SUPPORT SYSTEMS OF THE OLD IN A RURAL COMMUNITY IN THAILAND

by

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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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The Australian National University,
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Most of the data used in this study were collected during a field study organized and executed by myself. Except where otherwise acknowledged in the text the analysis in this thesis represents my original research.

Anthony Pramualratana
March 1990
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Obviously thanks go to my wife Supaporn who assisted me in every single research procedure I undertook during the fieldwork. To her I give my continued love.
ABSTRACT

The ageing of populations is an emerging demographic phenomenon for many Third World countries. This exploratory study of support systems of the old in Thailand applies integrative methods for conducting social research. Information collected included quantitative data such as field censuses and surveys and unpublished public health statistics. Qualitative information included participant observation, case studies, oral histories and in-depth and focus group discussions. These various research techniques were blended together into a field study design.

The study finds that societal change has dramatically affected the village domestic farming cycle and communal interdependencies which had existed in the recent past. Old people now receive less active and social support, and, with monetization of the countryside are very dependent on their children’s remittances. The study places emphasis on the relationship between adult children, as the main supporters, and the old as the key issue in analysing support, rather than on purely statistical proportions of the ageing of the population.
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GLOSSARY OF THAI TERMS USED

bun  merit, good deed, virtue. The act of making merit is described as tambun. Villagers may also described an act of making religious merit and charity as tambun tamtarn.
bunkhun  a mutual but unequal moral obligation.
chiworn  outer robe of a Buddhist monk.
chuenjai  refreshed mind.
decha  an interaction characteristic of the 'outside', impersonal, dealing with power and hierarchy.
dharma  teachings of the Lord Buddha.
gaa ngan  to be physically aged from work.
karma  fate, destiny. As determined by one's past deeds.
katanyu  emotional gratitude.
khaonamuang  a single crop rice variety.
khaonasuan  a single crop rice variety.
khru  religious teacher or schoolteacher.
khuna  an interaction characteristic of the 'inside', personal, one embodied with trust.
klong  a man-made waterway; canal.
konrubjarng  wage labourer.
kraengjai  afraid of offending or imposing.
kraitumkraidye  the concept of making individual merit.
kruangtunrang  a labour saving device.
kuti  monks' quarters.
kwamjaroen  urban type progress and development.
kwian  1000 kilograms
luang, a royal official.
maidye rup garndoorae, not being looked after.
moh, medical doctor.
mubaan, a village or collection of villages known under one name. Thus mubaan Paidum is a collection of seven official villages with this name, each having a number attached to it.
muu, an alternative term for mubaan.
naina, a middleman, broker or agent. Used in this thesis as a property of land agent.
numjai, gratefulness.
paiteaw, to roam.
pliykrachoke, brown leaf hopper, a rice pest.
plong, to be resigned to one's fate and condition. Also related to the resignation in one physical deterioration, in this case known as plongsungkarn. Some villages also use the term plongtok to mean that they have successfully plong.
plongjitjai, see plong.
rai, a unit of area equivalent to 1,600 square metres or 0.4 acres.
rua duan, an express boat.
sala, meeting hall.
samlor, a three-wheeled vehicle.
sapport, being overwhelmingly generous.
somparn, abbot.
takbaht, offering food to monks.
tambol, An administrative sub-district of approximately 10 villages.
tambun, making merit.
tambuntamtarn, providing sympathy and pity.
tamtarn, charity.
tang, a measure of 10 kilograms.
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<td>public, state land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>todpapa</td>
<td>see todkratin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toooktodting</td>
<td>being neglected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>todkratin</td>
<td>a religious pilgrimage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trai</td>
<td>a monk's yellow sash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tungtung</td>
<td>a steam-powered boat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tyedah</td>
<td>harrowing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tyeklaad</td>
<td>a stage of ploughing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tyepaa</td>
<td>a stage of ploughing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wat</td>
<td>a Buddhist temple.</td>
</tr>
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<td>yathakarm</td>
<td>a live within one's means.</td>
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1.1 Introduction

In the last two decades less developed countries have begun to experience a reduction in their population growth accounted for mainly by declining fertility (Knodel et al., 1987:4). Birth rates of these nations have begun to fall following the reduction in death rates. In the case of Thailand its fertility decline was the third largest in percentage terms, behind South Korea and China.\(^1\) The fall in fertility rates is the main determinant of an ageing population because of the reduction in the proportionate size of the base of the population pyramid. These basic demographic processes of ageing are not likely to alter. Arising from these processes are potentially problematic issues of an ageing of populations; one of these major issues is the changing type of support provided to older persons (Binstock, et al., 1982). In many parts of South-East Asia it is assumed that the role of the family in caring for its old will avoid many of the problems faced by western countries. Chen and Jones (1989:5) state that this is by no means a certainty. They posit the question whether 'Westernization' leads to increasing unwillingness of families to reside with and otherwise care for their old, or whether this phenomenon in the West is a natural outcome of demographic and economic trends there. Societal changes may affect the relative position and conditions of the old within the family and the community and may give rise to new problems or exacerbate old ones. Modernization of agricultural techniques, together with decreasing land availability, changes in family size and living arrangements, and changing patterns of consumption are general features of societal changes that may have a major

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\(^1\) This figure was acquired from the United Nations (1984, 1985) ranking of contraceptive prevalence rates for the fifteen largest less-developed countries. The countries include: China, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Mexico, Vietnam, Philippines, Thailand, Turkey, Egypt, Iran and South Korea.
impact on the old (Myers, 1982).

Thailand has moved in recent years from an early stage of demographic transition characterized by falling mortality in the presence of high, relatively stable fertility to a later stage in which fertility has also declined substantially. Between the late 1960s and early 1980s survey evidence indicates that marital fertility fell by almost 40 percent. One of the most striking features of the decline in fertility noted by Knodel et al. (1984) has been its pervasiveness; almost all major sections of Thai society have participated. During the last decade and a half fertility decline was seen to be even more pronounced in rural than in urban areas, thus narrowing the previously substantial rural-urban differential in fertility levels. One of the reasons why Thailand’s ‘reproductive revolution’ encompasses such a broad social and economic spectrum, may be related to the relative cultural homogeneity of Thai society. Declining family size preferences and expectations reinforce the impression that Thailand’s fertility transition will continue for at least some time to come (Knodel et al., 1984). With continually decreasing mortality rates the population would also contain an increasingly higher proportion of older people. This situation occurs because the large birth cohorts of the 1950s and 1960s, who themselves bore fewer children, will reach old age.

Various issues emerge as a consequence of population ageing. Population aging requires not only the provision of economic and social support for the older population but also a re-examination of various aspects of family structure, employment and income (Salas, 1982). In addition social and economic implications of aging populations in developing countries will very likely differ from those experienced by developed countries (Knodel et al., 1978, 1980; Nibhon 1982, 1987; National Research Council, 1980; Peerasit, 1977). In respect of the old in Thailand there has been concern that traditional support systems may not be able to maintain their existing role as they are affected by vast societal changes. Such changes include migration as a result of limited land availability;
villagers find wage work on farms or plantations within or outside their province, in provincial cities as well as Bangkok, either on a temporary or semi-permanent basis. As a response to socio-economic changes there has been an intentional limitation in the family size by child-bearing couples, unlike their parent’s generation. Such societal changes include the increasing degree of monetisation of the local economy, market penetration and the development of a cash economy affecting even the most geographically remote households. A goal of this thesis is to acquire an understanding of the social patterning of support systems in providing assistance to the old and to identify the processes of changes that are occurring and their resultant effect on the old.

Some initial research has already been undertaken to ascertain the demographic parameters of change in the population age composition in Southeast Asia and Thailand in particular. The Institute of Population Studies at Chulalongkorn University conducted a review of existing data on the Thai elderly population in 1985 (Institute of Population Studies, 1985). The initial report showed that the increase in the median age (as a standard measure for population ageing) was largely attributable to rapid fertility reduction since the late 1960s, in spite of declining mortality, which often results in greater reduction in death rates at younger ages, thus lowering the median age. Other measures of ageing such as the Aged Dependency Ratio (the ratio of the population aged 60 years and over to population aged 15-59 years) and the index of ageing (the ratio of population aged 60 years and over to population under 15 years of age) also indicate a proportional increase in the aged population in Thailand. In 1960, there were approximately 9 aged persons for every 100 working age persons (aged 15-59); this ratio increased to 10 in 1980. The index of ageing rose from 10.7 in 1960 to 14.2 in 1980. The support ratio and index of ageing were both shown to be rising; the speed of increase, however, is greater for the index of ageing which, according to the report, revealed the ageing trend of the population. In addition, patterns of marital status were
found to differ sharply between older men and older women. Aged women are more likely to be widowed than married. In 1980 more than half of the aged women, compared with less than one-fifth of the aged men, were widowed. These differences in marital composition were found to be a result of higher age-specific death rates among the men, coupled with the tendency for men to marry women younger than themselves.

The rate of increase of the old population rose from 3.3 percent per year between 1960 and 1970 to 3.7 percent per year between 1970 and 1980. With this rate of growth it took approximately 20 years for this population segment to double in size from 1.2 million in 1960 to 2.4 million in 1980. In 1970 44.9, 50.4 and 4.7 percent of the Thai population were aged under 15, 15-59 and 60 years and over respectively. By the year 2000, both total numbers and the percent distribution of the population are expected to change markedly (Binstock et al., 1982; Myers, 1982; Chayowan, 1985). Both high and low fertility assumption projections indicate that the age-distribution of the population will change from that of a younger to that of a more mature population (Sub-Committee on Population Policy and Planning, 1981). The Institute of Population Studies report concluded that the increase of the ageing population both in terms of relative and absolute size will accelerate in the future as the large birth cohorts of the 1950s and 60s mature, coupled with the rapid fertility reduction occurring within the last 15 years. More old women than men have been projected for every age group and this pattern of sex composition of the older population is expected to remain relatively unchanged in the years to come. A national survey by the Institute conducted in 1988 found that income declined with old age, with increasing dependence on children and other family members for support. A higher proportion of the old who were living alone were also found in rural areas. On a more positive note the report stated that the old often play ceremonial roles and are consulted on traditional issues and prominent ceremonies, indicating a positive role within the community.
1.2 Organisation of this Thesis

In an exploratory field such as research on the old care should be taken in the initial steps of acquiring comprehension. Exploratory studies such as the present one should attempt to provide an actor's point of view of what it means to be old and what perceptions the old have of the effect which societal change has on their situation. This thesis takes an integrative approach in studying support systems available to the old in a rural community. 'Integrative' means the blending of quantitative and participant observation methods of information gathering. 'Participant observation' refers to the method by which the observer participates in the daily life of the people under study, observing things that happen, listening to what is said, and questioning people, over some length of time (Kluckholm, 1940:331-343). Quantitative information gathering includes the construction and ordering of relevant questions into a schedule and the pre-test and implementation of the schedule to a certain number of respondents within the community. It also includes the collection of primary and secondary data where they are available, either from the field site, any other sources of origin or from library research.

The organization of this thesis is as follows: In the remaining part of this chapter (Chapter 1) introductory groundwork is established by providing an interpretation of Thai social structure and discussion on previous research so that it can be placed within a wider context of social systems. Support systems are defined to serve as the structural basis of analyses in the subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 presents the specific research method used in this thesis involving quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. Chapter 3 contains a social and historical description of the study community as well as presenting village primary based data showing various basic infrastructure of each village. Chapter 4 provides a grounded analysis of the meaning of old age as it exists within the community. Chapter 5 looks at personal health
and economic status of the old. In this chapter self, community and state support will be looked at in order to consider the adequacy of such support systems in assisting the old. Chapter 6 discusses familial support, and analyses variables such as the over-representation of the poor old in the welfare population, resulting from the limited numbers of adult children residing with the old and the material, social and active support provided by them. Chapter 7 analyses support systems from the adult children's perspective. This chapter interprets the effects of absent children upon support given to the old by the use of qualitative in-depth and focus group discussions. Chapter 8 provides a conclusion on societal change and its effect upon support systems of the old. Societal change has been shown to bring about increasing avenues for personal gain in social and economic status; inherent within this are motivations for some adult children to exploit such opportunities by sending their children for higher education. The effect of this motivation for personal gain for oneself and one's children is mutually agreed upon by both adult children and their old parents and results in a support system of consensual neglect. Concomitant with the motive of personal gain are the increasing dependence of the villager on the wage market and expanding monetisation which has seen the demise of the domestic farming cycle and related support networks of the old.

1.3 Thai Social Structure

Perhaps what can be seen as the most important contribution to academic debate concerning Thai social structure is John F. Embree's (1969) characterization of Thai society as loosely structured. This unleashed a long series of debates continuing up to the present time. The main complication regarding this characterization is the precise meaning of the term 'loosely-structured'. Does this, for example, refer to the psychological traits of individual Thais, to their antipathy to co-operative action
with others, or are these just symptoms of a deeply rooted structural looseness (Bunnag, 1979)? Furthermore, is 'looseness' a characterization at all: is all of Thai society loose, and if so, loose in comparison to what other society?

Embree's application of the notion of a 'loose structure' can be considered as mainly descriptive rather than analytic. His work was based on impressions when he served as a cultural attache in Thailand and Indo-China and in a previous position as Director of Japanese Area Studies. In characterizing Thai social structure Embree stated that

The first characteristic of Thai culture to strike an observer from the West, or from Japan or Vietnam is the individualistic behavior of the people. The longer one resides in Thailand the more one is struck by the almost determined lack of regularity, discipline, and regimentation in Thai life. In contrast to Japan, Thailand lacks neatness and discipline; in contrast to Americans, the Thai lack respect for administrative regularity and have no industrial time sense....The point here once more is that the structure of the family is a loose one, and while obligations are recognized, they are not allowed to burden one unduly. Such as are sanctioned are observed freely by the individual—he acts of his own will, not as a result of social pressure (1969:4-6).

Embree's 'loosely structured' thesis was succinctly developed by Phillips (1965:76-95). Phillips was part of the Cornell Research Team which undertook a multidisciplinary study of a rural Thai community in the early 1950s, headed by Lauriston Sharp. Phillips regards Thai social structure as embodying a lack of enduring ties between individuals. It is considerably easier to point to cases where there are no enduring ties between individuals or where there is hesitation to become closely involved with others than it is to identify what links them together (Phillips, 1965:76). Relationships between individuals are seen as unreliable, and may be broken off over matters that have nothing to do with how well each is fulfilling his
interactive responsibilities. Phillips cites cases where his research assistants left him in the lurch in order to attend a movie in town and where frequency of intrusions detract from responsibilities of an established relationship. He states that 'most villagers feel they can change their plans and intentions with impunity at the slightest provocation' (1965:79). Phillips relates this 'looseness' to the Buddhist belief in karma and further asks

Who knows what accident, change of heart, sudden windfall—particularly one occasioned by something done by one of the parties several lives earlier—might intervene to alter what had originally been planned and agreed upon? (1965:80).

The illustrations and subsequent conclusions which Phillips provides on Thai society represent a psychological universe of uncertainty and unpredictability. He supplements his religious basis of analysis with villagers' tendencies toward 'loose' relationships, with early childhood socialization that the child is just a previous incarnation of another life and the relationship between parent and child should be seen in contractual terms: parents go to the trouble of bringing up their children so that they will have someone to care for them in their old age and make merit for them when they die (Phillips, 1965:85). According to Phillips there is nothing intrinsic in the parent-child relationship that requires the two persons to be linked together. The maintenance of the relationship is always dependent on what the participant can gain from it. He concludes that these illustrations indicate there is nothing sacrosanct about any human tie in Bang Chan, even that which exists between parent and child. Individuals become involved with others and do things for them because they consciously expect others to respond in kind; this applies to the relationships existing between family members who live together because such an arrangement is most advantageous to each. The realities of Bang Chan social behaviour were seen by Phillips as
...so weighted in the direction of atomistic and essentially non-relational consideration that any coherent discussion of them should be organized in approximately equivalent terms (1965:95).

Critics of the Loosely Structured social system have de-limited the applicability of the concept. Punyodhana (1969:77-105) states that any society needs institutional continuity and in Thai society its institutions necessitate predictable and stable behaviour. Next to this predictable institutional behaviour, however, Punyodhana distinguishes an interpersonal level of behaviour where individuals are more free to act according to their own norms and opportunities. This freedom to act is the characteristic of the Loosely Structured aspect of Thai social behaviour. Punyodhana's analysis recognizes a dichotomy in Thai interaction, the understanding of which is crucial for understanding Thai social life. Titaya (1976) takes an opposite stance from that of Punyodhana in that he sees institutional or formal relationships as voluntary or outwardly directed; these relationships are most likely not long-term and not likely to be psychologically important. Conversely, close inter-personal relationships are dependent on bunkhun² which means a practical and moral indebtedness and has a deep sense of obligation; these relationships are to be seen as more stable and reliable. Titaya classifies types of relationships according to the quantity and quality of the bunkhun involved. Thai relationships are seen as person-centred as opposed to

² A bunkhun relationship is one of mutual but unequal moral obligation. Thus one has bunkhun to one's mother for giving birth to one, for rearing and upbringing, this moral obligation is unequal. A person may also have bunkhun to a friend or elder persons, related or unrelated, for acquiring a job or presiding over one's ordination. Mulder (1985) defines bunkhun as gratefulness and describes social relationships as hierarchically ordered and valued in terms of these bunkhun relationships. These perception of bunkhun are said to belong to a national culture and are applicable for all Thai regardless of social status or class position.
institutionally defined, but there is no indication of the individualism often attributed to Thai motivations. Bunkhun-inspired close personal relationships are the key to the stability of Thai social life, whereas formal institutional relationships are inspired by pragmatic motives and not upheld for their own sake. Mulder (1985) attempts to integrate Titaya’s and Punyodhana’s analyses to state that Thai relationships, whether interpersonal or institutional, depend upon bunkhun for their reliability and predictability. Relationships are thus built up on personal motivations based on bunkhun and obligation, need for affiliation and security, and the more intense these motivations, the more stable and predictable the relationship will be. Bunkhun can be seen as a more natural occurrence in interpersonal relationships but cultivation of bunkhun relationships can also be seen to exist in institutional relationships as well.

Other analyses of Thai social structure and behaviour seem to identify the importance of categories of power and the need for social acceptance and recognition by the display of power, wealth, rank and status as objectives to strive for. The attempt to strive for power, rank, recognition and acceptance better explains the dynamics of interpersonal relationship, according to these writers, and should be seen as the principle mode of classification (Khruakaew, 1969; Aphaphirom, 1974; Suphaab, 1975 as cited by Mulder, 1985).

Phillips, as the exponent par excellence of the Loosely Structured perspective seems to have adopted this view for all facets of Thai social structure. His explanation of the unreliability of relationships dealing with employers and employees seems to have overlooked the short-term nature of the relationship of a temporary occupation acquired by the villager. In his example of unreliable research assistants he demonstrates a lack of understanding of the rural way of life in which time is not measured in minutes and hours or even days but in seasons and weather conditions related to agriculture. Reliable relationships and contracts, for example, may be just a matter of differences in maturity between adults and
adolescents. If Americans are more administratively disciplined than Thais it may because they live a more urbanised way of life. These are alternative viewpoints which Phillips did not look into in his effort to make generalizations.

The critics of the Loosely Structured concept pointed out the dichotomy between institutional and inter-personal levels of behaviour. Mulder identifies these distinctions as khuna and decha relationships. Khuna is the characteristic of the inside and is embodied with trust. Khuna, as the inside dimension, is known for its goodness and reliability encountered with persons with close interactions and is to be distinguished from the decha dimension where interaction is with power and hierarchy. Though these two dimensions are not completely separate, as mentioned above, the boss or patron may also try to create bunkhun relationships in the khuna dimension, and a person may try to cultivate these relationships as sources of protection in the decha or outside world dimension.

Phillip’s confusion between inter-personal and institutional relationships came about precisely at the point where he attempted to relate the mother-and-child bond as that of a contractual relationship, because the child is seen as an embodiment from a previous life’s existence. At this point of Phillips’ analysis, inter-personal relationships, which his thesis is less appropriate in explaining, are integrated with institutional relationships which his thesis should have only been attempting to explain. His over-reliance on the Sentence Completion Technique as a psychological basis for analysis led him to conclude that there was a weak filial bond representing contractual relationships between mother and child rather than filial emotional relationships. His conclusions that filial bonds are less binding in Thai society than in the West and that Thai peasants state contractual reasons more than their Western counterparts

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Phillips developed a set of uncompleted sentences and asked his village respondents to complete each sentence. Thus, 'When I realize other people do not like me, I feel ....' or 'When people annoy me, I ....'. From his answers he attempts a psychological interpretation of their conscious and/or subconscious meanings.
could also be reinterpreted that all persons want some return from their investments: parents want the care and support children can give them; adult children want the wealth and inheritance from their parents in return for care in old age. Because Thais state such reasons openly could be reinterpreted to mean that Thais are more realistic and pragmatic than Westerners; or that to discuss familial relationships of any kind to a strange interviewer in the West is seen as a taboo.

Major criticisms of purely psychological approaches— and this also applies to Phillip's research— is that they place less emphasis on the cultural and contextual input which makes various responses meaningful. In Phillip's case he tries too hard to make abstract theory work. It is particularly interesting in this regard that Sharp, studying the same community as Phillips although more empirically as a participant observer collecting social histories of individuals, never once mentioned the name Embree or the concept of Loosely Structured either in the contents of his book or in its index. Mulder (1985), commenting on Phillips, states that there are no good reasons for Philips' conclusion that the experience of indulgent nurture and tolerance leads to individualism and self confidence; indeed, supported by Buddhist teaching, they could as well lead to an opposite direction of high dependence, individual insecurity, shame and vulnerability. In conducting social research Phillips attempted to generalize too quickly from situational circumstances which confronted him in the field. His efforts to link village social behaviour with a pre-conceived theory of loose-structure accounted for his hasty conclusions.

In the area of support systems of the old, social research should proceed along the lines of first providing a detailed analysis of the various support systems available to the old and their transformations as a response to societal change. Following only from this should the types and degrees of change and their socio-cultural reasons be analysed. In Thailand support and assistance to the old by their adult children in the pre-World War Two era was inevitable given the rural conditions
where wage work was non-existent, where unskilled and semi-skilled factory occupations were rare, where distant emigration to other rural frontiers was impossible and where educational opportunities for the young were unheard of. Support during these times was taken for granted, since the physical presence of children during the parents' old age was highly likely. There were no strict procedures for the care which children were to give their parents, apart from the stipulation that adult children should clean up the excrement of their parents when the parents became incontinent. Children were there in times of emergencies, illness and accidents, to do the heavy household work and farming chores and in some cases to cook the evening meal; but beyond this the actual quality of care given is sparsely documented.

With the expansion of various facets of societal change encroaching upon rural villages in the past three decades, a striking transformation can be seen in practically all Thai villages. Such transformations have affected the villagers' total life style: they include higher expenditures on agricultural production, monetisation of the economy, extension of road systems and canals, development of mass media such as radio and television, increases in educational opportunities, development of industries and the attraction which they provide in low but stable wages for the unskilled and semi-skilled villager. These societal changes obviously affect the adult age cohorts who have taken up factory jobs, furthered their education, migrated elsewhere, involved themselves in wage work rather than farming their own land and moved into town to acquire jobs in service or labouring industries. In the past children did not have to be forced to remain at home and care for their old parents and their social practices and teachings gave no preparation for the consequences which societal change brought, among them the absence of adult children from their parental home. It can be seen that uncertainties about the form of support might be expressed by old parents. Support in old age, a non-issue in the past, is clearly an important issue of relevance in the present and an issue of such recent effect
that social structures in rural Thai communities have not yet been able to adequately deal with it. The effect of societal change and its consequences upon the cohort of adult children in their economically active years has a direct effect upon support systems available to the old in rural communities in Thailand.

1.4 Earlier Research on the Old in Thailand

Apart from research on demographic parameters, a very limited number of studies has been undertaken in research on the old. The Cornell University series of studies on village life in Thailand, discussed in the previous section, touched briefly on the position of the old within the community. Sharp et al. (1953) stated that deference to the old is one of the noteworthy features of overt social behaviour among both rural and urban Thai. There are old persons who are accorded general respect, either among their own social group or by a larger public, but their status seems to derive from values other than age alone, such values as wealth, knowledge, sanctity—without which they would not be given the prestige they have. The respect shown to the older person may be less a function of greater age than of his status in a specific relationship such as parent-child, headman-villager, or teacher-pupil, in which one is normally the older. The old who do not have other value-attributes may have little prestige; conversely the young who do have such attributes may occupy positions of obvious superiority.

According to Sharp, age does not automatically give high position, nor is youth a bar to it in spite of the fact that Thais have a system of verbal and other symbols designed to indicate that all elders should be privileged. These forms of behaviour, Sharp mentions, are all expressions of a general idealization of seniority and age to which lip service is constantly given. In the case of older people this attitude is made overt and explicit by reference to the respect due to age. An old headman, obviously incapable of carrying out his duties, is not
replaced by a younger man because this would show disrespect for age. The position of the old who lack other status such as wealth, close kin, or religious or secular office, is very poor. To be without such status, and at the same time to be old and especially to be decrepit would seem to counteract evidence that simple survival to old age is automatically a sign of merit acquired. The only institution which can give status to such people is the wat (temple); thus dependent old men re-enter the priesthood and retire to the wat and more infrequently women may become nuns. Without such protection, the isolated old are accorded a neglect which Sharp states is shocking to most Westerners.

Sharp provides an insight that it is not age per se that provides one with prestige, care and support but its associated social position within the community and the family. However he does not elaborate upon the relationships between such social positions, though the conclusion is drawn that in spite of elaborate formal respect for age and seniority, age as such outside of the immediate family or kin group, is not an important value in his study village. He also implied that certain forms of westernized influence would be detrimental to the old by exacerbating existing problems confronted by the old who lack close kin, wealth, religious or secular office.

Delaney (1975) conducted his anthropological research in a northern Thai community. Though it had a different historical background from Sharp's Central Region community, some comparisons can be made. Delaney states that one key task of any study will be to determine whether old people are granted respect and status in conformity with the traditional ideology, or whether they must struggle for respect and the validation of their merit status as in his community. He states that within the Buddhist idiom of merit and reincarnation, the old were able to establish a counter-ideology to the materialism of the young and of the general society. The temple established a social basis for this counter-ideology and a context in which the elderly could act out their resentment and alienation. The over-riding goal of old age for the
northern Thai is located in their overt quest for power: power to nullify the effects of neglectful children; power to place themselves above an insensitive society; and power to overcome the disease of old age. Though he conducted his study in a northern and relatively non-rural setting, Delaney identified the general characteristic of the traditional ideology of respect and status and the impact of materialism and its effect upon the original ideology, resulting in what he called a counter-ideology.

Dealing more directly with support systems was an exploratory survey conducted by Wanthip (1975) which looked at changes affecting the life course of the old. Wanthip conducted a random sample survey of a nursing institution within each of the four regions of the country including Bangkok Metropolis. In addition to this a random sample population residing outside each nursing institution was also studied. Within the latter sample an equal number of rural and urban respondents were interviewed; the total number of respondents was 688. The study found that 65 percent of the aged men and women in urban areas stated that they had no wealth to give; in rural areas only 21 percent said that they had no wealth to give to their children. The study concluded that a factor which affects the support of the old is that they have not given out their wealth; this is an assurance that they will be taken care of and provides motivation for their children to look after and care for them when they are old. From various other factors such as source of income, ownership of home, lack of indebtedness and the giving out of wealth Wanthip assessed that the aged population in Thailand, especially the rural aged, still have a secure economic base, in comparison to other age groups.

Stability of the family was identified by Wanthip as an important prerequisite for the support of the old. The survey found that both rural and urban old are still in close contact with their families. Within the homes of old persons, spouses, children and/or grandchildren were still residing with them; in other cases the old reside with close relatives. In rural areas residence with close relatives accounted for 60 percent in comparison with 40
percent for the urban old. Living with a close relative was seen as having a large emotional benefit for the old. The majority of the old were also found to contribute to various activities of the family such as cooking, going to the market, looking after grandchildren, craft work etc. The study concluded that the old in Thailand do not have a lonely life, have an important role and are active members in the family; that a large proportion have close relationships with their children and in cases where children have moved out, still retain close ties.

In the area of life satisfaction 70 percent of the respondents still felt that they were of value to their offspring in that they were still depended upon to raise grandchildren, look after the house and, in the case of old men, to provide finance. The value of rearing children by the old in Thailand was gauged by their ability to rear their children properly rather than providing for their physical and material comforts. The study concluded that as long as the Thai family institution remains intact, containing close relationships across many generations, it will still be able to provide benefits to the old. The old in Thailand still have a sense of warmth and security in their lives amongst their family and still have an important role in the family and its economic life. The family as an institution in Thailand is still supportive and responsible for their old.

Peerasit et al. (1977) conducted a study on the old in rural, urban and nursing institutions. Their random sample population of 825 was undertaken in the two provinces of Bangkok and Songklha. Their findings are that most of the old in Thailand are still living in extended families, and that relationships with their offspring are strong, with slight variations between rural and urban areas. The old still retain a high position within the family and still receive reverence from their offspring. Various modernity variables indicate that the old have high modernity characteristics, and assess themselves positively; within the family there is emotional satisfaction due to respect, reverence, following teachings, interest and support. The study concluded that the majority of the old have
relatively high well-being in their families. The family in Thailand was still seen as an important institution which protects and cares for its older members. The major problems which the old faced were stated to be social-psychological; the inability to adapt to contemporary society.

Amongst the survey studies presented above there has been a heavy emphasis on majority percentages and their statistical significance, to the detriment of an elaboration of the remaining categories. The study conducted by Peerasit et al. (1977) stated that 61 percent of the respondents were living in extended family situations yet only passing reference was made to respondents living in nuclear families, nursing homes, or with relatives and friends; but these circumstances accounted for 22, 12 and 1 percent respectively. Similarly, with regard to the degree of independence of the old; being allowed to do what one wants in many cases accounted for 76 percent, enough to conclude that the aged have a high degree of autonomy within their households. Less emphasis was placed on being allowed to do what one wants in only some cases, and not being allowed to do what one wants at all. Similar examples are found in dissatisfaction with children’s behaviour to parents of 31 percent; and 26 percent of adult children who are not seen as adequately in the old person’s control.

The conclusion reached by Wanthip (1975) was that the old population in Thailand still have economic security compared to other age groups. This conclusion stems from the finding that 69 percent own their own homes, 80 percent are free from debt and 31 percent are economically active; but the study does not provide an analysis of the reasons why the remaining percentages are not economically secure. The old in both rural and urban areas were stated to still maintain close personal relationships with their families by residing with kin of one sort or another; 60 percent in rural and 40 percent in urban areas. By living in ‘close relationships’ with their family the old were seen to have a high degree of emotional security. This conclusion
provides for an identification and explanation of the occurrence of the majority percentages but, in most cases, only identifies and does not provide an explanation of the minority occurrence of cases. Similarly, relationships with children not living at home are stated to be good in that a large proportion of the old have steady relationships with such children (with minor differences between rural and urban areas), seen in frequency of visits of 53 percent. Less emphasis was placed on the 16 percent who had no visits at all or on the rather high percentage of 23 who did not answer this question.

In reading the questionnaires used in these surveys it is evident that in many cases in-depth interviews could have obtained more contextual information though this would result in the difficulty of measurement and quantification in the subsequent construction of tables. The objective of both survey studies was not to develop or verify any hypotheses or theoretical explanations, though it is not quite certain whether even the goal of providing a descriptive view of various characteristic traits of the old was reached.

Though micro-type studies have not been undertaken in Thailand on support systems of the old there have been some anthropological studies undertaken in the Asian region. Of interest are studies done by Vatuk (1980) concerning disengagement theory as a cultural response to ageing; Goldstein et al.'s articles on modernization and ageing and the extended family in Nepal (1981; 1983); Holme's volume on cultural gerontology in the Third World, Ikels' (1980) dissertation on the impact of urbanization and modernization on the old in Hong Kong, Evans' work on the old in Surakarta, Central Java (1987) and to a lesser extent Knodel et al.'s (1984) determinants of fertility study which discussed support in old age in Thailand. A recent study on ageing in ASEAN countries was also

conducted by Chen and Jones (1989) of which will be
discussed throughout this thesis.

Goldstein’s article, adopting a historical and processual perspective concerning the economic and social status of the aged, seems to have the most plausible connection with the Thai situation; his research was undertaken in a Nepalese Buddhist community of agriculturalists. He concluded that in Nepalese society there was little but land as a source of economic subsistence. One of the most profound changes in family organization in the past three or four decades has been the decreasing influence of the family as a unit of both production and consumption. The importance of land for farming and upland crops as the foundation of family economy and an important element of social position has declined and been replaced by salaried and wage employment for many of the young generation. The degree of control of parents over economic resources as well as life options of their children has thus greatly diminished. The emergence of wage and salaried employment has led to a large emphasis on education in the cost or value of children. These changes in the recent past, according to Goldstein, have detrimental effects upon the old. In addition, individualism, independence, secularism and democracy and the shift from patrilinealism to conjugalism are derived largely from Western-type values and norms inherent in the modern educational, political and economic systems emerging in countries like Nepal.

The consequences of societal change and their effect upon family organization shown by Goldstein in Nepal were discussed implicitly and explicitly in the two previously mentioned sample survey studies as well as the Knodel study in Thailand. In the area of societal change the Knodel study on determinants of fertility (hereafter referred to as DOF) found that there was a perceived rise in the cost of living and rearing children, market penetration and monetisation; rising consumer aspirations, increasing medical, educational and child care costs, decreasing land availability and concern over inheritance. Yet in the following group discussions presented in the DOF study, as well as the conclusions of the previously mentioned sample
surveys, no direct perceivable social-psychological or economic strains on the old persons were found. Goldstein calls the situation in Nepal a 'paradox' in that, to the extent that old parents succeed in preparing their sons to be successful, and in providing education and employment, the sons become economically independent of them. If the parents are unsuccessful in preparing their sons for employment, the sons have no income to support them. The dilemma facing the old in Nepal is thus exacerbated, though this situation does not seem to exist in Thailand. The situations in Nepal and Thailand seem to be similar in situational circumstances but to vary in resulting outcome.

Plausible, though not firmly grounded, explanations could be set forth to explain contextual differences between Thailand and Nepal. It could be that in the past the family in Thai villages was not necessarily a unit of production and consumption in the strict sense like that in Nepal. Land was free for the taking, though involving much labour in clearing forests and planting either lowland or upland crops (Knodel et al., 1984), thus the monopoly of the father over economic resources as well as life options was never final; this is complemented by a higher degree of individualism and secularism in Thailand than in Nepal. Thus what Goldstein identifies as a key issue of the old maintaining their social and economic status by controlling property and income may not have been as vital in the Thai context.

Additionally, parameter limitations were not clearly stated by Goldstein. For instance under what conditions is a family not a unit of production and consumption? Were there situations in the past where the father did not have a monopoly over economic resources and why? Are there cases where in spite of widespread societal change the father still maintained strong obedience, respect and deference by the very fact that he handed over or gave up his control of power to his son?

Though involving in-depth focus group discussions the DOF study also needed to de-limit their interpretations, though this topic was not their major concern. On the topic of persistence of parent repayment the DOF study
found that

both younger and older generation participants almost universally agreed that parents were entitled to and expected some form of support from their adult children and frequently described support of parents in the elderly years explicitly as a form of repayment for, or as an obligation created by the fact that parents had cared for them in their infancy and childhood. Repayment was generally described in broad terms, particularly as taking care of the parents, the discussion made clear that this was thought of as encompassing both economic and non-economic dimensions. The former included contributions in the form of money, material goods or labour assistance to the parents’ economic activities while the latter encompassed both non-economic labour services and moral support (Knodel et al., 1984:51-52).

Moreover the form of repayment, as stated above, varies in accordance with the stage of the parents’ as well as the adult children’s life cycle in a way that balances need and ability. Some old age group discussants also mentioned that even if children could not take care of their parents because of their job commitments or other reasons the grandchildren would still be able to look after them. Thus as a result of societal change present conditions were not regarded as better or worse but as different; societal change had provided for a new and different strategy taken by the old. It seemed that adult children in fact used their old parents as a support system rather than vice-versa in rearing their grandchildren, sometimes on a permanent basis: this enabled them to exploit new wage earning opportunities which could not have been done otherwise. Parameter limitations which also need further exploration are situations of the ‘old-old’ who can no longer take care of themselves let alone their grandchildren; or the old whose children rear their own children and who thus have no grandchildren to look after; or whether caring for grandchildren is in fact one of the factors which maintains this persistence of parent repayment. Would adult children, for example, still repay
parents in money and/or otherwise solely on the basis of the value of their emotional gratitude, _katunyu_ and nothing else? It may also be that certain shortcomings of their adult children affect the old parents in such a personal and emotional way that group discussions are not such an effective way of tapping such opinions, compared with the wide-ranging discussions of less emotionally-laden topics like changes in family size, age at marriage and contraception.

In an exploratory study the old should be seen more as members of a community and in a wider context the society, just as are children, young adults and babies. To attempt to construct a theoretical explanation of the support systems of the old, based exclusively on the characteristic of the old themselves thus seems unwise. We must first ask what the old are doing in the community as a principle of social organization; what changes are occurring and what strategies are taken by the old and others concerned as lifetime members of a community.

### 1.5 Delineating Support Systems

If type of support can be separated into more discrete categories we will be able to identify more clearly the different forms of support given to the old. From my fieldwork research I have found that the types of support which are provided to the old can be appropriately categorized into three major headings.

1. Active Support
2. Material Support
3. Social Support

By 'active support' is meant engaging in actual labour-expending activities which provide assistance to the old. From this definition active support necessitates the physical presence of the supporter. Types of active support are many and varied within a rural agricultural community. The contribution which a young son provides in the farming process may be initially small and might just include help in driving the mini-tractor or laying out the
harvested rice to dry in the sun. As the parent ages and the children become adults active support by the children may include all aspects of the farming process, as parents, because of decreasing physical ability, engage in fewer energy-expending tasks.

The nursing of the ill is also included in forms of active support, thus washing sick old people, providing medicine, taking sick old people for medical attention outside the home and monitoring their condition are all included as forms of active support. Cooking the evening meal, catching and/or trapping fish and household maintenance such as making repairs to the house and its surroundings as well as mending farming equipment could also be seen as the provision of active support. The key term within the concept of active support mentioned above is physical presence. Thus if societal change does affect the physical presence of adult children the relationship between adult children and their ageing parents in terms of active support must necessarily be affected.

By 'material support' is meant the provision of monetary and material goods. If an adult child assists the parent in the farming process this is considered a form of active support, however, if the child acquires a mini-tractor for his parents to plough the land this is considered to be material support. Similarly remittances by children to their parents are also considered as material support.

By 'social support' is meant an emotional feeling that one is being cared for. From the actor's point of view there is a sense of belonging within the household as well as the wider community with a network of communication and obligation. History is seen as an important part of this community network and thus temple functions or holy days, pilgrimages, funerals and wedding ceremonies, charitable activities and communal help in farming throughout a person's lifetime all help to promote a strong network. Social support also includes the perception by the actor that he or she is esteemed and valued by the immediate family and/or the wider community. In this context one's felt esteem and value depends on one's 'past performance'
regardless of age. What needs to be looked at here is whether the old are related in a positive or negative meaningful relationship to their children, relatives, neighbours and wider community. For example three different situational cases can be provided where their children do not esteem and value them. A comment by a village headman- 'I am not happy with the way my son has grown up though I cannot do anything about it now'- shows a relative loss of esteem from the son. This relative loss of esteem is quite different from a total loss of personal worth and esteem expressed by an incapacitated elderly woman who was neglected by her children and had to live on the charity of the community. Yet again the loss of esteem by another totally neglected but physically capable old couple may not affect them so much, at least in their outwardly displayed emotions, because of their physical capacity, economic independence, and as a result of the neglect, a hardened attitude to life.

It is quite apparent from the categories of Active, Material and Social Support that they are not mutually exclusive. Material and Active Support are in many instances implicitly acknowledged as being part of Social Support. My attempt to delineate support systems into such classifications, bearing in mind their over-lapping nature, is undertaken so that a more specific focus of analysis can be given to each and, more importantly, the relationships between the categories can be interpreted.
2.1 Reasons for Selecting the Specific Study Site.

2.1.1 The Selection of a Field Site

During my employment at the Institute for Population and Social Research beginning in the autumn of 1979 I was involved in numerous research projects conducted by the Institute; most of these projects included data collection by the use of the survey questionnaire. Large scale survey implementation requires communication channels which run from the higher levels of bureaucracy down to lower levels. Typically a letter of introduction from our university was sent out to the governor of the province; the governor’s office informed the various District Officers in writing that a survey research team from the University would need assistance on a specific date; and subsequently the District Officer was responsible for informing various headmen that their assistance was needed in guiding the research team’s interviewers. These stages are necessary for logistical purposes in the efficient running of the survey data collection.

The use of bureaucratic channels to inform a village headman of the arrival of a research team may not be necessarily appropriate for an extended community study such as mine. There are undoubtedly certain advantages in the use of bureaucratic or institutional levels of communication; the acquisition of local statistics from district offices, and the cooperation of headmen in updating their village registration data are some which come to mind. The disadvantages in using institutional channels include precisely the fact that a researcher is introduced to a community at a non-personal level. To be initially identified as a government bureaucratic official may inhibit expressions of felt opinions by headmen and villagers. One advantage in interpersonal communication is the fact that the community gives less attention and
importance to the researcher and is more likely to behave more naturally. It is for these reasons that I chose interpersonal levels of communication in choosing a study site.

As early as 1984 I began to select prospective village sites. I had located through interpersonal networks of family, friends and colleagues the four different provinces of Roi Et, Chanthaburi, Ratchaburi and Chachoengsao. A village in Roi Et was considered because a colleague of mine had conducted his Ph.D field study there and possible comparisons could be made, though language would be a problem as I did not speak the northeastern dialect. Chanthaburi to the east, and Ratchaburi, to the west, were included because they were where my parents were born. A Chachoengsao village, in the central east, was included because my wife had some relatives living there. Chachoengsao was finally selected because it had the most promising aspects in terms of both logistical and academic potential. Its physical proximity to Bangkok allowed for a clearer analysis of the impact of societal change as well as ease in travel from the village to my Institute. In addition, more frequent contacts were kept by my wife’s family with this village than with the other three villages. Just as important a reason for choosing this site was that the other sites had evident disadvantages. Distance and physical safety considerations were paramount at Chanthaburi which is near the Cambodian border, from which on more than one visit, I could hear artillery shelling. Familial networks at Ratchaburi were in fact too close and might have impeded the smooth running of my field study. At Roi Et distance and language problems prevailed; most important though, the levels of hardship and poverty evident in the population there were obstacles to a clear understanding of support systems of the old.

The rural community which I chose in Chachoengsao province is about 60 kilometres from Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand. The community is named Paidum (black bamboo), after the local wat (temple) and is situated in tambol (sub district) Saladang (Red Bamboo) of Bangnampriao District. Saladang sub-district consists of 22 villages of
which seven are considered part of the Paidum community. Paidum is situated about 13 kilometres from its district seat of Bangnampriao. Bangnampriao district is located to the west of the provincial seat of Chachoengsao. The total area of the district is 510 square kilometres, all of which is flat land suitable for growing paddy. There are not many hills or mountains surrounding the government irrigation areas of Luang Pra-Ong and Rangsit projects. Ninety five percent of the land area is under rice cultivation, and two rice crops a year can be grown. The first crop covers 276,315 rai (1 rai equals 1600 square metres or 0.4 acres) and the second 111,615 rai in the form of a Village Irrigation Association and 10 other agricultural groups (District Office data, 1987).

The rainy season lasts from June till October and is followed by the winter season from November till January. The hot season begins in February and lasts till May. Important water routes in the district include the Bangpakong river to the east of the district, Nakhonnayok river to the north, and klong (canal) Saansaeb, running through my study site eastward from Bangkok Metropolis. In addition to Klong Saansaeb, which was constructed to connect the Chao Phraya and the Bangpakong rivers, there are many other minor klongs passing through the district. Because of the various interconnected water routes much of the transportation is by water.

2.1.2 Setting Up the Field Site

My first meeting with the headman of the prospective village was in June of 1984 when he was 54 years old. His name is Durian Yaemglin; since then I have known him as uncle Rian. Uncle Rian is the headman of muu (village) five; everybody within the village and the local market knows it as Paidum (Black Bamboo) muu five. I informed him during that initial visit that I was interested in talking to old people and finding out how their children were taking care of them, and that in order to clearly understand the situation of the old and how they were
living it would be necessary for me to spend at least one year in the village. Though I set no specific dates for my field stay I told him that I would initially be coming with my wife's mother so he would not be obliged to 'entertain' me.

I made about five trips to the village during the next three years, mostly to attend ordinations into the monkhood and funerals. On each of those visits I stayed at uncle Rian's house. I learnt that uncle Rian enjoyed talking about national politics, as on each trip he engaged me in several long conversations on movements of political figures in Thai politics. He enjoyed television and reading political commentaries in the newspaper, and discussing this with minor government officials during their monthly meeting at the District Office. For the 12 years in which he had been headman at muu five he had immersed himself in the changes which had been affecting his village and the wider community of Paidum. He belonged to the committee which organized the construction of the first roads into the area and was secretary to the agricultural cooperative, as well as assisting in repair and maintenance of various watergates in the numerous canals in the area. My presence there allowed him to discuss even more frequently current events in the national political arena as well as world events which he watched on television. He was soon to find out during the initial period of my field study that my knowledge of Thai politics was quite limited.

A village headman is the lowest ranking government official. In its actual practice the headman meets very seldom with other government officials. He has no office or official desk and has a nominal salary of 450 Baht (A$ 22.50) a month. Though there is a standard uniform for the headman I had never seen uncle Rian or other headmen that I knew wear them in the 13 months of my field study. Within muu five many villagers had stated they were related to each other in one way or another and that being a headman did not make a villager superior to other villages in any way. Uncle Rian is seen more as a relative to the many other households in the muu than as a government official.
of any rank. The previous headmen to Uncle Rian was Grandad Samrarn who lives eight houses up the klong and whose mother was stated to be related to Uncle Rians mother. Previous to Grandad Samrarn was Uncle Rians father. Headmenship went from household to household and at times from father to son when the father reaches the mandatory retirement age of 60. Headmen were historically documented as potential holders of power. Such informal power held by many headmen has decreased as modernization encroached upon village boundaries. Specifically, improved transportation networks and communication channels as well as the expansion of central government authority has continually eroded what seemed to be the natural authority of many headmen.

My wife and I had arranged during one of our first visits to the community in 1987 to rent a house for the duration of our field study. Upon our arrival we found that the specific house was occupied by uncle Rian’s daughter, Oan, an occurrence which might have been construed by an unfamiliar researcher as a good case example of ‘Loose Structure’ (Phillips, 1969). Upon closer examination we found that Oan thought we were actually coming to live permanently there. We had already explained to her that we would be conducting a study on old people and would be staying no more than 12 months; we know now that she did not comprehend why we would want to study old people, and since the vacant house was her grandmother’s, she thought that she would lose any claim to it if we indeed moved in permanently. She quickly moved her things into the house and acted as if there was no prior arrangement for renting it. It was at this juncture that I had to decide quickly what to do for our accommodation. On each previous visit to the community we had been staying in uncle Rian’s house and I felt that we were beginning to impose on him. I discussed with him my uneasiness and he suggested we build a small hut next to his house; we made some calculations as to its cost and came up with a figure of Baht 5,000 (A$250). I felt this was affordable and set out to buy the materials, thinking at the time that I had always wanted to live in a thatch hut.
The building of our hut took two weeks and it was during this time that I felt I had the most intense village experience during my entire stay. Thatch huts are now considered obsolete as they need constant repairing; during my entire field work I came across only two houses which were made totally out of thatch and bamboo. Almost all houses now are constructed of wood and brick, with roofs either of corrugated iron or, if a household were more wealthy, of tiles. Being of simpler construction and cheapest thatch houses could be built by local villagers, thus the communal help which we received in the construction of the hut resembled forms of assistance rarely seen in the present time. With the increasing availability of concrete foundations and large wooden frames most houses now require exactness in construction available only to the professional carpenter.

Uncle Tohn the headman of muu two coordinated the construction of our house with the assistance of Uncle Rian, Auntie Come made thin bamboo strips for binding the thatch to the frame, and Uncle Moon, Auntie Come’s younger brother, assisted throughout the construction. Since Uncle Moon was unemployed at the time we gave him a small gift of money. Our next door neighbour Uncle Suk, a retired policeman, assisted in light duties such as handing the thatch to us when we were binding the roof. Other villagers who passed by might stop to help if they were free or would give their own opinions on the correct way to construct the hut. The hut construction served double purpose. Not only was it to provide us with a shelter throughout our field stay but it also introduced us into the Paidum community. Perhaps its modest cost and construction and our seriousness in living in it for the next 12 months made an impression that we were intent in living a life similar to that of many other rice farmers.
The construction of our bamboo hut during the initial stage of fieldwork

Paying homage to spirits who are presently inhabiting the housebuilding site
2.2 The Methodological Perspective Taken by this Thesis: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches.

This thesis attempts the use of quantitative and qualitative methods of data gathering. By ‘quantitative methods’ is meant the actual counting of numbers of responses from the various numerical data which we acquired. This process involves the use of all forms of quantitative data from primary, secondary as well as published sources. By ‘qualitative methods’ is meant the interpretation of meanings acquired from either the survey respondents or villagers in general. The qualitative component involves various forms of flexible discussions elaborated on in section 2.3.2.

There might be some confusion as to whether quantitative and qualitative methods of research complement each other or not; it is my opinion that they are indispensable to one another. Surveys and qualitative-type studies need not exist separately from one another and in fact would gain much if they were undertaken together within one research project. The presentation of the two sample surveys conducted on the old in Thailand in Chapter 1 was not undertaken to denigrate the survey technique as a social scientific tool. Surveys can cover huge areas, making it possible to identify a general phenomenon not confined to a single locality, but as Caldwell wrote

the patterns of value [acquired by the survey] in the sense that they represent something that is real and not misleading, are probably confined to unambiguous data which are quantifiable by nature and where reported behaviour is not subject to different interpretations in different cultures (Caldwell et al., 1984).

Thus for a sample survey to attempt to measure certain attitudes, opinions and behavioural patterns which are both ambiguous and unquantifiable by their very nature, would be inappropriate. Such an attempt may result in problems of
validation in the subsequent stages of interpretation of results where analyses are based partly on information and concepts which do not flow from the survey tabulations. Caldwell further states that

...except as seen through a single pair of eyes, households cannot be related to their neighbours, or families to kin-the relationships which are central to the study of society. In societies based on tight social networks, the survey helps to create an apparently atomised society (Caldwell et al., 1984).

The difference, and in some cases confusion, between survey analysis and micro-type approaches arises from this very 'atomized' or 'non-atomized' analysis. Mitchell (1983) commenting on case analysis as presented by Goode and Hatt, as a form of qualitative approach, states that case analysis is a way of organizing social data so as to preserve the unitary character of the social object being studied. It is an approach which views any social unit as a whole, the unit being a person, group or set of relationships or processes. Mitchell contrasted this type of analysis with survey analysis in which the person, or group, is replaced by a trait; such as age, sex, religion, as the unit of analysis. He goes on to state that in the sample survey a difficulty arises when the relationship between two characteristics is considered. The analyst may assume that the same relationship exists between the same characteristics in the parent population, but this inference is simply about the concomitant variation of two characteristics. The inference about the logical relationships between the two characteristics, however, is not based on the representativeness of the sample but on the plausibility of the connection. These two different types of reasoning have been termed by Mitchell as logical and statistical inference. Statistical inference is the process by which the analyst draws conclusions from a sample population about the existence of two or more characteristics in a wider population. Logical inference on the other hand is the process by which the analyst draws
conclusions about the essential linkage between two or more characteristics in terms of some systematic explanatory schema. The process of inference, as seen by Mitchell in case analysis, is only logical or causal and not statistical and generalization from one case is based only on logical inference and thus quite independent from statistical inference.

The interpretation and questions posed by statistical data could be most usefully complemented by qualitative topics of discussion. It is at this precise point of interpretation of statistical tables that qualitative analysis can assist the survey researcher. As a total package integrative research should involve both survey techniques and qualitative techniques of acquiring in-depth understanding at all stages of the research. For example, participant observation should be undertaken before questionnaire construction in order for appropriately relevant questions to be asked. Once the survey has been completed and tables and numerical data acquired, again more focused participant observation, and in my case focus group and in-depth discussions should be undertaken. The use of both qualitative and quantitative procedures in field research provide us with a general knowledge of the study area as well as an in-depth understanding of its implications.

2.3 Sources of Data

2.3.1 Quantitative Data

a. Village Primary Data

During the very early stages of my fieldwork part of my schedule included a visit to the District Office situated 13 kilometres away from the study site. The purpose of the visit was to bring a letter of introduction from my superiors at the Institute for Population and Social Research explaining that for the 12 months following I would be involved in a study on old age support systems within the district and specifically in the Saladang Tambol
area. On this trip one of my supervisors, T. H. Hull came with me. During this visit the District Officer was not in at the office and we were cordially met by the Assistant District Officer, who was an M.A. graduate of NIDA (National Institute of Development Administration). He asked me where I received my education, and I replied that I did not study at NIDA but I knew many people there. I mentioned the names of people I knew, and when the officer identified a name which he knew the conversation became more informal and he asked what he could do to assist me in my work. I told him that during the first three months of my stay I would be occasionally visiting the District Office to look at various information such as household registration forms and various statistics which were kept there. He mentioned that a national village-based survey had just been conducted and offered to show me their questionnaire. Hull and I looked at the completed questionnaires and decided that some of the questions would be useful for my work, so I told the officer that I would return soon to collect the data with my portable computer.

The ease with which we were able to gain access to various data at the District Office surprised Hull as his experience in Indonesia had been quite different. This ease I felt was partly due to two major reasons: (1) I was able to create a linkage between the Assistant District Officer’s teacher at NIDA and myself, and (2) the presence of a foreigner with me attested to my possible importance in having international contacts. Perhaps the officer felt he could indirectly benefit in some way from this. Punyodhana (1969) would categorize the context of knowing the same teacher at a university as an esprit de corps or ‘we’ feeling or in-group identity of students or alumni of the same school. After that first introduction to the Assistant District Officer our subsequent meetings were always undertaken in an atmosphere of relaxed and cordial helpfulness.

The data which we collected from the District Office was called The Village Primary Data Project, under the control of the National Committee for Rural Development, Ministry of the Interior. It had as its objective, the
survey of living conditions of populations in every village in the nation. The data are an assessment of development within the nation and the information is used for planning purposes of all levels of government. The process of data gathering for this project involved district officials instructing each village committee, consisting of five to nine members, to complete the prescribed questionnaire. Each question is read out by the district official and only when an agreement is reached by all will the responses be recorded. Upon completion of the questionnaire the district official and all village leaders sign their names on the back of the questionnaire to verify that its contents are correct to the best of their knowledge. From the questionnaire responses I chose only to tabulate certain data which included the following.

- population by sex
- income
- availability of drinking water
- short and long term crop production
- second rice crop production
- rice area under cultivation
- occupation of village population
- land quality
- land ownership
- outside occupations

b. Social Welfare Card

During our data collection for the village primary based data we were provided with a desk in the Public Health division which was situated on the ground floor. It was at this time that we were introduced to the Public Health Officer Khun Charoensuck. We learnt that a three year program run by the Ministry of Public Health and called the Social Welfare Card was due for renewal that year. The Social Welfare Card is available to households with a monthly income under 2,000 Baht, and entitles the bearer, and household members, to free medical services including cost of medication. This was an interesting data set in that I could check to see how many old people would be included as belonging to the welfare population. Since the data set used the household rather than the village or
tambol as a unit of analysis it would be amenable to a lot of manipulation in the form of dependency ratios, population structures and projections. Because the raw data amounted to almost a thousand pages Khun Charoensuk was most helpful in allowing me to photocopy the entire data set.

During the time of field study the card was available to 27 percent of the households in each village owing to calculated government budgetary constraints for the District; in the subdistrict of Saladang 276 households were eligible. If during the process of selection there was found to be an excess of households below the stipulated income levels, then the village committee would select the poorest households first according to their judgement.

Eligibility for the Welfare Card was restricted to persons 20 years of age and over; but those under 20 years could also be included, in another household member’s card. The card was given to the nominated individual and covered all persons who resided in that individual’s household. Every household had the right to apply for a card but it was the Village Committee which would decide who was eligible according to the criteria set down.

It was the job of Khun Charoensuck to order all government health centre personnel to inform all village headmen that the card would be renewed; it was the headman’s job to inform all villagers that they could apply for a card. When word got around muu five Paidum that applications were open many people were interested.

During the village committee discussion the health personnel stated that the card holder was eligible for free medical service but that the service might not be fast and efficient because the card holder was not paying any of the expenses. The Village Committee had already understood this to be the case and felt it was not surprising as they always had to wait for the better part of the day when attending a government hospital.

Uncle Rian realized that being on the selection committee was a ‘no win’ situation since a quota of only eight cards was given to his village of 30 households.
Those that applied and did not receive the card would certainly be upset. Everyone on the committee agreed with Uncle Rian since in their opinion the Social Welfare Card was a desirable 'commodity' within the community. The health official expressed his sympathy for the dilemma which the village committee was in, but he felt that no alternative was possible as there was a limited quota. The officer informed the committee that in two weeks' time there would be a meeting at Paidum temple at which time all 22 village headman in Tambol Saladang would present to the health officer a finalized list of those eligible for the card.

Uncle Rian got together the four members of his village committee and began to select those people that they felt should receive the card. Headman Pai in the adjacent muu two similarly began immediately to choose those he felt were needy. The seven households which Uncle Rian chose, for example, were Grandad Samrarn's extended household of nine people with five children under 10; Kaew who is an invalid and her household of four people; Chaleauw and her husband who has not been able to find a job and is a constant drinker; Sangiam and her household who are tenant farmers and fix bicycles as a minor occupation; Granny Nuu who lives underneath Uncle Rian's house; Granny Chuen who is blind, lives across the klong and is looked after by her granddaughter and Auntie Hlong and her husband Uncle In who seems to drink whiskey almost every day. I did not encounter any villager who might have displayed any antagonistic views against the decision to choose these people. Headman Pai's selection was even simpler than Uncle Rian's. He chose only those old people whom he felt were in need. Of the five households under his quota four were widows and one was a spinster. Though certain regulations were meant to be followed in the selection of households it seems that discretionary choice was available and used by many headmen. Any household who felt that they were being discriminated against had the right to appeal to the Health Officer but during my stay I never heard of any appeals.
c. Field Census

A field census means that the counting of a population is a means to an academic end. The field census provides data on population characteristics enabling further research to be conducted. Once the data are acquired from the field census further analysis is necessary to interpret the meaning behind the figures. The field census can be seen as a datum line; a quantitative statement towards a further goal. A field census can be seen as a pivotal instrument in micro-type researches; its use in my research was not only to acquire some form of statistical generalization but to formulate the generalized theoretical principles on which this population is based through complementary use of other data-gathering techniques. In this process logical extrapolation as described by Mitchell (1983) is used, for example, in interpreting the meaning of the numbers.

During the two months of March and April 1987 my wife and I conducted the village field census for the Paidum Community. Owing to logistical constraints we confined our field census to the villages within our specific vicinity; we were residing in Paidum muu five and decided to include the adjacent muu three and four. We initially asked Uncle Rian's daughter who was the Public Health Volunteer to draw us a rough map of muu five. Using this map we cycled to each household to check whether her drawings were correct and found there were some minor discrepancies. At the temple we met a man who lived in muu three, and we asked him to draw a map of his village; the headman of muu 4 drew a map of his village as well. The mapping and field census were undertaken at the same time. In conducting the census I had some difficulties using our bicycle because practically all houses were situated on the banks of the canal, the road being separated from houses by rice fields. In order to enumerate adjacent houses we had to return to the main road, cycle for some way and enter again through the path leading to the adjacent house; if a path was not constructed I had to push our bicycle alongside the rice fields. In addition, of constant concern were the
encounters with dogs in each household who were obviously territorially inclined. We soon decided that the best way was to travel by boat. In this way we could also call out to any household member to chase away the dogs before we would step out onto the landing. This we found was the way in which most villagers visited each other. It is a common occurrence that each visitor would call out whether there was anyone at home as a form of greeting. This informs the owner that a friend and not an enemy is approaching. The owner can also take this opportunity to tie his dogs. Though we had access to household registration data we decided that it was rather inaccurate as many people who had moved had not registered their move; in some cases a move was made as much as five years previously without the knowledge of the district office. In our field census we asked for a de-jure population; we asked, 'who normally resides here?' and used a 12 month cut-off point to determine residence.

d. Village Survey

The survey questionnaire was constructed half way through my fieldwork. The reasoning behind this was so relevant and appropriately worded questions could be devised during the initial period. I interviewed 100 respondents, 69 Buddhists and 31 Muslims in a nearby village. A detailed analysis of the Muslim population is not included in this thesis because of time constraints and a lack of qualitative familiarity with the population. Our questionnaire went through four stages of development, each stage being a refinement of relevant questions and their wording. For example, in questions on functional capacity we finally included questions on 'fixing rice'¹ and

¹ The method of broadcasting rice is done by taking a handful of sprouted rice seedlings and throwing it outward in a fashion encompassing 180 degrees. Though this method is less time consuming than transplanting it requires more thorough ploughing of the paddy field. A minor drawback with broadcasting is that some areas of the paddy may have not been adequately covered. When the sprouted rice seedlings begin to grow some sparse and dense areas will be evident. The process of 'rice fixing' involves the transplanting of the areas of high rice density to areas of
paddling a boat; the cessation of rice fixing could be considered a cessation of any form of active agricultural activity, the cessation of paddling a boat could be considered as an end of, amongst other things, independent social activity.

In the area of state support my wife and I found that some old villagers had a Social Welfare card, and/or Veterans card so we included this in our questionnaire. We asked what problems were encountered in using the cards; these provided us with a guide-line for our subsequent in-depth and focus group discussions. During the fieldwork we also observed that temple activities provided an important part of social life for the old and so I included a set of questions on frequency of temple attendance and its costs. Again we integrated this quantitative knowledge with our qualitative understanding. Similarly in the area of assets we included specific questions such as ownership of mini-tractors, boats and bicycles, important 'tools of trade' which might not have been included if we had not conducted any fieldwork. In the area of agricultural produce, animal husbandry and fresh water farming we included questions on type and amount of crops grown or area farmed. Some activities in this area did not necessarily create any income such as the growing of half a dozen mango trees; we observed however that the tending of crops such as mangoes or bananas provided a feeling of independence when old parents were able to reciprocate the cash and goods which their absent children brought them with a basket of ripe mangoes, corn or bananas to take back to their homes.

In the household schedule new categories were included in an effort to be more area specific. In addition to asking the standard age, sex and education categories I included the categories of major and minor occupations, years of absence of adult children and present residence of absent children. The inclusion of a minor occupation, for example, provides for any special abilities of villagers besides farming, and might include mechanic, carpenter, tailor, grocer etc.. During my visits for in-depth low rice density in order to maximize productivity in the given area.
discussions I noticed that some old villagers had sleeping quarters separate from their spouses; this seemed to be an area of particular interest as a common phenomenon. I had discussed this previously in a rather informal way with my colleagues at my research institute, and felt this was an opportune time to do some analysis as to the meaning of separate sleeping quarters in old age; I thus included a question on separate sleeping quarters in my questionnaire. In addition, during my in-depth discussions a concern was expressed by some that alcohol consumption strained the relationships of many old people, so I also included frequency of alcohol consumption in my questionnaire.

My wife and I began our interviewing with the old people we had previously located in our village census maps, beginning with the nearest household and spreading out to the farthest. We did not have enough respondents in the village census to complete the required number of surveys, so in order to acquire more respondents we asked the last few respondents to locate additional people aged 60 and above in any adjacent village.

If there happened to be more than one old person in a household we interviewed only one by giving each a number and drawing lots. In 100 interviews we had one initial refusal; after some coaxing this old woman decided to give in. When we came back to do some nutritional and anthropometric measurements however she got rather alarmed, went upstairs and locked herself in; we decided not to bother her any more. In general, respondents were quite willing to be interviewed and enjoyed our visits; this was partly due to our extended stay before the interview. Word had spread that there was a relative of Uncle Rian who had come to talk to the old people; those whom we had already visited told other old friends, during their social visits, about the types of questions and topics of discussion we were interested in, and that we were of no harm. The main single worry which most respondents mentioned to us was that we should not give our data on income and assets to the tax department.

With the exception of the latter part (30 Muslim respondents) of the survey implementation we did not have
any assistance and my wife and I conducted all the interviewing alone. This necessitated a lot of time and effort. To reduce any workload in subsequent coding of the data I constructed my questionnaire to replicate a LOTUS 1-2-3 spreadsheet, as this was more efficient in conservation of paper and in ease of transferring data into the LOTUS Database program.

On the suggestion of T.H. Hull I included some measures of health and nutritional status of my survey population in addition to the self-reports of functional capacity. As a part of my survey implementation I conducted height/weight and anthropometric measurements of one out of every three respondents. As it was necessary to acquire an accurate weighing scale as well as to accommodate my requirements to the village setting I purchased a bathroom scale which was accurate to one quarter of a pound. For height measurements I used a fibreglass measuring tape. I used a wooden ruler which was placed at a 90 degree angle from the post of each respondent's house; their height was measured with them standing upright with their backs against the post. Where possible measurements were undertaken on a level concrete base. Type of clothing and its possible weight were noted down and taken into account in the calculation of weight.

Anthropometric measurements were undertaken with the use of a standard Harpenden skin fold caliper. I measured the upper-arm circumference with a fibreglass measuring tape and skin fold thickness with a standard Harpenden caliper. I acquired, and was instructed in the correct use of, the calipers at the Department of Public Health at the University of Mahidol. Three caliper measurements were taken and an average was calculated from these. According to convention I conducted all anthropometric measurements myself.

e. Tambol Health Centre Data

During the early part of my field study I paid a visit to the tambol Health Centre, which is run by the Ministry of Public Health and serves the Saladang tambol area of 22 villages. It was staffed by two paramedical personnel, but
during the last few months of my field study the health centre acquired an additional paramedic to increase its staff to three. The health centre was established in 1975 as part of a national program to have at least one health centre in every tambol in the nation. In 1986 the Lions Association of Ayuthaya donated funds to construct a new health centre relegating the original health centre building to residential quarters for the staff. During our field study the construction of the new health centre was complete with the exception of its large water tank.

Khun Chamnan was the head paramedic at the health centre; he is known throughout the area as moh (doctor) Chamnan. I told him that I came from Mahidol University and he replied that I must know a lot of people in the Department of Public Health at the University; he jokingly asked me whether I could help get him a promotion. Because moh Chamnan and I were of the same age cohort and dealt with people in the public health area he placed himself as a subordinate to me. I did not attempt to perpetuate the superior-subordinate status or in fact patron-client relationship and tried to develop a more equal basis for friendship. I believe I succeeded somewhat as during the later part of the field study we talked freely, expressing opinions on such topics as the drawbacks of the Health and Social Welfare Card system. Moh Chamnan also discussed the over-abundance of projects which the MOPH (Ministry of Public Health) and its related agencies injected into the Tambol. These projects require implementation over and above the manpower abilities of the three paramedics, thus successful results were unlikely. As a result of the lack of success yet more pressure is placed upon clinic staff.

As my relationship with Moh Chamnan progressed I was able to request access to the health centre outpatient data. I decided to acquire data only on the number of outpatients 60 years and above for a time duration of 12 months, and I began to enter data from the first of January. As our introduction to Moh Chamnan was in May of 1987 we returned periodically to the health centre to update our outpatient files. We completed our data collection for December 1987 just before our departure for
Australia. The variables for the tambol Health Centre data include patient number, sex, age, residence, diagnosis of condition.

2.3.2 Qualitative Data

Various qualitative methods were employed to acquire in depth, contextual and historical understanding of support systems of the old. As discussed earlier, the integrative approach which I use involves both qualitative and quantitative methods within one single research effort.

a. Participant Observation

Participant observation can be described as being in the presence of others on an on-going basis and having some nominal status for them as someone who is part of their daily lives (Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979:46). Participant observation involves an immersion in the lives of the people under study by residing in the community and the observation of daily activities and habits. Apart from this, what distinguishes the casual observer from the field worker is a systematic framework of priorities for collecting information and its checking, monitoring and recording.

On our visits to various households we informed them that we came from a university in Bangkok and that we would be staying in the community for one year to talk to old people about their lives. In retrospect I believe that very few people understood why anyone would ever want to do work of this sort let alone why a university would pay for it. Initially people saw us bicycling back and forth doing social visits and concluded that since this did not involve any labour such as rice farming, we must be having an extended holiday. We told them that we recorded all our conversations and transcribed them at night and discussed what we had learnt during the day and that this involved a lot of work. Still it was mentioned on numerous occasions that ours was a much more relaxing job than rice farming. The status which we acquired as the extended holiday couple
was further enhanced by our late nights and subsequent late rising and this became a topic of joking discussion for the households surrounding our hut. It was only after a few months had passed that word got around from the households we visited to the wider community that we were the city couple, related to Headman Durian, who spend hours in old peoples' households, asking numerous questions about their lives. We were very careful to discuss personal topics only with those whom we felt we knew well enough. In most instances such people initiated or continued on the discussion the topics which they felt were important. As our field work progressed we were able to cross-check new information which we acquired with those old people who began to be our confidants. When we changed from travelling by bicycle to boat it was more evident that we were from town as my paddling technique left much to be desired. As the months went by word got around about how we conducted our work. One of the moments which made me proud was when we visited the household of an old lady whom we had never met. She said that she knew we would be coming to see her sooner or later, because a friend of hers had told her 'There was a good looking couple who came and wanted to talk to me about my life. They were really interested in what I had to say and they were very polite' (IDD3:34). I believe that the later success of the qualitative and quantitative research techniques applied in the village were due in part to the use of thorough participant observation in our introduction to the community.

b. In-depth Discussions

Part of my qualitative research involved the use of in-depth discussions. Eliciting information from an individual in a relatively unstructured way has been described in various terms in the methodological literature: informal interviewing, strategic informant interviewing (Sjoberg and Nett, 1968), in-depth interviews as used by some demographers, flexible discussions (Caldwell et al., 1984) etc. The specific method I use can
be seen as a combination of these variations. Since my study can be considered exploratory I developed an initial set of basic topics of discussion concerning the meaning of 'old' such as: when did you begin to consider you were old? About caring for the old I had basic questions such as: When you are old should there be someone to come and look after you? Why? What types of care should children give to you? Why? Is there a difference between the care which your sons and your daughters give to you? When you were young what kinds of help did your parents expect from you? Is the help your children give you different from the help you gave your parents? In what way? Throughout the in-depth discussion process in my field study I continually refined my topics of discussion.

A major difference between logical and statistical reasoning as stated by Mitchell (1983) is the treatment of the individual as a social unit rather than as a trait. In this respect, though the trait characteristics of interest to this study necessitated an in-depth discussion with persons 60 years of age and above. I tried to elicit information in such a way as to bring out the social characteristics of the individual. One way in which I attempted to do this was to begin the in-depth discussion with topics on the life history of the informant. This served a double purpose in enabling placement of the individual within an historical time perspective as well as developing a social history of the community in general. A further development of the in-depth discussion schedule included discussing inheritance practices and abilities and responsibilities of the old. The in-depth discussions were undertaken throughout the 12 months of my field study. I did not attempt to confine the discussion within a time period as that might stifle some of the emerging insights. As stated earlier I conducted in-depth discussions before and after my focused survey. Twenty five in-depth discussions were undertaken throughout the span of my fieldwork. Some of these were held with two or three old people at the same time. All the discussions were implemented with my emergent discussion guideline. All discussions were tape-recorded and later transcribed. Part
of the process of developing emergent ideas is to playback the discussion immediately and occasionally to transcribe it. During this process new ideas emerge which refine the discussion guideline for subsequent usage.

A natural extension of my contacts with in-depth discussion informants was the development of closer inter-personal contacts with some of them. These persons soon became my strategic informants in that they were my eyes and ears in indirect observation (Sjoberg and Nett, 1968). Closer inter-personal relations with such persons provided the occurrence of unprompted expressions of opinion by them. It was expressed in some instances that 'I want to tell you how I feel because at this age I really have nothing to lose.' My understanding of the close relationships which I had with some persons was a realization by them of my genuine curiosity and lack of knowledge about rural life and hardships which they encountered in their lifetime. I had close interpersonal relationships with three informants and have summarized their character traits into three categories. The first a *marginal person* in that there is only partial adherence to normative expectations of the reference group. This person's unique perspective provided me with valuable clues for follow-up questioning in the wider community. The second, a *cynical social critic* who expresses immediate opinions during personal contacts and is quick to cynically comment on others' opinions in group discussions. The third, a *go between* who must maintain working relationships with diverse and competing interest groups. Such a person is seen as a mediator who had learnt to subdue personal prejudices enough to gain confidence of disparate groups. Throughout my field study I was able to consult the opinions of these persons; they in effect became my instructors. They would express their opinion on irrelevant group discussion topics, questionnaire wording, incorrectly interpreted viewpoints etc. My relationship with these three people should not be considered as purely academic. Most people whom I had talked to during my field study provided academic information. These specific three were open in their judgements of the way in which I
went about doing my research; discussing topics of care and support and querying adult children about care given. Not only did they provide me with more confidence in the 'correctness' of the information I gathered but also developed with me a meaningful relationship lasting beyond the limited research experience.

c. Focus Group Discussions

My use of the focus group discussion technique arose from reading an article in Studies in Family Planning describing how the focus group technique was used to acquire information on declining fertility trends in a population.

The development of the focus group technique for social science research in Thailand was initiated by John Knodel. It had a humble beginning when Knodel and his associates held discussions with some construction workers in Bangkok concerning fertility changes. The sessions were a great success in that the participants talked freely, joked and expressed their opinions and in many instances covered relevant topics even before they were initiated. This gave the research team motivation to continue the development of the technique in spite of the fact that they had no funds for conducting the discussions. During those early days they learnt from their mistakes and became better recorders, moderators and transcribers and, better at categorizing and coding the qualitative material.

A focus group session consists of a group discussion in which a small number of participants (usually six to nine), under the guidance of a moderator, talk about topics of importance to the particular research study. The informal group situation is intended to encourage participants to elaborate on behaviour and opinions to a greater extent than might be forthcoming from more formalized individual interviews. When focus groups work properly, interactions among participants stimulate discussion of the topic at hand, with one participant reacting to comments made by another. It is this group

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2 A special issue of Studies in Family Planning volume 12, number 12, December 1981, Part 1 describes some of these efforts and provides a general discussion of the technique.
dynamic that distinguishes focus group sessions from more conventional individual in-depth interviews typical of ethnographic research.

Focus groups were originally used by marketing agencies where the session's objective was to acquire information on possible ways to market a consumer product; thus the colour and design of the packaging and appealing ways of advertisement were key issues in the discussions. The use of focus groups in basic social research however, has been limited (Folch-Lyon et al., 1981).

Focus groups can be formed on the basis of different criteria to permit in-depth exploration of views of persons with different characteristics. However, the free flow of discussion is facilitated when each group is relatively homogeneous. It is desirable to choose participants for a given focus group session who share a common perspective on the topic of discussion. Under these circumstances participants are more likely to feel at ease and converse freely than might be the case in an individual interview or a group consisting of persons of different backgrounds or conflicting opinions (Knodel and Pramualratana, 1988).

Each focus group session is recorded on tape. A session includes a specially trained notetaker who later may transcribe the complete session on the basis of notes and the tapes. During my sessions either my wife or I transcribed the tapes; these transcripts serve as the basic data set for analysis.

The objective of focus group sessions is not to provide statistically generalizable quantitative data but rather qualitative information exposing underlying attitudes, opinions, and behaviour patterns. Thus, it differs fundamentally from the sample survey approach, which is intended to provide information representative of a broad population but which rarely is able to probe the deeper meaning of particular responses.

A finalised version of the focus group discussion guideline is presented in the Appendix. It can be observed that many topics in the focus group discussion guideline are similar to the in-depth discussions, but a major difference between focus groups and in-depth discussions,
explained partly above, is that in the former I attempt to
develop a form of group dynamics whereas in the latter I
attempt to acquire a more personal contextual situation
concerning interpretations of the topics of discussion.
Taken together focus groups and in-depth discussions enable
the development of both a general understanding and an in-
depth contextual knowledge of the various topics under
discussion. Thus for example the separation of sleeping
quarters by some of the old was seen as a not uncommon
factor by the focus group participants because old couples
'get bored with each other', and or 'because there is more
machinery for farming nowadays and so the husband has to
sleep by the machines to watch over them' (FG:489). Though
we knew that it is not uncommon it was only through the in-
depth discussions that an emergent idea of an integrated-
segregated way of life could be seen as a determinant
factor in separate sleeping quarters. As stated by the in-
depth discussants, who remained relatively silent on this
topic during the focus group discussions, the separation of
sleeping quarters is not a practice that couples engaged in
necessarily because of the stated reasons. Such couples
always had a segregated way of life in daily, social and
occupational activities. Thus boredom, tiredness and
watching over assets was seen by such informants merely as
indicators of a segregated way of life. (IDD2:275) A
further analysis of this is presented in Chapter 6.

d. Preparing Qualitative Data: the use of the
Ethnograph program

One of the major topics of concern in qualitative
research is in the analysis of data. Is it possible, for
example, for one researcher's field notes to be analysed by
another? A second concern is with the enormous amounts of
information which a researcher acquires. Will there be a
tendency for the researcher to overlook much of the
information, because of its sheer size, and focus only on
pet theories and preconceptions, consciously or
subconsciously? The process of categorizing, indexing and
retrieving information is a major concern here which
confronts all researchers engaging in fieldwork. But if one spends most of one’s time categorizing and indexing there may be little time left to undertake any form of interpretive analysis.

I have attempted to strike a middle course in handling of the qualitative data by arranging my data in a manner amenable to analysis by the use of the Ethnograph computer program (Seidel et al., 1985:1-1).

Briefly, the Ethnograph computer program is designed to assist the ethnographer in mechanical aspects of qualitative data analysis; in managing field notes, transcripts, documents etc. The objective of the program is to free the researcher to devote more attention to the interpretative aspects of ethnographic analysis. The two basic parts of the program are the mechanical part, organizing and subdividing the data, and the interpretative part, whereby the researcher decides on ways to organize data into analytical categories and patterns of interrelationships.

The Ethnograph program allows the researcher to code, recode, sort and modify the data files into chosen analytical categories. The text can be reviewed and displayed in any order or sequence. It is thus possible to compare similarly coded sections with each other or with differently coded sections.

My qualitative data consisted, with the exception of my field notes, of tape recorded discussions. I transcribed these tape recorded discussions, verbatim, onto paper, which amounted to approximately 1200 pages. With the exception of non-interpretative data such as rice production cycle techniques I translated all the transcripts into English. This was hard work but as I had undertaken this type of work before during focus group research, it was manageable. Possible alternatives did suggest themselves, such as the use of a Thai program at the Australian National University Asian Studies Faculty or the use of the Apple Macintosh of which a Thai program is available. Nevertheless I was not quite certain of the programs’ compatibility with the Ethnograph program, which has its philosophical assumptions in the Grounded Theory
Perspective (Seidel et al., 1-1, 1985). Since I had experience in translating large amounts of transcripts I maintained my original plan of entering the translation into the Microsoft Word program and, following the procedure, transferred them onto the Ethnograph program for subsequent analysis.

e. Coding Qualitative Data.

As explained in the previous section, the in-depth and focus group discussion guideline went through numerous development stages seen as a process of refinement. During the initial stage of guideline development basic questions were set out. In subsequent implementation of the in-depth discussions inappropriate topics were discarded. Topics were considered inappropriate if they were irrelevant to any situation within the community. For example a question on older people monitoring each other’s conditions by doing ‘daily rounds’ to other people’s houses related to a situation encountered in previous research in rural Nepal. I decided to introduce this topic into the in-depth discussions. I discovered that there was no such system as such within my study community; nevertheless people with whom I discussed this did provide an answer. Interpreting this answer and observing their behaviour it was evident that such house visits were not routine, that is, they did not monitor, there was no systematic round of checks. These visits tended to be more for social or business purposes.

In addition to deleting irrelevant topics I also added some topics because their importance arose, in many cases spontaneously and unprompted, during the discussions. The final version of the in-depth discussion guideline, though not exhaustive, can be considered as a set of appropriate and relevant topics of discussion.

One of the major drawbacks encountered by researchers new to qualitative analysis is how to make sense of the data. The preparation of the data has already been explained in the previous section. This section explains the process of coding qualitative data. The philosophy
behind this process of coding can be seen in the Grounded Theory Perspective (Strauss, 1987). Grounded Theory involves the process of data collection for generating theoretical explanation whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses the data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them in order to develop the theoretical explanation as it emerges. The perspective offers a systematic process in focusing one’s interest on a substantive area. The attempt is to develop a theoretical position inductively during the process of information gathering and build theoretical explanations out of the data. The process of coding the data is in the use of open, axial and selective coding, of which a detailed explanation can be found in Strauss (Strauss, 1987:55-75). My interpretation of this process can best be provided by an example.

Open coding is the process whereby the reader of a qualitative transcript identifies various examples, categories, or subcategories within the text. Identification is undertaken in as general a process as possible. During open coding the researcher must read the transcripts attempting to be free of all previous cumulative knowledge and preconceptions pertaining to them. Ideas, concepts, descriptions are noted down in the margin and subsequently entered in as codewords in the Ethnograph program. An example is presented in figure 2.1. It must be reiterated here that the example given is not atypical of the many explanations provided by villagers and is not presented here because of any special descriptive qualities. Open coding may freely reign at all levels of analysis of identifying concrete examples, inductive generalizations and axial coding. No concerted effort is made at this level to necessarily organize and extrapolate inductively any generalizations. In this uninhibited fashion, concepts, categories, subcategories may be noted down during the reading of the transcript. A variety of questions may be asked concerning the text which at some later stage may develop into an interpretative framework.
Figure 2.1 A Coding Procedure of Qualitative Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concrete Examples</th>
<th>Inductive Generation</th>
<th>Axial Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>buffalo past</td>
<td>decreasing functional contribution</td>
<td>societal change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>machine present</td>
<td>rich uphold</td>
<td>lucky old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>precepts</td>
<td>present</td>
<td>societal change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less merit</td>
<td>cost of living</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extended family</td>
<td>reunion importance past</td>
<td>societal change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less importance</td>
<td>family reunion</td>
<td>improved transportation and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high cost of living, give children only</td>
<td>high importance</td>
<td>societal change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R: In the past we used buffaloes to thresh, now we use machines, only the young work on them. Old people nowadays, if they are a little rich they have it Sabye (pleasant), they uphold the precepts and eat before noon. Nowadays the cost of living is difficult and people make less merit now compared to the past. People in the past loved their siblings, it is not like that now. Wherever their siblings are they still love them a lot, when Songkran (Thai new year) arrives they must go to see each other and do a lot of conversing. Nowadays people can meet each other any time, new year, Christmas. Konboran (people in the past) believe that siblings love each other and so give food and care to each other. Nowadays it is the era of difficulty in feeding oneself. Like in the past they gave us a bowl of food we would give them a bowl of food in return. Now they have a lot of children, they don’t give us anymore.
After undertaking the open coding process the analyst must return to further develop and interrelate the explanatory schema. Thus an inductive jump is necessary. For example, the observation that people nowadays contribute less in merit making\(^3\) may be explained by the effect of expanding monetisation. In relation to the merit making process, ingredients which go into preparing food may all have a monetary value. Wildlife as a free resource is nowadays practically impossible to find; the growing of vegetables in any form necessitates the use of insecticides and fertilizers as a consequence of the salinity of the soil. In the past merit making costs were not given a second thought, presently the costs are a constant worry. For some old people such costs may render merit making impossible. Merit making is an important social function with psychological and/or spiritual benefit, as will be evident when other qualitative excerpts are interelated with this example. It is quite likely that the lack of any merit making by the old may have negative consequences on their well-being. Societal change thus brings with it the process of monetisation of the village economy affecting the daily lives of many in countless ways. One of its effects may be seen in the difficulty for the old to maintain an important social and psychological activity such as merit making.

It must be emphasized that the generalizations acquired from this single excerpt are not final. A process of constant comparison between other in-depth discussions with other old men, women, younger generation, focus groups etc. is necessary. While coding is done for an incident it is necessary to compare it with previous and subsequent incidents in the same and different groups of informants. The constant comparison of the incidents enables the generation and refinement of explanatory properties of the category (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:106).

\(^3\) A detailed analysis of the meaning of process of merit making is done in Chapter 4
f. Field Notes

My field notes could be considered as one of my most important information placing activities and events in which I participated within a time frame of reference. The notes consisted of a summary of the activities, events and places encountered each day. Where logistically possible I entered information into my field notes every afternoon or early evening upon returning to our hut. The re-reading of these records of events placed me back in time and refreshed my understanding of the events as they occurred on each specific day.

Problematic topics of discussions or wording of questions which I encountered during the day’s activities would be noted down in the notes. These would be reworded, deleted or modified and tested the next day.

Perhaps the most important contribution of the field notes was the emergence of analytical ideas arising from the day’s activities. I will provide one brief example here: I observed that a not insignificant number of adult children were employed as teachers, nurses and civil servants. An analytical idea emerged from this concrete example that societal change and its timing had an positive effect at least for some members of my study community. One consequence of societal change is the importance given to education as an avenue to betterment; another consequence of societal change is the increase in the price of land making it more difficult to purchase new land. For many villagers who had little land to divide out amongst their children, or who had no land but rented land and were considered worse off than those who had land, considerations about whether to save or borrow money to purchase land for their children or to send them off for higher education as a means for social and monetary advancement became foremost in their mind. The logic of this argument is not surprising but its timing is an important factor.

Societal change affected villagers in my community at an earlier stage than other more remote rural areas. Some children were sent to further their education in the hope of acquiring civil servant positions, especially in the
area of teacher training. For some of these children the investment paid off. These adult children who are now in their 30s and 40s have acquired teacher training degrees or B.A.s which allowed them to acquire teaching and other government positions; many of them have returned home to the village to set up their own homes. Being at home the aging parents would have benefited from their children’s physical presence in one form or another. The decision to return home by adult children was not necessarily prompted by a filial piety of any definition. Advantages in living at home were evident: in ease in transportation and communication prompted by societal change itself; easy access to land to build a house, and the possibility of a parent to watch over the house and care for the grandchildren. The old parents of such adult children in my community have benefited from societal changes as such as opposed to old parents in more remote rural areas. For the old in remote rural areas their realisation of the value of education occurred at a later time when the societal value of a teacher training degree or B.A. does not promise immediate job positions for their children.

Other analytical notes which directly emerged from my day to day experience and written down and analyzed in my field notes included, for example, the idea of kraengjai: meaning afraid of offending or imposing, stated by the old in reference to their married adult children. Kraitumkraidye: the concept of making individual merit and a possible interpretation of individualism. Yathakarm: to live within one’s means; this concept makes assessing the well being of an old person problematic when it is stated by them in relative terms. Plongsungkarn: to be resigned to impending death as a consequence of observed bodily deterioration.

2.4 Summary

This study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. These methods were not undertaken as separate entities in the data collection but were used in conjunction with one another, each respective
method building upon the other's findings.

An extended residence within the community resulted in a high degree of familiarity with the people; as a result of this, refusals to be interviewed or involved in discussions were almost nonexistent. As 'word' got around concerning how my wife and I conducted our home visits subsequent visits went very smoothly. The geography of the area also was advantageous in that we could directly observe daily activities of the community by paddling our boat along the klong. Perhaps, most importantly, the community members did not go out of their way to take care of us in any special way as accorded important government officials. It was not long after that, aside from our genuine curiosity and politeness, villagers realized we had no special abilities over and above others in securing any benefit for them from the bureaucracy.

The next chapter will provide a profile of the community, placing it within a time frame perspective. It is necessary to understand the community as it exists for its members, as only in this way would it be possible to relevantly explain the changes which have impacted upon support systems of the old.
3.1 The Meaning of Community

This chapter provides a background of the rural community in relation to its social history; special emphasis is given to changes in farming practices as these have a direct effect on the changing livelihood of the community and consequently the old. In addition, the Primary Based Data are introduced to show comparisons between the study tambol of Saladang and the district. The chapter traces changes from what can be described as predominantly communal subsistence to segregated dependence.

A community can be defined as a concentrated settlement of people in a limited territorial area, in which they satisfy many of their daily needs through a system of interdependent relationships (Theodorson, 1969:63). Inherent within this definition is the idea of a territorial area. Thus this definition of a community should be distinguished from that of say an ethnic community which may be widely scattered. A community also implies the acceptance of that community by both its inhabitants and those in the surrounding area. The territorial definition of an affiliation with Wat Paidum (Temple of Black Bamboo) can be considered as defining the boundaries of my study community. At the wat are undertaken ordinations, funerals, weddings and festivities of villagers in the area. The origins of relationships of villagers in the study area were built on the aforementioned definition of satisfying daily needs through a system of interdependent relationships. Villages acquired the name of the temple and people in outer surrounding areas refer to this 'set' of villages as Paidum. Being defined as affiliating with the temple implies being a Buddhist, therefore the odd Muslim household in the area will be known as Paidum villagers with certain qualifications; thus, 'he is from Paidum but
he is a Muslim' was a frequent explanation given to me for Muslim villagers in the Paidum community.

Local definitions of community are not necessarily rigidly demarcated. In my study site muu (village) two to muu seven are officially named as Paidum villages. In muu seven however at least half of the villagers attend another temple called Wat Bungtonglarng rather than Wat Paidum because it is closer; thus self-identification is problematical in this marginal case. Within the Paidum community official village boundaries are only important insofar as they are under the responsibility of different headmen. For official bureaucratic purposes each village has a number; village numbers are important only when villagers deal with the district office in registering births, deaths, migration and changes of title deeds. It is quite common for villagers not to know their village number but to state that they live in such and such a headman’s village.

Figure 3.1 presents a map of Tambol Saladang (sub-district of Saladang). The Paidum community consists of muu two to seven (shaded area) and is situated along the banks of Klong Saensaeb (meaning 'many stings': possibly referring to an abundance of mosquito bites). Demarcation lines show the official boundaries of each village’s paddy fields. Practically all households are built along the banks of klongs for various reasons such as transportation, water usage and purchasing various products from travelling salespeople. Tambol Saladang can be considered particularly fortunate in that all the villagers’ paddy fields have direct access to at least one of the klongs for irrigating their fields. The construction of the dirt road in 1975 further increased accessibility to and from the villages. There do not seem to be any ecological conditions which might reduce rice production for any particular village with the exception of uneven paddy, described in section 3.6.1.
FIGURE 3.1 MAP OF CENTRAL THAILAND AND PAIDUM STUDY COMMUNITY

Source: Sharp, 1978
Paidum community has a population of 1,262 persons with 611 males and 651 females and a sex ratio of 0.94 (Table 3.1). Muu one, the market, was not surveyed by the VPBD because of its non-rural criteria such as access to electricity, running water and occupational characteristics. It is particularly interesting, however, that muu one, which is situated a short distance from Wat Paidum is not named after the Wat. This is because muu one consists predominantly of Chinese shop owners who do not own or farm any land and who are not Buddhists. Though adjacent to Paidum villages muu one is known locally and officially as Klong 17 Market; thus religious affiliation and temple attendance seem to be likely indicators of community boundaries. Though muu one has been in existence for over 50 years its settlers, of Chinese origin and non-farming occupations, gave it its own identification distinct from the immediate surrounding area.

### 3.2 A Social History of the Community

The main problem encountered in constructing a local history of any sort, in Central Thailand, is the lack of...
written documentation. Over and above this Sharp et al. (1978) states that Thais in the Central region do not view history in a linear but rather in a cyclical pattern. Thus, events are seen as repetitions of the cycle, i.e. floods, storms, bad times and good times; Paidum social history is no exception. I was not the first in the study area to question villagers about the history of their community. A young and energetic school teacher named khru (teacher) Banharn had attempted to construct a history of the community. He wrote a paper as part of his course work when studying at a teacher training college (Banharn, 1986). It is interesting to note that apart from the Wat records of abbots and ordinations, Banharn could not find any other form of written records. His history of Paidum thus revealed only the past which older members of the community could recall approximately 100 years earlier.

The record of events which Banharn acquired from the Wat record books showed that Wat Paidum was established in the late 1800s, corresponding approximately to the time of my data attained from discussions with old villagers. Records were kept of dates of ordinations and departures from the monkhood, parents of the newly ordained monks and novices for the early years between 1931 to 1937. However, the dates of construction of various Wat buildings, such as the main sermon hall, the kuti (monks' quarters), water towers, etc., were not recorded. Perhaps most disappointingly, the activities of various somparn (abbots) known as leaders, were not recorded; there were no dates of their fund raising for community purposes, developmental efforts etc. The records that were kept were said by Banharn to be inconsistent and unreliable. The only reliable dates of activities by the abbots of Wat Paidum were those which he was told by living village members.

It is evident from Banharn's history of Paidum community that even he did not place much importance on dates and events. He saw the past as a time when people did things differently, in farming, the games children played and various festivities. There was no serious effort to place these activities and functions within a
time period in the form of dates. This is not surprising to any student of Thai culture: it has been recognized that popular Thai history has been that of kings and great leaders, used by various monarchs in the past for propaganda purposes in creating a form of national unity; a history of a local community or non-royal populations has been rare. The events and dates which I present here were collected during the 12 months of my field study. The information was acquired during house visits, in-depth and focus group discussions and casual conversation.

The year 1887 was the time when the present Wat Paidum was built on the southern side of Klong Saansaeb. In earlier times for which no records exist, the wat was situated at the northern side of the klong. When the somparn (abbot) of the wat in its original location died, the wat was said to be haunted and was abandoned to be later rebuilt on the southern side of the klong.

In 1927 two Chinese businessmen arrived in the Paidum area and set up a business selling small goods and farming implements. A few years later, in 1932, seeing the opportunity for profit in this area an influential businessman by the name of Luang (royal official) Chalum built the market now known as Klong 17.

In October 1, 1933, as part of the central government policy of expanding education to outlying areas construction began on Wat Paidum government school. Before this, schooling was given by monks at the wat on a casual basis; attendance was voluntary (In-depth Discussion 1:108-9; In-depth Discussion 13:9-13).

The years 1927-1933 saw the development of machinery for transportation along the klong; a boat was powered by a form of steam engine and was called Tungtung because of the sound it made. The operation expanded and was run by the Nailert White Boat Company; it later expanded in subsequent decades to include the White Bus service. This White Boat/Bus Company, known for its efficient and courteous service, is now amalgamated with the Bangkok Mass Transit Authority (BMTA).

In 1942 there was the 'big flood', so named by the villagers. Villagers I talked to were able to remember
this clearly as it coincided with the early occupation of Thailand by Japanese forces during World War II. Flood waters during this time were so widespread that villagers could attach sails to their boats and travel for long distances upon the paddy fields. Many households went without food for many days during this flood.

During 1943-44 there began the establishment by the central government of a village agricultural cooperative. The idea was sound but problems in funding and organization were evident, because of the war.

In 1943 there was bombing by the British in order to chase out the Japanese occupied forces, and many Bangkok people who had relatives living in Paidum returned to their villages. These times were extremely difficult for villagers in the community. It was necessary to ration basic necessities such as material for clothing, salt, fish soy. The lack of kerosene, candles and matches forced villagers to produce fish oil for lanterns and tightly matted straw to keep a flame going the entire day. The bombings continued throughout this time and were described by Auntie Dee as

the sky being lit red with the lights they dropped and then the bombs followed. I was terrified. The people from Bangkok fled to us. [The sound was so loud] I wanted to jump into the klong, they said don’t go in or your eardrums will pop. I was afraid that they would drop it on me (IDD14:159-169).

The post war era saw the development of newer forms of transport along the klong which were subsequently to influence transport and communication networks. In 1947 it was said that the development of the original long-tail boat was undertaken in Tambol Saladang. The original design used a converted diesel water pump attached to an exposed bamboo pole, serving as a propeller shaft attached to a wooden propeller. In 1952 there was a further development of the long-tail boat; this new boat was faster and was known as the Rua Duan (express boat). These boats were relatively expensive and were used mainly by transport
companies to take people from the village to Bangkok. In the same year there was a further development of the Agricultural Bank run by the central government. Funds were allocated to the Agricultural Bank, which in turn organized the development of tambol agricultural cooperatives and funded their activities.

The year 1956 saw the importation of the American four-stroke engine, Caller-Wisconsin, used as a long-tail boat engine. For the first time, local villagers were able to take out a loan to buy such an engine. Privately owned long-tail boats transformed many facets of life for the villagers; emergencies such as illnesses, business opportunities, communication channels. Before this when Uncle Durian was bitten by a cobra he had to wait many hours for a public boat to take him to Nongchok district hospital; that trip would have taken him half an hour with the new long tail boat engine.

In 1957 there was widespread use of corrugated iron replacing that of thatch for roof construction. Though iron did not provide the cool comfort of thatch its speed and ease in roof construction, its durability, as well as its identification with modernity and high status made it popular in the area with many villagers who could afford it.

The relatively quiet bliss of the klong, with the exception of public transport of the Nai Lert Boat Company, was transformed during the mid-50s. Privately owned long-tail boats could be seen passing back and forth. Further development of the long-tail boat continued with new engine models competing against each other. Teenagers now aspired to the ownership some day of a sporty long-tail boat; these aspirations have only recently been replaced by the desire to own a motorcycle. The mid to late 50s saw a further development in the form of a two-tiered hydrofoil-like long tail boat powered by a large diesel engine which travelled at very high speed(approximately 35 kilometres an hour). It was now quite dangerous to paddle a boat when one of these machines travelled down the klong. The advent of such high powered boats made difficult many activities of the old who paddle their boats for either social or
business purposes.

In 1957 Grandad Learn of muu 2 (now deceased) purchased the first large tractor in Saladang. All paddy fields were single-cropped during this time; single-cropping did not necessitate frequent ploughing of the paddy field which would make it very viscous and not ploughable by the tractor; the tractor enabled Grandad Learn to expand his rice acreage tremendously. Uncle Rian, soon afterwards, was the proud owner of the second tractor in the area. In the same year an all-weather highway was constructed to connect the district town of Minburi with the provincial capital of Chachoengsao; another form of transportation route thus opened up for villagers. During this year a flood occurred but it was not as disastrous as previous ones. Some crops were salvaged but not much was left over for sale.

During the late 50s to early 60s the predominance of communal help began to decrease. Increasing opportunities for non-farm wage work together with new road networks made travel to distant places much more convenient; more importance was placed on cash income. Some wage workers during harvest time began to demand more money while not harvesting to their full potential.

The late 60s saw the introduction of the mini-tractor. This enabled the average farmer to expand his rice production as the mini-tractor could plough much more land than the buffalo, consumed much less petrol than the large tractor and was comparatively easy to repair.

The early 70s saw the introduction of new high yielding rice varieties. These varieties enabled a farmer to grow at least two crops of rice in one year. The mini-tractor was a common phenomenon now as buffaloes found it difficult to plough the more sticky paddy fields. As harvesting two crops in a larger area was an impossible task for any single farming household the need for wage workers during harvest became even greater. These years also saw the introduction of the threshing machine by Uncle Durian and Uncle Tohn, the headman of muu 2. The machine was run by a car engine and enabled the separation of rice from the stalks through toothed steel bars. This machine
increased tremendously the speed of threshing, originally done by buffaloes tramping over the rice. What previously took buffaloes weeks to finish could now be done in a matter of hours. Rice production now was a race against time as farmers became part of the world rice market system; the sooner the rice could be harvested, threshed, dried and sold to the mill the sooner re-ploughing and planting could be undertaken.

In 1973 Paidum and its surrounding area was affected by a minor flood; though not destroying any significant amount of the rice crop it did affect its quality through higher humidity levels leading to a lower market price.

In 1975 the Ministry of Public Health established a health centre in muu 2 of Paidum; it served the Tambol Saladang area.

In 1977 electricity finally arrived in the Paidum community. Electric poles were driven into the klong every 100 metres and transformers were set up on the poles. Households that could not afford the connection fee connected their own lines from those that could. Electricity provided by the Electricity Authority was not consistent. When there were strong winds with the possibility of trees on the klong falling onto the lines the power would be cut off. In addition to this, power surges and drops were evident; the convenience of a strong and constant flow of electricity was not yet experienced.

The late 70s saw a further development in long-tail boat engines with the introduction of the Isuzu diesel engine.
Harvestors using a modern threshing machine

The mini-tractor, here converted into a shuttle to transport rice
In 1981 the rice crop was affected by an insect locally known as *pliyakrachoke* (Brown leaf hopper), which ate the newly sprouted rice. This type of insect was a rarity in the past single-crop era, when the rice was less susceptible to insects than the new variety. The insect was quickly eradicated by government-distributed insecticide. This year also saw the construction of a dirt road from the Bangkok suburb of Nongchok 16 kilometres away through to the health centre. In 1986 the new building of the health centre was constructed with funds from the Lions Club of Ayuthaya.

3.3 The Non-relevance of Support as an Issue in the Past

Under past conditions of communal assistance, caring for the old was considered as a non-issue. There were many people around to provide active and material support when needed. Affective ties and the sense of belonging within the village maintained a healthy social atmosphere for the old. Times were harsh but these values existed under environmental and living conditions which may be considered very Spartan by present day comparisons.

It was a jungle, I was told. It was a thick jungle and there were elephants, tigers and deer, everything. My father said when he went out to look for food in the dry season he could walk on the *klong* bed (IDD9:120-125).

When I was a child it was difficult. My parents led a difficult life because in making a living they had no labour saving devices. When [people] got old they still had to work. One stopped work when one got old; had to work with only one's hands and one's own burden. Like when threshing rice we all had to help (IDD3:71-80).
In the past if one had children they would farm. To farm closer to Bangkok or go elsewhere they would need contacts. They would farm for a living! Enough [to live on] and at other times not enough but farm for sure. So the parents were poor and the children farmed and it was not a very good life but they survived like that (IDD14: 700-709).

The past was more rugged than now. If we talk about the poor [farmers] their children did not go anywhere, they stayed within the household. The paddy was not consistent, sometimes good, sometimes bad (IDD14: 688-693).

Because of these harsh conditions, even in the recent past, the village maintained a greater sympathy and collective identity.

Whatever other people have they give it to you and whatever we have we give it to others. Nowadays there is none of this. In the past one could ask for rice to eat, it would be sticky rice. The people in the past would grow sticky rice along with their white rice (IDD3, Respondent 3:38-46).

For times of need either for themselves or others sticky rice is grown along with normal white rice. Sticky rice keeps longer, is easily stored and can be carried when travelling. Travellers who are in need can stop and ask local villagers for sticky rice to eat. Villagers never questioned the needs of others or refused the request for sustenance to those who asked for some, provided that these surplus stores of food existed. The interdependence on one another and communal sharing were very evident.

People back then were honest and straightforward. Whatever they did they did not have to ponder and worry much. They did not conceive of labour saving devices. There were no rice mills. If they wanted to husk rice they would put it in a mortar to pound it (IDD3.1, R2:115-121).

I lived with my parents and farmed [rice]. We all took care of each other like this. If [a
Values of sharing, caring and numjai (gratefulness) were typical traditional village values known as mubaan values in Thai society. The term mubaan been described by Nartsupha (1985) to have been in use since the 13th century. Nartsupha has been associated with the Culture of the Community Perspective of Change. This group advocates the development of positive values of the mubaan which they feel are being lost. Such values are stated as: numjai (heartfulness); brotherlihood; sharing and assisting one another; not taking advantage of others; simplicity; non-aggression; self-reliance and honesty. The mubaan’s relative self-sufficiency and maintenance of these values was achieved at the village level, not at the household level, because in the production process mutual aid among households with labour and farm implements was necessary. These practices of sharing had a strong influence on villagers’ outlook on life.

3.4 Societal Changes Affecting the Mubaan

Initial changes which affected the mubaan were not land scarcity but land disputes, which at the turn of the century were related to the boom atmosphere and rising market values of the time (Johnston, 1975:222). It is likely that the time period from the mid to the late 1800s saw disputes arising from certain people who cleared land onto an adjacent property and claimed that property as theirs. Such practices are quite common in forested areas which require large amounts of labour for clearing. More recent land disputes may involve not only neighbouring property owners but also relatives and acquaintances.

Grandad Learn had left the monkhood to marry a lady in an adjacent village. She had 50 rai of her own. Her elder brother had taken the deed to
the land to borrow some money from a money-lender in Bangkok. He was not able to pay back this loan and the money-lender promptly changed ownership of the land to himself. Grandad Learn did not know what course of action to take. Since it was not his land he left it to his wife to decide what to do. He never saw the deed to that land again (field notes July 1987).

Problems of land scarcity became more apparent in the 20th century and some adult children were reported to have subdivided the land in such a way that they received more fertile sections than their siblings.

Wage-labourers began to be more common most likely because of their inability to own land as a result of the many large land claims in the Central region at the time. These local wage workers charged little but were nevertheless symptoms of change affecting the domestic farming cycle. Johnston (1975:226) describes land claims by nobles as well as commoners which far exceed their capacity to cultivate. Wage labourers were also evident in the study community at the time.

Back then (approximately 1920s) one just ploughed and ploughed, there were no more expenses involved, did not have to invest any money. To hire someone to plough costs 25 Baht a month, one could plough for months [at this wage rate] (IDD3, R2:1262-1268).

The effect of foreign trade on the mubaan economy at the turn of the century has been seen as minimal. Nartsupha (1986) states that though foreign trade flourished it did not affect production inside the village. Sugar, grown and processed by large private companies was the major export commodity up to 1870 (Johnston, 1975:26-33). Important export items during this time were forest products like rawhide, cotton, sampan wood, and deer antlers. These products were gathered by villagers only for tribute to the central government, and subsequently exported, and were not traded amongst themselves. As a result of this there was minimal effect of foreign trade on
the domestic farming cycle of many mubaan (Suwit, 1984; Nartsupha, 1986).

The few landless labourers mostly came from the northeastern region, including Laos, but Johnson (1975:226) states that the supposedly large numbers of migrants were an overstatement. Severe land scarcity and population increases affecting the domestic farming cycle are a phenomenon of the latter half of the present century. From the 1860s onwards there began to appear villagers who rented all of their land and landless labourers (Douglass, 1984:67). Land scarcity became more predominant in the Central region during the 1930s when there were bad crop years and falling world market demand for rice, which resulted in many villagers falling into tenancy through their inability to pay debts. These villagers were now common in the local village scene of many mubaan in the Central Region. During this time landlords increased in number and power in the Central plains. Pakkasem et al (1978) states that landlordism in its most concentrated form, amounting to 80 percent of the total land area, occurred predominantly in provinces near Bangkok. Douglass furthermore states

Land 'breeds' land through rent incomes [income received by landowners from renting it out] which can be lent to smallholding families at the margin of existence and who, on the odds-maker's books, are bound to fail in the long run and be forced to forfeit or sell their small plots of land to their creditors (Douglass, 1984:71).

Such a situation no doubt benefited moneylenders such as Granny Run (discussed in a subsequent chapter). Such practices by moneylenders are on the decrease in contemporary times because of the establishment of the Farmers' Cooperative. Yet even with this system, villagers who borrow money may still encounter difficulties in repaying their debts if unseasonal rains or devastation of crops by rats occur.
Grandad Samrarn said that he borrowed 15,000 Baht (SA750) from the Agricultural Cooperative to buy fertilizers for the 50 rai (approximately 13 acres) he rents at 12 percent per annum. That year rats destroyed his entire crop, he only got two kwian (1000 Kilograms) of rice (approximate harvest of four rai) and he could not pay back the loan. He said:

The setting up of the Agricultural Cooperative was so that farmers could borrow at low interest rates and this should benefit farmers. But when I could not pay back [the loan] I went and told them, they told me to report this to the section which will come and look at my fields. Those people came and sat in my house. I told them 'why don't you go and look in my fields' but they just sat there. (Granny Chin confirms). Then they started looking at any valuables I had in my house like the television and electric fan and started putting a [monetary] value on it like they were going to confiscate it. That year the interest rate went up to 14 percent and now this year 17 percent. Is this the government's way of helping farmers? So what one has to do is borrow from the Chinese at five percent per month to repay part of what one owes to the Cooperative!

Back before we had the second [high yielding variety] crop I feel farmers were better off than now because rice per kwian was valued at 800 Baht (SA400) while fertilizer was 2.50 Baht per sack. All I ask from the government is that the market price of rice is kept close to the cost of producing it: the cost of fertilizer, petrol etc..! (August 15 field notes).

Under these conditions householders such as Grandad Samrarn who need credit most for their economic survival are the least likely to obtain it. If they are to remain as rice farmers they may have to borrow from traditional moneylending sources at a high monthly interest and with a very high likelihood of not being able to repay these debts.

Numerous studies (Piker, 1964; Sharp and Hanks, 1978; Douglas, 1984) have stated that by the late 1960s to early 1970s there was a change in the Central Plains economy which saw the appearance of landless labourers from within the mubaan: Konrubjarng (people who receive wages) as stated by Uncle Tohn. This situation no doubt affected strategies of the old to maintain possession of a portion of their property in order that the child who cared for
Fishing by casting nets is still practised by many poor villagers

Poor landless villagers can earn a small return raising ducks for large poultry companies
them would receive it. But more importantly it affected traditional relationships within and between reciprocating blood-tied households which dramatically changed the support received by the old.

Today we went and talked to the 'labourers' (Konrubjarn) who were digging ditches at Auntie Korn's house. They lived toward the Northwest direction of Paidum temple about one kilometre away. There were seven workers of whom two were brothers and five were children of the eldest brother. The eldest (approximately late 40s) said he had lived in this area since birth out near wat Kaarai. He said that his parents never had any land. During the rainy season they would dig irrigation ditches for hire. During harvest time they would harvest rice for hire. The younger brother said it is not possible to even consider rice farming because they would have to rent land and purchase farming equipment such as the mini-tractor. Other tools such as the various ploughs were also needed. The tractor itself would cost at least Baht 10,000 (A$500). Since they have no savings and no land they would have to borrow money from private lenders at around 10 percent a month. Some Chinese money-lenders would lend money to rice farmers for 3-5 percent per month but not to landless labourers such as themselves. They said that even then it is not a guarantee that they will make enough to live on as they know very well the problems which rice farmers encounter (June 21st 1987 field notes).

Such wage workers, though part of the community, are separated from it in that labour-exchanges and obligations between them and others are non-existent. The old of these people certainly would lead a difficult life with long periodic absences of their adult children from the household. More recently however, support given to the old of the labouring and the rice farming households by their children are becoming more similar. Changes in the process of monetisation and wage markets described in this chapter have limited the amount of physical presence of the adult children.

As production of rice began to be tied to exports, values of land increased and the changes in traditional farming practice for subsistence gave way to production for
export. Weaving had ceased in my study community for at least 30 years. With its fertile land the community was one of the first to acquire mechanization in the farming process. Mini-tractors and long-tail boats were used for transporting rice to the rice mills which were being set up along the klong.

Earlier relationships of communal assistance began to break down as local villagers became landless through indebtedness and population increases. Subdivision of land through inheritance was no longer a viable alternative for old parents. Land speculators who bought large tracts of land from villagers became a more common phenomenon. Remittances by children began to assume a more important role in support. The purchase of farming land may provoke questions as to why some farmers who were not in debt, though a small proportion, would want to sell land of which they have been a part all their lives. Farming has always been a precarious way of life. Farmers are also not completely familiar with the monetized economy and when offered what seems to be a 'large sum of money' consider that they might be able to live on this for the rest of their lives; land availability was already severely limited and it was difficult to subdivide the land appropriately among their numerous offspring. Land speculators wanting to buy land for industrial sites and housing development schemes have offered farmers on potentially good sites sums of cash larger than they have ever dreamed of before. Under such societal changes the continual breakdown of the domestic farming cycle can be clearly seen. Communal assistance has thus all but ceased in the mubaan. Remnants to be discussed in Chapter 4 are the communal effort in religious activities of todkratin and todpapa and yet these have also lost their traditional meaning in practice.

[Things have changed] for many years now. The traditions of Takbaht, Todkratin, and Todpapa. Like we [in the past] would go Todpapa at three temples. Villagers would all get into their boats, 8-10 people a boat and all go together. Each village [would take turns and do this]. It is like we go and meet and make friendships between villages, a unity between distant
villages far away from each other, like you are now truly one of us. [But now] it is more individual...It relates to the economic situation. In the past people were not poor, [they] had enough to eat with some left over. Now the economic situation has tightened up and everyone has to fend for themselves (in-depth 9, Samrarn: 1190-1210).

Furthermore the attendance of most if not all family members has ceased (see Chapter 6). It is now impossible for households with no land, farming utensils or beasts of burden to provide for any reciprocal obligation as their parents did in the past.

Farmers with land began to employ wage labourers, who in many cases travelled across provinces to acquire work. These farmers now produce almost all for sale to the rice mills. In many instances they do not have time to mill their own rice and sell all to the mill and then buy a small portion back for their own household consumption. More recently the introduction of the High Yielding Varieties of rice has created higher dependency of farmers, even those with their own land, on specialized chemical fertilizers and pesticides to maintain high productivity.

With these changes affecting the domestic farming cycle what is seen is a transformation from extended-kin groups in a communal reciprocating process to individual households maintaining their own separate economic existence. Farmers with their own fields acquire wage labour during harvesting and threshing, landless villagers hire out their labour and travel long distances to acquire wage work; such are the contemporary societal conditions in which the old live.

In the numerous households of labourers the old receive intermittent care. Those who work on rented land may leave the old unattended. A particularly difficult problem is the lack of active and social support given to the old by their adult children. The above-mentioned traditional mubaan values of caring, sharing and warmheartedness are still evident today. Yet the changes in the domestic farming cycle do not allow them to be expressed, thus the remark
You ask me whether I love my parents? I will tell you. I do not love them because I do not have time to love them (FG, Participant 2).

3.5 Exploitation of Opportunities

Societal changes discussed up to now did not cause disadvantages to all within the mubaan; different people were affected in different ways. Within this agricultural community there are diversities which result in benefits to a small number of households. Though these diversities represent only a small fraction of the community they demonstrate the growing value of a ‘business oriented’ way of life rather than a traditional way of relying purely on rice farming and dependence on rains. These advantages did not necessarily accrue only to land owning households. They are discussed here to show that opportunities realized through societal changes, though few, were possible for some villagers.

3.5.1 Seizing Economic Opportunities

The first value change deals with the idea of seizing economic opportunities rather than waiting for them to come. The construction of a watergate in the nearby district of Donchimpli was instigated by a former headman named Uncle Wan in the late 1970s. Uncle Wan is now 63 years old and has retired from the headman position at the obligatory age of 60. Funds were allocated by the government to construct watergates in the district but Headman Wan lobbied for it to be constructed in klong 15 passing through his village.

[former headman Wan] recognized that the cost of living of present times is a different world from when he was young. This did not mean though that he is suffering hard times. He stated to us that
he has been all over the country working, been to war, read a lot on politics and the current economic situation of the country and has realized the economic opportunities available to the common person. He said that he has taken advantage of the opportunities available to him in various business ventures and spared no cost in giving what wealth he had to his 10 children for 'one cannot take one's wealth with one when one dies'. He is happy that his children married well. He told us: 'there is no future for villagers if they expect [economic] opportunities to come their way. One must seize the opportunities. Villagers cannot prosper if they get up in the morning, go to the rice fields, come back eat, and go to sleep, opportunities will not come to them' (field notes August 8th 1987).

Headman Wan claims that it is because of seizing such opportunities that he got the construction in front of his house of the large watergate. The gate blocks water from flowing out during the dry season and drains water out during the rainy season. This would benefit many villagers, he said, and he himself would benefit because when the gates open he can catch a lot of fish and place them in his fish pond.

Though Uncle Wan can be considered as seizing economic opportunities through his position as a headman many other forms of economic earning activities outside rice farming also exist. One such common form is the construction of various-sized fish ponds.

Fish ponds are an emerging income-earning activity for an increasing number of farmers. Obviously timing is important and the first few householders who constructed these and contacted buyers on a regular basis have a more regular and/or permanent outlet to sell their fish. Fish ponds do not necessarily depend on their size whether income is high or not but rather on the type of fish and its weight. A certain degree of speculation is necessary as to what type of fish should be raised as market prices are determined by availability of any type of fish. Benefits which do accrue from larger fish ponds (1 rai upwards) are economies of scale. Owners of such ponds can buy feed at a cheaper price and can sell their fish about
once a year by draining the entire ponds and having the buyers weigh each different type of fish caught and pay the market price. Smaller ponds are not annually drained. Owners of these ponds catch their fish with nets and sell to small buyers such as market vendors who come to buy 50-60 kilograms at a time. Since there were no seasonal catches for such ponds, and fish are hatched and raised at different times, I did not tabulate any numerical data.

There is a certain amount of cash outlay in constructing fish ponds. Chief among this is the hiring of a grader to grade a crater-like area approximately six feet deep at 500 baht an hour for about 10 hours. Laying hens are commonly raised on a platform above the pond; their droppings serve as feed for the fish. Such cash outlays can be borrowed from the many agricultural co-operatives or banks so it is possible for a household with little cash in hand to embark upon this. The six households who had established fish ponds have acquired a steady income from them.

Other economic activities needing less cash outlay, some mentioned previously, include food stalls which may serve noodles and candy for children. Such food stalls can be constructed in one day with raw materials of bamboo poles and thatch. Grocery shops may be constructed of more permanent material such as wooden frames and corrugated iron and may sell rice as well as noodles; the well established shop of Grandad Chai adjacent to the temple also has a television which brings in numerous customers. The income from this shop has enabled him to build a new house worth 200,000 baht (A$10,000). Headman Pai in the adjacent muu four is experimenting with shrimp raising, for which he constructed six square cement ponds approximately six feet by six. Others such as Pai in muu two and Nong, granny Mali's daughter, sew patches of design onto clothes for a businesswoman in Nong Chok district. Uncle Tuu and Chamlong, grandad Samrarn's son, make brooms which are bought in bulk by the two rice mills in the area. Uncle Mon, as discussed in Chapter 5, is well known for embarking on many business ventures such as chicken raising, fish ponds, fermented fish and growing vegetables for sale. His
oldest son has continued in this form of business by being a large wholesaler of coconuts.

These descriptions have been mentioned here to show that societal changes have resulted in some community members taking decisions, and risks, in attempting to acquire a better living than that of purely rice farming. A generation ago these opportunities within the community did not exist. What can be observed is that there are emerging differences in standards of living in the study community. The few households who have benefited from various business ventures are not totally dependent on environmental conditions in maintaining a livelihood; there is less uncertainty in their lives. They are able to pay off their debts regularly and acquire household necessities when they are needed. The old people of such households are seen by others as having a lot of *bun* (merit).

3.5.2 Cohort and Regional Effect.

Societal change arrived in the study community earlier than in more remote rural areas. One consequence of change is the importance given to education as a way to betterment. Another consequence is the increase in the price of land making it more difficult to purchase new land. Some villagers had little land to divide amongst their children; foremost in their minds were considerations about whether to save or borrow money to purchase land for their children or to send them off for higher education, as a means of social and monetary advancement. Such decisions were taken by many parents, but at an earlier stage than in more remote rural areas. Children of such parents, who are now in their 40s, were able to acquire positions as primary and secondary school teachers, nurses, and public servants. These people were the first cohorts of village communities to exploit the expansion of job opportunities in the public service and state educational system. Grandad Sin in *muu* 2 provides a good example of this.
Grandad Sin only owns four and three quarter rai of land. When his daughter was young he decided that acquiring an education for her was a better future since the land was not enough to support a family. His only child is now a senior nurse in a Bangkok hospital. At 76 years old Grandad Sin has lived alone since his wife died 30 years ago. His house is compact, well built and is raised in two sections, one a living room and bedroom and the other a kitchen. Foundation posts are high concrete pillars. He has a television, refrigerator, electric fan and many nude calendars on the wall. He had spent the last two months in hospital for a gallstone complication but because of his daughter all medical expenses were not charged (field notes).

Given Grandad Sin’s situation of living alone he can be considered very fortunate that his only child is able to support him materially.

Similar decisions were also made by Granny Kuntong and her husband Grandad Sawang. They sent their two sons to teacher training college and both are now senior teachers in primary and secondary schools. They live with their mother and provide monthly remittances. With her children at home Granny Kuntong benefits more directly from their livelihood. The decision to return home by her sons was not only prompted by filial piety; changes affecting the mubaan created more easier transportation for them to go to and from their schools. In addition they had free access to land on which to construct their house. Similarly Auntie Som, the second wife of Uncle Pian decided quite early in her childbearing that her children were unlikely to acquire inheritance from their father’s mother given that the first wife, who had nine children, would have first claim. Auntie Som decided that education was the only avenue in which her five children could maintain an adequate life. She took this gamble and borrowed money from her mother-in-law to send the eldest son and daughter to technical college and nursing school. Subsequently, through personal contacts her eldest daughter was able to enrol her younger sister at nursing school as well. These two siblings are now practising nurses and are ‘pushing’ their youngest sister to further her education in Bangkok. The changes in
Auntie Som's household are striking in comparison to that of the first wife. There, all the children are rice farmers and though they may have future claims to inheritance their present economic dependence on their father, and grandmother as owner of the land, results in much strain on the household's economic resources.

At present competition for non-agricultural jobs has increased and more and more college graduates are competing for fewer jobs in the government sector. Increasing knowledge of the problems encountered in working for a large state bureaucracy, with its perceived corruption, low pay and uncertain future has created new values. Government positions are now not necessarily seen as a worthy objective for an educated person. Opportunities in the private sector are seen to provide more remuneration. Opinions such as these were also stated in numerous focus group discussion in the central region as reported by Knodel et al. (1984).

Evident in this community history are descriptions of societal changes which have affected the community in a not uncommon fashion for many Third World rural areas. Perhaps the most significant effects are changes in rice farming practices directly affecting the livelihood and lifestyle of the community and increasing the availability of wage work within and outside the community. The following section addresses current rice farming practices in the community; following this the Primary Based Data show the wage-earning occupations acquired by community members.

3.6 Rice Farming

3.6.1 Single-Crop Variety

Basically there are two types of rice; the single crop variety and the multi-crop variety. The single crop variety can be grown only once in a 12-month cycle; it uses less water and is of relatively good quality. There are two types of single crop variety: the first is known locally as khaonasaun which uses less water, is of good
quality and comes in three different weight classes of light, medium and heavy; the second type, known as khaonamuang, uses more water than khaonasuan and is less susceptible to floods as it can grown up to two metres in height, but it is of poorer quality. No farmers in my study community were still growing this second type. Single-crop varieties take approximately five and a half months to grow.

a. Ploughing

In the months of May, June and July farmers begin ploughing their fields. Rice fields are divided into sections so that the water level can be controlled; ploughing is undertaken a section at a time. The size of a section is decided by the evenness of the land; a section of uneven land would result in poor crops as the water level would be uneven. Evenness of the land is thus one of the most important considerations when either buying or renting land on which to farm. If a farmer owns his own fields he will, over the years, attempt to grade his various sections into one large even plot; in this way the procedures of ploughing, broadcasting and controlling the water flow are more efficient and result in a crop of higher quality. Within the Paidum community rice sections of various sizes can be seen and more efficient crop productions can be gauged by the size of the section. Areas which are either too high or too low are thus left barren. Some high areas may be used as temporary shelters during the harvest season where farmers can watch over their crops. Some low areas which may be under water during the monsoon season may be used to raise fish, or for irrigation of the adjacent rice plots, or they may be left unattended. Uncle Durian had mentioned that one of his major lifetime aspirations was to completely grade all his land so that it would be level; in this way he could more effectively control the quality of his rice.

Ploughing is undertaken in three stages. The first stage is called tyedah (harrowing) which involves turning the soil over; this stage is undertaken after the previous harvest has been gathered. After completion of tyedah,
water is pumped into the field to soften the ground for the second stage of ploughing called tyeklaad which breaks down the large clumps of earth into smaller pieces. The final stage of ploughing is tyepaa involving a long rectangular toothed steel bar which is dragged along the surface of the paddy-field to form a smooth surface ready for broadcasting.

b. Broadcasting

As ploughing is finished in one section broadcasting of the rice seeds can be undertaken. Rice seeds are acquired from the previous year’s crops, if it was a good year; they can also be bought from the government. Some single-crop varieties of rice, such as Jasmine rice, still have a strong market demand. Since the single-crop rice needs less fertilizer and chemical pesticide some farmers still grow such varieties. In most instances, however, farmers make a compromise in growing various types of single-crop and multi-crop varieties. Before broadcasting the rice seeds are soaked in water and then taken out and placed in a damp cloth for approximately three days. During this time the rice will have begun sprouting and is ready to be broadcast. Uncle Durian once acquired a new rice variety and soaked these seeds in water, but the rice did not sprout in the following three days. He and his wife Auntie Sert decided that maybe these new varieties would only sprout once they were broadcast, and they began broadcasting over his 40 rai (10 acre) section. The rice did not sprout and that year he lost time and money in re-ploughing and broadcasting.

Preparing seeds to be broadcast by soaking has to be planned to coincide with the correct timing for the paddy field to accept the seedlings. If a farmer broadcasts too early after ploughing the soil may be too soft and the rice grain may sink too deep into the soil; the rice may sprout inadequately or not at all. If a farmer waits too long to broadcast, the soil may be too hard and the seeds may not take root in the soil. Ideally a farmer should broadcast under conditions where half of the rice grain
(approximately three millimetres) sinks into the soil.

After broadcasting and when the rice sprouts roots and begins to grow it is necessary to maintain the water level at approximately half the length of the rice stalk; this is done by pumping water into the fields. If it rains after broadcasting in such a way that the water level rises above the half-way mark then it is necessary to drain water from the fields. If it rains too heavily and the rice plot cannot be drained in time, a particular danger with large plots, the rice may drown and the crop may be ruined.

The following months of August, September and October require the maintenance of the water level; weeding areas where grass has grown up among the rice and transplanting areas of high rice density to low rice density.

c. Harvesting

In the months of November, December and part of January farmers begin to harvest their crop depending on the variety which they have grown. As many farmers have now developed large plots most of the harvesting is done by wage workers either within the area and/or workers who travel from other provinces for the specific purpose of hiring out their labour during harvest time. Many children in the area have acquired steady urban wage-work. Because of this they are not able to return to assist in harvesting. Farmers who lack such labour during harvest must depend on hired workers. During the fallow months of February, March and April the paddy field is left to recover. In the past when water levels in the klong were not controlled during these dry months it was not possible to grow anything on the land.
3.6.2 Multi-Crop Varieties

The new rice variety, enabling two crops in a 12 month cycle, was introduced into the Paidum community approximately 12 years before my field study. This heralded an era in which farming was transformed from a relative subsistence occupation into an entrepreneurial business. The people of Paidum community were lucky in the sense that they had easy access to water, a prime ingredient in the successful cultivation of new rice varieties. For some farmers whose land was not adjacent to the klong an underground pipe was laid under the road to reach their fields; other farmers with adjacent lands simply connected a mobile pump from the klong to their fields.

The new rice varieties need 90-115 days from the time of broadcasting to harvesting. The various stages of tending the crop, though similar to those for the single-crop variety, have to be more exact as the new varieties are sensitive to any change in environmental conditions. The only indication of when to begin ploughing and broadcasting is the level of the water in the klong; if the water level is sufficiently high farmers will plough their fields and begin broadcasting.

The fear of field rats necessitates consultation amongst farmers as a joint decision is needed as to when they should broadcast, if one farmer broadcasts his rice before others rats will eat up most of his crop. Under normal conditions field rats can consume a minimal proportion of a crop if all farmers plant their crop simultaneously.

The sensitivity of the new rice varieties necessitates a very smooth and level paddy, thus the final ploughing stage of tyepaa must produce a smoother surface than for single-crop varieties. Weeding and fixing rice, similarly, must be undertaken so that the broadcast fertilizers and sprayed pesticides do not promote weed growth adversely to the sprouting rice. Chemicals to control insects and fungus are also required. Exact proportions and doses of such chemicals are provided by the Ministry of Agriculture.
but these officials also receive advice from farmers as to various proportions which they have experimented with and found to be successful. In addition, water levels have to be monitored much more carefully than for single-crop varieties. Twenty days after the rice broadcast Urea fertilizer is broadcast over the fields. Ten days before harvesting all water must be pumped out of the fields so that the rice will ripen equally and can be harvested in one effort. The harvested rice is dried in the sun for up to two days before threshing can begin.

The introduction of the new multi-crop variety of rice made obsolete the use of buffaloes for ploughing the land, as the greater frequency of ploughing results in the soil being more viscous, making it difficult for buffaloes to plough. The introduction of the mini-tractor superseded the buffalo in speed and efficiency and allowed farmers to expand their paddy fields within the same period; however, this also increased the cost of production and limited the contribution of the old to various farming tasks. Mini-tractors as a 'labour-saving device' (kruangtunrang) was jokingly referred to by many old villagers as 'labour-saving only of buffaloes' (tunrangkwai). Though faster and more efficient it demands brute force to run; physically capable older people are able to plough with the buffalo but not the mini-tractor. A trade-off can be seen in technological improvements and production increases and decreased functional contribution in farming by the old.

3.6.3 Monitoring

The time period between broadcasting and harvesting entails a process of monitoring, which involves two basic categories of preventative and curative methods. Prevention involves foreseeing possible dangers to the crops such as changing water levels, insects, rats etc. When preventative methods are not successful or are not used, immediate curative methods of spraying larger doses of insecticide and trapping or electrocuting field rats are needed. During my field study insects began to eat the
rice in many fields. This had occurred because there were unseasonal rains which in conjunction with the timing of the planted rice made the rice grain soft. The rains had caused the water level to rise and in slightly uneven paddy areas the rice grew tall in order to escape drowning. These tall rice stalks began sprouting soft leaves which were eaten by insects. Because of the unseasonal rain Uncle Rian lost about six rai of crop to the insects, a loss which he regarded as minimal. It was insignificant compared to the time when rats once devastated about 40 rai of his crops.

The seriousness of crop devastation by field rats cannot be understated. During my field study I was told on numerous occasions of the on-going 'war' which farmers had with rats and the rats' unbelievable efforts to completely destroy the rice crop. The last massive crop destruction by rats was in 1982 when they destroyed about 70-80 percent of the rice production in the Paidum area. No villager could explain why the rats came in such numbers or why they have not returned in force since then. Rats were still trapped during the time of my field study but nowhere near the numbers of 1982. A common preventative method against rats is the use of a double electric fence surrounding the entire plot of rice. Uncle Rian used this fence in 1982 and electrocuted 700 field rats in one night. The fence consists of two horizontal wires about two feet apart from each other connected by a wire mesh. The entire mesh surrounds the rice field and is connected directly to a 220-volt outlet. In 1982 some farmers placed bamboo fish traps on the inside of the electric meshing. For rats which were able to leap over the fence the fish traps would stop them temporarily before they fell back onto the electric fence. Some rats eat the roots of the rice stalk outside the fence so that they fall on top of the electric fence in sufficient amount to form a bridge which they can cross over; others dig tunnels under the fence to get at the crop. Using the net design described above was said to be about 80 percent effective in preventing rats from devastating the rice crop though there were some reports that during the 1982 devastation the huge numbers of rats
climbing the fence short-circuited the fuses of many households. At Uncle Samrnarn’s house the rats took three to four days to destroy his 50 rai of paddy (IDD14).

3.6.4 Changes in Farming Practices

The various improvements in farming practices have increased land area cultivated and production of all farmers. Leaving aside the disadvantages of increased dependence on market prices, fertilizers and pesticides, these improvements decreased the participation of the old in farming tasks. Such changes do not mean that life in the past was more pleasant in all its facets, only different:

The elderly in the past had it more difficult than the elderly nowadays....My parents had it very difficult because making a living they had no labour saving devices. When [people] got old, they still had to work. ...One had to work with one’s hands, with one’s own burden, like when threshing the rice we all had to help...There were no rice mills. If one wanted to husk the rice one would put it in a mortar to pound it... using the pestle to pound the rice so the husk would crack. My mother was the one who winnowed. It needed many people.....we[old] thresh rice with the buffalo and had to help gather the hay. Old people winnowed. My husband and I would winnow and grind the rice till it is white for cooking (IDD3:115-478).

Though farming tasks were different in the past, activities were done in an extended-family communal effort. Daily life could be seen as physically demanding but emotionally satisfying for old people since farming activities were undertaken together.

3.7 Primary Infrastructure of the District

This section presents the primary infrastructure of Tambol Saladang and Bangnampriao district. This data set
is known as the Primary Based Data set (see Chapter 2) and include population and economic characteristics of households. The field study tambol of Saladang is compared with the other nine tambols within the district; as this section deals only with general primary information most of the data are presented in the form of bar charts.

Table 3.2 presents population characteristics of Bangnampriao district, which has a total population of 50,821 with 8810 households. The study tambol of Saladang can be considered one of the larger tambols in number of households with 1025, but its population size of 5727 ranks it in the middle range of the other nine tambols. Tambol Saladang has a sex ratio of one and an average household size of 5.59. The average district population characteristics shown at the bottom of the table do not vary significantly from the study tambol of Saladang.

Table 3.2 Bangnampriao District Population Characteristics by Tambol 1987

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tambol</th>
<th>No. of households</th>
<th>Pop.</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Sex Ratio</th>
<th>Avg. HH size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saladang</td>
<td>1025</td>
<td>5727</td>
<td>2860</td>
<td>2867</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singtotong</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>3819</td>
<td>1896</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donkoka</td>
<td>1020</td>
<td>5759</td>
<td>2809</td>
<td>2950</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkanat</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>1055</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmontong</td>
<td>1235</td>
<td>6810</td>
<td>3405</td>
<td>3405</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donchimpli</td>
<td>1142</td>
<td>6859</td>
<td>3259</td>
<td>3600</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangnampriao</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>4734</td>
<td>2358</td>
<td>2376</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bungnamruk</td>
<td>896</td>
<td>5551</td>
<td>2601</td>
<td>2950</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yotaka</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>4355</td>
<td>2062</td>
<td>2293</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prongakat</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>5238</td>
<td>2605</td>
<td>2633</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8810</td>
<td>50821</td>
<td>24769</td>
<td>26052</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>5082</td>
<td>2477</td>
<td>2605</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Based Data, Ministry of Interior, 1987.

Table 3.3 presents the 1980 census data for the Bangnampriao district and my projected population for 1987. It is immediately evident from this data that the

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1 Parameters used for the projection were acquired from Population Projections for Thailand 1980-2015 pages 9-12. National Economic and Social Development Board, Bangkok October 1985. Life expectancy rate used for projection for
total population recorded in the census is higher than that for the primary based data (PBD). It is likely that the census enumerated the people according to their legal place of residence; this rather pure form of de-jure definition would tend to overenumerate the population. The Primary Based data on the other hand asked the questions: 'How many people are actually living in this village?'; 'How many men and how many women?'; and 'What is the total number of households in this village?'. It is likely that the PBD would, through recall errors of headmen, underenumerate the village population rather than overenumerate. It is my opinion that the data acquired from such village headmen, considering the small size of villages in the district, would be a relatively accurate estimate of the actual village population. Unfortunately the PBD did not include age groups of the population in any form amenable to analysis. The projected populations has a median age, 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.3 Bangnampriao District Population for 1980 and Projected 1987 Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


both males and females acquired from Table 5, page 12 for two time periods of 1980-1985 and 1985-1990 but projected only to 1987. Projected total fertility rates acquired from Table 4 for only the East Region for two time periods of 1980-1985 and 1985-1990 but only projected to 1987.
support ratio and index of aging of 15-19, 12.8 and 24.3 respectively (not shown in Figure 3.2). Again as was mentioned in Chapter 1 these higher projected ratios are largely attributable to rapid fertility reduction since the late 1960s. The projected population though does not take into account out-migration. It is likely that the economically active population in the ages 15-45 would affect the proportionate size of this projected pyramid shown in Figure 3.2, making it more top-heavy than shown and thus depicting more an aging population.

Figure 3.3 presents agricultural land ownership of households by category of ownership. In Tambol Saladang 11 percent of the households farm their own land; 9 percent farm their own land but rent additional lands to farm; 23 percent rent all the land they farm and 56 percent do not farm at all. Saladang’s small proportion of owner-operated farms is similarly matched by the district average. From my field study I have observed that two possibilities exist for owner-operated farms to maintain their livelihood: first, if the farm area is small there is a need for other types of cash earning activity such as agricultural and non-agricultural wage work, within or outside the district. Secondly, if the farm area is large enough then total dependence on income derived from the harvest may be possible. For farming households with small plots of land the only possible way to maintain their livelihood as rice farmers is to increase their paddy area by renting more land. In Saladang only nine percent were able to rent additional lands. It is difficult now for many households to rent additional land as most available land is already occupied; some available land may necessitate the farmers travelling long distances from their first plot. Thus for some farmers their plots of land may be scattered in different directions, which is a deterrent to farming rice as a total livelihood. It is likely that where tambols have higher proportions renting additional land

\[ \text{Support ratio} = \frac{\text{pop.60+}}{\text{pop. 15-59}} \times 100 \]
\[ = \frac{4979}{38926} \times 100 = 12.79 \]
\[ \text{Index of aging} = \frac{\text{pop.60+}}{\text{pop.<15}} \times 100 \]
\[ = \frac{4979}{20487} \times 100 = 24.30 \]
FIGURE 3.2 POPULATION PYRAMID FOR 1980 AND PROJECTED POPULATION FOR 1987, BANGNAMPRIAODISTRICT

Source: Thailand Population Projections
National Statistical Office, 1985

FIGURE 3.3 AGRICULTURAL LAND OWNERSHIP

Source: Village Primary Based Data, 1987
(Donchimpli, Bangnampriao, Yotaka for example), this is because of greater accessibility of land for rent; it is also likely that these lands have lower values and consequently lower rents.

The third category, renting all the land the household works, at 41 percent is a significant proportion for the district average. In Saladang 23 percent of households rent all the land they work on; payment of rent is either in cash or in kind. In my study site I observed that households had rented land on a long-term basis. Through long term contractual arrangements Auntie Jumnian, for example, paid approximately 60 tang (600 kilograms) of unmilled rice every harvest to the Thai Muslim owners of the land. This amounted to the harvest of two rai out of the 15 she rented from the landlord and can be considered a minimal rent. Auntie Come who does not farm but rents one rai of land for her house pays 100 Baht (A$5) per year for her rent. Many absentee landlords in Tambol Saladang are Muslims whose families have lived in the area since the mid 19th century; their ancestors were prisoners of war from the south and were brought to clear the area and produce rice for King Rama V. Sharp (1978:Ch.3-5) provides a detailed social history of the arrival and settlements of Muslims during this era. Auntie Come’s and Jumnian’s landlords are descendants of such Muslims. The contractual arrangements which they had for renting land were determined more by interpersonal relations than by those of an exploitative or market oriented nature.

The possibility of an increase in rent of the land is brought under pressure as market prices of land in Saladang have increased as a response to societal changes. Paddy fields in many areas adjacent to roads or klongs have fetched prices as high as 60,000 Baht (A$3000); in more remote areas of Saladang prices are still relatively high at 25,000 baht a rai (A$1250). There the absentee landlords still empathize with the local people and wish to retain the low rates of rent. Nevertheless there is a degree of apprehension among villagers that these rents may not remain stable. Auntie Come’s daughters are attempting to make down-payments on a small plot of land in a housing
estate (60 square metres), on which to build a house for their mother. These attempts by working children with stable incomes represent a realization of the uncertainty of remaining on the land which they have rented for many decades. It is more likely that such lands would not be rented to new tenants at higher prices but would be sold at market prices; a one-rai plot of land 100 metres from Auntie Come’s residence, for example, was sold during the time of my field study for 50,000 baht (A$2500).

Perhaps what most significantly indicates the effect of societal change in Tambol Saladang is that over half of the households do not farm. From casual observation a visitor to Saladang would conclude that the study site’s population is almost totally engaged in farming; this is relatively accurate, but many are not farmers or renters but landless workers, including ditch diggers, harvesters, wage earners who hire out their labour for any type of job offered; and small food-stall owners, fishermen etc. Such landless workers were a common phenomenon in my study site. Sin, for example, a 45-year-old landless labourer in muu six was born in Saladang of a landless family; his work consists of digging long ditches for farmers in the area, in preparation for the rainy season. During harvest periods he and his two sons and one daughter hire out their labour to harvest the rice. His eldest son explained that they do not consider farming rice any more because they would have to rent the land.

Other people I encountered who did not farm included, for example, Granny Fang and her brother Grandad Fuk who in their late 70s still hired out their labour during harvest times; Uncle Sawang, a gardener who grew bananas and depended a lot on his children’s remittances; Uncle Suk a police sergeant who returned to his home after retirement; Uncle Pun the wat lay leader who was a retired school teacher; Uncle Po who was once a monk and now earns a living as a bookie; Grandad Learn an ailing farmer who totally depends on remittances from his children and charity from other villagers. Viewed from this perspective it is not surprising that the data in Figure 3.3 show a rather high proportion of people who do not farm any rice.
Figure 3.4 presents area under rice cultivation. It can be seen that households cultivating 0-10 rai constitute a small proportion in both the district and Saladang. As mentioned briefly above, 0-10 rai of land can be considered insufficient to maintain a household. For these households other forms of cash earning income are necessary such as the various forms of wage work described previously. Some households may have inherited these small portions of land from their parents. Deceased parents would give out equal shares of their lands to their children and thus large shares would be subdivided into smaller ones. These households have decided to maintain their 'ancestral land' whilst their adult children acquire other forms of wage earning opportunities usually outside the tambol; Auntie Kuntong's 10 rai of land is farmed by her school-teacher son, and the income she derives from it is minimal, with her major income coming from remittances from her two sons, both school teachers.

FIGURE 3.4 AREA UNDER RICE CULTIVATION

Source: Village Primary Based Data, 1987
Households with 11-20 rai would just be able to maintain their livelihood as rice farmers, though some additional work as wage workers during harvest would be necessary. For some in these categories the minimal extra money earned, if any, may enable them to set up a small shack beside the road to sell soft drinks, rice whisky and snacks to passers-by; this is a popular form of business as the initial outlay is minimal. Plots of 11-20 rai are still not large enough to be considered as viable, because of the large outlay for chemicals and fertilizers necessary for the high-yielding rice variety; this is evident in the small proportion of households in this category for Saladang as well as the District.

The most viable size holding for rice cultivation is evident in the proportion of households in the 21-50 rai category. In Tambol Saladang 46 percent of those who cultivate land are in this category. The 21-50 rai category is the largest proportion for all cultivable land in the District of 52 percent. In Saladang 21 percent farm more than 50 rai of land, and are considered large farmers. Data are not available to ascertain whether households who cultivate these large farms own the land they work on or not, but it is evident from my field study that such farmers need a certain amount of savings in order to operate such large farms. The capacity to farm large areas involves large outlays for chemicals, pesticides, fertilizers and rice seeds; it is necessary to have more than one mini-tractor along with other farming implements. In addition a farmer must be able to pay harvesters on a day-to-day basis, thus a sufficient amount of funds must be ready even before the harvest is completed. Regardless of outright ownership of paddy land farmers who cultivate more than 50 rai of land can be considered to have a higher economic status than rice farmers who cultivate smaller amounts.

Figure 3.5 presents the predominant outside occupations acquired by villagers of the community. Here each village committee was asked whether any persons in the village had acquired work outside the tambol. These villagers would still be enumerated as residing in the
household. The objective of this, and the following sets of questions, is to determine the actual numbers of households who have members who depend on outside income earning activities. In total, 35 and 30 percent respectively of all households in Saladang and the district average have at least one household member with an outside job (not shown in Figure 3.5). Though the village might be stated as mostly having outside occupations in the agricultural sector, 45 and 58 percent for Saladang and the district respectively, this does not preclude the existence of other forms of occupation. Tambol Saladang, being adjacent to Bangkok, has a wide spread of occupational types with a large proportion in both industry and agriculture, (27 and 45 percent respectively). The data is also useful as an indicator of the relative dependence of tambols on outside forms of wage-earning activities, provided that remuneration is remitted. Both Saladang and the District average have a wide spread in occupational types showing a high dependence on wage-earning activities. It is also likely that with increasing monetisation there will be a higher dependence on remittances from adult children.

**FIGURE 3.5 PREDOMINANT OUTSIDE OCCUPATION ACQUIRED BY VILLAGERS**

![Bar chart showing the predominant outside occupation acquired by villagers in Saladang and the district average. The chart indicates the percentage of households engaged in various occupations including industry, agriculture, services, craftsman, and other. Source: Village Primary Based Data, 1987]
Figure 3.6 presents the place of outside occupation of villagers. Similarly, village headmen were asked to state the place where most village members acquired outside occupations. Tambol Saladang again shows a wide spread with 14, 36 and 14 percent acquiring occupations within the district, province and region respectively; these proportions are similarly reflected in the district average. Not surprisingly Bangkok represents a significant destination for job acquisition for villagers in Tambol Saladang and for the District as a whole with 27 percent of each population working in Bangkok. The 'other' category would include overseas occupations, did not answer, did not know or were not sure.

**FIGURE 3.6 PLACE OF OUTSIDE OCCUPATION ACQUIRED BY VILLAGERS**

- WITHIN DISTRICT
- WITHIN PROVINCE
- WITHIN REGION
- BANGKOK
- OTHER

Source: Village Primary Based Data, 1987
Figure 3.7 presents the time period of absence of village members. In Tambol Saladang 50 percent of those who have an outside job commute compared to 26 percent for the district average. The term 'commute' (to travel regularly between one's home and office) may be inappropriate here; forms of commuting mostly involve landless labourers who acquire casual jobs in the surrounding area. Such jobs as digging garden ditches or clearing fields may last only a few weeks at the most. There are some employees in more permanent occupations such as the small but growing numbers of school teachers, nurses, minor government officials and factory workers, who do approximate the concept of 'commuter'. The commuting population is more likely to be differentiated by religion;

![Figure 3.7 Time Period of Absence of Villagers](image)

Source: Village Primary Based Data, 1987
on my frequent visits to nearby Muslim villages I observed that many people were involved in Muslim religious instruction at various mosques within and outside the district. Many things facilitate the possibilities of commuting for the Muslim population; all major forms of transport in Saladang are predominantly owned and run by Muslims, and the frequent use of public transport on long-tail boats by Muslims compared to Buddhists was clearly evident during my field study. The complementarity between religious teachings, familial responsibilities and being an ethnic minority population may explain stronger familial bonds and the preference for commuting over any form of neo-local residence on the part of Muslim adult children. Such high frequencies of commuting were not as apparent for the Thai-Buddhist population. The category off-season relates to fallow periods or periods after rice planting and constitutes 18 and 29 percent for Saladang and the District respectively. This category would most likely constitute males engaging in work such as samlor (3-wheel) drivers, pedicab and taxi drivers and wage labouring in nearby districts. The higher proportions of those absent between three to six months in the District compared to Saladang is again possibly due to the physical distance of these tambol compared to Saladang.

3.8 Summary: From Communal Subsistence to Segregated Dependence

The changes to the community described in this chapter have resulted in a transformation from a situation of communal subsistence to that of segregated dependence. Production of a single rice crop, for example, needs much less monetary outlay. For Granny Chao the immediate cost of ploughing was in the purchase of a rope.

It is different [nowadays]. In the past we used buffaloes. We had to raise buffaloes. To plough we would buy rope for ploughing at one baht (SA.05). To plough nowadays it would cost
initially 50 baht (A$2.50) for one machine (cost of petrol). Back then one just ploughed and ploughed, there was no more expense involved, did not have to invest any money...(IDD3:1257).

Communal farm tasks included all facets of rice production as well as house construction. The availability of fish, frogs and shrimp in the klongs and paddy enabled many villagers, especially the old, to maintain a subsistence not possible nowadays. The physical presence of many offspring of the old within each household approximated a subsistence production unit more than in contemporary times. These forms of subsistence did not necessarily mean an absence of conflict. Conflict over rights of inheritance, and quarrels between family members occurred, but within this existence was a understanding that one’s endeavours were part of the wider familial household.

Well it is like this, the heart really feels whatever is done is done together, eat together. Whatever they [household members] have is shared to the children and grandchildren to eat. Whatever the children and grandchildren have they give some to their grandparents. All parents died in their children’s house. If their parents are ill they would provide ‘gentle care’ for them (IDD 3, R2:188-201).

Evident in the above excerpt is the context of the physical presence of the old people’s offspring making a living on their land; the comparative non-existence of outside wage work and a form of extended familial independence.

Beyond the extended family unit also existed a feeling of community bond. Thus, religious festivities as well as marriages and funerals were all given much more importance than in contemporary times.

This practice [visiting other villages] has stopped many years now. The traditions of Takbaht, Todratin, Todpapa, like you went to three temples, villagers would get into their boats, 8-10 a boat and go Todkratin together, it
is like they go and meet and make friendships between villages, a unity between distant villages far away from each other, like you are now one of us.... It is more individual now, they [adult children] did not go away to work[back then] (IDD 9:1190-1204).

Lessening forms of communal subsistence have been replaced by increasing forms of segregated dependence. Lessening communal tasks in rice production processes; the dispersion of the extended as well as nuclear family where adult children acquire outside wage work have ushered in a more segregated existence. The introduction of new rice varieties and the concomitant requirement of chemical fertilizers and other inputs have necessitated a dependence on market prices. The relative inability to 'live off the land' exacerbates even further the dependence which farmers, and especially the old have upon their adult children's cash income. This does not necessarily mean that all villagers view contemporary conditions as worse than before but only qualitatively different. For the 'lucky', villagers in my study community a balance has been attained between the relative poverty but emotional satisfaction of the past with the present monetary, health benefits and convenience though existing in an emotional vacuum for many.

3 The term 'lucky' is used to describe old villagers who are termed as such by the community in that they are comparatively free from economic and familial hardship. These people are seen to attend the wat during holy days to uphold the precepts. Chapter 4 introduces and elaborates in detail the interpretation of the term 'lucky old'.
CHAPTER 4 THE MEANING OF ‘OLD’: ANALYSES FROM QUALITATIVE DATA

4.1 The Relationship Between Physical and Functional Capacity

This chapter addresses the meaning of ‘old’ ascertained through the use of qualitative techniques described in Chapter 2. I chose villagers aged 60 and above to be my qualitative informants because 60 years officially defined the ‘aged’ in Thailand. All previous, and on-going, research on the old also uses 60 years as the basis for analysis; my choice of this age enabled comparisons to be made. However, in an attempt to analyse the concept of ‘old’ as it exists within the rural community I initiated the discussion of when a person is considered old in my qualitative data collection without any mention of chronological age.

Maintaining livelihood as a farmer can be considered as a cyclical process of ploughing, broadcasting, weeding, harvesting, as discussed in Chapter 2; these procedures require the constant expending of one’s physical capacity. This natural occurrence of the ageing process is directly felt by villagers in their functional tasks. A major determinant of when people consider themselves old is dependent on their functional capacity during the farming process. Throughout the in-depth discussions it was evident that when people became aware that their functional capacity was not what it had been when they were engaged and absorbed in work, they began to feel old. This opinion of decreasing functional capacity was expressed in numerous in-depth discussions.

Yes it is related to work [in farming]. If one can still work it means that one is not old, not like the government where at 60 one retires and is considered old...It has to do with energy, if we can still do it [work] then we go on...(IDD9:426).

Yes, I felt [old], I could not [work] any
more, last year I farmed behind my house. One portion was not good so I went to fix it. When I put my foot into the mud I could not lift it out, so that is when I decided to stop. I do not go and fix the rice any more or else I would have to put my hand on the mud so that I can lift my feet out (IDD13:511).

It is evident from these excerpts that people define themselves or others to be old by their functional capacity. One was also considered old when one’s bodily functions began to deteriorate; thus wrinkled skin, failing eyes, slowed walk and the need to have midday naps were prominent in most in-depth discussions on this topic.

We [the old] are like children, if we don’t get any sleep we get dreary. It has changed from before, my eyes and ears are now hazy...Old or not I cannot do things any more, my skin and everything is wrinkled (IDD3:914,9924).

My body is weak, my strength is less, everything is [bad]..(IDD15:1324).

It is also clear from the focus group discussions that decreasing physical capacity was a salient issue in the time when a person was considered to be old.

1st male participant: Yes, [we are old because] faces look old.
1st female participant: Our faces are old, we are all over 60, tell me do our faces look good?
2nd male participant: Bodies [are also old], veins can easily be seen underneath the skin, and our strength [is not good].
2nd female participant: Hair becomes grey and teeth are broken. For people who do not observe their bodies, they will not think of themselves as old (FG:187).
In practically all the in-depth and focus group discussions chronological age was seen as incidental to a determination of whether a person was considered old. Practically all villagers that I had talked to during my field study knew their ages through the use of the 12 year animal cycle, thus one was 60 or 72 or 84 etc. 

In an effort to make clear the emphasis on a person's physical or functional capacity rather than chronological age as a determinant of when a person is considered old, I acquired individual chronological ages of some older persons in my study community. I then mixed these persons' names in a random fashion in which no chronological order was evident. With these names I asked other individuals within the community whether these named individuals were considered to be old. I acquired 34 names with ages from 91 to 49 as shown in Table 4.1. The respondent villagers were asked whether each of these persons was considered by the community as old or not old. Though there were only 10 respondents the results seem to complement the in-depth and focus group finding that physical and functional capacity was a more important determinant than chronological age, of when a person is considered old.

The objective of the 'age game' is first to gauge whether there was a distinct cut-off point where a person might automatically be considered old, the second objective is to see whether there were any conflicting answers in the cutoff points between two persons and their respective ages. In other words a person who was older chronologically than the subsequent person might be considered younger, this in fact occurred in nine out of the 10 cases. The cut-off points ranged from age 60-61 to age 72-76. There does not seem to be any trend for older respondents to state higher cut-off points than younger respondents or any sex differences in when a person is considered old.
Table 4.1

Respondents' answer to the question: Is this person considered old or not old in this community?

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Note: bold letters show contradictions in responses between chronological age.

F=female; M=male. Numbers following sex refer to age of respondent.

O=old; N=not old; DK=don't know.
What seemed most interesting and was the main objective in conducting the 'age game' was the reason given why such a person was considered older than another who was chronologically older. In the subsequent discussion concerning these contradictions not once was chronological age mentioned as a determinant of age; it was mentioned only once as incidental to functional and physical capacity.

Uncle Mon is old because he cannot make a living by himself any more, it has to do with his health and also because he is over 60 years old (field note responses).

The responses from the 'age game' showed that a person is considered old because he or she cannot get around any more, cannot work any more, has white hair, looks less physically energetic, is not in good health, cannot make a living, cannot walk properly, has no teeth, looks dark and haggard, chews betel nut. Conversely some reasons why some of the people listed were not considered old by the community were: is still pretty, looks more energetic, can still do work on the farm, has suffered from no illness so does not look old. Grandad Sawang at 75, for example, was not considered old by one person (respondent 8) because

Even though some other people were younger chronologically he can still clear the fields of weeds and is out all day broadcasting rice, how can that be considered old? (field note responses).

Some of the specific terms respondents used in describing an old person in the Thai language included
'Ripe', as in a ripe fruit ready to be picked.
'Late in the afternoon', meaning very old.
'Cannot any more', meaning unable to work any more.
'Just about', about to be old.
'Mid-afternoon', as opposed to late afternoon, meaning not quite very old (field note responses).

Such terms were used in conjunction with a prior determining of whether the persons were considered old or not by their physical and functional capacity to do work.

4.2 Individual Determination of 'Old'

It becomes evident in these definitions of what is considered an old person that no constant chronological age was applied by the villagers with whom I had discussions. Chronological age, as mentioned earlier, was used only in conjunction with a person’s functional and physical capacity. It was mentioned spontaneously in at least six in-depth discussions as well as in all focus group discussions that to be considered old would depend on the individuals’ functional and physical capacity.

It deals with one’s physical health, strong or not strong, age we cannot tell about that, sometimes 50 plus a person cannot manage any more, is sick, it is not certain (IDD2:300).

Q: Which is more important, age or body. or is it the same?

Participant 2: They go together, like Pi Suk, he’s 60, is his body old (he is known to look young)? Does he look old in your eyes? (trying to force researcher to say he is not old) (FG:174).

Though when a person was considered old did depend upon that person’s individual characteristics, differences between men and women were mentioned in a few cases.
[In old age] men have much more resistance than women, women must be weaker (IDD7:207).

Men do not get as old as women, to have a child makes a woman less strong...The women who have no children would still be pretty strong (IDD 13:526).

Because the determination of when an individual person was considered old depended upon individual considerations, a constant chronological age definition seems unlikely. When asked at what chronological age a person was to be considered old respondents gave a wide age range. At age 40-50 it was generally felt that ‘people can still do things’ and if unable should not be considered old. Between the ages of 50 and 60 a person could be considered to be old because at this age many could not do any more work (IDD3:506). At 60 years ‘the body can be seen to begin to deteriorate’. But at 59 it was mentioned that it would depend on the individual since at this age some are still strong but for others their physical health has deteriorated (IDD2). It was also considered that between the ages of 60 and 70 one was old because having grandchildren changes one’s ‘state of mind’ and at this stage one’s mind is more temperamental. Some participants chose their own definitions and stated that at 71 they considered themselves old because their grandchildren did not allow them to cook any more. For a person to surely be considered old 80 years was mentioned, for at this age it was seen that most people could not help themselves any more. A person thus can be considered ‘old’ between the chronological ages of 55 and 70, at which time that person’s functional and physical capacity must first be determined as the lower age-range. The upper age-range was 70-80 years when most persons would have a generally decreasing physical and functional capacity to the extent that they needed external assistance.
4.3 Awareness of Life Cycle Transition

4.3.1 Non-involvement

As a direct consequence of the awareness of decreasing capacities, social-psychological effects were evident in the qualitative information. There were various types of behaviour seen as not appropriate for the old. A common phrase which is used in the community is 'To be old and not prepare oneself'. This phrase means that an old person should not be involved in other people's business; it describes the practice of non-involvement. To meddle in other persons' affairs is considered unworthy of an ideal typical old person. There is a form of sacred-profane distinction here between the ideal behaviour of an old person and the actual practice; community members acknowledge that it is quite difficult for any old person to approximate that degree of non-involvement. It is evident that this common principle is uniformly accepted but is only partly practised and is understood as only an approximation to a worthy role performance.

A second interpretation of non-involvement is the non-display of physical attraction to the opposite sex. 'Trying to be young and energetic and showing interest in women or men' or displaying a 'passionate' attitude would also provoke the phrase 'old and not preparing oneself'. Old men are still considered to have a desire for new sexual encounters; although this is seen as not true of all men it is certainly seen as true for more men than women (IDD5:746;774;785;787;797; IDD15: 463;496;531). The clothing for persons 'considered' old is also seen as quite distinct from the 'not old'. Bright colours, loose T-shirts with silk screened motifs, blouses with ornamental fringes are stated examples of 'young' dress. Such forms of dress are not seen as just discretionary choice and if an 'old' person were to dress like a 'not old' person he or she would be considered a maladjusted person practising a role behaviour seen as not appropriate or normal by the community (IDD15:43;496;521;622;653;708). Women show more interest in their physical appearance; grooming themselves,
putting on necklaces and rings, occasionally getting their hair done by the local hairdresser. If sufficient income is available they will have broken or loose teeth fixed; they should remain 'tidy'. The old who do not conform to such conventions are not criticized severely but those who do are praised widely. The 'old' also consider themselves and are considered by the younger generation to be old-fashioned and not abreast of the times (IDD7:232; FG11:176).

4.3.2 Awareness of Being Labelled

The awareness of decreasing physical and functional activity may result in other people remarking on the unnecessary work which the old do. This situation arises from directly observable actions in the farming and agricultural process. In this situation other people provide the definition of 'old' and insist upon the direct supporters, the children, stopping their parents from doing 'back-breaking' work. Direct labelling occurs as well, and in this situation a person is directly called 'granny' or 'grandad', which results in that person's awareness that he or she is getting old. In my observations direct labelling does not seem to be as commonplace, or to affect a person's 'feeling' of being old as much, as their own self-determination of oldness (IDD2:861; IDD14:364). The awareness of being 'old' is more meaningful when it is effected through mutual awareness between two or more individuals. In this situation individuals might discuss various changes which have occurred to them personally; these changes include the various topics dealt with in this section but, more importantly, the ensuing discussion results in a mutual awareness of the discussants that 'we must certainly be old or getting old' (IDD2:262, 393, 885, 892; IDD3:935, 940, 962; IDD13:438).

In some instances health conditions may have a direct and immediate effect on a person's awareness, different from the labelling by others. The effect concerns one's participation during a set time period such as festivals, funerals and weddings, where one cannot choose the time and
thus may not feel well when it is time to go. Being tired, needing one's midday-nap or rest, or just the feeling of not wanting to go, all resulting from a decreased physical capacity, are felt at this time. The decision to go may not necessarily mean that one feels well but may be due to the importance of the occasion, as in funerals of close friends or relatives; or for the satisfaction of other relatives such as grandchildren who want to attend a festival (IDD3:327).

4.3.3 Outward Psychological Involvement

When a farmer is fully active in the agricultural tasks he or she is totally absorbed in the planning about whether the water level is high enough to begin ploughing, what grain variety to use, the germination of the grain etc. Though the cessation or decrease in such activities because of functional capacity is not as abrupt as the retirement process in employment it nevertheless frees the mind from the daily planning process. It is not surprising to see a change from a worry or concern over one's own work to be replaced by a higher degree of worry or concern for one's adult children. When children are absent the degree of loneliness and worry by old parents is heightened; in cases where the children are present such feelings of worry or loneliness do not necessarily disappear. 'What are my children engaged in?', 'what are they planning now?', 'I would like to be involved in the planning process though I would not want to impose' are commonly stated feelings. The concept of imposition was very evident in all the in-depth discussions and at times was acted out in the village situation through a form of silence practised by the old (IDD3). The behaviour of silence in this context is seen as 'I do not want to impose' rather than 'I have no qualms'. Another implication which arises from the feeling of loneliness and worry for one's children is the form of emotional support received from the children. Chapter 6 discusses whether absent children provide less or a different kind of support, and whether there are any differences between support from sons or daughters.
4.4 Religiosity

Perhaps what may be surprising to a Western observer is the open discussion of death evident in Thai society. This openness has links with the Buddhist principles of contemplation on impermanence, suffering, birth, ageing, illness and death. Thus it is not surprising, and can be seen as psychologically healthy, that discussions concerning death are undertaken quite freely. Comments such as 'close to the shore', '[a fruit] ready to be picked', 'ready to go any day now' have their interpretation from the awareness of decreased capacity, and the awareness of impending death, which is complemented by a widely prevalent religious teaching that life is impermanent. One does not have to be religious to be aware or to talk freely about this. Impermanence, death and decay are topics which can be discussed amongst strangers as well as in group situations without any taboo. During my field study discussions on death took place freely and, in the majority of cases, without prior prompting.

4.4.1 The Concept of Plongsungkarn

A major teaching of the Buddhist religion and one which has emerged as a central theme for the conduct of life for the old is the concept of plongsungkarn. Plongsungkarn as used commonly by the old also refers to plongjitjai. Sungkarn means the body, jitjai means the mind. Villagers commonly use the term plongsungkarn to include plongjitjai. Plongsungkarn means to become resigned to death, to meditate or contemplate upon the impermanence of life, and to be resigned to one's fate. Once aware of decreasing physical and functional capacity and impending death, one may contemplate it and mentally prepare for it.

The first characteristic of plongsungkarn to be observed is health; failing health results in a realization
of impermanence. There is an inward contemplation of self resulting in non-involvement with concerns external to oneself. This self-involvement does not imply selfishness but is understood more as the attempt to be less dependent upon others. There is an understanding that one’s soul is only temporarily residing in a physical body which has only a temporary existence.

Plong, yes I feel that one day soon I will have to depart...(IDD1,R1:519).

The old should not be involved with others, should only be involved with oneself...(IDD2, R1:471).

[to Plong] one must first observe one’s health (IDD2:1023).

I think plong my body, before I was able to walk and get around with ease, speak with swift ease and freshness, but now I am about to go [die],...(IDD11:538).

To ask them [children] to come [live with me] would be difficult for it would just bring suffering to them. I feel that I came into this world by myself and so I should go out by myself (IDD11:396).

Plong of course, from here on how many days, or months will we live, because we have entered these years ...just take each day as it comes...(IDD14:574).

The above excerpts are in most instances ideal expressions of plongsungkarn popularly taught by monks to the laity and by parents to children. The level of practice of plongsungkarn can only be approximated to the ideal. A further consideration is that when practised in any form plongsungkarn helps us to understand that however severe we may consider the 'objective conditions' in which an old person is living, such a person may not feel these conditions to be severe because of successful plongsungkarn.
4.4.2 I Cannot Become Old

One important category which emerged during my field study was that socio-economic status has an important bearing on how a person ages; it is an important determinant of whether a person has the choice to plongsungkarn. Traditional modes of production, whereby communal help is provided during the harvest, children are more apt to stay at home and the cash economy is not as important, have had to be compromised as various forms of societal change encroach upon practically all rural villages in Thailand. The increasing use of pesticides, chemical fertilizers, the over-fishing of canals and pollution of water resources have made it almost impossible to 'live off the land' with only one's labour. The pervasiveness of a cash economy and increasing monetization have meant that practically all facets of rural life necessitate the use of money, a striking difference from the recent past.

The effect of these societal changes upon the old is that when remittances from children are inadequate or non-existent, work is now not from choice but from need; the choice to plongsungkarn in this sense has been blocked. There seems to be no disagreement that people can be considered old when they cannot work any more; many people remark that they are old but the work forces them not to be old. This contradiction is not rejected by villagers but is seen as a fact of life for those who do not have a steady personal income or do not receive regular remittances from their children.

1st Male Participant: Economy is one thing that forces people not to become old. If they are poor, they can't get old because they must go on working.

1st Female Participant: It is related to the individual person.

2nd Female Participant: It must be the economy.

1st Male Participant: Economy in their families.

1st Female Participant: Though they are old,
they must go on working.

1st Male Participant: He [old] realizes that he gets old but he must force himself not to be old...He can’t do as he pleases when he would like to take a rest.

3rd Female Participant: We can’t force ourselves not to become old, we know this but we must work for our mouths and stomachs (IDD7:39-151).

Like me I am old in body but the work is not old. Having said that it is difficult to understand right! I look at myself in the mirror and see oh, I am really old, but I cannot stop [work], if I stop I will not have anything to eat...(IDD9:1233)

During my field study I wondered just how much work an old person could do; would it be a waste of time for the old to feebly expend physical energy on a task too overwhelming? Continually observing the activities of such old persons I realized that the work was not necessarily for monetary income or for savings but involved pure subsistence. Maintaining subsistence in this situation involves such tasks as collecting firewood, clearing brush to plant vegetables, making candy for sale at the local school, making brooms to be sold at the local shop, fishing either by nets or traps. If a catch of fish or a crop of vegetables is successful it may be sold at the local market. The cash acquired may be used to buy rubber thongs to wear or modern luxury goods such as toothpaste, a new toothbrush, some detergent and soap and maybe some charcoal from the boat salesman. Even after acquiring information such as in the comments quoted above it took me a considerable amount of time and observation before I began to realize that such explanations of continuance of work dealt not with feeble bodies doing useless tasks but rather ageing bodies striving for a certain degree of subsistence.
4.4.3 Performance of Religion

Three relevant categories have been constructed in which the concept of plongsungkarn can be categorized. All three categories are affected by the societal changes described above and the restrictions they place upon the freedom to plongsungkarn. The first category is group performances of religion by those people who attend the temple regularly and uphold the religious precepts. The second category is private performance of religion by those people who are not regular temple attenders. The third category comprises individuals involved in worldly matters and not considered as plongsungkarn but nevertheless practising their own form of religion.

a. Group Performance of Religion

A description of the observance of a holy day undertaken by Granny Num of muu 3 provides a good example for this category.

Granny Num paddles her boat to the market early in the afternoon to buy some fish, meat and vegetables to prepare food for the monks for the holy day tomorrow. In the past she was able to get up early in the morning at around 4 a.m. and cook food in time to take it to the temple, 15 minutes by paddle boat, by at least 7:45 a.m. She feels older now and does not think that she would be able to get up so early, cook the rice and prepare the food, get dressed in a new sarong and embroidered shirt and still arrive before 8 a.m., at which time the monks come down from their kuti (residence) to begin the chanting. Today's preparation includes some yellow curry, fried vegetables, and stir-fried beef. She does not skimp on the meat and vegetables for tomorrow is holy day and 'what one gives one is to receive in return in the form of merit'. An extra large meal is prepared because it is not only to be given to the monks but also for her own consumption and for sharing with her companions at the temple. Only a simple dessert is prepared for this holy day consisting of boiled bananas in coconut milk, the afternoon's shopping amounts to 65 baht (A$3.25). Granny Num is quite proud of the fact that she can still cook, and though her adult daughter does most of the daily cooking, for the holy days granny Num does the cooking herself.
The next morning Granny Num arrives around 7.45 a.m.; there are no monks paddling in their boats to receive food today because on a holy day they will receive the laity at the temple. Lay persons begin to arrive from 7 a.m. onwards, today there are about 70 people. At around the same time temple boys bring the monks' alms bowls and trays and place them at the back of the sala (large meeting hall). The food which is brought by the laity is placed in each monk's tray. It is a gay time and people who attend greet each other cheerfully. At 8 a.m. the monks arrive at the sala and pay their respects to the Budhha image. Soon afterwards the temple boys carry the trays of offerings of food to all the monks. The monks begin to recite the acceptance of food from the laity. At a certain stage in the recital all the laity go up to the back of the sala where the alms bowls are situated and place rice as the main offering into each alms bowl, after which the temple boys return the alms bowls to the monks. Before consumption, the food has to be presented to each individual monk by a layperson. The meal is finished at around 9:30 a.m., when the monks begin to chant again. Upon the completion of the chanting all monks with the exception of one return to their kuti. A sermon is given by the remaining monk. The sermon lasts approximately 30 minutes and concludes at around 11:00 a.m., when the large bell in front of the temple is rung; the laity who are to uphold the precepts today can then begin their own meal. Before they begin they receive food from each other, a symbolic gesture of upholding the precepts; the meal is to be finished before midday. They uphold eight precepts on every holy day; to abstain from taking a life, stealing, cheating, drinking alcohol, committing adultery, gambling, sexual intercourse and pleasurable activities such as physical adornment and listening to music. After their meal the dishes are washed down by the canal. For those who have been awake since 3 or 4 a.m. to cook, now is the time to catch up on some sleep; others read the precepts and discuss amongst themselves their meaning; the objective during this time is to contemplate the teachings of the Lord Buddha. Later in the afternoon the precepts group chants sections of the Dharma and later at night around 7:30 p.m. they receive the monks for another session of recitals. They will spend the night in the sala and return to their homes the following morning.

We can observe here an initial outlay of a relatively significant amount of money, the energy to travel to market to purchase the needed ingredients and to cook and prepare
a special meal better and larger than one would normally consume; there is the belief that one acquires individual merit from one's individual endeavours. That women cook the meal themselves is an important part of the merit making process; for men who do attend the temple, in most instances, it is their wives who do the cooking. Clothing is also considered important and one wears special white clothes during this day, so further expenditure is needed to purchase the material to sew a garment. Perhaps the most important consideration is the home support system while the devout are at the temple; someone should be at home to look after the house, care for the grandchildren, tend the fields, watch over the cattle. To uphold the precepts at the temple is seen as the purest form of plongsungkarn.

To be absorbed in it [teachings of Lord Buddha], discussing about the teachings. To see that our bodies are beautiful from youth to old age, and are aware that our age is getting on, and we can then release ourselves [Plong successfully] (IDD2,R1:1192).

Persons in this category have the option to practise what is viewed by the community as the ideal life for an old person. For some there is also a desire to attend a distant temple of well known repute (IDD2,R1:680). To receive the precepts, chant and meditate are seen as prerequisites of being religious, at least in the study community (IDD2,R2:993). A further reason that one can plongsungkarn more successfully at the temple is because one does not see and is not involved with what is going on at home (IDD2,R1:456; IDD2.1,R1:1099), and one's personal contact with a person of the yellow robe provides spiritual warmth.

Distinctive to temple attendance is the outward display of religiosity; the wider village community know who the regular temple attenders are and view them as having a high social position. For the old who wish to attend but are unable there are no antagonisms or even
aspirations to be like the attenders. This situation is
perfectly underlined by the concept of plongsungkarn
itself; a person is seen to receive individual merit from
monks by making individual merit to them.

Attenders of poor economic status do not have to bring
food to the temple; they arrive early and help the temple
boys clean and prepare the dishes and alms bowls. After
the morning meal they remain with the others at the temple
for the entire day and night. Most people in this category
have no land of their own and no farming equipment with
which to work on rented land. Their income derives from
wage work during the harvest season, clearing fields of
weeds, digging canals for irrigation for any persons who
would want to hire them; a day and night at the temple
means a loss of such wages. There are a few people in the
study community who are like this; Granny Fang is one of
them, and her actions tell more than any explanation why
she decided to come.

Granny Fang was born in the Paidum community
approximately 75 years ago. She is one of the
few people who cannot state their exact age. In
her younger days she had misplaced her
identification card and her household
registration and when the time came for renewal
she was too afraid to go to the District Office.
As a result of this she is unregistered and her
children were ineligible to officially enrol at
school, she is ineligible for a welfare card and
since her son sold the little land she had, she
is landless. Granny Fang can be considered lucky
that she is still quite strong and hardy and can
still acquire wage work during the harvest
season. She has one son who is a beggar in
Bangkok and comes home occasionally and is said
to demand money from her on his visits.

In spite of the severe hardship which Granny Fang has
encountered she shows no outward pain or emotion or any
verbal expression of her position in life when asked. It
is perhaps such tremendous hardships which either
strengthen people or totally destroy them; with Granny Fang
it is the former. Such a conclusion cannot be reached by
simply interviewing her but can only be acquired by
Auntie Kuntong and her son Headman Tohn offer food to their ordained son and an elderly monk.

A Buddhist holy day where villagers attend the temple and uphold the precepts of their faith.
observing her daily activities; discussing her background with other villagers, the circumstances in which she has lost her land, the type of wage work she gets and the informal relationship of food giving which she has with the temple. As an outward form of display, temple attendance by Granny Fang at the least provides a network of communication and contact with the community which otherwise would not have been possible. It is likely that hardships encountered by Granny Fang are a more common occurrence in more impoverished areas of Thailand such as the dry Northeast.

b. Private Performance of Religion

There are those who plongsungkarn individually but do not enter the temple to uphold the precepts. The majority of old people are in this category, both men and women. To plongsungkarn individually means an undertaking not directly involved with religious proceedings at the temple. Such persons occasionally make merit on holy days but are considered quite distinct from the precepts group. Individual vows are promised to oneself without any outward display or necessary acceptance by others. The vows are flexible and are akin to a New Year resolution, for example. The decision not to take a life, not to be affected by anger, revenge or spite, not to take things which do not belong to oneself, not to gamble, drink, lie, or gossip. Many persons consider that to successfully plongsungkarn in this limited form is better than to uphold the precepts on holy days only to break them again on other days (IDD9:530,558; IDD12:362; IDD14:588).

The various reasons why some people do not uphold the precepts are a combination of the high costs involved. This is directly related to increasing monetization as a result of societal change. A higher degree of functional capacity is also evident; they are more physically active, they are engaged in tasks which would not allow them to leave home such as rearing grandchildren or working in the fields. These reasons, however, may be only indicators of a pragmatic view expressed by many people concerning the limits of the practice of plongsungkarn. The most common
village view of the limits of plongsungkarn is that family and community commitments developed through one’s lifetime make it difficult to undertake successfully. Those able to uphold the precepts can be considered as only temporarily plongsungkarn; awareness of such limitations has prompted many persons to attend holy days only during the day and not uphold the precepts. A more serious criticism concerning only a few persons who uphold precepts are that they are hypocrites because they in essence live a life of double standards; they might refrain from committing sins during holy day and contemplate the Dharma, but on other days they may indulge in gambling and drinking.

...the society that they [old people] are in has a lot of interrelationships. Just look at the functions and the festivals which Uncle Suk goes to. Whoever is ill or dies or whatever, he has to go, the society is a society of old people (IDD3,R3:716).

[When I uphold the precepts] I am not worried. I want to stop [worrying] just for one day, I feel at rest. At night of course I worry...The people in the temple ask me to stay, I say I cannot stay I have to return home...(IDD3.1,R1:1097).

On holy day they receive the precepts. Let me tell you, they wear white and uphold precepts. The next day they curse and swear at each other, how can you call that plong (IDD9,R1:613).

On the day he [an old person] will uphold precepts, he will create goodness. But one is not good all the time, there are people who are 10 times worse than us but they will uphold precepts on holy day...(IDD3,R3:771).

As has been described above the family structure and economic characteristics of the old who uphold the precepts enable them to devote their efforts to such an endeavour much more than others; whether they are successful is a personal matter. Those who plongsungkarn, including the majority of the old in my study community, seem to be constrained by financial or family structural characteristics as well as personal preferences which do not enable them to practise this in the ideal sense defined
by the community. Those few who are poor but do uphold the precepts could be considered to have plongsungkarn most successfully. Though they do not provide the traditional offerings of food and rice and are not seen by the community as strictly belonging to the precepts group they are able to uphold the precepts and practise plongsungkarn in spite of their poverty.

c. Involvement in Worldly Matters

For certain individuals whose life experiences are different from the above categories awareness of death is of much less importance; consequently plongsungkarn is less meaningful. Three types emerge as specific examples of persons who do not plongsungkarn: the entrepreneur, the moneylender and the single mother. Uncle Mon considered here as the entrepreneur was one of the first chicken farmers in the district.

Uncle Mon was willing to gamble on the initial investment of buying approximately 300 chickens, and chicken feed, and constructing a large fowl house. He had sold some land and borrowed some money from a Chinese moneylender friend to finance the project. He contracted with purchasers from Bangkok to come out and buy his eggs. He has since finished his down-payments on a pick-up truck so as to deliver his eggs straight to retailers in Bangkok. Since paying back the debts on his original investment he has constructed a fish pond underneath the fowl house. He has plans now to raise cattle. He grows vegetables and ferments fish to be sold in the market. His daughter and son-in-law still farm on approximately 12 rai of land as well as help in the chicken farming with the other three children. He runs his household more like a factory than a family.

Granny Run owned a reasonable amount of land from her inheritance of 20 rai. She began many years ago to lend small amounts of cash to villagers around the Paidum community at various interest rate ranging from 5 to 20 percent a month. In some instances she appropriated land from debtors who could not pay their debts. At present she owns approximately 150 rai (a conservative estimate) of paddy. At 82 she has not subdivided any of her land to her children or grandchildren and is the subject of much criticism for not doing so. She can be seen paddling her boat up
and down the klong daily to engage in social conversation and to either collect debts or make loans.

Granny Mali, 76, was married at what she considered to be an early age of 20. Her mother died when she was an infant and her father sent her to live with various relatives. While still young she helped her aunt in selling groceries first along the klong and then later in the market place. Her father had bought some land in Paidum and she settled down there to farm with her husband. Her brother sold this land without her knowledge, her husband soon after took to drinking and was of no help in the rented land which they had to farm. She divorced him in her mid 20s and since then has been head of her household of eight children. As a single parent she has taken full charge of all facets of her household, managing the purse strings as well as all the farming procedures. Though less physically active now she still controls the purchasing and maintenance costs of the farming equipment, seedlings, fertilizers and the constant badgering of her adult children to work harder.

What these three character types have in common is that they are all physically and mentally engaged in various tasks; there is more of a continuity of tasks than for pure rice farmers in general. The life which they lead is their own, towards themselves, rather than living a life through their children. They can be seen as economically independent from their children and, as most interestingly remarked by some community members, are considered old in age but not in mind. Uncle Mon and Granny Mali do not frequent the temple on holy days and certainly would not consider themselves to have plongsungkarn. Granny Run does attend the temple on holy days but more as a patron of the temple; she donates large amounts in cash and kind to the temple and presides over many of the important festivals undertaken there. Granny Run’s donations to the temple, as a form of merit-making, are a variant in the practice of religion described here; she freely admits that she is not plongsungkarn and is seen as such by villagers in the community.
4.5 Summary

Figure 4.1 summarizes the meaning of 'old' as presented in this chapter. The concept of old age within a rural agricultural community involves the perception by individuals of decreasing physical capacities evident in deteriorating health. Physical decline has a direct impact on a villager's agricultural livelihood in the form of decreasing functional tasks. This functional loss creates an awareness of the life-cycle transition in the ageing individual; self-labelling and social labelling as old is one effect of this awareness. Religion and its practice is a second direct consequence of this transition. Religiosity can be understood as an integration between the Buddhist teachings and a Thai way of existence in later life. This relationship provides a pattern to which the 'old' may conform. The concept of plongsungkarn, as this

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**Figure 4.1** The Meaning of Old in a Rural Agricultural Community

- Physical Decline
- Rural Agricultural Livelihood
- Functional Loss
- Awareness of Life Transition 'I must be getting old'
- Self and Social Labelling
- Religious Meaning System of Plongsungkarn and variations in practice
pattern, means contemplation of the impermanence of one’s life. Plongsungkarn is widely known and understood by the community, but the implication that the old in Thai society seem to age successfully because of this positive form of withdrawal, where it does occur, is not uniform. In relation to successful plongsungkarn there are two final important points. First, this practice is a choice available only to those who have adequate economic status and familial support systems; a situation uncommonly encountered in the rural agricultural setting. Secondly, even if the choice is there for the ‘lucky old’, their social and familial commitments and attachment to worldly desire may prove insurmountable barriers. Given these constraints the consequences are far from uniform for those who are considered old through their decreasing capacities to age successfully by the practice of plongsungkarn. Subsequent chapters elaborate on this framework by describing various support systems, their changing forms and their effect upon support of the old.
5.1 Introduction

It is popularly held that people in traditional or non-industrialized societies are cared for by their immediate family and extended kin when they reach an age defined by that society as old (Cowgill, 1966). A society undergoing industrialization and Westernization, according to this perspective, may be affected in such a way that the old are not properly taken care of by their extended kin as institutional arrangements of care are strained. The analysis of the insights and shortcomings of such an explanatory framework is one of the main aims of this thesis, and is dealt with in Chapters 6 and 7. However, preparatory work must first be done to examine the personal health and economic status of the old. I have divided this chapter into sections dealing with the health, nutrition and economic status of the old, and community and state assistance to them.

5.2 Health and Nutritional Status

5.2.1 Anthropometric Measurements

Procedures for collecting anthropometric measurements include measuring weight, height, triceps skin fold and upper arm circumference. Equipment used for these measures included a weighing scale accurate to within one quarter of a kilogram, skin fold calipers accurate to within 0.2 millimetres and a fibreglass measuring tape accurate to within 0.1 centimetres.

These tools were selected according to the requirements stated by Jelliffe (1966) as the minimum sufficient conditions for accurate anthropometric measurements in the field; the training involved in correctly applying such tools has been discussed in Chapter 2.
From weight and height measurements a body mass index was calculated from the equation.

\[
\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight (in kg.)}}{\text{Height (m)}^2}
\]

Standards for Body Mass Index are acquired from the World Health Organization (WHO) as reported in Jelliffe (1966). These standards are shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Nutritional Standards for Adults Derived From Body Mass Index Measurements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>BMI Measurements Male</th>
<th>BMI Measurements Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undernourished</td>
<td>0-20.0</td>
<td>0-18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>20.1-25.0</td>
<td>18.7-23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>25.1-29.9</td>
<td>23.9-28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese</td>
<td>&gt;30</td>
<td>&gt;28.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jelliffe, 1966

In addition to body mass index Jelliffe conducted skin fold measurements across various nations in order to acquire an international standard, and arrived at a standard of 12.5 skin fold thickness for men and 16.5 for women (Table 5.2). Figures in the subsequent columns in Table 5.2 are proportional percentages of the standard. Thus the skin fold measurement of 11.3 is 90 percent of the standard.

Table 5.2 Triceps Skin Fold Measurement Standard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Thickness of skin fold (millimetres)</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>90-81%</th>
<th>80-71%</th>
<th>70-61%</th>
<th>&lt;60%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jelliffe, 1966

or 11.3/12.5=0.90. Table 5.2 is divided into categories in
order to rank people into various nutritional levels according to their measurements. The categories range from severe malnutrition (less than 60 percent) to normal nutrition (standard). As stated in Chapter 2 I undertook the triceps skin fold measurements after training at the Department of Public Health at Mahidol University in Bangkok. Because of logistical limitations only a third of the 69 survey respondents (every third respondent) were measured resulting in a total of 23 nutritional measurements, as shown in Table 5.3.

The body mass index of the focused survey respondents shows that 56.4 percent of those measured were undernourished by WHO standards with 30.4 and 13.0 percent in the categories normal and overweight respectively (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Body Mass Index of Survey Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BMI (kg/m²)</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undernourished (0-20)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal (20.1-24.9)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight (25-29.9)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese (&gt;30)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field survey, 1987

In order to acquire some comparisons to levels of undernourishment, triceps skin fold measurements were undertaken on the same population (Table 5.4). In this procedure a slightly higher level of malnutrition of 60.9 percent was recorded. Of particular interest in this Table are the sex differences in levels of malnutrition. There were no men in the categories of normal and mild malnutrition; the major proportion was in the category of severe malnutrition. The women were more evenly distributed amongst the categories with a significantly lower severe malnutrition level of 21.7 percent. From
these findings it seems that malnutrition affects a majority of the surveyed population but to a higher degree for men than women. These results must however be treated with some caution as Jelliffe's (1966) standards may not be entirely applicable to these data and/or may need updating. Jelliffe does caution his reader that it would be more appropriate to acquire local standards of a healthy population such as an urban middle-income category; unfortunately these standards of comparison have not been undertaken for Thailand.

Though a locally 'healthy' standard of triceps skin fold measurements is not available in Thailand, the results of a Thai northern rural population seem consistent with my prior assumptions of a relatively high nutritional level of the study population. Montchai and Sithitrapi (1987) conducted anthropometric measurements of a northern rural population and found that 81 percent of their study population (n=560), using the BMI index, fell in the category of the undernourished. Using the triceps skin fold measurement with the Jelliffe standard they found that 82.2 percent fell into the category of severe malnutrition. This is compared to my average severe malnutrition level of 58 percent (the averages of bmi and skin fold measurements). Though these findings may be
comparable to each other based on Jelliffe’s standards, they do not seem appropriate, at least, for the Thai situation. It is inherently unlikely that 82 percent of the study population in the north of the country were really severely malnourished.

As discussed in Chapter 1 I had attempted to locate a study site which was relatively rural yet affected by the processes of urbanization and modernization, and not unduly affected by serious poverty. The study site, being situated within the fertile central plains, and with access to a continual water supply from the irrigation canal, satisfied these conditions. It is thus not surprising that the lower levels of malnutrition found here compared to the north, as indicated by the above standards of measurements, are due to a comparatively high standard of nutrition. A positive correlation was also found between the body mass index measurements and malnutrition levels as measured by skin fold thickness with a Pearson’s value of 0.66 and 0.82 with a significance at the 99 percent level for males and females respectively (not shown in Table).

In the tables mentioned above different anthropometric procedures showed similarities in that all measured a high degree of malnutrition in the population. Correlations of these anthropometric measurements (Table 5.5) show that they have a strong association with one another, in particular the important standard measurements of body mass index and level of malnutrition, as measured by skin fold calipers. The procedures used for anthropometric measurements seem to complement each other well and indicate a relatively high level of malnutrition.
Granny Mali taking her grandchildren home from school

Granny Jeen charges five baht for a haircut
Table 5.5 Correlations of Anthropometric Measurements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurements</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Skin-fold</th>
<th>Arm circ.</th>
<th>BMI</th>
<th>Nutrition level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin fold</td>
<td>.7665**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arm circ.</td>
<td>.8291**</td>
<td>.8440**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMI</td>
<td>.8275**</td>
<td>.8559**</td>
<td>.8061**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition level</td>
<td>.8189**</td>
<td>.9532**</td>
<td>.8690**</td>
<td>-.7842**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=23
** indicates 99 percent significant level
Source: nutritional survey, 1987

5.2.2 Functional Capacity of Survey Population

Part of my focused survey included asking respondents about difficulties encountered in conducting their daily activities. During the early stages of my field stay I began constructing my focused survey schedule. I decided to include in my questionnaire selected activities undertaken by villagers and whether they encountered any difficulties. Table 5.6 presents 12 activities chosen for their appropriateness to the local context. Some activities could be considered locality-specific such as clearing fields, fixing rice and paddling a boat.

Clearing fields involves the clearing and weeding of edges of paddy fields with a sickle and spade, an activity undertaken prior to ploughing. Weeds and tall grass are likely to grow around the perimeter of each paddy field and necessitate its clearing in order to acquire a maximum area for rice broadcasting. Clearing fields is thus a full day’s effort with possibly two to three breaks in between for a physically active farmer. Respondents who answer that they have 'extreme difficulty' in clearing fields thus should not be considered fully active. Part of the self perception of difficulty also involves whether 'one can keep up with the others' throughout the working day, thus response to difficulty involved in clearing fields is not necessarily an isolated self-perception. A distinction should be made between 'clearing fields' and 'clearing an
area of weeds', one of which I was not aware before I conducted my field study. 'Clearing an area of weeds' generally means clearing around one's house. The decision to clear around the house depends upon a person's whim, no set time is made to begin or end the effort. This undertaking is seen locally as suitable for the old.

I felt that the activities mentioned above were important and necessary for villagers in my area and were a good indicator of degrees of self-support. In the questionnaire respondents were asked whether they had 'no difficulty at all', 'moderate difficulty', or 'extreme difficulty' in performing these tasks. Responses were coded as 1, 2 or 3 for the degree of difficulty for each activity. I re-coded categories 2 and 3 as those 'experiencing at least some difficulty' and 1 as those 'experiencing no difficulty'. Single asterisks in the Table represent significant differences between the sexes of each respective age group.

Table 5.6 Those Experiencing Difficulty in Conducting Daily Activities by Sex, Age and Type of Activity in Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>60-69</th>
<th>70+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear fields</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>65*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lift &amp; Carry</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddle 1 km</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wash clothes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk 1 km</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fix rice</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathe self</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet use</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self feed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk 5m</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peel fruit</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting up</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates difference between sexes at the level of significance of 95%.
Source: field survey, 1987

Males and females in the 70 plus age group have more difficulty in conducting all the 12 activities than those in the 60-69 age group. In addition, females in both age
groups have more difficulty in all the 12 activities than their male counterparts. Statistically significant differences between the sexes within the age groups, represented by asterisks, are experienced in the more physically demanding tasks such as washing clothes, walking one kilometre and lifting and carrying five kilograms.

In analysing the physically demanding tasks it may seem surprising that paddling a boat 1 kilometre showed a relatively low percentage of difficulty in both age groups and a significant difference between the sexes for only the 60-69 age group. This result is not surprising to anyone who has lived a short time in the community; paddling is a daily activity which all villagers have undertaken from as early an age as four. Though it requires constant expending of energy, the villagers have perfected an efficient physical movement resulting in minimal physical exhaustion. It was not uncommon to see old villagers whom I knew to be well over 70 paddling past my hut on social visits, going to and from the market or conducting personal business in the late afternoon. An important qualification concerning 'late afternoon' is necessary here; most of the old paddle their boats at that time as that is when motorized traffic is the lightest. Thus respondents answering this question are mostly referring to difficulties encountered, if any, when paddling their boat in the absence of encounters with 'long tails'.

5.2.3. Chronic Illness of Survey Population

The focused survey also questioned respondents concerning chronic illness. Virtually all reported that they suffered from some form of chronic illness; the answers given are respondents' self reports of their illness. In some cases these reports reflect consultations with medical personnel and/or receiving treatment at a clinic or health centre. In other cases recurring illness is a personal opinion of one's condition; the respondent may venture an opinion or just state his or her symptoms. With these self reports four major categories were
Table 5.7 Type of Chronic Illness by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illness</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthritic</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digestive</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dizziness</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not ill/other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field survey, 1987

The first category, 'respiratory' includes self-reports of recurring coughs, asthma, chest pain and breathing problems. Aches and pains related to different joints of the body such as legs, arms and hips are categorized as 'arthritic': 16 percent of the respondents reported this as their major chronic illness. Twenty nine percent reported digestive problems, which included responses such as cramps, diarrhoea and stomach pains. Intestinal and kidney complications, identified through medical consultation by the respondents, were also reported and may be due to excessive alcohol consumption. Unstable blood pressure, anaemia, and various forms of dizziness such as fainting spells, made up the largest category of illness of 38 percent. Respondents who reported anaemia or unstable blood pressure levels were able to state this because of diagnoses by medical personnel.

Sex differences in chronic illness were minimal (Table 5.8). The only major difference between the sexes are seen in the higher reports of dizzy spells of 46 percent and 31 percent and respiratory complications of 12 and five percent for males and females respectively. No significant differences were found when comparing age group differences as well as whether there was a second type of chronic illness (Table not shown). Problems of dizziness and digestive complications seem to be the two major categories
of complaints for both the 60-69 and 70 plus age groups; females report more dizziness and arthritic complications than males.

Table 5.8 Self Reports of Chronic Illness by Sex by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Respiratory</th>
<th>Arthritic</th>
<th>Dizziness</th>
<th>Digestive</th>
<th>Other/ not ill</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male (n=26)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (n=39)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

missing observations=4
Source: field survey, 1987

In addition to self reports of illness from survey respondents I gathered information on outpatients at the Tambol health centre from the period January 1987 to January 1988. During these visits by villagers ailments were diagnosed by the health centre personnel and entered into their daily schedule (Table 5.9). Of all villagers who came to receive treatment I selected only those aged 60 and above, who accounted for seven percent of the total number of persons who received treatment at the centre. Because the information spanned the time period of 12 months there are occurrences of repeat treatments for the various categories. Thus a single individual may return for a change of dressing for wounds, for example, or receive periodic treatment for high blood pressure.

From Table 5.9 it can be seen that treating accidental injuries accounted for the highest number of treatments for both sexes at almost 19 percent. The incidence of injuries would indicate that many of the old are still physically active in various farming tasks in all age groups with the exception of the female 70 plus age group. Treatment for high blood pressure was the second highest percentage but
Granny Jeen acquires extra income through the practice of traditional massage.

The new tambol health centre funded by the Lions Club of Ayuthaya, Thailand.
Table 5.9  Percentage Distribution of Number of Old Persons Who Visited the Health Centre from January 1987 to January 1988, by Type of Diagnosis, Sex and Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Both sexes</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastritis</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wound dressing</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aches/pains</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold/fever</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhoea/dysentery</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stomach-ache</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper respiratory tract infection</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular blood pressure</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin infection</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache/dizziness</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaemia</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyrexia of unknown origin</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total percent</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tambol Health Centre Records.

was over-represented by the 70 plus female age group; other age groups showing a very small proportion. Interestingly, Chen and Jones (1989:74) report a comparable figure of 10 percent who stated they were affected by abnormal blood pressure levels. Diarrhoea accounted for a high proportion of 11 percent of treatments at the health centre and is possibly related to consumption of unclean water from the klong. Unclean water consumption can occur most frequently during the dry season when availability of rainwater is at its lowest.

Respiratory ailments accounted for almost nine percent of the total number who received treatment. Quite alarming though is their concentration of 11 and 16 percent in the 60 to 69 and 70 plus male age group. It is possible that a major determinant of respiratory complications is the spraying of chemical insecticides throughout the farming cycle. During these times we had to vacate our cottage if
it was even slightly downwind of the spraying. On two occasions the spraying was so severe that we left the mubaan entirely for the day. As discussed previously villagers make it a point to spray in pairs of individuals as a precautionary measure for loss of consciousness. The use of oxygen masks and protective clothing has been experimented with but the extreme heat from the sun results in accelerated loss of body fluid and consciousness. Farmers decide to spray downwind on a day of little wind. To a lesser extent chemical spraying may also result in occurrences of skin infections.

Treatments for gastritis in both sexes of the 60 to 69 age group indicate the probability of excessive alcohol consumption by these people. This is complemented by my survey findings which show that a third of the respondents still frequently consume alcoholic beverages. Though no data were shown for Thailand, Chen and Jones (1989) report a comparable figure of 28 percent of incidence of alcohol consumption for the Philippines. Many people who receive treatment at the health centre complain of tiredness and lack of resistance to infection. The personnel diagnose many of these people as anaemic, assuming a deficiency in iron and provide a supplement of iron-rich tablets for them. Fevers with a rise in the body temperature accompanied by shivering, headaches and nausea are diagnosed as Pyrexia of Unknown Origin. The information presented in Table 5.9 can be interpreted to indicate that the old who attend the health centre are still relatively active in their daily tasks; a large number are engaged in physically active tasks. The higher number of treatments for gastritis in the young-old age group indicates a problematic area of concern in both health and intrafamilial relationships.
5.3 Economic Status

It is expected that in agricultural occupations villagers would not receive any form of wages or salaries from employers. I was specifically interested in whether the old received any form of monthly salary regardless of its source. The question was asked 'do you receive any type of monthly income?' Eighty eight percent (61 respondents) stated they received no monthly income. Of the remaining seven respondents six said they received a regular monthly income from either their children or grandchildren. The remaining three respondents were two retired school teachers and a retired policeman, who were receiving a pension from the government and were considered by their neighbours to be comfortably off.

Eighteen respondents (26 percent) stated they had savings; the average amount was B12,192 (A$610). There was a certain degree of reluctance to answer the question about savings. It seems that those people who either have a pension or are very poor are quite willing to state their situation. For those who do have some sort of savings, it is likely that they have acquired it from other sources than purely rice farming; this ability to 'get ahead' of the others in the community may derive from their individual entrepreneurial ability, in occupations such as bookie, chicken farmer, or grocery stall proprietor. It is thus not surprising if respondents are reluctant to state their true savings; in addition, though those who had savings gave a reply to this question, it is quite likely that they understated the amount.

Of the 69 respondents 61 or 88 percent own their own home and are considered as the head of the household. The remaining eight respondents were living with their children or children-in-laws. Chen and Jones (1989:29) report a similarly high incidence of home ownership and household headship of 86 percent for Thailand. They state that as a person becomes old responsibility and authority may devolve on, say, the married son living in the same household.
Politeness may decree that the old person is still regarded as official head of the household. From my qualitative information it seemed that the high incidence of home ownership, and subsequent headship, should be looked at as a form of strategy taken by many old people so that their children will care for them (see Chapter 6.3). That 48 percent of the surveyed population own some land can also be considered as a form of strategy for old age support. Chen and Jones citing other works note that in Java, for example, it is common for old people to delay bequeathing the house and land to their children until they die (Sunarto, 1978), thus retaining control of the household economy. A further comparison was also made with Bangladesh (Chaudhury, 1982) where a majority of old parents had not distributed their land as control over land is a powerful mechanism through which parents control the labour of their children.

Involvement in the farming of high-yielding rice varieties requires a constant cash outlay; cash requirements for seeds, fertilizers and chemicals have been discussed in Chapter 3. It is typical of these villagers to take loans to finance the farming process; farmers in the study site are no exception, and their access to a year-round water supply together with the fertile soil conditions of the central plains enables them to have good credit status. Half the respondents have borrowed money and are still paying off their loan (Table 5.10); of these respondents over two thirds have been able to borrow money with a relatively low annual interest rate of 20 percent or less. These low interest rate loans are available from financial institutions only for agricultural purposes. The high number of respondents who have acquired these loans indicates that they are still actively engaged in the business of farming. Loans with an interest rate over 20 percent are probably from non-financial institutions and may have been used for non-agricultural purposes.
The ability to take a loan from a financial institution can be seen from Table 5.11; 64 percent of the respondents stated that they borrowed money from the Agricultural Bank or various types of farmers' cooperatives. The study site can be considered fortunate that loans with relatively low interest rates can be acquired. The existence of 'bank' loans has been evident since the introduction of the second rice crop, approximately 13 years ago. The continuance of such loans indicates the relative success of the rice crop throughout the years. Money is repaid and then borrowed again when seedlings, fertilizers and farming equipment are needed.

Table 5.10  Rate of Interest of Money Borrowed by Sex and Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Rate of interest</th>
<th>0-20%</th>
<th>20+%</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field survey, 1987

Table 5.11  Source of Loan by Sex and Age Group, in Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Source of loan</th>
<th>Bank/Co-op</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Relative</th>
<th>Total%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>70(7)</td>
<td>30(3)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td></td>
<td>100(5)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>58(7)</td>
<td>17(2)</td>
<td>25(3)</td>
<td>100(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td></td>
<td>44(4)</td>
<td>22(2)</td>
<td>33(3)</td>
<td>100(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>64(23)</td>
<td>19(7)</td>
<td>17(6)</td>
<td>100(36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field survey, 1987
The information presented in Tables 5.10 and 5.11 may indicate that farmers in the study site are relatively well-off. The ability of a large proportion to acquire low interest agricultural loans indicates that they are relatively successful in the agricultural pursuits. Given their favourable environmental conditions they can definitely be seen as better-off than farmers in the dry northeastern regions of the country where out-migration and very low levels of nutrition have been documented. However, the expansion of a cash economy and dependence on international market prices for rice have left them dependent upon these external forces. The desire of many rice farmers is for the cost of all the various inputs to be equally offset by the price of rice on the open market. An in-depth discussion with a retired headman indicates very clearly the dilemma which farmers face.

...I can make a bet with you that from the intersection of klong 17 to klong 15 only 10 out of 100 houses are not in debt to the bank, at least 20-30 thousand [baht]. I am at least [owing]less then they do, 7-8 thousand [baht]. I try to pay off 2-3 thousand every year... I will tell you, in the past farmers were not poor like nowadays. One kwian of rice was 800 baht, farmers still had more to eat than now, diesel cost 130 [baht] per drum. How many drums of diesel can one kwian of rice buy? When the price of rice went up to 2000 [baht] per kwian it was good but diesel then cost 1450-1500 [baht] per drum. If the rice was slightly damp it would fetch only 1500 [baht]. And at 1500 [baht] with a drum of diesel at 1450 [baht] how much is that! And today rice price is 3000 [baht], very high huh!. The price of diesel has come down to 1200 [baht] they say is good. And how many drums of diesel can one kwian get? A bit more than two! [drums]. And can we live on that, and the cost of fertiliser at 4700 [baht] a ton, pesticide at 200 [baht] for 4 rai of land, I work on 50 rai of land which is rented! (IDD3).

Grandad Samrarn’s situation is not atypical of the surrounding community. Data from the focused survey indicate that 41 out of the 69 respondent households still grow rice with an average rice holding of 27 rai; of these 41 households 17 (41 percent) have to rent land and thus incur extra costs in rice production.
Part of the benefits to farmers from borrowing from the various financial institutions is the ability to take out life insurance. The introduction of a life insurance plan, known as Chapanakit, by the agricultural bank and various co-operatives has enabled the surviving offspring to provide for a funeral ceremony for their parents appropriate to local tradition (which can be costly) and to have a proportion of the money left for their own use. The Chapanakit typically involves an annual deposit of 500-1000 baht a year for a minimum of six years. Some holders expect to receive close to 100,000 baht upon their death.

Table 5.12 Respondents Who Belong to Chapanakit by Sex by Age, in Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field survey, 1987

The introduction of Chapanakit is a recent phenomenon which gained wider acceptance when the Agricultural Bank became involved in providing loans about 15 years ago. The 60-69 age group seems to have benefited more, by becoming members, than the 70+ age group who probably did not know much about it on its introduction and were probably too old to take it up (Table 5.12). It can be seen that less than half (25 out of 69) of the respondents actually have any form of Chapanakit.
5.4 External Support

5.4.1 Development of Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) Health Centres

The place of treatment for any form of chronic illness can be a good indicator of accessibility to professional medical attention, especially for rural villagers. The necessity for frequent medical monitoring is important, especially for older people, and their ease of access to professional medical attention is thus an important part of their physical well-being. Access to health centres run by the Ministry of Public Health also indicates effective development in awareness of the importance of physical well-being of the population in general.

As a first place of treatment for chronic illness interesting differences can be seen in the two categories of 'no treatment' and treatment received in a 'Bangkok hospital' (Table 5.13). In the 'no treatment' category we find 23 percent of women compared to only 15 percent of the men. In the 'Bangkok...' category the men account for almost twice the proportion of women receiving treatment, 19 and 10 percent respectively. The remaining categories of 'health centre' 'provincial hospital' and 'drugstore' do not show any marked sex differences. Treatment received at the MOPH health centre accounted for 56 percent of all treatment received for both sexes, far outweighing the remaining categories of hospitals and drugstores. Since women reported more difficulties than men in all categories of daily activities (Table 5.6), it might seem that they received more medical attention than the men but this is not borne out in the category 'no treatment'. It is quite likely that different gender roles account for the differences shown in this category. The older women
### Table 5.13 First Place of Treatment for Chronic Illness by Sex, by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of treatment</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No treatment</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOPH health centre</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok hospital</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial hospital</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugstore</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

valid cases n=65

Source: field survey, 1987

report more symptoms than men but these symptoms may be less severe than those of the men, resulting in the higher proportion of women receiving no treatment. Conversely there were almost twice as many men as women in the category 'Bangkok hospital', attendance at which, whether as an initial step or subsequent to visits to other medical centres, clearly signifies that the men have a more serious illness. The time involved, expense in travel and stress on the family environment are features common to every villager who has experienced a visit to a Bangkok hospital.

Though representative data do not exist in Thailand concerning health behaviour of the old population, Verbrugge (1983:146) confirms in her US sample that older men tend to have more serious illness than women. Many of Verbrugge’s findings, despite being from a developed country, strikingly parallel the situation in the village. She states that older women respond to health problems earlier and better than older men do. Even after diagnosis, older men may be more reluctant than women to change their behaviour; this increases their chances of an earlier death. It is further stated that women are more
sensitive than men to body discomforts, interpret them as illness more often, and are more willing and able to restrict activities, seek medical care and use drugs. These gender differences of illness behaviour of women thus may enhance their health status.

The Ministry of Public Health has successfully established a health centre in every district in the country; but the efficient and effective running of these health centres depends almost entirely on staff who have minimal outside assistance. The Saladang district MOPH health centre in Muu 2 of the Paidum community was established in 1975 and updated to include a total of three personnel and a new building in 1984. The health centre is run by Moh Chamnan who has to co-ordinate the selection of Social Welfare Card recipients, attend to all accidents in the district, provide prenatal and postnatal check-ups, assist deliveries, provide medical care for all villagers who come to the health centre and maintain complete records of these activities. In addition to this, various projects undertaken by the MOPH as well as other government agencies in the area, regardless of subject matter, are sent to Moh Chamnan; the time he spent with me as a social researcher would be included in the MOPH projects category. He is paid a junior civil servant rate of approximately 2700 baht ($A135) a month.

The structural pressures of the situation do not motivate health centre personnel to devote attention to their jobs; the effective organization of the health centre is due entirely to Chamnan’s devoted concern for patients who come to the centre, but opportunities do exist for health centre personnel to bend the rules on distribution of medicine to villagers. Bulk orders of non-MOPH issued medicine can be purchased from large drugstores. When patients come for diagnosis or treatment these medicines can be offered for sale to them with a remark by the staff that they are better than the MOPH variety; this alternative avenue of income is a very attractive motivation for MOPH employees to be posted to village health centres.
5.4.2 State Support

Except for civil service pensions there are no forms of old-age pensions or social security given to the general population in Thailand. Old age security has generally been dependent upon one's past savings and one's adult children (Peerasit et al., 1975; see also Chapter 1). During the second world war a large number of men from the study site were drafted into the army. Some of the male respondents in the focused survey were affected by the draft and some in the 70 plus age group were drafted for the pre-war engagement known as the Indo-China war (1939-1941). Army ferry boats would arrive in the community and the men in the area would be rounded up and assembled in the temple compound. The only test given to identify able-bodied men was a chest measurement; if the measurement was above the minimum standard the man would be immediately sent to the waiting ferry to be transported to the army camp. Some men ran away to the city to escape the draft, some attempted to demonstrate physical disabilities such as a bad limp or a crippled arm. The men who were drafted and actually experienced any form of front line activity eventually received a veterans' card entitling them to free medical service, transportation and a proportionate reduction in their electricity bill, and were given an annual cash sum of 500 baht. The veterans' card can be seen as a nascent form of state support though given to only a selected population.

One in seven survey respondents have a veterans' card, but some respondents did not know that they were entitled to the benefits of the veterans' card; and it is likely that many of the old and rural population who were entitled or did hold a card did not fully exploit its minimal benefits.

Perhaps the most widespread form of state support can be seen in the distribution of a welfare card to households below a certain level of income since 1982 (see Chapter 2 for a detailed description). Though not covering the entire population the card does enable free medical service
and medication. Eighteen respondents or 26 percent of the surveyed population stated that they had a welfare card (Table 5.14); 16 of them were female. It is of particular interest that 11 out of the 16 female card holders are widows, four aged 60-69 and seven in the 70+ age group.

Table 5.14 Welfare Card Holder by Age Group and Sex, by Frequency of Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field survey, 1987

(not shown in Table). From observation of welfare card recipients in the 10 surrounding villages I believe that most village communities were likely to choose households with crippled, widowed and old persons living in them even if they were no poorer than other households. From my transcripts of discussions of the village committee it is clear that this decision was not a consciously stated objective of choosing the crippled, widowed and old. Though monthly income was the main criterion for selection (see Chapter 2) no household with the above types of eligibility was objected to during the discussions. This observation is further supported by the data on district welfare card recipients detailed in section 6.2. The benefits which the old and widowed acquire from the welfare card were not consciously stated objectives of the village committee or the national government when implementing this scheme.
5.4.3 The Lack of Community Support

Writing on age and anthropological research, Keith (1985) stated that old-age peer groups, because of similar social experiences, were evidently a form of old age support system.

The logical and empirical link between liminality (Latin for threshold) and age peers is that the 'social clocks' of many cultures move age mates through liminal states together so that egalitarian potentialities of age are accentuated in the combination of celebration and ordered typical rites of passage... When peers are available, we should therefore expect that old people, like other people, will be linked to these age mates in informal networks that provide both tangible and intangible support (Keith, 1985:254).

To find out whether the peer-group form of old age support existed in the study community, I introduced this topic into the in-depth discussions, asking whether old people checked up or monitored each other's physical and social well-being in any non-coincidental manner as Keith had mentioned. The ensuing discussions indicated that no type of old age peer support, such as that described by Keith, was evident. If an old person was ill, or did not show up at a certain social function, no particular peer would necessarily have to check up; the absence of that person would be only incidentally remarked by others in their next encounter as, 'I haven't seen you for a while, where have you been?' (IDD3:1667-1696; IDD14:979-998). It is only coincidental that visitors find that the person visited is ill, and so provide assistance; the intention of the visit is social and not monitoring. It can be argued that Keith's analysis does not presume purpose or intent. The important issue here is that an old person cannot entirely depend upon the 'tangible and intangible support' in periodic times of need for medical attention which many old people encounter. It became clear during in-depth discussions that conscious group support was not a salient
issue and I decided not to include this topic in my focus group discussions.

While peer support may not have been a salient issue there were other forms of community support to be considered such as that by neighbours, the temple, headmen and various local community groups. The lack of support by any of these institutions was made clear by my continued involvement with the old, and expressed most clearly in the case of Grandad Learn, a former senior monk at Wat Paidum. In many aspects Grandad Learn can be considered as an elder who is ‘worthy of respect’ in the community.

Grandad Learn who is now 78 years old, was married and settled in Paidum community and has been living there for approximately 50 years. He lives alone and is a war veteran though he does not receive any benefits because he cannot travel to Bangkok to receive the 500 baht provided by the State. He does not have electricity in his house and thus does not benefit from this reduction. On returning from the war he entered the monkhood and received six years of education; he frequently went on jungle expeditions to practise meditation. He was once nominated to be the new abbot but owing to conflicts over the title he resigned and disrobed. He married and fathered four children who have now moved away; his wife died when giving birth to the last child and because ‘she was the only one for me’ he refused any attempts by his friends to match him with any other woman. It was sad to see his own total acceptance of his living conditions, his deteriorating physique, the lack of nutritious food available to him and the degree of neglect he experienced from family and friends, neighbours and the wider community.

From time to time during my field study I visited Grandad Learn bringing some food, clothing, kerosene for his lamp and a good supply of betel nut. Out of academic interest as well as personal involvement during the subsequent months I discussed Grandad Learn’s situation with others in the community and it was clear that apart from his neighbours and a sister who lived in the next village nobody actually knew that his living conditions were well below the standard in the community. Again and
again people's first comment was: 'But he has children, hasn't he?' (Auntie C, D, K, Uncle A, M.), indicating that children should be responsible for their parents' well-being (see Chapter 6). Community support could easily have been given to Grandad Learn; for example the provision of left-over food at the temple, though not a traditional practice, could provide for his daily nutritional needs. I asked the abbot, a close friend of Grandad Learn's, about providing food for him from the temple; his first remark was 'I see no problem in that but doesn't he have children?'. The wider community of which Grandad Learn was a part did not see why they had to involve themselves in his predicament, and were surprised that I should involve myself. It was his children's responsibility to care for their father and beyond this one should not make any overt attempt to care for him.

The absence of any form of community support for people like Grandad Learn makes the later part of their lives particularly difficult in view of societal changes which force children to get work elsewhere. This situation also creates more pressure upon 'struggling adult children' to balance care between their children and their aging parent. A certain type of individualism exists which emphasizes katanyu (see Chapter 4) which children must have towards their parents, beyond this even close relatives and friends are not bound to this form of katanyu.

5.5 Summary

Malnutrition was found to be relatively widespread and affecting more men than women though accurate standards have not yet been ascertained. As the study site is predominantly 'well-off', such levels of malnutrition would presumably be common in other rural areas as well. Though men did not report many difficulties in conducting daily activities for the young-old (60-69) women in this group did have some difficulty in more physically demanding tasks. For the old-old (70+) group difficulties in the more physically demanding tasks were such that it would
impede their daily lives if they were without any external assistance. Females in the old-old group, especially, reported difficulties even in tasks such as maintaining personal cleanliness and moving about the house, a worrying situation with higher female life expectancies. Furthermore, with the likelihood of their children acquiring outside occupations active support in attending to daily activities would be difficult to obtain.

The only promising aspect as yet for the old is the relatively low amount of indebtedness, and low interest rates as a result of the introduction of the agricultural bank and various farmers' co-operatives; yet compared with the past, indebtedness is growing. It is likely that the villagers in the study community are 'well-off' compared to rural communities without access to a water supply, but worse off compared to the past with respect to rice prices and cost of farming inputs. The low amount of income and assets held by the old demonstrates their almost total dependence on remittances from their children for basic consumer goods.

The MOPH health centre had demonstrated its effectiveness by being the first place of treatment for the majority of the population, with more serious complaints treated by Bangkok hospitals, but structural obstacles do exist in adequate performance by paramedical personnel at these centres. Forms of state support seen in the veterans' and welfare cards provide very minimal assistance and because of their selective nature demonstrate inequities in this emerging support system.

Perhaps most interesting is the absence of any form of local community support for the needy old. The casual observer may protest that 'surely someone must care for the old who are totally neglected by their children and who cannot care for themselves?'. The neglected old that I observed are given sustenance rather than care. If community support is seen as the feeling of a degree of worry and concern for the well-being of a non-related old person then this exists to a very slight extent. The important idea of katanyu is linked only to family and significant others in a reciprocal fashion arising from the
domestic farming cycle. Because of this there is no emergent feeling that an unrelated old person is in need of any immediate care and attention.
[Children] don’t have to look after them [parents] all the time but to come and make a living near them. If they [children] live in rural areas then they should come and see if their parents have anything to eat, do they have any money for expenses, like to come and look after some of the time (IDD9:788).

When something happens to me they care, take to the doctor, like that,...We raise them, the children must care for us,...Care like if I can’t get up they would feed me like that house across the klong, she has five children, they clean her excrement [when she cannot help herself] (IDD13:813-845).

6.1 Defining Familial Support

The term family has a wide range of definitions in the literature: from a group of persons with common ancestry to a group of individuals living under one roof. The term family is used here in a rather narrow sense: first, the immediate offspring of the parent or parents, and secondly the children of these offspring. It is used in this way because household structures are commonly found to be confined to these groups. Furthermore, as touched upon in Chapter 5, support given beyond these limits is not expected and in practice seldom occurs.

If support can be separated into more discrete categories it is possible to discuss more clearly the different forms of support given to the old. From my fieldwork I have found that support can be relevantly categorized into three types. First, active support, seen in nursing the old during illness, maintaining the household by contributions such as fetching water, ploughing the rice field, fishing, providing food. Second, social support, giving the feeling of being cared for and loved, a sense of belonging within the household as well as the wider community, with a network of communication and obligation, and a certain degree of interaction. History is an important part of the community network and temple
functions or holy days, pilgrimages, funerals and wedding ceremonies, charitable activities, help in farming throughout a person’s lifetime, all help to promote a strong network within a community. Third, material support, the provision of monetary and material goods; remittances from absent children, groceries and gifts are forms of material support.

It is apparent from the above categorizations that these areas of support are not mutually exclusive. A small gift of little monetary value can be seen not only as material support but as a form of affection from the adult child, and thus a form of emotional warmth. For adult children to return from the city and sweep the floor also brings emotional warmth and is seen as social support. As these categories are interwoven their presentation is not divided into major sections; rather the various forms of support, where relevant, are examined throughout the chapter.

6.2 Household Classification

In determining who the potential supporters are a household classification is necessary. Household classifications are seldom exclusive of one another but are necessary if order and coherence of the collected information is required. I have classified each respondent’s household arrangements as straightforwardly as possible (Table 6.1) to show the potential familial support system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Nuclear</th>
<th>Stem Joint</th>
<th>Stem-Joint</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Not related</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field survey, 1987
The classification 'nuclear household' includes a husband and wife and their children; there were 21 households in this category. Households which contained grandparents and grandchildren but not adult children were also considered as nuclear. Households classified as stem are those consisting of more than two generations residing in the same household; this constituted the majority of households in the survey. Joint households consist of a type of composite or extended family composed of nuclear families linked by sibling ties. The combination of stem and joint households constitutes a significant proportion, 12 out of the 69 households interviewed. From this classification it can be seen that only a small proportion of the old are in single person households. Most live in some arrangement which gives them some access to help and assistance from family members.

There were only two households which consisted of only a married couple with none of their living adult children residing with them. For purposes of classification they were defined as nuclear families. One couple can be considered as not typical of pre-fertility transition families in that they had only one child. More typical of pre-fertility transition families was the second couple which had six living children who were all absent from the household. There are several reasons why such a situation of a married couple living alone may not be typically found. Women have a higher life expectancy of 67.5 compared to men of 61.8 (Population Projections for Thailand, NESDB, October 1985, Table 2), a difference of almost 6 years. It is likely that a lower proportion of men compared to women would survive to age 60, my study population. Subsequently, numbers of old couples living together would also be less than other populations which have a life expectancy at birth well beyond 60 years of age for both sexes. The prevalence of a large completed family size would also mean a higher likelihood for at least one child to remain at home. In addition, grandparents are also quite likely to care for their grandchildren while
their adult children are at work.

'Single person households' consist of old people who live totally by themselves. This classification has two major qualitative distinctions in that proximity to adult children is an important determinant of well-being for the old. For example, Granny Chuen in muu two has remained in her house whilst her adult children have built another house within the same compound. In Granny Chuen's situation, active social and material support is immediately available. In contrast the three other single person households are those where the children of the old people have moved away and acquired occupations which do not allow them the same frequency of contact as Granny Chuen. These old people may have difficulty in getting active support from their children when needed. In common occurrences such as illness or accident neighbours provide the immediate attention and contact the children either by telephone at the district capital, by letter, or in person. The time and effort involved are burdensome for the neighbours and this can dramatically affect the health and well-being of the old parent. In Grandad Learn's case his nephew had to travel long distances to get help:

On June 25th we went on our bicycle to Grandad Learn's whom we hadn't visited for almost one month. We brought with us some food, the picture which we took of him and a shirt which my dad gave me. We stopped at the only noodle shop in the middle of the rice fields and had two bowls of noodles. We told them we were going to visit Grandad Learn and one of the women there said he had been ill for some time. We quickly finished our meal and went to his house, carefully walking on the banks of the dry rice fields since there was no path leading to the house. Upon arriving, passing through the obligatory barrage of barking dogs we found that his daughter, aged around 50, had come to take care of him the night before. She lived in klong Chao (about 35 kilometres away). Uncle Learn at 76 years old was recovering from frequent dizzy spells and immediately began talking about olden times when he saw us. He talked about the cost of transportation, food, clothing and how everything cost much more nowadays. He was pale, frail and his physical health had deteriorated since last we saw him. We learnt from his daughter that when he became ill his nephew (brother's son) who lived nearby went to klong Chao to tell her to come and take care of him; she had to pay back the cost of
the nephew's transportation. Nang, his daughter, has six children of her own of whom four are already married. She has a small grocery stall at the side of the road and her husband is a farmer. We learnt from Nang that the son who Grandad Learn said visits him every month and always brings enough food and money actually gives him only 100 baht (A$5) a month and six small cans of tuna. Nang had told her brother to give their dad more because he is old and cannot help himself any more. She told us that her dad always said that 100 baht was enough, that it was plenty. Grandad Learn had stated to us on numerous occasions that his children have families of their own, he did not want to impose on them. This explanation we have heard on many occasions and will term it the concept of imposition.

I felt today the extreme loneliness which Grandad Learn must have been feeling over the last few years. His daughter said he had told her that two fine looking people [researcher and spouse] came to visit him the past few months. He said that he must have had some bun (merit) because two fine people came and talked to him.

Throughout my field study we visited many old people, participated in community functions, and became rather close to many households in each of the classifications. We were saddened and dismayed over Grandad Learn's situation yet felt helpless to provide any worthwhile improvement as our stay was only temporary. We marvelled at the business-minded stem-joint household of Uncle Mon and how he kept all in his household working. We were particularly impressed by what seemed to be the ideal living arrangements of Granny Porn and her sister Granny Pun's stem household whose children provided attention, remittances and active assistance in their daily lives. Particularly striking was the social diversity of the various nuclear household arrangements within one community. 'Everybody is different in every single household along this klong', I was told by Auntie Come. I asked 'But are there common similarities in the community along this klong when compared to that Muslim village nearby?'; she replied 'In this case, yes there is'. I began to feel more motivated in my search for commonalities in my field study.
6.3 Children of the Old

The importance of having many children as a potential support system for parents when old has been a major determinant of high levels of fertility and completed family size in Thailand (Knodel, 1982). Typical comments in the in-depth discussions concerning this matter included:

Children must look after and provide attention [to parents] (IDD1:25).

Like Gangom (old and grey) already, cannot help oneself, like this the children must come and look after [us] (IDD9:937).

For the 69 old respondents there were a total of 396 children-ever-born with an average family size of 5.7. In Table 6.2 the sub-heading 'children present' means that a child is residing in the household with the old parent on a daily basis. The category 'absent children' comprises children who have been absent from the household for at least one year.¹ Out of the 344 children living (169 plus 175) only 92 children (27 per cent) were residing with the old people. A higher number of living daughters (83) than of living sons (74) for the 70 plus age group does not seem surprising and could possibly be accounted for by higher mortality levels for males, considering that some of these children are approaching old age themselves.

¹ Initially the meaning of absence was left open to respondents to answer. After collecting all the data I found that the least time period in which a person was considered absent was one year.
Table 6.2 Children Ever Born, Living Children, by Presence in Household by Age Group of the Old

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Children ever-born</th>
<th>Living children</th>
<th>Present children</th>
<th>Absent children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field survey, 1987

Old age group differences show a significant decrease in numbers of children present in the 70 plus age group in comparison to the 60-69 age group. This is possibly accounted for by withdrawal of the old from farming activities and decreasing abilities in managing a household. Of particular interest is the small number of children present within the household for both age groups of 56 and 36 persons for males and females respectively. Both these figures together account for only 27 percent of the total number of living children. Within the 60-69 age group itself there were almost twice as many sons present as daughters. Number of living children and number of present children are shown to decrease as respondents get older; these points are elaborated further in Table 6.4.

From the data on living children presented in Table 6.2 an average number of male and female children and family size can be calculated (Table 6.3). Family size is shown to decrease for both sexes of the children as respondents get older.
Table 6.3 Average Number of Male and Female Living Children and Family Size by Age Group of the Old

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Family size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(35)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(35)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(34)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(34)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field survey, 1987

The information on children present in Table 6.2 enables proportionate comparisons to be made between the sexes of present children (Table 6.4). The prevalence of almost twice as many males as females residing in households of the 60-69 age group may seem to conflict with the general opinion in Thai society that the younger daughter should remain in the household and care for the old parents (Rabibhadana, 1984). But the presence of more sons does not necessarily mean that they provide more care than daughters in, for example, active support.

Table 6.4 Average Number of Children Present Per Household by Age Group of the Old

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Male present</th>
<th>Female present</th>
<th>Avg.no. present male</th>
<th>Avg.no. present female</th>
<th>Total male</th>
<th>Total female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>0.41*</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(35)</td>
<td>(39)</td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>0.22*</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(34)</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* x² significant at .01 between the two old age groups

Source: field survey, 1987

From in-depth discussions on active support daughters are seen as better than sons. Differences between daughters and sons, in the form of active support given,
made quite clear the preference for daughters.

When ill my eldest daughter will always spend the night with me (IDD12:442).

Daughters are better. The sons cannot cook and do things well. If we want to eat this and that... if we cannot wash our clothes, ... daughters are better. The sons, it would be difficult to find one that would wash and do things for us, usually [one] cannot find [a son] one like that. Good sons are quite good, they can do it also but [it is] hard to find (IDD1:487-495).

Just from what I have seen sons are not as good as daughters, daughters worry for their parents (IDD9:832).

Note here the emphasis in the second quote on 'good' sons, implying that there are exceptions to the opinion that sons cannot properly care for their old parents. These sons are known as 'good sons' and are likely to be the equal of daughters in their ability to care for old parents; they are further distinguished from regular sons who are characterized by their inability to provide proper care.

Mixed opinions were expressed concerning care given by daughters-in-law. Some daughters-in-law were seen as very helpful but examples were also given of those that were considered uncaring.

I just heard that the daughter-in-law has to find rice, medicine and betel nut for her mother-in-law. I think she [daughter in law] is good. The real child does not buy anything (IDD12:569-580).

There have been examples, the parent gave everything to the son and in the end the mother has to sleep under the house...children are not all the same. The daughter-in-law is the one who cooks. If the old are hungry she says to them 'go and find food for yourself'. And in the end the mother has to sleep under the house (IDD1:187-197).

Most conflict was seen to arise from relationships between
mothers and their daughters-in-law.

Participant 1: Most sons and daughters usually have problems with their mothers-in-law...As for the families that are living together...as I have seen most mothers and daughters-in-law have problems.

Participant 2: Yes

Participant 3: Most fathers-in-law don’t interfere. People who are fathers mostly have no problems with other [in-laws] (IDD7:67-78).

Interestingly, most focus group participants were rather reluctant to express their opinions concerning care given by daughters-in-law. Many reiterated that daughters were the best in providing care to the old. Some mentioned that second to daughters were spouses and then daughters-in-law with sons as the last resort (IDD7:p75).

Though sons were seen to provide inadequate care to parents when ill it was acknowledged that the physical strength of sons was a benefit in the farming process; but in spite of this physical advantage daughters were still preferred.

Participant 1: Sons are better [strength], daughters are a little bit weaker. neatness [though] sons can’t match daughters...sons have more strength to plough.

Participant 2: Daughters can work more tidily than sons.

Participant 3: Daughters are more diligent [in the farming process] than sons. Sons are only good in ploughing (FG:80).

In spite of preference for daughters it should be noted that the physical presence of sons ‘being there’ must provide some feeling of immediate active support in certain chores, assistance during emergencies or at least physical protection or sense of security from robbers and thieves. On this latter point it was necessary in the past to have
many grown sons for a family’s physical protection from gangs of thieves and robbers. The presence of sons might at least deter potential danger in a time when there was little access to police protection and its effectiveness was limited. As recently as 25 years ago bands of thieves in the area were so confident of their power that it was not uncommon for them to place a sign in front of a wealthy person’s house saying that on the following day they would arrive to rob it. This does not happen any more; but the decrease in crimes of this sort is not due to higher police presence and effectiveness, but to widespread construction of transport networks, communication channels and encroaching urbanization. The presence of sons as a protection and deterrent is not needed nowadays and possibly is taken for granted by many old parents.

In the 70 plus age group it can be seen that the proportions of sons and daughters residing at home are almost equal at 0.22 and 0.19 respectively. In this age group old people are seen to be less active in their daily routines. Farming tasks, even those tasks the active old used to do such as clearing fields of weeds and filling in empty rice patches, have all but ceased. Replacement tasks are growing vegetable gardens, sweeping the courtyard and generally minding the house when the children are not in (IDD10; IDD3; IDD12).

Compared to the 60-69 age group the 70 plus age group shows a shrinkage in the proportion of children present, especially of sons. It is likely that this is due to the cessation of all active work in rice farming by the old. When an old person decides to ‘rest his hand’ completely from farming, especially if it is on rented land, the choice is open to his children to continue on their own or to discontinue farming the land. The majority of land in the study area, as well as the central region in general, is owned by absentee landlords; rented land puts less pressure on children to remain as farmers.

Farming has already been shown to be a precariously balanced existence; instabilities exist in borrowing from the Agricultural Bank for chemicals, pesticides, fertilizers, rice seedlings, petrol and farming utensils.
There is also a dependence on the water level in the canal as well as the rains coming on time. If rains do not arrive at the appropriate time, resulting in an unsuccessful crop, the debt from the Bank is carried on to the next season, contributing to the downward spiral alluded to in Chapter 3. So it is not surprising that many sons at home find it less worrisome to get wage work as pineapple and sugar-cane plantation pickers, or labourers in general who hire out their labour during the harvest season as well as digging irrigation ditches; as pedicab drivers or taxi drivers; or to move yet further out to other rural areas where land is cheaper.

Mention here should be made of the practical conveniences to children living at home. I observed that in addition to managing their children's farming activities, old but active parents provide stability and domestic conveniences for the children, single or married. Many children of farming households lack technical or academic qualifications which might provide them with a stable and relatively high paying occupation. The wage work they may do provides only minimal subsistence, not enough savings to rent or purchase a permanent dwelling. The luxury of remaining at home or returning to live at home where physical comforts outweigh those in any construction site or textile factory remain open to these children; it is likely that more sons than daughters avail themselves of this luxury.

The view by the old that daughters are better active supporters than sons raises questions concerning the higher rate of absence of daughters from the household. How can daughters be better supporters if their physical presence is not being felt? This seemingly conflicting circumstance can be explained by the definition of active support which emerged during the field study.

Within the central region and specific to the field site a large proportion of farming households had to rent additional land on which to farm. The process of urbanization has resulted in land speculation and the subdivision of such lands into manufacturing and industrial sites. As a result of this the 'release' of farmers from
their land has been predominant during the past three decades. These changes were clearly evident in the perceptions of members of the community.

Yes, we had a little land, they [children] helped. And then when they grew up we thought that we had only a little land, it would not be enough for all to live on so it would be better to find other ways [of making a living]. If anyone has left over [money] from their jobs they would send it back, if not then it is okay, it goes on like this (IDD14:85-95).

Most jobs available to such unskilled migrants within the study area favoured daughters more than sons; jobs within textile industries, small manufacturing, as servants, hawkers, market sellers, in some cases even construction workers. This does not preclude adult children from acquiring other forms of rural jobs in other areas where agricultural land is more accessible, a practice which has been going on for more than a century (Sharp and Hanks, 1978; Phillips, 1965). As a result of this it may not be surprising that more sons than daughters are residing at home with their old parents. It is quite common in the villagers’ view that daughters still provide good active support, though in a different sense than in the past. Active support in this community context cannot be defined or indicated by the uninterrupted presence of a ‘supporter’. Active support by an absent daughter can be seen more as support by continued monitoring or support when it is needed.

Forms of social support also differ between the past and present. As shown in Tables 6.2 to 6.5, adult children are noted for their absences from the household. In the past it was felt that most children worked and lived in their parental household. There was felt to be a natural occurrence of numjai (kindness)² which led to a strong sense of belonging by each member of the household. The

² Numjai literally means water from the heart. An English interpretation of numjai would possible mean thoughtfulness, kindness of a high degree.
household in the past was felt to be a true social and economic unit of production.

[concerning communal help] ...many stages before it [rice] came out as white rice. It needed tens of people, to pound with the pestle. In the past it was very difficult (IDD3:143-146).

I lived [in the past] with my parents, farmed, took care of each other like this. If anyone was ill we would take care of them; some survived some died. People back then did not go to work in Bangkok, they made a living on the paddy... (IDD14:679-685).

Different forms of socialization received by male and female children, referred to in the previous section, also account for differences in emotional attitude which parents have towards their children. Concerning the emotional worth which a father shows towards his son, it was not uncommon for a parent to show dissatisfaction at the lack of emotional support which the son portrays in his actions:

He [son] thinks that his father is not wanting, he does not buy him anything. On new year he says that his father and mother have money... Even if he could buy just some candy, that would be good enough, shows he has some heart. It doesn't have to be something big and expensive it has to do with numjai. We are old parents, we want to feel chuenjai (refreshed). Oh! our child has not forgotten us (IDD3:210-231).

If we talk about giving attention to parents daughters do more than sons. From what I have seen, not only in our community, in general women are likely to worry for their parents. Men do not worry so much (IDD9:870-879).

Of adult children who are absent a very small proportion live within the district for both age groups of the old, most preferring to go to Bangkok or other provinces (Table 6.5). In the 60-69 age group a significantly higher proportion of daughters (44 per cent) than of sons (30 per cent) live in Bangkok. These
daughters include younger cohorts who get work more easily than men, as mentioned previously. In addition, these daughters are in a better position than those in other provinces to provide continual monitoring of the old. The proportionate differences in geographical residence are not evident for the children of the 70 plus population and may possibly be due to the aging of this cohort of children since those who were once denied a job in Bangkok finally acquired one or it was easy for a migrant to get a city job in the past.

Table 6.5 Geographical Residence of Absent Children by Age Group of the Old, in Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>In district</th>
<th>Bangkok</th>
<th>Other province</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children of 60-69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>100(56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100(72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of 70+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>100(56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>100(67)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Don’t know of one respondent

Source: field survey, 1987

Not only are more daughters absent than sons but their absence is also longer (Table 6.6). In Table 6.6 recent absence is categorized as 0 to 9 years while non-recent absence is categorized as 10 or more years. In the 60-69 age group slightly more than half (0.53) of the sons left their household recently and a smaller proportion (0.47) left non-recently. In comparison to sons, daughters show a markedly different duration of absence with a large majority (0.70) having left their households 10 or more years previously. With general tendency for matrilocal residence, job availability rather than marriage for daughters, as mentioned above, may have accounted for this difference. Furthermore, the old of both age groups were able to state specific jobs which their adult children were
employed. Approximately 60 various types of occupations which adult children were employed in were mentioned by the old. Such occupation covered a wide spectrum ranging from rice farmer, weaver, mechanic, truck driver, to boxing trainer, telephone operator, bus ticket collector and travelling salesman.

Table 6.6 Number of Years Absent Children Left Household by Age Group of the Old by Sex of Children, in Proportions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Dk/Da</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(70)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field survey, 1987

A large percentage of the respondents in the 60 to 70 age group provide no remittances to their parents (Table 6.7); a smaller percentage of children of respondents in the 70 plus age group provide no remittances. Though a large percentage provided adequate remittances in the 201 to 500 Baht category for the 70 plus age group a significant percentage of parents still received only minimal remittances shown in the 1 to 200 Baht per month category. A minimal percentage in both age groups received on average more than 500 Baht a month. In a few cases
Table 6.7 Average Monthly Remittances Received from Children for Previous 12 Months by Age Group of the Old, in Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>No remittance</th>
<th>1-200 Baht</th>
<th>201-500 Baht</th>
<th>500+ Baht</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-70</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $1 equals approximately 20 Baht
Source: field survey, 1987

however the money received could not clearly be categorized as a remittance because children were paying back loans to their parents. Clearly remittances made by children were not substantial. These amounts were most likely to be used by parents for purely household necessities. Unfortunately a sex breakdown of remittances by children was not made. This information would have enabled further analysis on higher amounts of material support given by female children. Qualitative information collected, however, does give the impression that daughters provide more material support than sons.

During the 12 months of field study we observed on numerous occasions that absent daughters seem to visit their parents more frequently than absent sons. Many old people can be heard during casual conversation with their neighbours to say that their child has returned home and brought gifts and/or groceries. Daughters can be seen more frequently than sons to carry large bundles of gifts such as sweets for children, large bowls of fish paste, fish soy, and various household necessities. Our field stay allows us to say that we observed more visits by absent daughters than sons. This can be seen as a form of active as well as social support by daughters. The worry and concern which some daughters show over the well-being of their parents may perhaps be explained by the differences in early socialization which they received.

Differences in early socialization between sons and daughters are evident in most societies. In Thai society
sons seem to be given more freedom than daughters from their early adolescent years. Rabibhadana (1984) states that the general pattern is that adolescent girls are given much more responsibility, while the boys are allowed much freedom and given few responsibilities. Young boys of the same age, he states, are always found in 'gangs', 'hanging around', or 'just talking'.

During my field study one of the major reasons stated for daughters not being given more freedom in their adolescence is the fear by parents that their daughters will be enticed or forced into premarital sex (field notes: Samrarn). Even if premarital sex does not occur gossip in the community concerning the 'loose' behaviour of the adolescent daughter will indirectly affect the parents' moral standing within the community. Parents are seen as the cause of their daughters' behaviour because they allow them to 'run loose' and people say 'Whose daughter is that? They shouldn't let her run loose like that'. This fear or worry about premarital sex is made clear by the saying 'having a daughter is like having a toilet in front of one's house' (FN:April 17), implying that more negative than positive consequences are likely to come to the family. Some daughters themselves believe this value system to be legitimate thus maintaining its effectiveness.

For sons the opposite form of socialization, freedom to paiteaw (roam), is evident. For young male adults, the freedom to socialize, to drink alcohol, to learn how to entertain and to show that one is a good sapport (sport) by spending money on friends is certainly something which I have observed, and often experienced. This kind of behaviour is rarely criticized by the community. The son learns to initiate, develop and expand his circle of friends within the community, and later when an outside occupation is acquired, beyond the community boundaries (FN: Pai, Kaa). The bonds of obligation initiated in the early adolescent years have expanded to include not only the family but also the circle of drinking and non-drinking mates possibly defined as one's obligatory friends.

It is to be expected that daughters provide better care when ill, are more reliable in times of need and are
more socially supportive to their parents; this type of role is evidently an ascribed one. Daughters are expected to do this and are brought up in this way; to cook, clean, wash, socialize only on a limited basis and to be conscientious at school. Though these attributes are seen as good for boys as well they are not as strongly emphasized. Daughters are better supporters in all facets but only ‘good sons’ are like daughters; an achieved role rather than an ascribed one is given to sons. A ‘good’ son has to achieve this label whilst a daughter does not. In spite of their absence daughters may take it upon themselves to visit and check up on their parents; this process of monitoring does not necessarily need physical presence. When visits are not possible maintenance of indirect contact through letters or friends and relatives going to and from the community may be undertaken. In this form some daughters may not have visited their parents for months but are in contact, know of their parents’ well-being and are informed by friends and relatives when immediate support is needed. Because of differences in socialization which daughters receive it is likely that they will be more concerned than sons over the well-being of their old parents.

6.4 Household Composition

In addition to adult children the presence of other family members and related individuals directly affects the forms of support which the old may receive. In Table 6.8 two age categories of grandchildren are presented because of differences in the support which they are able to provide to the old grandparents. Grandchildren in
### Table 6.8 Household Composition and their Relationship to the Old by Age Group of the Old, in Proportion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Adult children</th>
<th>Grandchildren by age</th>
<th>Other relatives</th>
<th>Total proportion</th>
<th>Average number residing with old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field survey, 1987

The ages 0-9 are in most situations in the direct care and supervision of their grandparent. In some instances these young grandchildren can provide active support in certain farming chores such as driving mini-tractors, taking messages between households in the community and doing light chores around the house. Those in the age group 10-19 are capable of providing active support in the maintenance of the household, and are possible substitutes for absent children in practically all forms of active support. By being there the companionship of grandchildren may also instil in the old a sense of belonging to the family. The category 'other relatives' includes the spouse of the respondent, sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, siblings, and unrelated individuals. In the 60-69 age group young grandchildren account for the highest proportion of persons in the household. Respondents in this age group are still physically active enough to look after such young grandchildren. Grandchildren in the age group 10-19 accounted for only 11 percent of the household composition. In many instances the parents of these grandchildren are absent from the household and are working elsewhere. The grandchildren attend school at the local Paidum primary school. Upon reaching high school age of 13 they may continue schooling in the outer Bangkok district of Nongchok; school fees are required at Nongchok high school and the responsibility is on the parents to provide.
the necessary funds. Adult sons and daughters together accounted for a major proportion of almost 40 per cent of the household composition in this age group.

In the 70 plus age group the proportion of young grandchildren decreased somewhat to 0.21; there was a doubling of the proportion of older grandchildren to 0.19. This doubling may be due to the grandchildren ageing into the older age cohort. It is more likely though that the grandchildren's presence is a conscious decision made by adult children to provide indirect active support for their old parents through their adolescent children.

Of other relatives spouses are considered the most important in providing all forms of support, unavailable to the widowed. In the 60-69 age group there were seven widows and one widower; in the 70 plus age group there were six widowers and 13 widows (not shown in table). These numbers account for 7.2 and 48.5 percent of widowhood for males and females respectively. The 1980 Population Census has a higher rate of widowhood of 17.4 percent for males but a comparatively similar rate of 53 percent for females (Chen and Jones, 1989). These sex differences are explained by Chen and Jones as due to three factors. Males tend to marry females younger than themselves and are less likely to have suffered the death of their spouse at any given age than are females. There is a tendency for mortality rates of males beyond middle age to exceed those of females at the same ages. Thirdly, widowed males are more likely to remarry than are widowed females.

In both age groups there are fewer adult children at home. For the 70 plus group, who may need more assistance, there are even fewer adult children. Grandchildren have come to replace adult children as supporters for the old, but these grandchildren still do not take the responsibilities and provide the care which adult children can give. In many instances grandchildren are still seen as dependants of the grandparent and thus the flow of care is from grandparent to grandchild.

They [children] must give us [money]. We look after their children for them and their children
share food with us (FG:2709-2717).

I take care of these two [grandchildren]. [I have been doing it] for a long time. Before I raised the grandchildren for the other [children's] house. When they grew up I stopped. Then I raised the grandchildren from this house here (IDD1:22-30).

We live here just the two of us. They [children] bring the grandchildren for us to look after. My son left us his child who is studying at Nongchok [high school] (IDD1:789).

To care for grandchildren they [children] give us money for the school term. They give food expenses for the grandchildren. As for me they give a little, sometimes it is enough (IDD2:922-927).

The 70 plus group had higher rates of widowhood and thus the companionship and care provided by a spouse is lacking as people age. Being old in this village is marked not only by decreasing physical abilities but also by continued burdens and responsibilities.

6.5 The Welfare Card

Though the Welfare Card is a state supported scheme it is examined here because it reflects the availability of support, or lack of it, by adult children in the household. As discussed in Chapter 2 the Welfare Card is provided to households with a monthly income under 2000 baht; this amount is assessed by the village committee. It was remarked in the three village committee meetings which I attended that most households' income was less than the 2000 Baht minimum; in this situation MOPH (Ministry of Public Health) personnel advised the committee to give first priority to households which they felt were the poorest or in the most hardship.

The data which we acquired on Welfare Card recipients were in the form of household listings. Each household and its members were listed as recipients of the Card. With the household as a unit of analysis I was able to tabulate
the data in such a way as to acquire separate dependency ratios for each age-group of the old. A point must be made concerning the special characteristics of the data set. As the Welfare population is deemed a 'poor population' they do not reflect the general population. This data set particularly interested me because I wanted to see whether the proportion of the old population in it was markedly different from the wider district population.

Column two presents the number of welfare card holders by age group with the total number of holders in the district of 849. Column three takes these numbers and divides them by the district population in each age group as explained in the footnote. The percentages increase gradually from 11.8 to 13.1 for the age-groups 60-64 and 65-69 to a high average of 28.5 for the 80+ age-group. It is evident from column three that the higher the age group the higher the percentage of that age group are covered by the Card.

Because each Card holder may be living with one or more persons aged over 60 a more appropriate measure of the district population covered by the Card would include these persons into the calculation, this is presented in column four and five. In the age group 60-64, for example, an additional 31 persons aged over 60 were living with those 197 who held a Welfare Card thus totalling 228 people. This represented 13.6 percent of the total district population. Of main interest in this table are the comparative percentages in this column. The higher the age group the higher the percentage of welfare card coverage of that group, from 13.6 percent in the 60-64 age group to 41 percent in the 80+ age group. Of related interest to the percentage of welfare card holders is their average household size in column six. Average household size decreases as age group increases, from 4.1 for the 60-64 age group to 3.0 for the 80+ age group. Thus at older populations not only does welfare card coverage increase but household sizes decreases as well.
Table 6.9 Characteristics of Welfare Card Holders Aged Over 60 by Age Group of the Old

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number of welfare card holders</th>
<th>Percent of welfare card holders per total district popn. age group*</th>
<th>Number of welfare card holders plus others over 60 in household</th>
<th>Percent of welfare card holders and others over 60 in household per total district popn. age group***</th>
<th>Average household size of welfare card popn. aged dependent popn.</th>
<th>Welfare card popn. aged dependency ratio****</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>96.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>28.5**</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>41.0**</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>95.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>28.5**</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>41.0**</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>132.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>849</td>
<td></td>
<td>1145</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures in this column are calculated by the number of welfare card holders in column two divided by the number of people in each respective old age group in the district population (see Table 3.3). Thus for the age group 60-69, 11.8 percent was acquired by 197/1669*10.

** In Table 3.3 the population projection package had an open interval at 75 years of age, thus only an average between the age groups 75-79 and 80+ years was acquired.

*** Similar to column three, figures in this column are calculated by total number of people 60 plus in the household of the card holder in the respective age group divided by the number of people in each old age group in the district population. Thus for the age group 60-69, 13.6 percent was acquired by 22/1669*100.

**** The aged dependency ratio is calculated from the population aged 60 plus residing in each household of each respective age group divided by the population aged 10 to 59 residing in each of the respective age groups.
In order to inquire further about the composition of household size of the welfare card population an aged dependency ratio is presented in the last column. The aged dependency ratio shows quite strikingly that there are very few working age population (aged 11-59) residing in households of each respective age group. There is a relatively high ratio of 49.4 for the 60-64 age group to a strikingly high ratio of 132.5 for the 80+ age group. Being a state service given free of charge there would be high motivation for all households who hold a Card to provide complete listings of all their household members as possible. High ratios, compared to more normal populations, indicate a lower proportion of adults and a higher proportion of old people, with the remaining household members composed mainly of young children. This finding does not seem surprising considering that village committees would very likely choose those old who are either living alone, with young children and whom are within the low income earning criteria set down by the state. Higher aged dependency ratios in this special population are also reflected by a high number of single-person households of 197 (not shown in table) in the welfare card population as well as few numbers of present adult children (see Table 6.4).

The Welfare Card population data show the old to be over-represented; this identification by the village committees is only the very first step by any 'state related' agency in providing needed services to the old. The identification only points to symptoms of a much larger and encompassing problem encountered by the old: the lack of adequate medical and public health services.

As explained in Chapter 2, the Welfare Card entitles the holders and their households to free medical services, but this process involves various bureaucratic channels. If old people are ill the first step is to take them to the
health centre; if the illness cannot be treated there they are referred onwards to the tambol hospital. More serious complications are further referred to the provincial hospital; any break in this referral system annuls any services given to the patient. In the study community a Bangkok outer-district hospital is closer than the tambol hospital; for the old who have savings or can borrow money, attending this hospital is much more convenient. Those with no savings or credit cannot go there.

It is evident that an old and ill person will encounter extreme hardship and monetary expense travelling from one medical outlet to another, and having to wait in day-long queues at some centres. A poor eligible old person with adult children such as Grandad Samrarn (case study follows) found it difficult attending the first stage of the Welfare Card process, the health centre, even with the researchers’ assistance. For the numerous single person households shown in Table 6.9 the benefits to be exploited by the Welfare Card seem remote indeed.

6.6 Kraengjai: A Social Dilemma

Emerging from discussions on the various forms of support given by children, and expected by parents, is the concept of kraengjai. The meaning of kraengjai, touched upon in Chapter 4, concerns the feeling by parents that they do not want to impose upon their adult children’s lives. This feeling of kraengjai has a direct effect on the acceptance and requests for support by the old to their children. When parents have desires or needs, this feeling of kraengjai detracts from their willingness to seek assistance from their children. This unwillingness to impose was discussed and elaborated on in the focus group discussion.

Participant 1: All parents never ask our children. We never say give me some. Though we don’t have any money we never ask them.

Participant 2: If we ask it will not be good (FG:69).
The unwillingness to impose is partly due to a feeling of acceptance by old parents that the first priority of support should be given to the grandchildren. Married couples with children are seen to have responsibilities and burdens of their own. Old parents realize these practical necessities which their adult children face.

They [married children] must take care of their children and wives. If they have something left, maybe money or things, they will give it to us. (FG:82).

Couples have a lot of responsibilities, their children, their husband. The child who is single, it is easy (IDD1:423-426).

They [children] have their own responsibilities, they cannot continually look after their parents. Like you [researcher] for example. You have work to do and burdens on yourself, like this you cannot just care for your parents all the time...If you go and look after them you will miss work, but you can go temporarily [and give remittance], when you are free, this is called to songsia occasionally [to temporarily visit and provide remittance] (IDD9:800-810).

[Old people] begin to ponder and worry more. I think of my children very often but do they think of their parents? I don't know. There is a lot of kraengjai on my part. The children want me to go and see the doctor, I feel kraengjai. They have jobs to go to, I don't want to bother their minds (IDD3:357-368).

As a result of these perceived obligations which adult children have it is not surprising that old parents refrain from requesting and refuse offers of assistance.

To go and live with them I kraengjai them. In the beginning it would be sweet, after some time it would be bitter. [The] family, to stay a month or two it would [begin to] get bitter. They will say this and that [which I consume] costs too much. Dealings with money, it cuts into the heart (IDD9:410-417).
I feel happy, but then I have to impose on the children that are living here with me or my daughter-in-law if I want to make merit at the temple during holy day, so I do not (IDD1:593-599).

All right so you go and ask other people, do parents ask for money to spend from their children? They [parents] cannot say it, they have to bear it, how can they ask from them. There is none of this, if any [parent] asks for money from children then they are not good, those parents (IDD10:846-854).

The parents' unwillingness to impose was directly experienced by myself. Grandad Samrarn had become ill and his wife asked me to assist; I was in two minds as to what to do. If I helped would this upset their children? Would this also have an effect upon my continuing fieldwork? I certainly knew that it was the duty of children to provide help especially when their parents were ill. If I did nothing Grandad Samrarn's physical deterioration would certainly worsen. I decided not to dwell on these thoughts long and immediately made arrangements to take him to the health centre.

December 2nd 1987: We took Grandad Samrarn to the health centre today. He complained terribly of his heart shaking and his eyes becoming hazy. He said it was because of the medication the Nong Chok hospital gave him. The hospital did not give him the injections as suggested by the Chulalongkorn Mobile Health Unit which came the week before. They felt that the injections would be too dangerous for his heart. His wife was too weak to paddle their boat to the health centre which would have taken at least 45 minutes. We paid Pai (a neighbour) to use her long-tail boat to take him to the health centre. The health centre took his blood pressure, found it was too high and gave him some medication and some vitamins, I believe, as a form of placebo. Grandad Samrarn told me that the doctors previously informed him that he suffered chronically from a lack of blood circulation to his brain, which accounted for his continual dizzy spells. His wife Granny Chin said they didn't want to impose on their children [who were living at home] because as landless wage workers they had to travel far to find work. She also didn't want to impose on their responsible
daughter in Bangkok to come and take him to the hospital. Since we passed by to ask about the food they ate last night (part of our data collection on nutrition intake) she asked us to take him to the health centre.

I suspected that one of the major reasons why Granny Chin asked us to take Grandad Samrarn to the health centre was because their children didn’t have any money. Grandad Samrarn also told me on our previous visits that his children do not bother to ask him about his physical condition, assuming that Granny Chin would take care of him; this may have contributed to Grandad Samrarn’s attitude of not wanting to ask for help. The above-mentioned attitude that adult children also have their own burdens was held by Grandad Samrarn as well (IDD9:937-945). The situation here can be described as one of consensual neglect. Adult children may become accustomed to their parents’ chronic illness and overlook certain activities of attention and care. An old parent who is ill does not want to ask for help because of kraengjai as well as not wanting to feel helpless within a household of which he is the head; he thus remains quietly suffering. The unique position that we were in, seemingly not doing any active farming like other people; our curiosity and the 'free time' which we spent with the old, and the wealthier status which they projected upon us, led Granny Chin to ask for our assistance.

6.7 Fatalistic Acceptance

One prominent theme which runs throughout all discussions concerning familial support is that whatever support is received is determined by fate. One’s good or bad karma predetermines one’s future. Though karma originally derives from Buddhist teachings it is not necessary to be a religious person to believe in its effect. The title of this section does not directly relate to religion because the concept of karma, as it is practised by many, is a world view on life. Karma is
continually produced and reshaped throughout one's lifetime. Though it precedes and continues beyond a person's lifetime it is also felt that *karma* accumulated during life will show its effect when one gets older. Because of this belief the discussions on *karma* were quite relevant to the old and were unprompted in most instances.

To influence one's *karma* a person may indulge in the process of making merit discussed in Chapter 4. Making merit or *tambun* can be done by the formal processes of providing cash or services to the temple. What can be considered the non-formal processes of *tambun* or *tamtarn* can be defined as providing sympathy, pity and helping one's fellow man. These concepts are in many instances used in conjunction with one another. Thus I may say I am going to *tambuntamtarn*, though I am more specifically referring to making merit at the temple. *Tamtarn* may also be considered a less conscious form of making merit, providing help to a less fortunate person, giving a beggar some money, showing generosity. Together, *tambuntamtarn* provide for the accumulation of good merit throughout a person's life. This accumulation of merit is seen by the old as accounting for the support or lack of it given to the old by their children.

Caring for the old is difficult for me to summarize. People's minds are not the same. Parents can rear their children but will the children care for the parents? It is not certain...Our parents took the trouble to rear us, no matter how difficult we must care for our parents. And now when old to have or not to have to eat depends on each individual (IDD1:157-169).

No, no matter how difficult it would be for me I just think it depends on my *karma*. If I have some *bun* (good merit) I will die without troubling the people around me (IDD9:420-423).

I hope to stay with the youngest daughter...she probably won't chase me [out of the house]. It all depends on my good or bad *karma* (IDD12:421-423).

[It] Depends on the *bun* or *karma*. Where can you find a child that will rear and care [for you]? (IDD10:640-642).
If we have some children maybe one [child] is no good but there will be at least one who is good. One or two good children will at least be okay [for me]. We could depend on them when old. But will they do it [care] for us is really up to them, up to our karma (IDD12:541-546).

Also inherent in these discussions were the strategies used by the old to make sure they were looked after in their remaining years. The main strategy mentioned was retaining a portion of their land or house so that whoever looked after them would receive this wealth upon their death.

Interviewer: Why did you not divide [the land] out [for the children]?
Participant 1 and 2: Keep it first. If we give it all then what are we going to eat? The children can care for you.
Interviewer: The children can care for you.
Participant 1: They would look down on us (IDD1:180-187).

She [Granny Pun] has land, she lets her children do it. She says ‘Do you want to care for me, look after me for payment in the land, give me a place to live and something to eat?’ (IDD10:499-505).

Part of this strategy is undertaken by parents because of possible conflict within the family. This conflict is understood to arise from children-in-law. The care and attention which a child gives may seem weighted more to the parents than the parents-in-law; this would provoke conflict with the spouse.

I would give some [inheritance to children] but I would still keep some for myself. Not give all, whatever one has do not give it all. Even if you know that this child is kind, you should not give all. If they [sons] have a wife it is not certain. If they [daughters] get a husband it is not certain (IDD1:98).

People are of different minds, if they were all the same it would be good. You give to your
father [your wife would say] why not give to my father too, he is also old. Just say that the son and daughter-in-law are of different minds. Lets say your mother is sick and you take her some money, your wife says 'I have a mother too you know, I have a father too you know and they are both old.' The wife and husband are talking to each other... If I [as a father] had wealth [say], land of 10 rai you would not be able to disagree that I should not get the money. But if I had no wealth then you would have a reason. [You could say] 'so how good is your father, drunk all the time, he is [bad] like this, [bad] like that (IDD10:793-815).

In spite of this retention of wealth by old parents fate or karma still contributed to uncertainties in the future.

We only give them [inheritance]. Whether they will look after us or not depends on them...we don't care (FG:850-854).

Participant 1: It depends.
Participant 2: It depends on the children themselves, some parents have nothing but the children care for them a lot.
Participant 1: It isn't quite sure.
Participant 2: Some love their parents. [They] don't think of property [wealth they will get] at all.
Participant 3: But some do love property, there are many types (FG:1012-1035).

Unfortunately such strategies can only be used by those who do have the wealth to retain for themselves. For those with no inheritance children may be obliged to find work elsewhere and the support, such as remittances, visits, monitoring well-being, seems to be dependent on the parents' accumulation of bun and karma.

6.8 Summary

There is a difference in the forms of familial support which children and grandchildren provide to the old. More
adult sons were residing with their parents than adult daughters. They provide more active support than daughters, especially in ploughing rice fields. However, daughters, though acknowledged as absent in greater numbers, provide a different form of support described here as support by monitoring. Though lacking in continual active assistance daughters maintain contact with their parents and can be called upon to care for parents in times of illness. There was a general consensus, when discussed in both focus group and in-depth discussions, that in remittances, companionship and support when ill, daughters were better than sons.

Such differences between daughters and sons in the giving of care are probably the result of early socialization. Daughters are taught to 'maintain a proper household' by learning early how to cook, clean and work on the farm. Sons on the other hand are given more freedom. They learn to socialize and expand their circle of obligatory friends resulting in observed behaviour and responsibility quite different from those of daughters. Grandchildren who are left in the care of grandparents provide adequate active support and can be relied on to do most chores around the house and farm, but their youth and lack of maturity makes them dependent and puts an extra burden on the grandparent.

Chen and Jones (1989:46) state that there is

...an expected decline in the old-age security motive for having children in countries as fertility is lowered, and lowered expectations of help from children, either as they are growing up or later, when parents get old. Since the fertility declines are correlated with economic development, we might tentatively conclude that ASEAN countries will probably follow Western patterns whereby, with economic development, many parents neither expect nor receive economic or other forms of assistance from their children in old age.

The analysis in this chapter does not refute the above statement but rather complements and elaborates upon it by providing a context in which such a situation may arise. It is not remarkable that a fall in the birth rate is
associated with lowered expectations of help from adult children. The social context confronted by many Thai villagers does not allow them to choose between having many children or having few children. If a family is to maintain a certain level of existence there is no choice, one must have few children. Whether the result of having few children will mean that as parents age they will receive less care has nothing to do with their decision to limit their family size. In this context family size limitation is an urgent decision which is made in the face of increasing economic constraints.

**Figure 6.1 A Conceptualization of Support Given to the Old**

![Diagram](image)

Old parents are aware of the strains which their adult children encounter in bringing up a family within the economic constraints of a contemporary monetized economy (see Figure 6.1). Now more than ever their needs are filtered through the concept of *kraengjai*. With such societal conditions changing rapidly before their eyes old parents are less willing to show their financial and emotional needs to their children and seldom request any help. Where requests for assistance do occur they are met by adult children's perceptions of their own limitations in satisfying the requests and their subsequent offers of assistance. These offers are met with fatalistic acceptance by the old parent. In most instances the parents' silence may cause adult children to overlook their
needs. Because of the idea of kraengjai a situation of consensual neglect may also exist. Neighbours may help but usually only in times of emergencies. The daily maintenance and care will be lacking and further compounded by the attitude of kraengjai by the old people.

Old parents are caught up in the vast transformations of the agricultural process; the movements of their children away from home, the increasing amount of wage work availability. They are caught up in two worlds, the old relatively non-monetized economy and the rapidly changing new one. They may be seen as remnants of the past whilst their children are swept away in the process of societal change. When time allows, 'good' children withdraw from this monetized economy and return home occasionally, but only for a fleeting visit. The non-participatory interpretation of these long absences from home, small remittances and limited help and assistance would be neglect by adult children. Yet old parents do not say this is so for they realize the requirement for their children to participate in this change. Rather, it is the process of societal change itself, elaborated on in this and previous chapters which does not have a place for the old in this rural agricultural community.
CHAPTER 7  ADULT CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS THE OLD

7.1 Definition of the Old

During fieldwork I recorded information based on conversations not only with the old but also with their children. The information was acquired through personal visits or focus group discussions and was tape recorded or written down in field notes. As with the in-depth discussions, this information was transcribed and in most instances translated and put into a word processing package. Some information was not translated, such as monks' sermons or conversations with the abbot which contained extensive Pali and Sanskrit vocabulary. It was felt here that the conversation should be kept in its original form because of difficulties in translating 'non-conversational language'.

7.1.1 Physical Capacity

Like the old people adult children felt that determination of when a person becomes old is dependent upon the individual’s physical capacity.

When people can hardly work, they will think they are becoming old, something like that. If they can work and are strong they will think they are still young (FG:26-30).

When people become old whatever they do they will usually get tired, they will realize they are getting older (FG:33-38).

Q. Well to be old is related to many things which you have said: age, whether one can work, appearance, which is the most important?

Participants 1 and 2: The body.

Participant 3: The old won't be able to go anywhere or do anything. When
bodies can do nothing, people are old (FG:1402-1410).

Excerpts such as these reflect opinions similar to those expressed by old parents; physical ability is an important determinant of when one becomes old. Yet within these discussions an unprompted observation made by many adult children was that old age was also related to an individual's economic status. This topic was mentioned by the old but was not expressed with such conviction as by the adult children.

Participant 1: Economy is one thing which forces people not to become old. If they are poor, they cannot be old because they must go on working.

Participant 2: It is a concern for each individual.

Participant 3: It must be [the] economy.

Participant 1: The economy of their family...

Participant 2: Though they are old they must go on working...

Participant 1: They must do their work.

Participant 3: They can't be old. If they are old, they will have nothing to eat.

Participant 1: It is related to their financial status. If it is not good enough they must struggle for themselves (FG:39-56).

It is evident from these excerpts that the meaning of 'old' is that one can no longer work and make a living for oneself and this is dependent on one's economic status. A person who is not quite capable of doing active physical work but is of poor economic status still has to carry on feebly in order to have some food and income. Under such economic conditions people are considered really old when
they are physically unable to look after themselves.

Participant 1: They [old] will look after their children until they cannot any more because they are too old and it will be time for the children [us] to look after them.

Participant 2: There is an example in my house. Is my father old? (known to be old) Can he rear his two grandchildren? (no). Can he go anywhere? (no).

Participant 1: Now the old can no longer rear us, they really can’t. They can’t even reap even a bundle of rice or plough a field just one time.

Participant 3: No they can’t work at all.

Participant 1: They can’t even boil rice. If we don’t look after them they will not be able to look after themselves.

Participant 2: Their bodies, they can’t even keep their own balance (FG:1083-1106).

We must clean them from their excrement and urine, the old people (FG:1228).

In the situation of poor economic status old age is defined as when an individual has no choice but to go on working until physically incapable. Though the adult children may have considered that there are many active people who are old they very commonly qualify their answers by saying that they are old but still must work.

Differences between men and women were not highlighted in the discussion, mention was only made that men seem to be stronger than women. This may be due to childbearing of women which was identified in the older focus group discussions as accounting for men being stronger. Simply being a grandparent was not necessarily considered as becoming old, consideration first had to be given to the person’s chronological age and health status.
7.1.2 The Work-Old and Chronological Age

A determination of when a person begins to get old was expressed more clearly by adult children; this is probably because they are at present experiencing this process. They use the term gaa ngan (work-old) to identify when a person is beginning to get old. Farmers are seen to engage in hard physical labour for a large proportion of their lives; physical deterioration is more evident than for city people. With such continuous physical labour it was considered that people begin to get work-old in the late 40s to early 50s.

The work-old, that is they have worked in the sun and wind for a long time and become older and older. They are called the work-old (FG:1035-1038).

The work-old are those who have worked hard, it is shown on their faces, their faces will become all dark (FG:1054-1058).

You may also look at their fingers you will know if it is overworked [fingers become crooked due to harvesting] (FG:1068-1070).

People must be at least 40 to 50 to be work-old...They will be called old because of work (FG:1099-1107).

They have low ages but become old because they are overworked. It’s like that, they work hard but their ages are low. Since they were 20 they did not have any chance to rest (FG:1111-1116).

Participant 1: People begin to get old at 50.
Participant 2: And we can’t work at this age.
Participant 3: At about 50.
Participant 2: Cannot do strenuous work (FG:1196-1210).

Being work-old is particularly likely when there are few or no adult children to help (FG:68-73). Because of this there is little time for rest and these adult children
begin to see themselves as becoming work-old as well.

I’m telling you now, perhaps an old man may have no children to look after him. He himself is poor but must make an effort to work (FG:68-73).

Though they are old they must go on working (FG: 47-48).

We can’t force ourselves not to become old. We know this but we must work to feed our mouths and stomachs (FG:148-152).

7.1.3 Generational Differences and Respect for the Old

One of the few instances where generational differences were seen between the older and the younger generation was in the area of being frugal. The old feel that their adult children consume too much, do not look after their expensive farming utensils (IDD9), leave too much rice to fall in the field during the harvest. These no doubt are felt as bad values attained through the process of societal change emphasizing speed and quantity over being economical.

Participant 1: Oh? They [old] are of a former generation and accustomed to the past [ways of life] which were not the same as we do for them now.

Participant 2: They see us as being careless with wide hands and feet (not economical). They say that we don’t know how to keep things [property]. Wherever we work on the land we also just leave our tools lying there.

Participant 3: It may be true the way they blame us.

Participant 2: You see now like threshing rice. In the past they thresh rice on the ground, not a grain [of rice] was left. Now rice is left on the ground, when the old see it oh! (they cry out).
Participant 1: On the rice field perhaps the old see some rice left scattered, they try to gather it up onto a piece of paper to feed the ducks and chickens. It is good (FG:417-440).

This attitude and work practice is reflected in the old people’s farming process with comparatively few farming tools, each possessing an intrinsic value not felt today. The threshing involved the use of buffaloes treading on the rice for many days separating the husk from the stalk, a tedious and slow process. The entire farming process was part of life as a rice farmer and this life was slow with each step having a purpose, quite different from the modern threshing machine, which was unexaggeratedly described as ‘a thousand times faster than the buffalo’. These differences in not being frugal are acknowledged by adult children themselves. To be frugal and ‘not lose a grain of rice’ during the harvest is still a worthy value but the contemporary processes of rice production with a race against time, represented very aptly by the threshing machine, make this goal very difficult to attain.

Respect was expressed by adult children through the old attending and chairing all community activities such as weddings, funerals, merit-making ceremonies and ordinations. From a community standpoint this situation may be termed ceremonial respect.

Participant 1: ...they must invite the old. Like us, we are their children living in the same house. When people give us an invitation card they must write our father and mother’s name on the card as well.

Participant 2: They are the heads of the family.

Participant 3: They must [invite] the heads of the family.

Participant 1: Because they respect them, how can they only invite the children? (FG:573-580).
Participant 1 and 2: There must be [the old] in every festival ...of course.

Participant 3: Every festival.

Participant 1: It's impossible that only the young will join the festivals (FG:596-602).

Participant 1: If we have some old we should take them to enjoy talking with their grandchildren.

Participant 2: We want them to sit as chairman...(FG:618-621).

Participant 1: Perhaps we must ask for some help from the old because some things we will not be able to do properly, the old can...

Participant 2: ...for example how to prepare anything necessary for the ordination which we don't know how to do...go to buy chiworn (outer robe of a Buddhist monk), sabong (lower garment of a Buddhist monk), trai (a monk's yellow sash), something like that (FG:661-682).

Participant 1: You can't say that we don't respect the old because when the Songkran (Thai new year) comes it is still popular to pour water for the old.

Many: Yes.

Participant 2: My father is poured with Songkran water every year....

Participant 1: April 13 comes we still do this every year.

Participant 3: When the Songkran festival comes, we bathe the old. This means we still respect them (FG:257-272).
Respect for the old was discussed in relation to common ceremonial activities. It was unanimously agreed by the discussion group that they respect the old. Respect is also outwardly shown in mannerisms such as bowing down when walking past the old and not pointing one's feet towards them. Beyond this however, adult children found it difficult to describe behaviour practices regarding respect given to the old by the community.

The old were not necessarily seen as receptacles of wisdom and experience, nor were they noticeably in positions of authority and power within the community. Past and present differences in the role of the old in community decision-making were discussed but not found to be salient. A person can be seen as becoming a community leader through personal achievements and not necessarily through ascribed status such as age. The adult children had very strong feelings of respect towards the old but this was not related to any leadership roles such as community decision-making in temple, school, or road and dam construction, which have been in the process of societal change for many decades. Furthermore, as described in Chapter 3, farming processes have undergone a dramatic change which has made obsolete the previous knowledge and skills of the old (FG:571-605).

It is likely that strong community co-operation in the rural central plains region was never a vital necessity. Fertile land had always been abundant; its cultivation could be undertaken by a single household and communal assistance was needed only during the harvest. Under these conditions community leadership was not as fully realized and various potential roles for the old did not emerge. The Thai situation has been contrasted with Leach's study of a Sinhalese village as reported by Bunnag (1979). The Sinhalese have been described by Leach as having a bilateral kinship system similar to that of the Thais; kin ties assume a great deal of importance as the basis for the formation of permanent groups. In the Sinhalese village vital resources of land and water are in short supply; kinship provides the basis for the formation of groups to protect individual interests in scarce property holdings.
and to ensure day-to-day co-operation. Bunnag stated that the abundance of natural resources in the Thai village setting is one major determinant of the existence of few corporate groups of any kind, which at the level of individual behaviour means that actors move quite easily between roles, both within and between spheres of activity and relinquish ties which they no longer consider to be of any importance.

During my fieldwork, seldom if ever did villagers initiate any developmental process which would have benefited the community in terms of money, production, or health. Initiation of activities was done only in relation to religious ceremonies. Intense community co-operation was seen in Songkran, ordinations, and sports competition, rather than, for example, a mobile health or dental unit to visit the village. In times of emergency, however, relatives did provide immediate assistance. During the fieldwork a storm destroyed many people's houses. Uncle Mon's large chicken coop was flattened during the storm and immediate reconstruction began the following day, for which his kin from the Paidum area provided labour. Uncle Mon however had to provide for all the material costs; if he had had no spare cash it seems unlikely that immediate reconstruction would have been undertaken. More likely, his poultry-raising business would have ceased until such time in which he could personally accumulate more funds.

Certainly, the health and welfare of the old are seen as the responsibilities of their children and not the community. The leadership of certain key people such as abbots and headmen in history was not a norm but rather a unique occurrence. The construction of a water gate in muu 13 of a nearby district, for example, was undertaken by a headman for the benefit of his own fields, which subsequently benefited others in his village but was said to be initiated primarily for his own benefit.
7.2 Support Provided to the Old

With recent fertility declines and smaller desired family sizes it is expected that the completed family size of present childbearing populations will be smaller than that of their parents (Knodel et al., 1982). One of the consequences of larger family sizes for the older generation was the amount of labour provided by many hands. Increased labour meant increased productivity and expansion of landholdings by the rice farmer. With limited land availability in recent times and increasing costs combined with monetization and the use of high-yielding rice varieties, the benefits of having a large family began to be questioned by many. Throughout this section on support, reference will be continually made to economic considerations and constraints on the adult children as they affect various forms of support given or expected to be given to the old.¹ As in Chapter 4 support is analysed in three broad categories of social-emotional, active and material: the importance of economic constraints faced by adult children is a constant strand running throughout each of these categories.

For those generations which were affected by such societal changes and already had a large family, some children left to acquire forms of wage work elsewhere. For these children contemplation of having fewer offspring became a conscious desire. With adult children dispersed in an attempt to find work the family as a unit of production became less important. Even with many children old parents were not sure of the support which the children could give them. Adult children expressed feelings of uncertainty regarding support given to the old. It seemed that the economic well-being of adult children was a prime determinant of the subsequent well-being of the old parents. The doubts of many 'unskilled' villagers about attaining a job which paid adequately contributed to their opinion that even with a large family there were many uncertainties.

¹ It should be reiterated that the study site is relatively well-off compared to other rural areas. It is likely that economic constraints faced by other villagers in poorer agricultural areas are much greater.
Q: Do you think the old with many children will receive more help than those with few?

Participant 1: It is not quite sure.

Participant 2: This can’t be the indicator.

Participant 3: If the old have many children and their [children’s] status is fair, they won’t have much trouble.

Participant 4: No, no trouble.

Participant 3: If they have many children and their status is not so good, they will have some trouble.

Participant 5: If people have many children and they have good [economic] status their parents will have good (FG:1650-1676).

Participant 1: Like a person near my house. A man called Sang has 10 children. He has an easy life.

Participant 2: His children are really good.

Participant 1: Because all his children have jobs to do and they all send their parents money, so they [parents] have to do nothing.

Participant 2: Yes, he really has an easy life. It’s hard to find children of that type though.

Participant 3: But I think both types are in equal proportions, some good, some bad.

Participant 2: Only a few children can help their parents have easy lives. Most can earn enough for only day-to-day living, it’s like that (FG:1681-1704).

The only advantage seen in having many children nowadays was that sheer numbers meant adult children could maintain a form of roster to take care of their parents when they
became ill (FG:1733-1750). It is more likely though that one or at the most two adult children were the ones who would continually nurse their parents and this form of rostering practised by one group discussion participant was not a common occurrence.

7.2.1 Social-Emotional Support

Adult children expected that the continued support they provided their parents should have prompted some form of appreciation from them. The lack of any display of appreciation or satisfaction has made them feel emotionally let down. Given that the group discussion was held with adult children residing with their parents the most obvious expressions of appreciation which they observe are by parents towards absent children who return home for a visit. This was not surprising but nevertheless was a spontaneous topic of discussion.

Participant 1: Really, they [children] go far away and are absent for a long time. When they come to meet [parents] they will love one another well. They meet each other oh! they will be so happy.

Participant 2: They meet after a period of absence and they will laugh, they will be happy (FG:282-288).

Throughout the discussion opinions of this sort re-emerged. Some participants began to console others for their hurt feelings that parents seemed to show more appreciation to children who visit them.

Participant 1: We must think that as parents it is only temporary that they will be happy to see children who live far away come back.

Participant 2: We must think in another way.
That is, we always live with them right? But other children come home once in a while. So they [parents] must surely be happy to see them. It is common. We live with them all the time.

Participant 1: When we think of it, we try to cut the thought off. I think if they don’t love us would they have reared us to grow up? (FG:1574-1594).

For absent children to return home is a very clear example of emotional well-being of parents. For those who remain home, to receive outward displays of appreciation by the old is rare. Such forms of emotional support are only displayed through milestone ceremonies such as novitiate or monkhood ordinations by sons and marriages of their children; these no doubt are much less frequent than periodic visits. For the old who are living by themselves these visits mean a great deal. Grandad Learn’s situation discussed in Chapter 4 provided a good example. We were told by him that his child visited him every month after pay-day and brought with him food and money, which only amounted to 100 baht (A$5), six cans of tuna and small packets of instant noodles. I was tempted to condemn the son for neglecting his old and ailing father; I measured support purely in material and monetary terms. Yet Grandad Learn appreciated very much these periodic visits by his son; he expressed very clearly his contentment that his son always visited after pay-day of each month and brought with him food and money. Grandad Learn’s situation reflects forms of emotional support discussed in Chapter 1 where small gifts of little monetary or material value provide emotional warmth and comfort. He receives very little money and practically no active support from his children; his son visits him regularly and his daughter comes to care for him when he is sick. Though Grandad Learn can be considered to be unique in that he has plongtok (successfully plong), his case typifies an old person who could be considered to receive only social support.

One of the rare instances where children discussed
forms of strategy to provide a feeling of belonging for their parents was in managing the household funds.

Participant 1: Each family is different, like mine, I don't keep the money, I let them keep it first. It is their satisfaction to keep the money, they will think we trust them.

Participant 2: It is like to cheer them up that they still have meaning in the house (FG:619-626).

The expression of love which comes with caring and providing the best for the old was seen as an objective for all adult children. Expressing love was hindered by lower economic status and subsequent lack of active support given to parents which meant that there was no time to love them.

Participant 1: Our minds...yes we love them but we cannot stay with them all the time because we also have our own families.

Participant 2: We can't watch them all the time.

Participant 1: We have burdens. If we stay with them all the time, we over-love them and try to please them in everything—draw water, boil rice for them. Oh! I think we will all starve to death.

Participant 3: If we have some land to earn a living on it won't matter much, if we have enough money.

Participant 4: Love, we all love our parents but we have no time to please them, if we do so we will starve (FG:884-900).

In Central Thai society the youngest daughter ideally should care for parents when they become old. This view was expressed clearly in the discussion, however, it was not seen as a forceful tradition, rather it depended upon
the chance circumstances of each family’s situation. If
the youngest daughter is unmarried or decides to stay in
the household and not acquire wage work she may be able to
provide a great deal of active support (FG:1121-1154).
This element of chance was contrasted with the adult
children’s perceptions that the Thai Chinese community
enforce their traditional rule that the youngest son must
look after the parents (FG:1169-1184). Such enforcement
does not occur in the study community, partly because of
the relative autonomy of each family, in which concepts of
bun and karma and individual merit may also play a part.

7.2.2 Active Support

One of the interesting points which came up during
discussion was that the old have given more care to adult
children than vice versa. Over a lifetime the old parents
have provided more care to children and grandchildren than
they have been given. One participant’s seemingly self
condemning attitude did not provoke any conflict within the
group discussion; all were open in their opinions.

Participant 1: I mean that they reared us. Mostly, children hardly have a
chance to look after parents but parents must rear them for a long
time.

Participant 2: After rearing children they must
take care of grandchildren also.

Participant 1: Take care of both children and
grandchildren.

Participant 3: They rear not only children but
grandchildren also.

Participant 1: That we say we look after our
parents is not true. We hardly
have the chance to do so
(FG:1015-1028).

The old are seen to provide daily care to the grand-
children and are not necessarily passive carers. They
actively care for the young through constant visual
contact, scolding, active baby-sitting, cleaning and washing after them. Some old people say that the grandchildren are closer to them than to their own parents (IDD1). Adult children are said to have been looked after until they got married and then had to take care of their own families (FG:1035-1043). Adult children are seen also to only 'partly' provide active support during their adolescent years before marriage (FG:1053-1060).

Love and affection are expressed in the various forms of assistance given to the old, as discussed above, but adult children spontaneously qualify these statements with the opinion that parents have given more to them. These qualifications were unprompted probably because of my prolonged stay within the community; not that they would have deceived me if I were a total stranger who had come to ask them some questions: social, emotional support and material and active assistance have long been a tradition. Rather, it is likely that they thought that I would understand what they meant by these qualifications, and would not condemn their views that parents had given more to them. Various phrases used to me which suggest this are: 'Well Acharn as you know', 'Why should I tell you, you already know' (field notes). Regarding parent repayment Knodel et al. (1984) state that:

The expectation that children will provide comfort and support to their parents...and particularly once their parents are elderly...is shared by virtually all segments of Thai society... It is a tradition deeply rooted in the culture and firmly linked to the broader normative structure... The concept of parent repayment is probably viewed most accurately in Thailand as a process which traditionally begins from the time when children are old enough to do household chores and make useful contributions in terms of labour inputs to family economic activities... However, it is the later stage of the process, particularly when parents are no longer able to work or care for their own personal needs, that seems to epitomize it (1984:50-51).

Knodel further states that all their focus group
participants almost universally agreed that parents were entitled to and expected some form of support from their adult children.

What Knodel describes is an expression by the participants of an ideal-cultural value. Children should care for their parents in all ways possible. More active care in illness was also said to be given when parents became older and less able to help themselves. However, not described in these focus group discussions were economic conditions which prohibited the children from implementing these cultural values of care to the old. These economic conditions can also exert emotional strains upon adult children; they want to realize the value of *luktao doorae* (children caring) but are unable to because they are poor. Differences can also be seen between adult sons and daughters in the care and assistance which they give their old parents. In many instances I have found that adult sons seem to provide more ‘excuses’ than do daughters for their inability to care for the old. Expressions of love defined as various forms of support and their inability to implement them are stated by some adult sons. These opinions are phrased in a context of self-pity. Daughters however are more likely to describe actual support given, no matter how little, to their parents in spite of difficult economic conditions.

Analysis of such psychological differences between sons and daughters takes us beyond the intentions of this thesis. However, a methodological point can be made that extended fieldwork as undertaken here provides for a more detailed analysis of any contextual situation. The trust which I believe I gained throughout my stay allowed the group discussion participants to express more openly their opinions with less apprehension about misinterpretation. Such open expressions necessitate less speculation by the researcher.

The focus group discussions were attended by a colleague of mine who was conducting a study on ageing in northern Thailand. In his effort to determine what was meant by caring for the old he discussed some examples of the lack of active support given to the old by villagers in
his northern study village. His example concerned an old couple whose children were said by others in the village not to look after them properly; the children only gave them food and no attention at all. The meat that the children bought was tough buffalo meat, a delicacy in the northern region, which the parents could not chew. When confronted by the neighbours' views the children retorted that if they had not looked after the old people they might have starved to death ten years ago. 'The old people are still alive with a roof over their heads, why do people say we didn't look after them?' The old couple themselves were said to have complained to others that their children did not care for them.

The effort in the above example was to acquire meanings of care. The resulting discussion about this old couple was unexpected in that the participants began to ponder, not the example given and the meaning of care, but the actual validity of the situation itself. Was this example an accurate description of care given to this particular old couple? Did neighbours really know the situation with which the adult children were faced? Were the old couple 'senile or forgetful'? The group participants' own contextual situation resulted in a high degree of empathy for the children in the example. Though they did agree that there might have been some neglect they cautioned the researcher against jumping to any conclusions.

Participant 1: They don't minister to the wants of the old, they only give them food.

Participant 2: When it's time they only give them food.

Participant 3: They dip rice for them.

Participant 4: Whether the old can eat or not, they don't care...

Participant 5: Whether they eat it or not [they don't care]..(1521-1540).
Participant 5: I think what they[adult children] say is right.

Participant 2: They might not attend to their parents well. We shouldn’t blame children who must go to work for wages, if they don’t work for wages... We must think of the situation they face outside the house. Supposing they bring their parents rice, they who work for wages can’t attend to their parents all the time.

Participant 1: They can’t attend [to their parents], they must work for wages!

Participant 2: They must work for wages, in the evening they will then have rice to eat... They will then say ‘mom your rice, eat it’[and others will think they treat their parents poorly].

Participant 2 and 6: We must know the situation!

Participant 1: The rich may see and think that the poor don’t look after their own parents. But as for the poor, if they look after and attend to their parents all the time, they will not have rice to eat in the evening... we must understand them first.

Participant 2: They [old] haven’t gotten ill yet. So children must leave them [to work]. If they get sick, though their children are very poor, they must attend to their parents (FG:1729-1772).

The exchange above provided two important points for my research. Firstly, the extended field stay resulted in more open discussion. The group participants cautioned the researcher about jumping to any hasty conclusions. As a result of this the researcher is more confident in his subsequent interpretations. Secondly, definitions of care must be interpreted not only from the observed action of caring itself but also in the context under which it occurs. Without such contextual understanding isolated
questions such as frequency of visits, remittances and care during illness become meaningless.

Active assistance provided by children who are living at home included buying food for day-to-day consumption (FG:321-329). For sons the labour they provide on their parents rice field is considered important, especially with the use of mechanization requiring more physical energy (FG:1473-1475; 1479-1501). This does not necessarily mean that women cannot cope at all, though it was mentioned that they found it more difficult to use the mini-tractor for the initial process of ploughing the hard soil.

A general agreement between the parents and the children’s group discussion was that daughters were better at actively taking care of their parents.

Participant 1: Women are better.
Participant 2: It’s more convenient [for daughters] to look after parents (FG:1318-1321).

It was accepted though that there must be some sons who can take care of parents but this was seen as only a small proportion.

Participant 1: But for some people...sons are better than daughters.
Participant 2; Only few though.
Participant 3: Yes few.
Participant 1: Yes, only few but there are.
Participant 3: Of course there are, like in my family (1332-1340).

Participant 1: The good sons will take care of them[parents], wash their clothes dirtied by excrement and urine like daughters do. We can say that when talking about good sons.
Participant 2: They [sons] will not mind because these are their parents, they don’t mind.

Participant 1: They don’t mind because they do something for parents, they do for someone who gave them life.

Participant 2: [sigh] But only few sons are like this (FG:1368-1390).

As noted in the previous section some children at home who provide active support felt let down that their parents show so much outward appreciation to children who visit them. Economic constraints again were seen to determine the amount of active support which adult children may give.

Perhaps, on some days, I don’t look after my mother. Early in the morning I must go to work. When it is dark I return. They have already put her to sleep in the mosquito net. Some days everyone has eaten and is sleeping, but I have just returned to cook for myself (FG:903-911).

Some parents, their children all go to work on the rice fields and parents have to boil their own rice, they must also do it for the grandchildren as well (FG:927-931).

The grandchildren who stay at home will take care of the old. We are poor so we must... (FG:499-502).

Everybody has katanyu (gratitude) [to their parents] and would like to do [take care] but perhaps circumstances force them not to be able to do so (FG:510-514).

Clear explanations were made considering the constraints which adult children have in properly caring for the old. In many ways such care was seen as a definition of love. The discussants were not able to provide this love to their parents. As in the old group’s discussion daughters were regarded as better active carers than sons, probably because of early primary and secondary socialization as described in Chapter 5.
7.2.3 Material Support

The importance placed on material and monetary support to old parents was stressed by the adult children. Though there was not a general consensus there was discussion of the feeling by many parents that children who regularly give parents money are good (FG:350-362). Some adult children again expressed their dissatisfaction that parents value the monetary gifts of absent children more than the daily expenses which they have to pay.

Participant 1: Some [parents] pretend to be weak, nearing death. [to appeal to their absent childrens attention]....

Participant 2: Let's think about it, five months or one year, they [the old] live in the house so 500 or 200 baht [given by absent children] is good and every day, we are not so good!

Participant 3: I agree with you.

Participant 1: Because we live with them all the time, we can't complain about any good or bad things.

Participant 4: It's a long time when their children will come home. Giving them [parents] 50 Baht makes them better than us who live with them[parents] and clean their urine and excrement (FG:363-392).

The dissatisfaction expressed by these children is intensified when absent siblings return home. These children are most likely wage-workers who may not be paid a high rate but nevertheless are paid regularly. This is contrasted with adult children who are at home and depend upon income from their harvest, and who occasionally acquire non-regular wage-work around the district. When absent children return home they may see certain signs of disarray in the household: water jars may need replacing, overdue electricity bills may be mounting or boats need
mending. These very conspicuous forms of material and monetary assistance prompt adult children at home to state that their daily care of their parents may have been overlooked.

Participant 1: As for those who work in Bangkok, when my elder siblings return home they see my father’s mosquito net and the shirt that he wears,'Oh!...they are old and shabby. Buy new ones, buy new ones’. Of course they could buy them but we don’t have the money to buy.

Participant 2: Though we love them we don’t have any [money to buy]....

Participant 3: This is common. Our parents, we all love them, but...

Participant 4: It’s the same.

Participant 3: Like we see the star, when we grasp for it, we can’t reach for it. But we see that the star is so near that we can almost grasp it, however we can’t (FG:858-878).

Though absent children are expected to send some remittances it is recognized that married children have their own burdens so they are not necessarily expected to provide anything. But there were evident differences between absent sons and daughters; not surprisingly, daughters were regarded as more reliable in sending remittances. Though daughters are beginning to be more independent than in the past they are still more reliable than sons. Nothing is certain regarding remittances but generally daughters are more reliable.

Participant 1: Daughters usually send [remittances]. Sometimes they may not but not often.

Participant 2: Yes, sons don’t usually have money left (FG:1416-1426).
Participant 1: In my family many work [to send money], all are women, but the men...?

Participant 2: If we count in percent,...

Participant 1: Daughters are better (FG:1455-1460).

Absent children, especially daughters, provide monetary gifts which promote more satisfaction than the daily expenses of children at home. Perhaps the strategy by one participant of letting parents 'hold the money' should be adopted by more adult children.

7.2.4 Bun

In Chapter 4 discussion centred around the concept of plongsungkarn as it related to the meaning of old age. To be plongsungkarn was a consequence of physical and functional decreases in relationship to social meanings. Many old people spontaneously expressed their feelings of plongsungkarn and how this affected their outlook towards life as well as behaviour practices such as upholding precepts in one form or another. In this chapter plongsungkarn is introduced in its relationship to bun or merit. The salience of plongsungkarn was overshadowed by the bun; adult children expressed the value that to plongsungkarn was dependent upon how much bun an old person had. Adult children believe that bun in the old is dependent upon the socio-economic conditions of their children and the subsequent lack of support given. Bun is discussed here in the context of adult children's perspective on support provided to the old.

The old with bun were those surrounded by their relatives who provided a variety of support. The adult children's poverty and resultant lack of active support however were again mentioned as determining the bun which the old have.
Participant 1: People with bun means... we can find an example from someone near us like Granny Mai. She surely has bun because she enjoys an easy life.

Participant 2: You mean the old who have easy lives...

Participant 1: [The old who are] surrounded by their children and grandchildren who are willing to look after and please them right? (FG:705-720).

Participant 1: Yes, she has bun.

Participant 2: Her children have a lot of money. She needs to do nothing.

Participant 1: They send her [money], something like this (FG:752-757).

I come home from selling ice-cream. I must massage my mother first. When finished I will have rice at 8 p.m... Both my mother and mother-in-law are my mothers, how can I neglect them? No, I can't, I must take care of them (FG:724-738).

When people get old and have someone to look after them, they are considered the old with bun, like 'Ah! this auntie is lucky she has bun' (FG:747-751).

Old persons who have no bun subsequently find it difficult to plongsungkarn successfully because they have to continue to work. Adult children say that these old people are ones whose children are poor and who have to care for themselves.

Participant 1: The old who don't have much merit means those whose children and grandchildren are poor.

Participant 2: Yes, they are poor.

Participant 1: They must work for wages, what will they find to minister to the wants of the old?
Participant 3: They can’t find abundant food for their parents because they themselves can hardly find food to eat.

Participant 2 and 3: They don’t have time to return home.

Participant 2: When the sun shines they are gone to work (FG:759-778).

Some of the old stay at home, though they are very old they must look after themselves, this means...they don’t have merit (FG:801-806).

7.3 Discussion

Caring for the old is considered a complex task; there are various related factors which determine an old person’s situation. Because of this attempts to define any type of well-being are quite difficult. The old are sometimes said to be fussy and 'it is better to take care of young children'. A certain degree of patience is also required because any conflict may worsen the household environment (FG:320-343). Well-being of the old was largely dependent on the economic status of their children. Having large numbers of children did not guarantee that some would have high economic status, similarly to have few children might also be a problem if one of them did not provide any monetary support. Ideally one should have many children and then for each child to contribute a small amount would be sufficient when a person grew old.

Neglect of the old was not considered an important issue for the adult children. They felt that in their community only two old people were neglected. Their strict definition of neglect concerned those old people who were not living with any of their own children, who lived alone and whose children did not visit or provide any remittances. Old people living with their children but perhaps not properly attended to were described as 'not being looked after' (maidye rup garndoorae) rather than being neglected (tooktodting). Again, these criteria of
care are salient to many households whose children have parents living with them but must go long distances to get wage work; this poses a continual dilemma for the adult children.

There was also discussion of certain problems of children-in-law relevant to the well-being of the old. Especially, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law problems were mentioned as affecting the care which an old woman might receive. It was felt by both the old and the adult children that a child-in-law brings the potential for familial conflict between the old as well as between siblings. These potential conflicts are heightened when inheritance and property divisions are involved. An in-law may feel that his or her spouse should have received more than what was given. It was believed that when the working day ends and people lay their heads on their pillows, it is the child-in-law who sows the seeds of conflict, whispering to the spouse about grievances which have accrued. Though many old people may say that all their children love them, these potential conflicts remain in their minds.

Adult children’s economic power played a major role in the well-being of the parents. Foremost in the adult children’s minds are expenses they have to incur for both their ageing parents and their young children; important expenses for the children include education and medical expenses. With increasing monetization affecting practically all villages, limited cash provides a dilemma for the adult children, who insist that when a need occurs, either for parents or children, they will pay for both. If there is insufficient money then they will borrow. They had strong opinions concerning allocation of expenditure for parents and children, and accepted responsibility for both. Because of my long contact with the community I was able to ask provocative questions concerning ‘choosing between parents and young children’, which might otherwise have caused ill-feeling. Equal amounts of attention were given to old parents and young children, yet definitions of urgency provided by many examples indicated that young children received more economic benefits than old parents.
Q: Do you think of giving your children anything before parents?

Participant 1: Which is more important? Supposing a teacher tells us how much a textbook costs this year. Meanwhile my father's mosquito net is torn, for which will we pay first? If this were you [researcher] which would you pay first? Father's mosquito net is torn at the same time a child's textbooks will have to be paid for by tomorrow!

Participant 2: If children need money for studying, we must give them first.

Participant 3: If father's mosquito net can be mended it should be mended. I say the truth.

Participant 4: If we don't buy children's textbooks or any other things needed in studying and their friends have all of them ours may feel inferior.

Participant 2: If we don't buy them what will they study with? These must be bought first.

Participant 1: Supposing father's mosquito net is torn and also children's uniform. They will go to school tomorrow, and their shirts are too torn to be mended (FG:750-782).

Adult children realized that I was trying to force them to choose between their parents and their young children with the various examples I gave them. They all refused to choose. However, the reasons and examples which they provided all pointed to the greater importance they placed upon young children than on old parents. When a purchase has to be made their examples reflect the greater need of young children. Examples of the need for educational books when an exam is looming, or uniforms when school resumes the next day, or illnesses which if not treated would cause immediate death, all overwhelmed my
initial example of the need by the old parent for a new mosquito net.

7.4 Summary

An important strand running through this chapter is that the support which old parents receive is dependent on the economic circumstances of adult children. It is particularly noteworthy that adult children place more emphasis upon their economic situation than do the old; economics dominated their discussion, whereas the old group only briefly referred to this. This is not surprising considering the expansion of the monetized economy and the increasing value and costs of education for young children.

Adult children said that they cared for their old by their *yathakarm*, meaning 'by their *bun* or *karma*'. The meaning and practice of *yathakarm* obviously encompasses more than this simple definition to include 'in which manner or way; in accordance to, or conformity with, according to actions or as circumstances dictate'. Some dictionary definitions also give its meaning as 'at the mercy of fate'. Its use by adult children is directly related to their view of their economic situation: the expenses they incur for old parents and young children. An appropriate interpretation of *yathakarm* thus could be 'caring within one’s means' (*liang tarm yathakarm*). Its mention here is important because poor families in many cases need to get outside work.

Though not participants in this process of societal change old parents realize the constraints on their adult children. Life as an active farmer and parent also does not accustom them to make requests for personal assistance. Under these conditions it is quite difficult, for example, for adult children to know about parents’ ailments and provide for preventive health care. Consequently visits to the health centre are likely to be undertaken when illnesses of the old are at a highly visible stage and possibly quite serious. Medical attention provided to the old only alleviates the ailment. For young children
however a high level of interest is taken in diagnosis, observation of symptoms and preventive care by medical personnel as well as by their parents. This may not seem surprising, but put in a larger context important and recent societal changes such as medical and educational systems, though they are more accessible to the whole community, are regarded as absolute necessities for young children. Health facilities as well as the villagers' knowledge of child health care have increased tremendously throughout the past three decades. The awareness that one can provide preventive health care for the old, however, has not developed, and it is not seen as an absolute necessity.

Like the old people, adult children define old age as the time when a person's body suffers from physical decline, which in an agricultural setting results in either full or partial functional loss. All persons with either full or partial functional loss are regarded by the adult children as 'old people' with certain qualifications (Figure 7.1). The old who stop work do so because their economic situation allows them; in this situation it is a decision made from personal choice. They remain at home with their present adult-children who provide for their daily care in a rather fulfilling sense. Illness or full functional loss may also force an old person to stop work; there is no choice here and old people who have inadequate economic resources suffer a great deal. Some old people may decide to continue to work but not through economic
need; they may engage in less labour-intensive work but carry on through personal satisfaction in managing their children’s economic activities. Others continue to work owing to immediate economic needs because assistance by adult children is not forthcoming.

From the adult children’s perspective support provided to the old is highly dependent upon their economic resources. If adult children’s economic status is adequate then it is very likely that support provided will be at a high level. Under these conditions old parents are regarded as having a lot of bun. Low levels of support provided by adult children who have adequate economic resources may also occur in families with few children such as Grandad Learn. Fewer children may mean longer absences from the household and fewer visits. More common situations are where adult children have inadequate
economic resources resulting in a low level of support provided. Old people in this situation are thought to have very little bun.

What was discussed in the latter part of the chapter was the dilemma faced by adult children in caring for the old and the young with their limited economic resources (Figure 7.2). Societal changes affecting the community profoundly affected the care that is given to young children. Particularly, the expansion of educational facilities and medical outlets have developed a value which places great importance on caring for young children. This value change by parents is supported by the wider community as well as the central government. There is strong encouragement for young children to exploit these avenues of physical and mental welfare provided by the expansion of educational and medical facilities; unfortunately these value changes by both government authorities and adult children are not paralleled for the old. Requests for assistance by the old, discussed in Chapter 6, work through the value systems of kraengjai and fatalistic acceptance resulting in unchanged care systems described as yathakarm. Subsequent offers of assistance by adult children are thus likely to be few and provide only palliative care of illnesses which might have been diagnosed and perhaps even prevented at a much earlier stage. Conversely value changes in child-care result in perceptions of higher basic needs for young children, more immediate support provided by parents and higher continued expenses.

Positive changes envisaged for the future must include value changes of the well-being of old people throughout the later stages of their lives; particularly in the area of physical and mental well-being. Such changes should be welfare oriented and funded primarily by the central government, possibly through an expansion of the Ministry of Public Health centres. Perhaps most important is promoting value changes in the old themselves. There are already many active old people in the community and through
Figure 7.2  A Conception of Differences in Support Which Adult Children Provide to Their Old and Their Young

![Diagram]

such persons values of high well-being may be appropriately matched together. My attempts to include a boat race for people over 60 years of age in the traditional long boat races at Paidum temple showed a high potential for success. Time and monetary constraints prevented its inclusion. This particular example highlights the changes in the way people are beginning to perceive what old persons are and what they are capable of. Such grass-roots changes in perception are far more important than external attempts to promote new perceptions. Appropriate development occurs when government agencies are able to complement the already existing potential for change.
8.1 Lessons Learnt from this Methodological Experience

Uncle Mon came to my hut today to express his dissatisfaction at a question I asked during the focus group discussion yesterday. I had asked the question 'When people get old do they get tired of each other?'. He felt that I should have also asked 'What was the relationship of the old now compared to when they just got married?' He felt that getting tired of each other was not something which occurred because two people had been together for a long time but rather because 'there was nothing to talk about to begin with'. (Field notes April 17th).

As a young man studying the old in Thailand I was venturing into uncharted territory. Because the ageing of populations is a recent phenomenon in Thailand there was not enough background information for me to exploit; I had to use multiple sources of information. Though a Thai, I had limited understanding of village life and the old people who are living there. My use of varied sources of information, particularly participant observation, greatly enhanced my understanding of rural life. I found that the more that various types of appropriate techniques are used the more they contribute to the research endeavour. Indeed before I had conducted this field study I believed that focus group discussions were sufficient for qualitative type information. When I included in-depth discussions as well I found that the information obtained by different techniques differed markedly but that each was complementary to the others. Focus group discussions revealed the importance of group dynamics in discussing various topics. Group dynamics generate discussion and debate amongst the participants while the focus group topics guide the direction of the discussion and form the content. In-depth discussions allowed for a further elaboration on topics and provided for deeper analysis of the context in which opinions were formed. However
reliance on oral history alone limits information to only about two generations into the past. Thus important historical information came from library research concerning conditions in the Central Plains during the early 19th century.

The mixture of quantitative and qualitative data gathering amidst participant observation in the village provided for a contextual and historical understanding of changing support systems and their effect on the old. Critics of this method of data gathering may argue that a researcher will never have the time to repeat research of this sort. The fieldwork for a Ph.D thesis may be the only time that an integrative type of research can be effectively conducted by an individual researcher. Realistically most academic researchers will not be able to reside in the research site for long periods, be proficient enough in the language, observe and conduct discussions as well as collect relevant survey data. Problems also accrue when nationally representative samples are conducted: what other forms of data should be collected? What types of quantitative and qualitative information are needed to illuminate national data?

The methodological experience of this thesis does not imply that the more types of information collected, the better the outcome of the research. More of everything would no doubt provide more information, but this does not equate with better understanding. However, it is possible to define three important types of information which all interpretive social research should strive for: the contextual, historical and cross-sectional, which can complement each other and provide a thorough understanding of any research area. At times their complementarity helps not only to reveal new information but more importantly to prevent the researcher from drawing inappropriate conclusions through lack of regard for an important dimension of the phenomenon under consideration.

My experience indicates that social research should include these three forms of information in roughly equal proportions: they should serve, as far as possible, equally in the research endeavour without one being subordinate to
another. For example, Chapter 3 provided qualitative information which was acquired by three means: library research, in-depth interviews and casual discussion. A small amount of quantitative information was presented in this chapter in the form of certain district numerical data. Chapter 3 thus presented predominantly historical information and enabled the researcher to put the community within a historical perspective. Chapter 4 reported in-depth and focus group discussions. Though many topics of discussion related to the history of the mubaan (village community) the major portion of the discussion centred around actions taken as a response to changes throughout the history of the mubaan. Chapter 5 relied mainly on the focused survey conducted during my field work and thus can be stated to be predominantly cross-sectional. Such data provide a certain degree of statistical generalization beyond the immediate study site. This form of statistical reasoning complements the aforementioned historical and contextual reasonings. Chapter 6 is an example of equal importance given to contextual information and cross-sectional data. Here interpretations arose both from a qualitative and a quantitative standpoint, in a sense from both deductive and inductive reasoning. Finally Chapter 7 returns to the focus group discussions and remains predominantly contextual.

8.2 Improved Health, Children are Absent, and the Old are Poor and Lonely: Cannot Modernization and a Sense of Community be Achieved Together?

You know Tony when I plough I don’t think of anything, I feel so relaxed. I wish I could borrow your ‘Walkman’ so I can listen to music when I plough (personal conversation with Uncle Rian).

Interpretations of farming like this are rare indeed nowadays and only reserved for farmers with large plots of land like Uncle Rian. Yet in the not so distant past contentment such as this was common. The buffalo dragged
the plough in a slow but steady manner and the farmer 'just simply walked after it'. Life was poorer but villagers were also more economically independent. Independence rested upon the interdependencies between households. These interdependencies provided security among many to farmers.

Population ageing is a recent phenomenon which has begun to affect most Third World countries. In Thailand, at least, this means a rapidly ageing rural population which is less and less an integral part of the wider society, because of the impact of societal change on the existing support system. The changes affecting Thai society and the cultural reaction to it are not what can be considered 'loosely structured' (Embree, 1969). Far from 'looseness', a characteristic of Thai society shown in this thesis is the strict expectation of forms of behaviour which adult children should practise towards their parents. Strains on these systems have resulted in social-psychological stresses upon many adult children as they grapple with alternate behaviours while attempting to maintain feelings of reverence and care. The attempt to maintain these values of care and support shows the cultural resilience of rural populations rather than any form of 'loose structure'.

Change has also brought with it positive improvements such as the expansion of the national health care system. With a health centre in every tambol (sub-district) of the country the Thai population is well served with health outlets and compares very favourably with other Third World countries. The introduction of basic medical assistance such as inoculations and tetanus shots has no doubt improved mortality levels. Yet inequities remain; clinics are understaffed with paramedical personnel who are underpaid, furthermore different rural development projects fall on their shoulders. They are undertrained in techniques of diagnosis of illnesses which affect the old, and there is a slight but real opportunity for them to exploit their position by pocketing money acquired for purchases of medicine.

A drawback in the mubaan's embrace of change is seen
in the loss of knowledge of traditional curative and preventive measures against illness. The almost total dependence of the mubaan on modern medical treatment cannot be successful if efficient access to health centres and hospitals is not guaranteed. Improved dissemination of knowledge on preventive health care and a change in values of care for the aged would go a long way toward reducing morbidity levels among the old. The attitude of kraengjai (not wanting to impose) by the old, in conjunction with agrarian life, results in medical treatment which is almost always curative rather than preventative. Kraengjai was more easily overcome, though unintentionally, for young children because they are seen as helpless, dependent, and as the future of the family, by both parents and grandparents. To be old should not necessarily mean enduring suffering from continual physical discomfort; people must become aware that the suffering can be relieved or avoided.

While most of the Third World is agrarian and poor, wage earning activities have replaced much of the previously predominant agricultural subsistence way of life for the young. Many of the working population go where there is wage work, rural or urban industrial, and for these workers, long absences from the parental household become a common occurrence. Even adult children living at home are engaged in wage work and are absent for most of the day, leaving the old unattended. This situation is severe for the 'old-old', even if numerical data show that some adult children are co-resident. The relationships between such old people and their adult children indicate the degree of neglect which the old in general experience.

The absence of children prevents them from expressing values of numjai (gratefulness) towards their fellow mubaan members and particularly to their old parents. Concepts such as numjai, historically seen as uniquely Thai, arose through traditional production cycles. Communalism and interdependence are a major characteristic of mono-cropped non-mechanized agriculture. Social practices also played a part in forming attitudes of communalism such as marriage ceremonies, funerals, merit making and ordinations. The
construction of my bamboo hut, elaborated on in Chapter 3, provides a good example of communal assistance. Communal activities such as these are rarely evident now because of the breakdown in domestic farming practices. These changes have a direct effect upon the entire support system of the old and go beyond their ability to control it.

The increased monetary support given to parents by children, a concomitant of change, is in the context of increasing monetization for all segments of Thai society. Wage work away from home has replaced the rhythms of the domestic farming cycle; this has isolated many households socially and economically within the mubaan. There is no choice for the average agriculturalist; the rural family must adapt to modern technologies. A rural family cannot, for example, revert to old mono-crop rice strains and subsist as their fathers did as recently as a generation earlier. The immediate effect of growing old rice strains amongst high yielding varieties would cause untimely harvesting and attract rats and insects which would destroy the crop. A 'precarious existence' is a term often used in this thesis; one drawback or hiccup in a harvest results in the rural family falling into debt and commonly needing at least two good harvests to repay the debt from one bad one.

Modernization has also brought consumerism to the countryside; not even the most remote village or hill tribe population is free from its influence. The messages 'see this' 'you need this, you want this, you must have this' are repeated continuously on television, radio and in newspapers. If such messages of desire and need had no impact it would be irrational for sponsors to invest millions of baht in them.

Within my short stay in the mubaan I observed a pace of change with signs of the inevitable suburban expansion of the metropolis. This process of expansion is not uncommon for rural areas surrounding any large Thai city. Economic expansion has brought with it a dramatic change in the livelihood of farmers in the area. The domestic farming cycle exemplified by household interdependencies has ceased. Inevitably rice farming as has been practised in the area since the mid-1800s will also cease. Outward
social turmoil as a result of this transformation will most likely be negligible, as the evidence of past urban expansion suggests; the history of the Central Plains of Thailand has already shown the steady loss of land through indebtedness. It will not be difficult to find discouraged farmers willing to sell their lands at 'high prices' to the numerous speculators who arrive at their doorstep.

Land speculators appeared during my stay like a swarm of flies attacking a dying animal. Perhaps as a final blow to this animal villagers themselves have become naina (middlemen) for the urban speculators searching out land in the area. From an 'economic point of view' it is no longer efficient to grow rice when land prices continue to rise and while rice remains relatively cheap. Much fertile land will be transformed to either commercial and industrial sites or housing estates. The naina villager will receive approximately five percent of the purchase price of the land. He and possibly his children will take up wage work positions in the factories at a minimum but at least a steady wage.

I can guarantee you that if a factory was set up right now in this area which offered 60 baht a day there would be no people working in the fields any more (personal conversation with Grandad Samrarn).

Exploitation of economic opportunities has become a widely upheld ideal by many in the community. Headman Pye's attempts to influence Bangkok businessmen to create a floating market in Paidum serves as a good example. The immediate effects are clear to many villagers; increased job opportunities, better infrastructure; possibly increased health facilities; a larger market for villagers to sell their produce. But would 'people of the village' have a say as to the shape and form of this development of their community? My neighbour Pai, for example, would be able to sell more candy and snacks; but her identity as assistant headman's wife, head of the women's working group, member of the agricultural committee and helpful
contributor in all mubaan activities would evaporate if there were no mubaan. Land prices obviously would increase, buildings would be constructed, complete with high barbed wire fences or walls with broken glass; many poor villagers such as Grandad Learn, Grandad Nop and Granny Nuu, who have for decades been living on tee sartarn (public land) would be displaced from their dwellings.

To become rich economically should ideally afford one to become rich culturally. What good will it do if material inventions and high-rise edifices are only to be had at the expense of a sense of community. Already, many of us may feel that we hardly know our neighbours, let alone a sense of good neighbourhood. In a nutshell, is a society marked by material prosperity amidst cultural and humanistic poverty the ideal target for planners? (Bangkok Post: December 17, 1987).

Impaired physical abilities of the old may prompt family and neighbours to assume incorrectly that they also have decreasing mental faculties. As yet there is no substitute satisfaction for the physical work which the old have done throughout their lives. With fewer tasks to do a person's mind begins to wander; and the old become more psychologically dependent on their loved ones. When adult children are absent from the household the degree of loneliness and worry for old parents is heightened. It is at the stage of the widening gap between physical and mental competence that an old person most needs the reinforcement of the family. The almost unanimous rejection by adult children of special homes for the old demonstrates their understanding of the needs of old parents. However, most adult children cannot satisfy the basic requirements which they have set for themselves. Faced with the present economic environment many old parents remain alone, even when at home and supported by 'good' children. Given 'free' time their other children occasionally visit them.

Under the above conditions modernization can be seen as a double edged sword for many rural communities. A major negative consequence of modernization clearly seen in
this study is its effect in breaking down the essence of village community structures and particularly practices related to support to the old.

'There where the breeze blew urban sounds and smells agriculture wilted' (Hanks 1972). This comment by Hanks in the early 70s still rings true as long standing rural communities are engulfed by the expanding city. Yet I did not find during my entire stay in the mubaan any concerted criticism or reaction against these changes they call kwarmjaroen (urban-type developmental changes). Further kwarmjaroen would bring with it more of the isolation of households typically seen in the metropolis. The old are quite aware of this, but view such changes in a positive and individual way. After all what is personal isolation and a loss of mubaan independence? These are losses of the past. Their adult children are discussing and planning for changes in the future, which are much more important to their families. The community will change but the old are not meant to contribute to the form of this change. The old of these households are being considered more as burdens to their society and as economic costs to their children and community. From both a societal and a familial perspective we cannot sufficiently care for our old people; at least not in a modernizing economic environment where government budgets are strained and family purse-strings drawn too tight.

8.3 The Future of Support Systems

Let us consider support in two time periods. Firstly, a time period in which the people who are old now will become unable to care for themselves and need constant attention. Secondly, a more distant future in which the currently middle-aged themselves reach old age.
8.3.1 The Present Old

The needs of the present old like Grandad Samrarn, Learn, and Granny Kuntong, though small, will remain until they pass on; yet the needs of the grandchildren seem increasingly important as they grow. It is likely that in the case of Grandad Samrarn who is old and poor, land speculators will entice his children to sell his land and invite him to move and live with them in the city. They believe he cannot manage for himself at present. Grandad Samrarn may move, making the pace of change for him dramatic and the process of social isolation complete. A different set of circumstances would exist, with adult children seen to be co-resident with their elders, maintaining forms of katanyu (a sense of obligation) in the urban environment. Yet systems of social-network dependent upon one’s history in a community and a sense of belonging will be erased in a two hour bus ride from the mubaan to ‘my children’s house’. The process of rural to urban migration of the old in Thailand has yet to be researched and would provide illuminating insights into such changing support systems.

Wariness of strangers was a common feature we observed as people aged, especially among those who are alone in the house. Physical decline brings with it deterioration in the senses, an increased wariness of strange things and people. Our presence in the community was accepted by the many old people we met partly because there was a kin-link between us and many in the community; however some problems did occur.

You can go and interview her but I’m not sure she will answer all your questions...Old people have slower reflexes and slower awareness than when they were young. They can’t see as clearly, hear as clearly and understand as quickly as when they were young and so are afraid of strangers who might take advantage of them (Uncle Samrarn FN: August 12th).

Future changes in composition of the mubaan would bring
increased wariness and fear from the many old people who remain in the mubaan. Regardless of the presence of children, the increased proximity of strangers in the area and the constant talk concerning robbers and thieves by citified children heightens this worry. These old people who have at present been defined as those with bun (those who have accumulated good merit) would most likely experience a contraction in their social network: fewer people to visit and be visited by, with higher population density, more physical difficulties in independent travel, all these by definition an important part of social support. These common processes of urbanization will increase the isolation of the old in the countryside. Adult children will continue to have less time to care for their parents because they will be busy in earning a living. Relationships between parents and children may be worse than at present because of a deterioration in the value and practices of katanyu and numjai.

8.3.2 The Future Old

Up to the present time both parents and their children have grown up within the agricultural world. Such children will see lesser practices of care given to their grandparents by their parents. Their knowledge of communal obligations and the resultant emotional well-being of the old arising from this will be lacking. In the past people saw their old as contributing members of their community. With a lack of understanding of this past the future old will be treated more as individual entities devoid of a history, who are a burden to their family. All very old people need care and attention, now and in the future. It is the present and very likely the future society, however, which has defined this care as a burden. The future will hold a different set of circumstances with many children growing up and receiving an education in a non-agricultural setting providing a completely different form of socialization from that which their parents received. These differences in socialization and human upbringing may
develop into unforeseen complications in the relationship between parents and children in the future.

Perhaps new findings will emerge which show a more optimistic and grounded possibility in upholding village values and providing more economic independence to rural Thailand. Emphasis should be given to emerging home-grown developers such as Khru Banharn. Through such persons, with interest and knowledge in both worlds, new findings will emerge to suggest possible avenues for appropriate revival and sustained mubaan development and subsequently greater well-being of the old.

Immediate measures which can be taken to improve the health of the old include periodic nutritional and health checkups at all health centres. Free health checkups for the numerous old people who hold welfare cards might be considered. Initial obstacles which would be encountered are time constraints for adult children to bring their parents to the health centre. Free basic medical check-ups for people who bring invalid old parents to health centres is a possible way to overcome this obstacle. Awareness programs might also be initiated emphasizing that being old is not contrary to being healthy. A promotion of health in old age is necessary; information, education and communication through tambol health centres concerning preventive measures for common illnesses encountered as a person gets older are also possible. There is an imbalance of IE & C towards family planning and infant care. A more holistic approach to better health can include alternatives to the present lifestyle such as diet, smoking and drinking, exercising for the population at all age groups. Further dissemination and revival of effective traditional curative methods are also possible; these should contain information on effective herbal or traditional preventive and curative methods.

More profound improvements involving changes in the philosophical outlook by the central government which go beyond but encompass the well-being of the old can be linked with the culture of the community perspective of development which promotes the cultural heritage of the mubaan. Premature conclusions should not be made of this
perspective as Thai village studies are only in their infancy. Further research may provide newer perspectives in maintaining and strengthening the mubaan community and as an integral part of it, the well-being of its old people.

I have shown the village as it was and as it is. This description indicates how changes have affected many basic village values of care given to the old. Old ways go, new ways replace them and what were traditional values change. Village life and its cultural practices are seen as backward and underdeveloped with bad health and pervasive poverty; development programs are constructed to overcome these problems. Yet what are the goals of this development? The type of modernization and change pursued to date has brought with it economic dependence and displaced adult children from their households. Values of care towards the old cannot be fulfilled and will likely lose their meaning with the passing of the present generation. What forms of solidarity exist to indicate the direction in which the mubaan might evolve into a secure, modern institution? The questions, we see, are clear to my friends in the village. The answers are not.
Appendix A  Field Survey Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

Support Systems of the Old in a Rural Community in Thailand

Name: ___________________________  Last Name: ___________________________

House number: ______  Muu number: ______  Name of village: ____________

Tambol: ________________  District: _______  Province: ________________

Date of interview: ________  Month: _______  Year: ________

Begin interview: _________  End interview: _______  Years lived in Tambol: ______
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Children ever-born</th>
<th>No. of Household Members</th>
<th>Reltn. to head of household</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Major Occup.</th>
<th>Minor Occup.</th>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>Place of child absence</th>
<th>Years child left home</th>
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*Household Schedule*
In your daily activities do you encounter any difficulties in conducting the following tasks?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>Bathe</td>
<td>Clear field</td>
<td>Feed self</td>
<td>Getting out of Toilet</td>
<td>Using Clothes</td>
<td>Wash Bed</td>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>Fix</td>
<td>Lift</td>
<td>Paddling</td>
<td>Peeling</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 Metres</td>
<td>self</td>
<td>15 Sen Rice 5 Kg.</td>
<td>15 Sen Rice 5 Kg.</td>
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- Codes:
  - 01 very difficult
  - 02 difficult
  - 03 not difficult

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<tr>
<td>Do you have any chronic health problems?</td>
<td>1st health problem</td>
<td>Did you see a modern health practitioner?</td>
<td>Did you see health anyone else?</td>
<td>2nd health problem</td>
<td>Did you see a modern health practitioner?</td>
<td>Did you see a Modern Health Practitioner?</td>
<td>Did you have a health problem?</td>
<td>Do you have a Modern Health Practitioner?</td>
<td>Do you see health anyone else?</td>
<td>Do you see health anyone else?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>No problem</td>
<td>Welfare Veterans</td>
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Welfare Veterans
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<tr>
<td><strong>At what age did you marry?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Divorce. Widow</strong></td>
<td><strong>How many living siblings do you have?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Are any of these siblings living in this village?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Do you have this close friend?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Where do you meet this other person?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Do you keep in contact with this person?</strong></td>
<td><strong>At the present time do you sleep apart?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Have you or your spouse ever borrowed money at a low interest rate?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Are you presently in debt to anyone?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What are the places you have borrowed money from?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Are you a member of the Chapanakit?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What type of Chapanakit are you a member of?</strong></td>
<td><strong>How many years have you been a member?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Normally do you drink any alcohol?</strong></td>
<td><strong>(If yes) How frequent do you drink?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>01 Yes</td>
<td>01 Yes</td>
<td>01 Yes</td>
<td>02 No</td>
<td>02 No</td>
<td>03 Never</td>
<td>01 every day</td>
<td>02 every other day</td>
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<td><strong>Interest rate</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you ever been to the Wat?</td>
<td>On what occasions do you go?</td>
<td>If you bring food to the Wat how much expense is incurred in its preparation?</td>
<td>Have you ever donated some money to the Wat?</td>
<td>What was the occasion of your last donation?</td>
<td>How much was donated at this occasion?</td>
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<td>01 freq.</td>
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May I please ask you about your income. From what sources do you receive your income from (in Baht).

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<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have any wages or salaries? finances?</td>
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<td>Who manages pensions? savings? rent?*</td>
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<td>Main-tenance from spouse?</td>
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<td>No income. children provide for cash and kind.</td>
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<td>Receive cash and assistance from neighbours.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receive cash and assistance from govt. authorities.</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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* rent received from paddy, gardens, house, tractor etc.
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<tr>
<th>May I ask about your assets?</th>
<th>58</th>
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<th>60</th>
<th>61</th>
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<tr>
<td>Have no assets at all</td>
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<td>Have given to children.</td>
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<td>(Continue asking what was given)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Is there anybody in this household who grows?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Income (Baht)</th>
<th>No income</th>
<th>Number of rai</th>
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<tr>
<td>68 rice</td>
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<td>69 corn</td>
<td></td>
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<td>70 sugar cane</td>
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<td>71 bananas</td>
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<tr>
<td>72 mangoes</td>
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<tr>
<td>73 raise chickens</td>
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<tr>
<td>74 tend ducks</td>
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<tr>
<td>75 raise fish</td>
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<tr>
<td>76 raise shrimp</td>
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<tr>
<td>77 raise cows</td>
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<tr>
<td>78 sew clothes</td>
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<td>79 weaves baskets, etc.</td>
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APPENDIX B  Guideline for Focus Group and In-depth Discussion

Note:  FG = Old and adult children focus group discussion
       Y = Adult children focus group discussion only
       O = Old parents focus group discussion only
       IDD = In-depth discussion only

Brief Life History

IDD How old are you now?
IDD Do you have any formal education?
IDD Were you ordained as a monk?  Drafted into the army?  What was it like?
IDD When did you begin to work?  What types of work were you engaged in?
IDD What did your parents do for a living?
IDD At what age did you start to have children?
IDD (If male) When were you ordained as a monk (or novice)?  
IDD Were you a soldier during the 2nd world war?
   (If female) What was life like during the 2nd world war?
IDD What type of work were you engaged in after the second world war?  Any accidents?
IDD In this area have there been any natural disasters like floods, fire, lightning?
IDD FG At the present time do you have enough land to make a living on?  Your own land?  Rented land?
IDD FG What are conditions like for farmers nowadays?

The Meaning of Old

FG IDD When should a person be considered old?
FG IDD What are the characteristics associated with someone who is old?  Do old people dress differently than the not old?
FG IDD Are there any differences between old men and old women?
FG IDD What are the best things about being old? What are the worst things? Is it any different between now and say a generation ago?

FG IDD Do old people have any special abilities? Are old people of any use? Is it any different for men and women?

IDD Does one feel more temperamental when one gets old?

FG IDD Should an old person continue to work or should they stop?

FG IDD When do people consider themselves as old?
   When they are grandparents?
   When they are not able to work hard as their younger days.
   When people call them granny, grandad or when they start taking care of grandchildren?
   When they only help a little in the rice field and begin to spend more time at home?

IDD Should people plongsungkarn when they become old? Should they uphold the precepts at the temple?

FG IDD Are old people in our mubaan respected? How is this expressed? Is there any difference between now and in the past?

FG IDD What are the differences in daily activities between the old and the not old?

FG IDD Do old people ever feel plong? When do people begin to feel plong?

FG IDD When people become old is it necessary for them to enter the temple and uphold the precepts? Is it any different between now and in the past?

FG IDD Are all old people considered to have bun (merit)?

FG IDD From what you have seen in our mubaan would married couples live together in harmony when they get old or would there be less harmony? Would husbands and wives have more or less kwarsuk at later ages?

FGO IDD Up to this age is there anything in your life which has made you very happy?

FG IDD Which time in ones life do you think one has the most happiness and the less suffering?

Support in Old Age

FG IDD Do old people give more, less, or equal help to their adult children than the help which they receive from them?
FG IDD What would be the situation for an old person who is fortunate? And one who is not fortunate? Are there old people who are neglected by their children? In what way?

FG IDD Should one prepare anything ahead of time so that they will be comfortable when they get old?

IDD (If planned ahead) If you had the chance to plan over again would you have planned differently?

FG IDD When a person is old who should come and look after him/her?

FG IDD Is it important to stay near one’s children?

FG IDD Do old people hope that their children will take care of them? In what way (monetary, emotional, social)?

FG IDD Is there any expectation of receiving help from people who are not one’s children?

FGO IDD What type of assistance are you receiving at the moment? What types of assistance are you giving to others?

FGO Is there any difference in the assistance you receive between married and unmarried children?

FGO IDD If children go against your wishes is there any action which you can take to change the situation?

FG IDD Should it be the youngest daughters’ duty to provide care to parents when old?

FG IDD Between sons and daughters who is better or is it the same in:
- caring when sick
- companionship
- provide regular remittance
- help in housework
- help in the paddy fields
- why?
  (what about between sons and daughter in law; daughters and daughters in law; sons in law and sons.)

FG IDD If children and grandchildren do not come and visit you would you go and visit them?

FG IDD Do absent children regularly send remittances? Visit?

FG IDD If we compare children who live at home and help in rice farming and absent children who send regular remittances which do you prefer? Why?

FG IDD Would old people who have many children receive more help than those with few children?
FG IDD Would old people with no children have any difficulties? Would there be anyone to come and take care of them?

FG IDD Are there any unrelated old people who care and assist each other?

FG IDD In our mubaan is there anything resembling an old peoples group? (If not) Would it be a good things to organize an old peoples group to help each other and do things together?

Changes in Support Systems

FG When do people stop becoming decision makers in the household? Is it any different for men and women? Between the past and the present?

FGO When you were young adults what types of support and assistance was required of you by your parents? And what was actually given by you?

FGO Is the assistance which your children give you now any different from that which you gave your parents?

FGO IDD How many children do your children have (identify about three participants)? Would your children receive less assistance than you because they have fewer children?

FG IDD Do parents spend more on children today than in the past?

FG IDD Does it cost more for adult children to care for their old parents today than in the past?

FG IDD Do adult children sometimes have to choose between supporting their own children and their old parents?

FG IDD Do old people live longer today than a generation ago? Why?

FG IDD Does this affect the support they receive from their children?

FG IDD Has medical care for the old improved over the last generation? Has it become more expensive?

FG IDD Is it often difficult for a family to afford medical care for their old parents?

FG IDD If a person has a minor illness is it necessary to go immediately to the doctor or to wait and observe the symptoms? Is it any different between now and a generation ago?

FG IDD What types of festivals are there in the mubaan? Are old people invited to these festivities? Why?
Inheritance

FG IDD Is it necessary for old people to have some wealth so that someone will look after them when they are unable to look after themselves?

FG IDD Have you received any inheritance from your parents?

FG IDD How are you going to give your inheritance to your children?

FG IDD Would you give your land to your children before you die?

FG IDD Do parents who give their inheritance to their children before they die receive better, less or the same amount of support and care than parents who do not?

FG IDD Do parents who do not have any inheritance to give receive the same amount of care and support from their children than those who do?

IDD Would children care and love their parents even though the parents have no wealth?
Appendix C Questions Selected Out from the Primary Village Characteristics Questionnaire 1987

Region_________ Province_________
District _____ Tambol___________
Mubaan_________ Number_________

Questionnaire for Primary Village Infrastructure Characteristics 1987

The Committee for National Rural Development

The Survey of Primary Village Infrastructure Characteristics

1. Importance

The objective of this questionnaire is to survey the standard of living of the village population. It will serve as a primary data for the 6th Social and Economic Development Plan. This information is the overall assessment of development in the country. It will also be used as a source of data for other related agencies to use in their planning purposes. The follow-up and assessment of regional rural development agencies will use this data to categorize different levels of development existing in each village. The data will also be used for planning tambol development. It can be seen that data to be collected in this questionnaire is of vital importance in determining the direction of development to be taken. If collected data is inaccurate implementation and allocation of budgetary sources will be misplaced. It is thus of vital importance that accurate and up to date information be collected.
1.3 How many people actually live in this village ________ persons
   Total number of households ________ households
   Total number of males ________ males
   Total number of females ________ females

1.5 What is the total income of this village as reported in the income tax form__________.

2. Water Usage

2.1 Drinking water
   Number of households in this village who have access to year round drinking water.__________ households.

10. Occupation

10.1 Number of households in the village who are engaged in only one occupation.__________ households.
   Number of households engaged in only wage labour as an occupation _________ households.

10.2 Number of households who are engaged in more than one occupation.__________ households.

11. Households engaged in rice farming

11.1 For households who are engaged in rice farming what is the size of holding (include paddy which is owned and rented, both within and outside the village).
   less than 1 rai number of _______ households
   1 to 5 rai number of _______ households
   6-10 rai number of _______ households
   11-20 rai number of _______ households
   21-50 rai number of _______ households
   more than 50 rai number of _______ households

13. For households who cultivate fruit gardens (does not include those who grow a limited number of fruit trees within the vicinity of their households).
   -Number of households who are engaged in cultivating fruit gardens. _______ households.
   -area of usage. number of rai________
   -average amount of income per household________

22.2 Number of households who are engaged in raising fish for sale.
   -number________ households.

24.2 Number of households who own a mini-tractor.
   -number ________ households.

Number of households who have to rent tractors
25. Land quality and characteristics

25.1 Use all available land for agricultural pursuits.
-Number of households ________

25.2 Reason(s) for not using all available land area for agricultural pursuits.
- bad soil
- labour shortage
- not profitable to grow crops
- lack of knowledge in growing alternative crops
- lack of water
- other

25.3 Problems encountered in soil quality are:
- no problems
- shallow soil
- sandy soil
- hard soil
- tepid soil
- salty soil
- sour soil

26. Land ownership

26.1 Number of households who own their own land and do not rent additional land.
- number of households ________

26.2 Number of households who own their own land but rent additional land.
- number of households ________

26.3 Number of households who have no land and have to rent all the land they work on.
- number of households ________

35. Outside occupation acquired by village members

35.1 Number of households who have at least a household member working outside their tambol.
- number of households ________
- approximate number of people ________ persons.
35.2 What type of work are these people mostly employed in?
- industrial factories
- agricultural (such as rice farming, upland crops, fruit gardening, raising cattle)
- fishing (wage labour)
- servicing (such as servants, entertainment businesses, pedi-cab and taxi-drivers)
- craftsman (such as carpenter, bricklayer, fitter)
- mining and forestry
- rubber plantation (wage labourer)
other work

35.3 Where mostly do they go for work?
- outside district
- within province
- outside province but within region
- other region
- Bangkok
- foreign country

35.4 When mostly do they go for work?
- daily
- only when free from rice fields
- for less than three months
- for more than three months

35.5 Sex of workers
- mostly male
- mostly female
- equally male and female

- What age range are these people mostly in.
   _____ years to _____ years.
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