hairdressing shop in her village. Then, one of her sisters, who was (and still is) a full-time teacher and part-time dress-maker, wanted to share the shop to sell women's garments. Some of the garments were made by herself, others were bought from shops in Chiang Kham. Both the garment selling and the hairdressing went well.

Subsequently, Khwanryan's sister accompanied her husband, who was a soldier, to live in the military camp to the north of Mae Hong Son town.⁵⁷ So, Khwanryan began to run her own garment trade while continuing the hairdressing work. She obtained goods from her friend who owned a large garment shop in Chiang Kham town. This female friend of hers also let her buy on credit and pay the debts later. Due to the boom in the garment trade, their relations have subsequently developed into mutual trading support and help. Khwanryan sometimes selects new kinds of

⁵⁶ According to Khwanryan, Chiang Kham is a rather big market town, where shops sell all kinds of goods and traders come and go all the time. The residents of the town now consist of Kon Müang, Lü, Thai and Lao speakers who migrated from the northeastern provinces. Some shop owners in the town are her friends.

⁵⁷ Both of them still live in that camp.

garments for her friend's shop (see below). All of the goods in her shop are now sent from some garment agencies in Bangkok.

When Khwanryan was in her early twenties, she met Samniang Sapjajut, a Thai man who worked as a field-officer for the Department of Community Development in Chiang Kham. She later married him and the couple now have two children. In early 1992, Samniang was transferred to the district office in Khun Yuam, but Khwanryan and the two children still lived in Chiang Kham. Wanting to visit her husband and to earn some extra income, she contacted her sister who lived in the military camp north of Mae Hong Son town and proposed that both of them together should sell garments. Her sister agreed.

Khwanryan then brought various kinds of garments from her friend's shop in Chiang Kham town to Mae Hong Son. She stayed with her sister in the military camp. Using her house as a shop, her sister would choose some of the goods to sell to residents in the camp and locals who lived in a nearby village, while Khwanryan took some garments to the morning market in Mae Hong Son town to sell. Everyday she arrived at the market by a *sau-ngthae-w* (mini-bus) about half past five or six a.m. and returned to the camp at one or two o'clock in the afternoon.⁵⁸ The garments sold well at the market and in the camp. After all garments were sold, she would return to Chiang Kham to get more goods. On the way between Chiang Kham and Mae Hong Son, Khwanryan, of course, stopped in Khun Yuam to spend a few days with Samniang. By this time, Khwanryan had stopped doing hairdressing and started to trade full-time.

A few months later, Khwanryan decided to leave Chiang Kham to live with Samniang in Khun Yuam. They rented a small house near the district office. Their

⁵⁸ Khwanryan had to pay three baht a day to sell her goods in the morning market.

two children came with her and studied at the secondary school in the town. Her arrival, nonetheless, was not an empty-handed trip. She brought with her a lot of garments, women's, men's and children's, and started her garment trade again. She sold her goods in front of the morning market everyday.⁵⁹ Whenever there was a fair at a temple or on the town's airfield, she would also be seen there selling her garments. Her customers, mainly local females, often came to see her at home to select goods or sometimes to request that their dresses be made specially. Khwanryan, therefore, returned to Chiang Kham every now and then not only to select and to bring more new garments back to Khun Yuam, but to hand all of her customer's orders to another sister of hers who was also a dress-maker. The sister now lived in the shop which used to be Khwanryan's hairdressing shop. She sold ready-made garments and made women's dresses to order. Usually, every dress for Khwanryan's customers would be finished when Khwanryan returned on her next trip.

Things went so well that Khwanryan and Samniang soon thought of finding a larger place to live. Before the end of 1992, the couple and their two children moved to a new rented house on the main road of the town. Khwanryan turned its front part into a garment shop. Since then, she has sold more varieties of clothes, garments made-to-order and pieces of plain and coloured cloth for a customer who wanted to make her own dress. She normally requests that the customers pay cash. However, those who are regular customers or who work at the district office are allowed to pay within a period of two months, but the prices of the goods will be higher. For example, if the price of a pair of man's trousers is 160 baht (cash), it will be 180 baht if it is paid within two months (i.e., ninety baht must be paid in the

⁵⁹ She left home for the morning market very early, about five o'clock, and usually returned home when the market closed at eight or half past eight. Sometimes, however, she remained there to sell her garments until after midday.

She once complained to me that she paid a higher rent at the morning market in Khun Yuam, that is, five baht per day, than she did in Mae Hong Son. Furthermore, the selling here was not as good as in Mae Hong Son market.

first month and another ninety baht in the second month) and the price of a good-quality winter jacket is 860 baht for cash and 880 baht for the two-month payment.⁶⁰ Despite the higher price, this method of payment has become quite popular among her customers. Khwanryan is obviously delighted that her goods sell better than ever.

Khwanryan has established trading relations with a few petty traders as well. These are Tai farmers who live in the villages of Tau· Phae· and Müang Pau·n and trade seasonally to earn an extra income. They buy shirts, blouses, trousers and winter jackets from Khwanryan and take them across the border to sell to the villagers living in the territory of Burma in the dry season. They stop trading during the rainy months to cultivate their crops. One or two of these petty traders seem to trade more often than others.⁶¹ When they first contacted Khwanryan they were asked to pay cash for all the goods they bought, but now they are allowed to pay half of the total price of the goods when they take the goods and pay the other half when they return from Burma.

Khwanryan encourages these part-time traders by offering them cheaper prices. For instance, she charges them 140 baht for a pair of trousers (while the retail price is 160 baht) and 250 baht for a low-quality winter jacket (the retail price is 270 baht).⁶² Her sales strategy is to sell cheap but in quantity. Besides, the customers prefer cheap products. For example, low-quality, cheap, working trousers and shirts (under one hundred baht each) sell well. She also promises to give these petty

⁶⁰ Khwanryan paid 120 baht for a pair of trousers and 750 baht for a winter jacket. Thus, if the payment was in cash, the profit on a pair of trousers was 40 baht or 33.33%, and on a winter jacket was 110 baht or 14.67%. If they were paid within two months, the profits were 60 baht or 50% and 130 baht or 17.33%, respectively.

⁶¹ One of them, for instance, now has a wife in Burma. He spends several months a year traversing back and forth between Burma, Khun Yuam and his village, buying and selling goods.

⁶² She pays 220 baht for a low-quality winter jacket.

traders refunds on goods that are brought back to Khun Yuam. However, the garments normally sell well.⁶³

She informed me that since her business is going well and her children seem to be managing their school life successfully, she will probably settle in Khun Yuam, even though Samniang may be transferred elsewhere.⁶⁴ However, she will still go to Chiang Kham occasionally to visit her family and to bring more goods from her friend's shop back to Khun Yuam. In order to find more varieties of cheaper products, Khwanryan now sometimes also travels to the markets in Bangkok to purchase goods. She is sometimes asked by her friend in Chiang Kham to select new garments on her behalf. These goods will be transported by truck to the market in Chiang Kham. In this case, Khwanryan will probably take the opportunity to buy some defective cloth that is sold cheaply to send in the same truck. The cloth is delivered to her sister's shop in order to be cut and made into dresses later.

CONCLUSION

These are some examples of former *khaaraatchakaan* who are now self-employed and schoolteachers who trade part-time. These two groups share some similarities with the shop owners and itinerant traders mentioned in Chapter Five. For instance, both self-employed men and schoolteachers who are part-time traders always support local monasteries and monks. They are often involved in communal affairs. Men who migrated to the town and married local women are supported and assisted by their wives' kinsmen. Sakchaj and Thaloeng are excellent examples of this. The two men had a lot of support from kin when they were running for the *sau cau*.

⁶³ One of the explanations is that the villagers who live on the other side of the border have more cash than ever. Many of the men work in the logging industry. Some of them trade cattle and some buy and sell precious stones.

⁶⁴ Normally, a government servant is transferred from one office to another, often to a different province, every two or three years. The transfer often means a higher position, as well as a higher salary, for the officer.

However, the most important aspect of all this is that all traders have rarely failed to sponsor local monasteries and schools. Traders, full-time and part-time, always maintain good relationships with local monks and schoolteachers. Regular small donations, annual offerings and even scholarships for the secondary pupils are given to the monks and schoolteachers. As noted, such offerings are a kind of merit-making. They also indicate the traders' benevolence, generosity and kindness.

Here, there are several issues I want to discuss. Firstly, it is concerned with the avoidance of fighting among the traders. Conflicts occur among traders and non-traders from time to time, but the former usually try to keep themselves away from disputes or fighting. As mentioned earlier, for instance, Niran was suspicious that the driver, whom he hired to drive his utility truck that was turned into a *sau-ngthae-w*, took his money. Instead of dismissing the driver, however, he decided to sell his utility truck. Although Niran himself is a local, he prefers to avoid any trouble with another local. Maana quarrelled with Thak about the wrong-sized spare parts and stopped buying any goods from his hardware shop. But, as far as I know, there has not been any fighting between the two men. Despite the conflicts between some shop owners and itinerant traders, they have never used violence against each other.

This is because any conflict between traders and local people will definitely affect the former's occupation. If a dispute takes place, a trader will lose not just a customer but, perhaps, several of them. He/she will probably be boycotted by other members of the family of that local. He/she will face a lot of trouble trying to maintain his/her trading activities. Or worse, the trader will even be hurt. He/she may not receive any co-operation, either in economic or non-economic activities, from these locals. There will be more trouble if the local is a policeman or a

government servant.⁶⁵ Most traders, local and itinerant, are afraid of the officials. The former believe that if the latter do not like them, they may use their power to discriminate against them or even frame them for false charges and put them in a very difficult situation. In general, therefore, traders - local or itinerant, part-time or full-time - feel constrained not to get into disputes and physical violence with others, local residents in particular. Like Niran, a trader normally chooses to give up that particular kind of trade (in Niran's case, a *sau-ngthae-w*), which caused the disagreement, rather than quarrelling with the local man whom he hires.

Secondly, like the previous chapter, it is about education. The self-employed men and the full-time teachers who trade part-time are educated. Several of them finished tertiary education. They all believe that education is very important. Those who can afford it have sent their children to private schools in Chiang Mai, wanting the children to have a better education and a better school environment. These are schools where children of well-to-do traders, professionals and high ranking officials from other provinces also study, therefore, one can establish relations with others for the benefit of one's future career.

The importance of education and literacy lead us to the third issue, which is related to the bureaucracy and, more importantly, connections with government servants. The self-employed men who were former *khaaraatchakaan* have some connections with local schoolteachers and/or other government servants. The former, of course, find some benefit from these connections. For example, when a private construction contractor is needed by a government office to build a building or any kind of the construction, several construction contractors may submit their construction proposals to the office. Only the contractor who is known or has established some relations with a senior, high ranking, officer in that office will normally win the

⁶⁵ In spite of their strongly dislike of the policemen, Thak and Thaloeng try by all means not to quarrel or, worse, fight with them. Both men also avoid any association with the policemen.

contract. Other work, such as the sole liquor agency of the district, is monopolistic. Of course, the one who has connections will have the licence or become the liquor agent.

Sakchaj, Thaloe-ng and Sombuun have used such connections with the government servants at the provincial level to establish their businesses. When Sakchaj began his construction business, his friendship with some high ranking teachers at the Mae Hong Son provincial office of primary education was greatly beneficial. He became the construction contractor of that office and has been contracted to build school buildings, homes for the teachers and other facilities, in several schools in Mae Hong Son province. Helped by friends who were former *sau· cau·* and *khaaraatchakaan* in the province, Thaloe-ng turned to the liquor business. He has been the sole agent for the sale of government-controlled rice wine in Amphoe Khun Yuam and his new business is a lot more profitable than the grocery shop. Sombuun used his intimacy with some government officials and politicians to become a teak logging contractor. He was also a friend of Kawii, the *naaj amphoe* of Khun Yuam. Their relations were so close that when Sombuun was killed by the police, Kawii angrily criticised the police's action. It is clear that these three jobs are the kinds of businesses that are extremely profitable, but anyone who has no connections will never get them. So far, Sakchaj and Thaloe-ng have been doing well, making a reasonably large amount of profit.⁶⁶

Such connections not only earn them business benefit but also political advantages. Sakchaj always subcontracts his construction business to the locals. Since he has become involved in local politics, the local men who have been working with him have helped him in election campaigns and voted for him. In his view, this is the greatest advantage he has gained. Sakchaj told me that he has to continue working

⁶⁶ Although Sombuun is now dead, his family, as far as I know, have been living quite comfortably.

in the construction business because the profit from this job enables him to act as patron towards his men. When Sombuun was still alive, he too hired and was patron to a lot of local people, especially the Karen. Needless to say, these men were his votes, which made him win the local election in 1990. Support from local people, to whom Sombuun and Sakchaj acted as patrons, was the decisive factor that helped both men become the *sau· cau·* for Khun Yuam.

In fact, local traders and businessmen who are involved in local politics are very active in developing trading and economic conditions in the region. These local businessmen/politicians have taken part in important affairs, which have had some economic-political impact in local and wider levels. As mentioned earlier, for instance, Sakchaj has made friends with the businessmen who are *sau· cau·* for Mae Hong Son and its neighbouring provinces. These men, along with senior, high ranking, government servants of each province, were the people who negotiated with the Burmese officials about the border trade between the two countries and the opening of new border checkpoints. It was anticipated that such an action would improve the situation of the border trade in the areas of Mae Hong Son, Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai. In addition, these men also have connections at the national level. Sakchaj supported Panjaa Ciinaakham, who won the national election and became the Member of Parliament for Mae Hong Son in 1992. Sombuun had been a supporter of Bunloe-t Sawaangkun for some time and had some close relations with Bunchuu Triithau-ng, the owner of Sirin Technology and a politician and a minister of the Thai governments in 1992-93 and 1995.

The increase of trade has benefited the government servants as well. On the one hand, when the trading goes well, traders may offer some contributions to the government servants in exchange for their favour. In Chapter Five, for example, I mentioned Somphau-n Ekkalakrungryang who ran a petrol station and offered free

petrol to the highway police. As a result, her truck drivers were rarely arrested by the highway police. Although there was no evidence that Sombuun made any offer to Kawii personally, it is known that Sombuun always supported the activities of the district office. For example, he provided blankets and other necessities for the district office to give to upland people in winter.⁶⁷ Despite his dislike of some policemen and government servants, Thaloeng offers free soft drinks and ice to the officials when there is an annual social gathering, such as a New Year party. Sakchaj gives some support to local policemen and district officers from time to time as well. On the other hand, if there is a trading boom, economy of the district will be prosperous. Local businessmen anticipate making money and ordinary people expect to have jobs. The district office will earn more income from the sales tax and rates. It is also likely that there will be promotions for the government servants, the senior ones in particular.

Nevertheless, the government servants are not only one of the major factors in encouraging the trading boom, but they also play an important role in national politics. As shown in the previous chapters, the increase of political awareness ('being Thai') has taken place in Khun Yuam. Such political activity is closely linked with the rapid influence of the Thai language, which is now used in trading and banking, and economic growth. Through the officials, the Thai government fulfils its economic-political tasks.

In addition, the development of administration, district and provincial levels, goes along with the growth of trade. As Suphaap noted that there was not enough rice for consumption in Khun Yuam many years ago. He had to bring rice from Mae La Noi

⁶⁷ When a winter is too cold, the district office has to prepare the necessities, including clothing and blankets, for the poor villagers, especially those who live on the mountains. Often, the office does not have adequate financial support, so it usually ask for donations from the townspeople. Sombuun was always one of the major donors. It should also be noted that such an activity is thought to be a duty of the *naaj amphoe* (to ease the troubles of the people). If he can fulfil such a task, it will be written in his work record and make a promotion possible.

or, sometimes, even from Chiang Mai. The arrival of tourists and outsiders, the government servants in particular, has increased the amount of goods, as well as their varieties, sold in Khun Yuam. Rice, dried and canned food, medicine, consumer products and miscellaneous goods, have been brought to serve the newcomers. More new shops and eating houses have been opened. It is obvious that the growth of trade, which has increased quite rapidly in the last two decades, is partly due to the increasing number of outsiders who moved into the town. The arrival of the government servants, moreover, has affected the lives of the townspeople. They have brought with them Thai food (already mentioned in Chapter One), architecture, entertainment, recreation and, most importantly, the Thai language. Such a new lifestyle has been shared by many locals. For instance, Thai food, movies, modern music and songs, have been widely consumed by the locals (details have already been discussed in Chapter Three).

The booms of trade and tourism, the connections between local traders and national politicians, the influence of the Thai language, the mass media and entertainment, and the roles of monks, schoolteachers and government servants in building the political awareness, facilitate the efforts of the government in integrating a remote community like Khun Yuam into the larger society - the Thai nation. These are considered to be the development, which will lead the country to modernity. Of course, the government servants are a part of the country's economic-political development process.

Appendix 6.1

Cattle breeding programme in Khun Yuam

Cattle trade across the Thailand-Burma border has been carried on for some time. In order to inspect both men and animals that cross the border into Thailand, the administration of Mae Hong Son Province has established several temporary checkpoints along the border. Government veterinary officers are stationed at these checkpoints to examine and vaccinate the animals, all of which are cattle and water buffalos, before they are allowed to be transported to the markets in Mae Sariang town and other provinces.⁶⁸ Any animal found to be sick or too weak owing to the long journey will be nursed until it is recovered or healthy enough to travel again. However, if the animal is suspected of carrying any disease, it will be destroyed. A Burmese Tai man who herds animals into Mae Hong Son informed me that many animals are brought from Bangladesh and some, perhaps, even from India, across the territory of Burma. They are brought to Thailand mainly as a source of food.

Though none of these animals is sold in the market at Khun Yuam, some are brought under a pilot project called 'Fattening Cattle Project' (*khroongkaan khoekhunkhooman*). According to Phathaj Rakwichaa, the deputy district veterinary officer of Khun Yuam, the purposes of the project are threefold. Firstly, it provides animal husbandry training for local farmers who voluntarily participate in this project. Secondly, it introduces these farmers to a possible alternative occupation. Thirdly, it offers them extra income. The project is subsidised by the Mae Hong Son provincial development budget. Under this project, a contract is made between the Khun Yuam veterinary office and a cattle merchant in Mae Sariang agreeing that the latter will provide a number of cattle to the former. Two

⁶⁸ The deputy district veterinary officer of Khun Yuam confirmed that the Thai authorities are very concerned about the spread of some fatal diseases, anthrax in particular, from animals brought into the country to domestic cattle and buffalos. Such a disease is fatal to human beings as well.

heads of cattle and a bag of high-protein, animal food, are then given to each project participant. He or she will also be advised and trained about how to look after the animals. If the animals become sick, free medical treatment will be given. The cattle are normally fed for four months, though some for only three months, until they are fattened and big enough to be sold back to the same merchant who supplied them to the veterinary office.

When the cattle are first bought from the merchant, each of them weighs approximately 280 to 290 kilograms and costs between 6,384 and 6,670 baht. That is about 22.80 to 23.00 baht per kilogram. The district veterinary office will cover this cost, so the farmers do not have to pay anything. When the animals are sold back to the merchant, their price depends on the increase in their body weight. For example, if an ox or cow that originally weighed 280 kilograms gains 20 kilograms, the farmer, theoretically, will earn twenty baht; that is, one baht for each extra kilogram. In practice, however, he/she will receive less since the veterinary office will deduct ten per cent to deposit in the cattle farmer's co-operative. This money is then used for other significant purposes related to the activities of the co-operative.

Phathaj Rakwichaa remarked that most of the cattle that were brought from the market in Mae Sariang are over six or seven years old or have been overworked for a period of time or were castrated and cannot be used for breeding purposes. Therefore, no matter how well the cattle are fed, they will produce less meat and more fat. Nonetheless, Phathaj suggested if the meat (and fat) is sliced and grilled on charcoal fire, it will be delicious.

Appendix 6.2

Logging industry

It is reported that

...[i]n 1988, the Myanmar government granted logging concessions to 33 Thai companies and state enterprises in 48 forest areas. These were areas with 30%-40% of teak wood, 30%-40% of other hardwood, and the rest with soft-core wood for producing plywood, and situated mostly in the eastern part of the country near the Thai border.... Logging and importing wood from Myanmar entails high production costs because concessions are sometimes in conflict-ridden areas under Karen and other minorities. There are no rules and regulations which often lead to uncontrolled logging. The forest areas in the Thai-Myanmar border are being depleted rapidly, so much so that 20 km. from the Thai border into Myanmar, big trees with 150 cm. perimeter are now no longer found.[M]ost of this timber/lumber are sent to Bangkok and the Central part of Thailand. The sawmills in the Central part and in Bangkok are the biggest consumers, almost 43% of all sawmills in Thailand (as of 1988) (Project for Ecological Recovery Thailand 1991:B14-B15).

The agreement signed by the Thai and Burmese governments which allowed Thai private companies to log in the forest in the Kayah State near the Burma-Thailand border was a five-year contract. The contract began in 1988 and finished in 1993.

'Mathichon', a Thai daily newspaper, indicates that at least five big Thai companies were granted logging permission to work in the forests of Burma near Khun Yuam. They are Sirin Technology, Paamaj Santi, Unionpar, T.C.K. Saw-mill (which holds a contract together with Paamaj Santi to do logging in one area of the forest) and Phanaachaj Saw-mill (Mathichon, 24 October 1992, p. 22). Unionpar and Paamaj Santi have opened their offices in Khun Yuam town. The former used to employ many locals, but later cut the number of its employees and sublet the logging job to the sub-contractors. Chaan Phoowong, a Tai man who used to work for Unionpar and another sub-contractor, said that the company treated him and other employees well.

In fact, all these companies prefer to let sub-contractors (*luuk chuang*) work in the forest. This is due to several reasons. Many *luuk chuang*, for instance, are locals who speak Karen and/or Burmese and know how to deal with the Karen and/or the Burmese troops in the area. They are also familiar with the local geographical conditions. In addition, local wages are cheaper and the cost of other expenses are lower. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, the logging areas are dangerous and kidnapping for ransom is common. The big companies, therefore, take less risks and have fewer responsibilities if they let the sub-contractors do the job. Some *luuk chuang* are groups of Kon Müang who came from Mae Sariang and other provinces. Others, such as Siam Sakthong, are small companies that are based in Bangkok.

A *luuk chuang* group is normally composed of two or three partners who pool their money together as an investment. Each group of *luuk chuang* will make a contract with a big logging company. The agreement between the parties covers such details as the size, number and price of the logs. Any charges or taxes related to the logging are the responsibility of the sub-contractor. The *luuk chuang* at times come to Khun Yuam to find locals to work with them. For example, they may hire some townspeople who own a utility truck to deliver food and other provisions, as well as to transport the workers between their camps and the logging sites. Or they may employ one or two locals who possess a logging truck to carry the logs from the forest to the logging stations.⁶⁹ Many Karen who have elephants are hired as well. Almost all of the labourers are local. The wages of these hired men vary, depending on a verbal agreement between themselves and the *luuk chuang*.⁷⁰ In contrast, a

⁶⁹ After the trees are cut, they are transported to the logging stations where all of logs are assembled. These stations are usually located on the periphery of the forest where they can be reached by heavy logging trucks. There are several logging stations in the Khun Yuam area - one or two of them are located on the outskirts of the town. From the stations, the logs are transported to the saw-mills in Chiang Mai or the central provinces. The logs are mainly carried through three temporary checkpoints near the Karen villages of Pratumüangnau-k, Huaj Ton Nun and Mae Sapee, west of Khun Yuam town (Mae Hong Son Provincial Office of Commerce 1991:45).

⁷⁰ Unfortunately, some *luuk chuang* are dishonest. At least two local Tai workers, to my knowledge, claim that they were cheated by sub-contractors. The latter offered them a high wage,

local *luuk chuang* like Sombuun Khiirikaset acts as patron to his own men, who not only earn a wage but also sometimes receive support and help from him.

Some locals who work, or used to work, with the *luuk chuang* estimated that in the first and second years of logging, the amount of timber that was transported from the forests in Burma through the border checkpoints of Amphoe Müang and Amphoe Khun Yuam exceeded over one hundred thousand logs per annum, but the number of logs was reduced in the following years. At first, most of the trees that were felled were teak (*Tectona grandis*), but after the teak became scarce other hardwoods, such as *Pterocarpus*, were cut as well. The size of the logs is now also smaller. Hardwood trees with 120 centimetre circumference (in contrast with the 150 centimetres above) were felled. Each log is approximately twenty-five metres in length. The trees are cut all year round, but the number of trees that are felled are reduced in the rainy season. In fact, all work often has to be stopped because of heavy rain. The logs are then collected at the logging stations and later transported to the saw-mills in the dry season, which runs approximately from December to May.

Nevertheless, logging is extremely dangerous. Accidents and injuries are not uncommon.⁷¹ A lot of workers caught malaria. Some became seriously ill and died. In addition, because the logging is done in areas that are occupied by Karen and Kayah troops, the investors are frequently threatened and told to pay protection money. There are, as far as I know, several armed forces with whom both the logging investors and workers have to deal. These are the Burmese, Karen, Kayah and the so-called 'Daw Dae-ng' (Red Star) troops. According to Sombuun

but after the job was finished, their payments were much less than they expected. The big companies, on the other hand, are not deceitful and often take good care of their employees.

⁷¹ I once saw a young man who worked in the logging industry who was severely injured. His hand was crushed by a falling tree and he was taken to the hospital in Khun Yuam town. The trip took several hours and he lost a lot of blood. His hand was so badly damaged that the doctor could do nothing but amputate it. He recovered slowly, but lost his job.

Khiirikaset, the latter is an independent group that recently separated from the Kayah. The Karen, Kayah and 'Daw Dae-ng' have been fighting with the Burmese for independence. Some said that they needed the money to buy weapons.

As mentioned earlier, the investors may have already given money to the Karen and Kayah troops, and then be threatened by another group. If a demand is made to pay for protection money, an investor will be given three chances to pay it. If he fails to do so, his logging properties will be damaged, or he or his partners or workers may be kidnapped or even killed. A Thai Border Policeman who was in charge of intelligence, for instance, reported that at the beginning of 1992 several vehicles and logging equipment in one logging area were burnt, but none of the Thai workers was injured or killed. It is not clear who was responsible for the attack, but some investors believe that it was the 'Daw Dae-ng'.

None of my informants, however, complained that he had been threatened by the Burmese military troops to extort money or anything else. Chaan Phoowong recalled that when he worked in the forest, the Burmese soldiers were neither hostile nor threatened him or any worker, but they would accept food and whatever was offered to them. Owing to their fear of being shot by the enemy, however, they sometimes asked him to drive them down to the stream to get water.⁷² The Burmese soldiers thought that they would be easily attacked if they were on foot and it was safer to move around in a vehicle.

Finally, the locals in Khun Yuam prefer teak to other hardwood. Therefore, any kind of woodwork, as well as houses, are most likely to be built from teak. It is not difficult to buy teak timber and the price is not too expensive, although, due to the

⁷² Chaan owned a utility truck and was hired by a group of *luuk chuang* to travel between Khun Yuam town and the logging camps in the forest, delivering food, petrol, medicine and other necessities to the workers. He worked with them for eight months.

1988 nationwide logging ban, selling teak timber is often illegal. In 1992, for example, teak timber, 2.5 cm. thick and 15 cm. wide, cost approximately 24 baht per metre and 50 baht a metre for 2.5 cm. thick and 30 cm. wide. A 20 cm. thick and 20 cm. wide teak post was about 200 to 240 baht a metre. A teak door of 3.5 cm. thick, 80 to 90 cm. wide and 200 cm. long cost 1,300 to 1,400 baht, and a window of 3.5 cm. thick, 45 to 50 cm. wide and 110 cm. long cost between 200 and 250 baht. Teak furniture is made to order by local carpenters as well. The price of the furniture varies, depending on size and style. Normally, a piece of furniture that is made from thicker and wider pieces of teak is more expensive than one made from thinner and smaller pieces.

Appendix 6.3

Cash payment and hire purchase

This section is to provide some examples of two different methods of payment offered to customers in Khun Yuam town: cash payment and hire purchase. The price of goods and the amount of profit earned in these two payment methods will also be shown. The first two tables (6.1-6.2) compare the prices of garments sold in a shop (Khwanryan Sapjajut's shop) and those sold by one of the itinerant traders who come from their home towns in the central region to trade in Khun Yuam periodically. The third table (6.3) shows the prices of some products sold on hire purchase by a shop owner, Sakchaj Suphaasaa.

The figures below prove that the traders, local and non-local, earn reasonable amounts of profit from their goods, those sold on hire purchase in particular. Since hire purchase has been introduced to the town, many households now possess more electrical appliances or even a motorcycle. They are satisfied because many products have become available to them, although they have to pay a higher price for the goods. Even those who earn a little cash, for instance laundresses and food hawkers, are now able to own a television set or a motorcycle; the latter has become almost a must for many locals. In addition, since a lot of villagers, Tai and Kon Müang, have begun to make more cash by selling their crops, especially garlic and soy bean, they are also inclined to buy and utilise more consumer goods than previously. Some of these products are bought on hire purchase. Often, on the other hand, a special discount price is offered to customers who pay cash for their goods. I am told that the Hmong, unlike the townspeople and those who have a salary, prefer to pay cash in order to get a discount.

Table 6.1 Cash payment - shopkeeper's (Khwanryan) case

Type of goods	Price bought (baht)	Price sold (baht)	Profit (baht)	Profit (percentage)
A pair of jeans	120	160	40	33.33
A pair of sports trousers	60	80	20	33.33
A skirt	120	160-170	40-50	33.33-41.67
A good-quality winter jacket	750	860	110	14.67

Table 6.2 Cash payment - itinerant trader's case

Type of goods	Price bought (baht)	Price sold (baht)	Profit (baht)	Profit (percentage)
A pair of jeans	150	210 minimum 250 maximum	60-100	40-66.67
A man's shirt	75	120-140	45-65	60-86.67
A man's shirt	90	130-150	40-60	44.44-66.67
A good-quality winter jacket	450	650-700	200-250	44.44-55.56
A good-quality winter jacket	650	850-900	200-250	30.77-38.46

Although an itinerant trader may make more profit than a shopkeeper. The former has some extra expenses, such as petrol, truck maintenance expenses, vehicle registration fee, camping cost and so on. The only expenditure that seems to be unusually high for a shopkeeper is rent. This is the main reason why many

shopkeepers in Khun Yuam try hard to own a shop. In general, despite the differences in price, both local shopkeepers and itinerant traders often sell the same quality of goods or similar products.

Several itinerant traders remarked that they are doing somewhat well and that their present occupation is more profitable and more desirable than their former one - rice farming. As mentioned in Chapter Five, most itinerant traders are former farmers or people who used to work in rice fields who decided to become traders because of financial problem, illness caused by agricultural chemicals or other reasons. Many of them still own some land in their home towns, but they do not consider it likely that they will take up farming again. In fact, those who have become quite successful have encouraged their siblings or close relatives to join them in trading.

I have mentioned in Chapter Five that some shopkeepers complained to the district office and demanded that all itinerant traders be forbidden to camp and sell their goods in the town area. The district office replied that it had no authority to impose such a trading prohibition. Moreover, as the itinerant traders had not done anything illegal, any prohibition against them would be considered discrimination. I presume that the shopkeepers' actions were caused by worry related to pressure of competition from the itinerant traders, and fear that they might lose their customers to these outside traders. Though tensions between the shopkeepers and itinerant traders have not yet eased, not all the former are unhappy. Many goods, especially food, drinks and cigarettes, are purchased and consumed by these outside traders. Locals who sell food and groceries or run small eating houses are delighted.

HIRE PURCHASE

Table 6.3 compares the price of certain goods sold for cash or on hire purchase at Sakchaj Suphaasaa's shop. The period of payment for goods bought on hire purchase varies from three months to thirty-six months depending on the price of the item. Expensive goods, such as motorcycles, have the longest period for payment.⁷³ A down payment, of course, has to be paid before the goods are taken. Each customer is asked to sign a contract with the shop, agreeing to make regular payments and so forth. If he or she stops paying, the goods will be confiscated by the shop and no refunds will be given. Another one or two shops in the town offer hire purchase to their customers and their prices are no higher than those offered by Sakchaj.

As mentioned previously, locals who have limited cash prefer buying goods on hire purchase. So far, it has been a successful business. However, those who have a reasonable amount of money like to pay cash because a discount is given to them. Furthermore, some residents, whenever they have occasion to travel to Mae Sariang or Chiang Mai will take the opportunity to shop and purchase goods there, especially electrical appliances, because of the cheaper prices and greater variety of goods sold in these two markets.

⁷³ Around the beginning of 1993, a sister of Sakchaj Suphaasaa started to run an agency of Nijompaanit, selling utility trucks, large vehicles and spare parts. The customers could buy any vehicle on hire purchase, but unfortunately, I have no information regarding her business.

Table 6.3 Hire purchase

Type of goods	Cash price (baht)	Down payment (baht)	Number of monthly instalments	Amount of each instalment (baht)	Total price paid on hire purchase (baht)
Rice cooker	750	150	3	215	795
		150	6	115	840
Electric fan	990	200	3	291	1,073
		200	6	159	1,154
Gas stove	3,668	773	6	555	4,103
		773	12	314	4,541
Washing machine	5,140*	690	12	515	6,870
		690	24	317	8,298
Refrigerator	6,240*	990	12	601	8,202
		990	24	370	9,870
Television set	6,380*	790	12	649	8,578
		790	24	399	10,366
Stereo	10,090*	1,600	6	1,744	12,064
		1,600	12	986	13,432
		1,600	18	733	14,794
'Yamaha' motorcycle	33,000	5,900	12	2,868	40,316
		5,900	24	1,739	47,636
		5,900	36	1,363	54,968
'Honda' motorcycle	36,500	6,900	12	3,133	44,496
		6,900	24	1,899	52,476
		6,900	36	1,488	60,468

Notes: * = These are discount prices especially offered to customers who pay cash.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This thesis is concerned with the market town of Khun Yuam and trading practice. The discussion has been on a number of topics which elucidate the relationship of the town and its life to the culture and the state of the nation as a whole. In the first two chapters I gave some details about the location of Khun Yuam and its residents. I also provided some historical background of Khun Yuam and the region. It shows that Khun Yuam has long been a trading town, where most of its residents are (and were) traders. The town and the region have also been important for strategic purposes and national security. After the second world war, successive Thai governments have paid more attention to this region. Infrastructure, such as airfields and highways, have been built. Since the 1980s Khun Yuam (in fact, the whole region) has boomed with tourism and new cross-regional trade. In addition, new technology of communication, for instance, television, telephone and fax, have been introduced.

As I showed in Chapter Three, the townspeople consist of several speech groups, with three main languages, that is, Tai, Kam Müang and Thai, being spoken in the town area. Almost everyone speaks two languages or more. I noted that Tai and Kam Müang are common languages spoken by most locals, but Thai is usually used by schoolteachers and government servants. However, with the support of formal education and the popularity of the mass media and tourism, the influence of Thai is increasing. Thai, both spoken and written, is also now one of the major languages used in trade and business. I pointed out that formal education and literacy have helped more people to engage in trade and other occupations that offer more income than agricultural jobs.

In Chapter Four I noted that merit-making and wealth are correlated, and that monks are active in both educational and political movements. I stated that the beliefs of ordinary Buddhists confirm that people who have accumulated adequate merit will be re-born healthy and wealthy, or will have a good opportunity to become rich. On the other hand, people are poor because they lack merit. Such beliefs encourage people to engage in trade so that they will have enough money to make merit. In the view of ordinary people, wealth enables people to make merit, and accumulating merit helps them to become richer. I also said that monks are involved in converting non-Buddhist children to Buddhism, as well as in educating them. Monks believe that good persons should be Buddhists who are loyal to their families and their country. Good persons must also be self-disciplined, self-reliant, diligent and literate. Monks, therefore, have been trying to train upland children to be good Buddhists. Education is also provided for these children. The efforts of the monks have been so far successful. It is said that the number of Buddhists is increasing among the uplanders.

In Chapter Five I gave several examples of individuals who are shop owners and itinerant traders. I pointed out that many of both groups do not have a trading background and have done all kinds of jobs. However, because they are literate, they found no difficulties in taking up a trading career. As a matter of fact, some shop owners and itinerant traders are doing well. Both groups give donations and other support to local monasteries and schools, and have excellent relations with the monks and schoolteachers. I also remarked that children are encouraged to become involved in trade and to be successful. I provided the story of an itinerant trader who became successful and was invited by local schoolteachers to talk to the pupils. The teachers believed that the trader was an excellent example of a person who worked hard to make his life meaningful and successful, and that the pupils should follow in his footsteps.

Some examples of individuals who are self-employed or part-time traders are given in Chapter Six. Both groups are, or used to be, government servants and engage in trade, part-time or full-time, because it offers high income. They have high education and know a great deal about government regulations and the bureaucratic system. In addition, those who are self-employed have connections with senior government servants and local politicians. They use their knowledge and connections to engage in some highly profitable businesses, such as liquor agencies and construction contracts for government buildings. Some of those who are self-employed even use their connections (and support from their kinsmen and trading friends) to become involved in local politics. They have been very successful and have become rich.

In this thesis, I focused on several topics. The most important topic has been the relationship of Buddhist doctrine and practice to traders and trade. This subject has an important place in the development of sociological theory, largely because of the writings of Max Weber. The relevant theory involved the view that Western capitalism and economic development were the consequences of the growth of Protestantism (Weber 1968). In a number of subsequent studies, Weber examined the economic history of other civilisations to demonstrate that there had been no indigenous development of capitalism. With regard to Buddhism he defined it as an 'other-worldly' religion of world-renouncing monks (Weber 1958). This view has been criticised by a number of more recent writers, such as Ling (1973, 1980) as well as the essays in Leach (1968), specifically Obeyesekere's article. Numerous other writers, such as Kirsch, seem to have been influenced by the Weberian view. It seems to me, however, that the Weberian hypothesis of Buddhism is insufficient and can no longer provide satisfactory explanations, especially about Buddhism in a

country that has changed - and is still changing - rapidly like Thailand. I think that we need much more careful analysis.

My research looked at the beliefs and behaviour of traders and monks in Khun Yuam. It showed how these phenomena are conducive to the accumulation of wealth and the development of trade. In my view, ordinary Buddhists want to attain well-being, happiness and security in this life. Since the beliefs in the Law of Karma and in merit-making are shared among men and women, they believe that if they accumulate adequate merit, they will be re-born healthy and wealthy. Those who are already rich must have past merit. So the rich try to make merit regularly to ensure that their wealth will increase in this life and will continue to the next. I disagreed with some previous studies since my research shows that ordinary people are more concerned about 'this existence', not with the 'other world'. I argued that wealth and merit-making are closely connected with Buddhism. Being rich is not wrong. I think that merit-making is a social investment and that wealth brings more than just economic security. People who make merit regularly are praised for their kindness and generosity. They gain social prestige and honour. To make merit, people need money, and to earn money, they should be traders.

I argued that previous studies, especially those of Kirsch (1975, 1982), misinterpret the populace's view of Buddhism. Such studies pay too much attention to the ideology of Buddhism and do not understand what ordinary people think about the religion. I think that the Buddhists in Thailand find that their belief in merit-making suits their socio-economic needs. It explains why some people are wealthy, but many are not. It also offers hope to those who are poor that they will probably be rich in the future if they make merit. So merit-making encourages people to make money and to be wealthy. I want to emphasise the point that Buddhism plays a significant role in persuading the Buddhists to engage in trade and business. In fact,

Buddhism is one of the major factors that has supported the economic boom in Thailand.

Another issue taken up is the ethnic and linguistic diversity in the population and how the action of monks, schoolteachers and other government servants as well as the spread of a national culture is integrating the population of Khun Yuam into the Thai-speaking, national society and polity. Again, an examination of the religious sphere is a vital part of this discussion. As shown in Chapters Three and Four, the Thai language and monks play important roles in politics and nationalism. Thai is an official language and has political implications. Using Thai indicates one's national identity and is considered to be prestigious. Therefore, all Thai citizens should be able to speak, read and write Thai. It must also be noted that the increasing use of the Thai language in banking and trading activities has accelerated the awareness of 'being Thai', particularly among those who engage in trade, either small- or large-scale, part-time or full-time.

There is no doubt that Thai functions to integrate people of different speech groups into one nation, that is, Thailand, and that Thai citizens are encouraged to be proud of using the language and of being Thai. The increasing awareness of 'being Thai' is supported not only by government servants and schoolteachers but also by traders and monks. Local and non-local monks are active in converting the non-Buddhist population to Buddhism and in educating them to be good citizens who are loyal to the religion and their country. In the monks' view, being a Buddhist and being a Thai are the same thing - both indicate national identity. It is clear that Buddhism, education and the Thai language all have important roles in supporting and spreading nationalism in Thailand.

This change may be seen by some as a loss - a loss in local variety and identity. As I showed in Chapter Three, many local Tai are rather concerned about their children being influenced by the Thai culture and the mass media, and not able to speak Tai. Local monks and laypeople thus decided to establish a class to teach the children the Tai language. Yet, such a phenomenon takes place in the wider community. For example, Thanet Charoenmuang (1993), a Kon Müang academic, criticises Kon Müang parents in urban areas who speak Thai to their children. This is because Thai is thought to be a language of educated people, as well as symbolising modernisation.¹ As a result, many Kon Müang children cannot speak Kam Müang. Thanet sees this as the loss of local identity and the destruction of local culture. He believes that languages are a means of transferring the knowledge, custom and tradition from one generation to another, and that children who speak several languages develop learning skills faster than those who are monolingual. In my view, however, with the increasing influence of the Thai language and the popularity of the mass media, the use of Thai between parents and children have become an undeniable phenomenon which cannot be halted. In fact, such a phenomenon is now very common in many northern provinces.

As already mentioned, however, formal education provides an opportunity for ordinary people to become involved in non-agricultural work, which generally offers a better income. Being literate, many people find no difficulties engaging in trade, some even become successful and rich. My study suggests that there are neither direct connections between being a trader and being a particular ethnicity nor special trading skills are dominated by some particular groups. With some financial support, anyone who is literate can develop trading skills.

¹ As noted in Chapter Three, many government servants in Khun Yuam also use Thai with their children because Thai is considered to be more prestigious than local languages. Needless to say, it is used among local educated people, such as schoolteachers and nurses.

Schoolteachers also stimulate their pupils to be diligent and to strive to be successful. To achieve this, the pupils should take up trading as a future career. The teachers believe that trade is a very promising occupation for their pupils. There is, moreover, another support for the children to engage in trade. The Thai language is now used in large-scale, modern trade and commerce. Since Thai is taught in schools, all children are now able to read, write and speak Thai fluently. It is clear that education and the Thai language have prepared children of both sexes to take part in the new economic system.

Another theme to which much attention was paid was through the personal histories of traders, their families, schoolteachers and government servants. A number of issues arise here, but generally we may identify common aspects in these stories which illustrate religious motivation, the pursuit of wealth and status and the attraction of the national Thai culture and way of life. I noted that educated people, in particular, have done well in trade. As discussed in Chapter Six, several former government servants who are now self-employed have used their knowledge of the bureaucratic system and their connections with senior government servants and local politicians to benefit their careers. They are the most successful entrepreneurs. This group is also involved in politics at both the district and provincial level. Using their political status, they have influenced the provincial administration to extend the scale of trade and to establish new cross-border trade between Thailand and Burma. As a result, new border checkpoints have been established and people from both sides of the border have been allowed to trade with each other. In fact, the border trade is not merely active in Mae Hong Son, but also in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and other frontier provinces.

To sum up, I have shown that economy (trade) is closely related to Buddhism and formal education. In my view, Khun Yuam, a small trading town, is an excellent

example to illustrate the way religion and education actively support trading activities at the local level. Therefore, the rapid growth of the economy and the business boom in Thailand is no surprise. The importance of this thesis is in showing how, even in such a remote part of modern Thailand, the working out of national and local themes leads towards the development of a modern society which is becoming an example to the developing world. At the present time, economic boom, literacy and the increasing uses of the Thai language in trade, mass media and entertainment, are supporting each other in spreading awareness of national identity among the Thai citizens.

I am certain that Thai people are inclined to be successful and rich because their religious beliefs confirm that there is nothing wrong in accumulating wealth if they spend some of their wealth to make merit. In addition, formal education provides a means for ordinary people to engage in trade, and encourages them to be successful. This has been, however, happening not only in Khun Yuam, but in the wider community. Elsewhere in Thailand, with the support of religion and education, more ordinary people intend to become involved in trade and business, and want to be successful and rich. I think that scholars who are interested only in the ideology of Buddhism will not understand why ordinary people, men and women, take up trading occupations and accumulate wealth. In everyday life, ordinary Buddhists do not seek their own spiritual salvation nor the 'other world'.

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¹ Names of Thai authors are written in Thai fashion, that is, the author's given names first (without a comma at the end), followed by the surnames.

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