The conflict over natural resources in the Thai countryside: the Kor Jor Kor forest resettlement scheme.

by

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I certify that this thesis does not incorporate any material which is not my own work without due reference in the text. I take full responsibilities for any inaccuracies.

Kathy Ragless

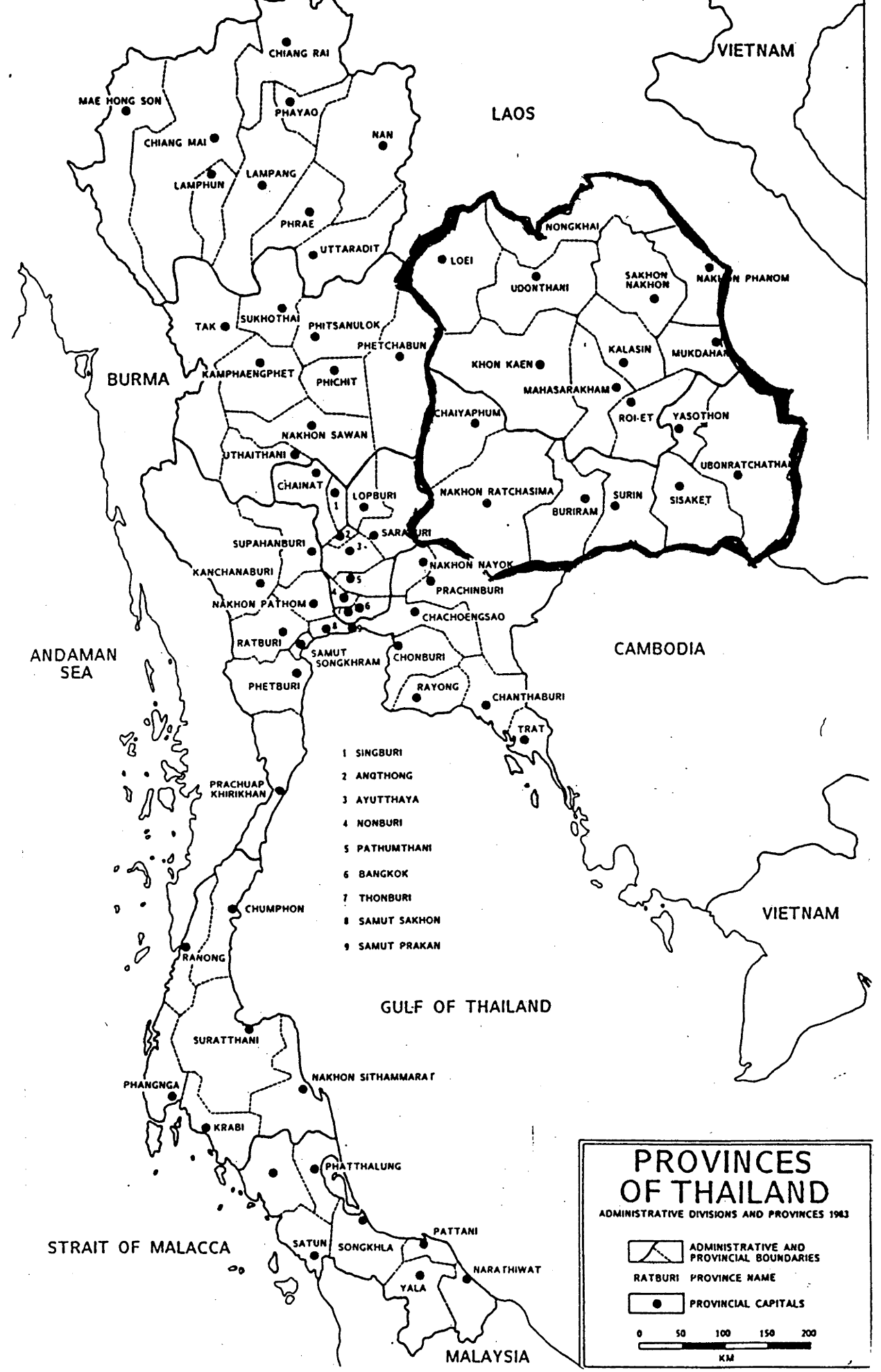
20th December 1995

I would like to thank my supervisor Craig. J. Reynolds and Edward Aspinall for their assistance with this thesis. I would also like to express my gratitude to the many people in Thailand who were so generous with their time and hospitality and offered such patient explanations and assistance.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BP	Bangkok Post
BWR	Bangkok Weekly Review
CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
FEERYB	Far East Economic Review Year Book
KJK	Kor Jor Kor forest resettlement scheme
NGO	non-government organisation
NGO-CORD	NGO coordinating committee of Thailand
PER	Project for Ecological Reconstruction
PFT	Peasants Federation of Thailand
SFT	Student's Federation of Thailand
SR	Siam Rath
TDN	Thai Development Newsletter
TDSC	Thai Development Support Committee



Map of Thailand with the Northeastern provinces affected by KJK outlined in black (map copied from Charles Keyes Buddhist Kingdom as Modern Nation Westview Press 1987 USA).

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The most explosive source of conflict in the Thai countryside in the last decade, although by no means the only one, has been over the control and ownership of natural resources. This thesis explores the conflict over natural resources which has manifested itself largely as conflict between villagers on the one hand, and the state and corporate sector on the other. The discussion attempts to explain the basis of the conflict and explore protest themes and discourse using the protests over the Kor Jor Kor forest resettlement scheme in Northeast Thailand in 1991 and 1992 as a case study.

This thesis was inspired primarily by my experiences with Thai rural non-government organisations (NGOs) and villages in 1991 and the coverage of the democracy demonstrations in Bangkok by the Australian media in 1992. The attention drawn by NGOs to the disruption in many rural peoples' lives as a result of modernisation in the face of the official rhetoric of Thailand's economic success inspired my interest in the other side of the development story. Furthermore, the Australian media's portrayal of a vibrant and growing Thai urban middle class as the primary force for political change in Thailand and a largely conservative and malleable rural population did not fit my experience and prompted me to explore the character of contemporary opposition in more detail. [1]

At this point a brief word needs to be said on my approach to the question of rural protest and dissent amongst villagers. This thesis tends to focus on organised protest and the alliances that have been formed between villagers

[1]The tendency of commentaries on the May 1992 events to portray poorer rural inhabitants in this way has also been commented upon by Hirsch (Hirsch 1993:5).

and urban middle class forces. Large parts of this thesis are devoted to discussion of the discourse articulated by many rural based NGOs with other middle class forces and some village leaders as part of the conflict over natural resources. This approach carries the danger that my analysis will focus entirely on the discourse of NGOs, which is accessible and readily available in English, at the expense of village perceptions. However discussion also covers village protest in some detail and describes the point at which middle class discourse and village demands converge.

The idea that peasants are not interested in visions of the future but only the existing system is a persistent theme in peasant studies. James Scott has forcefully emphasised this, and he concludes that "the great bulk of peasant resistance is not to overthrow or transform a system of dominance but rather to survive it, today, this week, within it" (Scott 1987:424). However I would like to join Van der Geest in his emphasis on contemporary Thai peasants as literate and actively involved in the construction of imagined communities. In answer to Scott, Van der Geest concludes that "on the contrary locally based struggles can coalesce around radically different visions of how the larger social context should be constituted, visions which themselves are products of changes in the global system" (Van der Geest 1993:135).

Furthermore such alliances are important in strengthening protest and influencing broad change. Examination of everyday forms of peasant protest in the tradition of James Scott is a valuable addition to the study of rural societies and its strength is the avoidance of overemphasising elite versions of discourse (Scott 1986). However, as Turton points out concerning everyday forms of resistance "Avoidance protest can protect but not transform...if the history of agrarian revolutions are any guide, non-peasant, elite allies are essential to the

mobilisation and success of peasant resistance once it moves beyond the protest of avoidance" (Turton 1986 :83).

Conflicts over natural resources

As agri-business and the state have increased their economic activity and utilisation of natural resources in the countryside the 1980s and 1990s, conflict with villagers has been common. Natural resource conflicts have become high profile concerns and alliances have been formed between villagers, monks, non-government organisations (NGOs), intellectuals, students and other middle class forces in protest.

At this point it is worth briefly qualifying the emphasis on resource conflicts as the major conflict in the Thai countryside. Resource conflicts do not represent the only public protest in this period. For example, there were significant protests for higher rice prices in 1984 and for higher rice and pineapple prices in 1987 (FEERYB 1984:303, 1987:207). Nevertheless, conflicts over natural resources make up the great majority of the public protest reported and have been almost overwhelming in their number in the last decade.

As early as the 1970s there was protest over resource allocation and environmental issues such as the plans to build a dam in Khao Yai National Park. However, the Nam Choan Dam campaign is one of the first famous resource conflicts that involved broad alliances and attracted support from a wide alliance of villagers and urban groups. As a result of the campaign the government was forced to postpone the project indefinitely (Rush 1991:76; Hirsch 1993:17-18).

The 1989 logging ban came soon after the dam campaign. After deforestation caused floods which killed hundreds of villagers in Southern Thailand an existing anti-logging campaign by villagers and NGOs intensified. Villagers in Northern Thailand were deeply involved in the anti logging campaign because logging directly resulted in degradation and appropriation of their farm land. Villagers organised petitions, held rallies and roadblocks and took other resistance action. These actions were coordinated with allies in the media, conservation groups, schools and government by NGOs such as the Project for Ecological Reconstruction (PER) (Rush 1991:76).

In Southern Thailand conflicts over marine resources between small-scale fishing communities and the large-scale modern fishing industry have been common whilst the construction of large scale hydro electric dams, resorts, and golf courses have sparked conflict over land rights, water rights, and compensation levels all over Thailand. Pollution by agri-industries such as aqua culture, and mining activities have also sparked protest in all regions. As protests proliferated, NGOs worked increasingly to provide local movements with middle class allies (Field notes 1993).

During the latter half of the 1980s and the early 1990s, most major conflicts in the Northeast, known in Thai as *Isarn*, have stemmed from three major issues: salt mining; dam construction; and the ownership and use of forest land. Salt mining in the region resulted in farmers suffering damage or destruction to their crops as a result of the rise in water salinity in the late 1980s and led to a concerted campaign against the salt mining industry and for the desalination of the Siew river. This campaign was organised by villagers with NGOs, students and environmentalists (Tasker 1990:28). The construction of Pak Mun Dam in the early 1990s in Ubon Ratchatani resulted in years of conflict with the government and the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) as

villagers and their allies attempted to avert displacement and gain compensation. Conflict over forest land constitutes the third, and most significant and protracted conflict. Eucalyptus plantations established by the government and forestry companies on forest land which had previously been utilised and sometimes conserved by the village and the relocation of villagers from forest reserve land, has led to bitter conflict between villagers and the state allied with industrial forces (Field notes 1993). However this is by no means an exhaustive list, with the 1992 molasses spill in the Chi river which resulted in widespread protest in Maha Sarakham and Kalasin one notable example (1 April 1992, 3 April 1992, 6 April 1992 BP).

The dispute over eucalyptus plantations in the latter half of the 1980s is fundamental to understanding conflicts over forest land and the KJK resettlement program. There was widespread and sustained opposition to eucalyptus plantations in the countryside. Protests from villagers demanded that land expropriated in order to grow eucalyptus plantations be returned, permission be given to replant with other species and in some cases that eucalyptus plantations be outlawed altogether. In 1985 demonstrations occurred in Surin, Roi Et, Buriram and Sri Saket provinces. Eucalyptus trees were damaged and government property destroyed or damaged (Orawan 1992:72-73).

In 1987 villagers in Roi Et pulled up trees and confiscated tractors and demanded that natural forest be retained. In the same year Ubon villagers marched to demand that there be a complete halt to all plantations because they were encroaching on farmland. Soon afterward villagers in Roi Et protested that eucalyptus plantations were replacing their community forests. Thousands gathered in Nong Yai on two occasions in 1986, the second time to

demand the acquittal of villagers charged with destroying 400 rai of eucalyptus plantations (Orawan 1987:72; Apichai 1992:201-202).

Apichai describes the "fiercest" protest as coming from villagers of Dong Yai forest in Buriram province, an area that was to be a centre of conflict during the KJK program. In 1987 2000 villagers burned down eucalyptus nurseries and destroyed 200 rai of eucalyptus plantations with the demand that the government return all land expropriated for plantation use. Arrests followed this incident but violence was to continue in other provinces. In fact, soon after this there was direct armed conflict between officials and villagers over eucalyptus plantations in Kalasin province (Apichai 1992:201-205).

The Kor Jor Kor forest resettlement scheme

The case study used in this thesis is a conflict which arose over forest land in Northeast Thailand. This conflict occurred as a result of a government project to resettle poor villagers living in degraded forests. The project was called the "Land Redistribution Project for the Poor in Degraded Forests" and is known in Thai by its abbreviated name Kor Jor Kor. The project aimed to move as many as 5.8 million people from forest reserve land into resettlement villages under the military. The program began in the Northeast in March 1991 with a plan to move nearly 1 million people out of forest reserves. It was planned that the bulk of this vacated land would be commercially reforested with eucalyptus trees.

The KJK program came into fruition for a number of reasons and served various purposes. It was first and foremost presented as a conservation program designed to benefit the poor and landless. It was described by the army's deputy commander as being "a response to the national forest policy in

which forests and in this country will be saved and expanded" (17 Sep 91 The Nation). Forest preservation and regeneration legitimised the program and at one level KJK was simply a conservation program born out of a badly planned conservation effort. However, as we shall see, both parts of the state involved in planning and implementing KJK, the military and the Royal Forestry Department (RFD), had stronger political and economic motives than either forest protection or regeneration.

The KJK program resulted in widespread protest in both Northern and Northeast Thailand from villagers and various middle class forces including NGOs, environmentalists, monks, students. After a concerted campaign the program was cancelled in mid 1992.

Fieldwork and sources

Fieldwork for this thesis was carried out from August to September 1993 in Thailand. I visited various NGOs and villages and spoke with students and academics in Bangkok and Northern, Northeast and Southern Thailand. In Northeastern Thailand, the region which this thesis concentrates on, I visited NGO-CORD, the Northeast Farmers Federation, two forest temples and their neighbouring villages and attended meeting of Northeast village leaders in Khorat and a forum on community forests at Khon Kaen university. Fieldwork was carried out as a series of interviews and discussions with NGO workers and villagers in both Thai and English.

I have relied largely on written sources in English. I have used two English language newspapers, the Bangkok Post (BP) and The Nation intensively. I have also used the newsletter of the Thai Development Support Committee (TDSC), the Thai Development Newsletter (TDN), as a primary

source. I have translated selected texts in Thai to ensure the English language material is representative.

Chapter plan

Chapter two of this thesis discusses changing interpretations of the Thai countryside and the rural protest movement of the democratic 1972-76 period. Three main themes are introduced; utopian perceptions of the village by both conservatives and radicals; the importance of social differentiation within rural society as a basis for conflict; and the significance of middle class alliance with villagers in protest.

Chapter three examines the changing rural sector in order to understand the basis of recent natural resource conflicts. Environmental degradation and the effect of dwindling resources on the countryside is discussed in the context of modernisation and the expansion of cash cropping. This chapter explains how trends in income distribution and differentiation have come to foster a notion of distinctly different urban and rural interests Thailand and examines the question of internal social differentiation in the village and how the ownership and control of land have changed since the 1970s.

Chapter four is a discussion of the economic and political motivations of the state in the countryside. There is particular reference to state forest policy and the political and economic motivations of government, state and corporate sector in the formation of the Kor Jor Kor resettlement program.

Chapter five is a description of the alliances that formed between middle class groups and villagers in the resource conflicts. This chapter analyses Communal Culture, the strong tendency to characterise the resource conflicts

as being based on a conflict between the urban, state and corporate sectors and rural, peoples' sector, and the prevalence of utopian visions of the village. The work of NGOs is examined in detail and the strength of themes of democracy and environmentalism examined.

Chapter five describes the development of protests over the KJK forest resettlement program, protest themes and the way protest interacted with middle class groups. This chapter also examines a growing tension between villagers over issues at stake in the forest.

Chapter six describes three main developments in the aftermath of KJK. The first is the effect of protest on government policy. The second is a broad discussion of rural protest after KJK, and the third is evidence of some reexamination of some of the fundamental ideas of Communal Culture by NGOs.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE THAI COUNTRYSIDE

This chapter discusses utopian views of the Thai countryside by Thai and Western scholars, the rural protest movement of the 1970s and the effect of this movement on interpretations of the Thai countryside by scholars. Characterisations of a self sufficient rural population which lacked serious class stratification, poverty and traditions of dissent were challenged with the beginnings of Thai Marxist analysis in the 1970s and the development 1973-76 farmers' movement and rural insurgency. The chapter considers the importance of social differentiation in the 1973-76 protests, the significance of the farmers' alliance with middle class forces and the persistence of the vision of the pre capitalist village as self sufficient, non stratified and abundant.

Challenges to utopian visions of the countryside

Thai history seems to contain more continuities than other Southeast Asian nations, threads of culture and social formation are more easily followed without great dramas of war and revolution. Much of the writing of Thai history in English has been characterised by a lack of emphasis on radicalism and dissent. Reynolds writes, "Thailand is written in most histories by English speakers as a country without radical politics and radical writing....the writing of Thai history is monumentally uncontroversial" (Reynolds 1987:9). Rural dissent and it's driving force, factors such as poverty and exploitation, have not been obvious to outside eyes and have often been measured against dramatic events in other parts of Asia. In fact in English language literature on Thailand

characterisations of a passive and largely happy rural population were not really challenged until the 1970s.

European imperialists who stressed the fruitful abundance of rural Thailand and the lazy and passive nature of the natives (Bowie 1992:779) paved the way for later versions of history to focus on abundance and passivity. The work of Western scholars which accumulated over the 1950s and 1960s was generally characterised by a view of village society as being self-sufficient, free of widespread poverty and free of serious class stratification. Wilson is one example cited by various historians to illustrate this characterisation. His 1962 history described a "sturdy and wholesome peasantry" able to engage in a subsistence lifestyle easily as a result of abundant land reserves and a relatively benign state. He concluded that stable subsistence had shaped the Thai peasantry into a fundamentally conservative element in Thai society whose "inarticulate acquiescence to central government and indifference to national politics are fundamental to the political system" (Wilson 1963:258).

Such portrayals of rural Thailand mirror the strong tendency of official Thai historiography to focus on rural abundance and utopian images of rural life. Utopian visions of historical abundance and the benign rule of the state suited the needs of a royal state consolidating their administrative hold over the population in the nineteenth century and the needs of the Thai government maintaining their hold over their nation state in the twentieth century. These images were used as part of the creation of a common national identity and have been integral to the idea of a Thai identity, a process Bowie describes as "fabrication through repetition" (Bowie 1992:798).

Thailand began to develop its own Marxist tradition in the post World War Two period. The naming of social formations along Marxist lines and the

emphasis on feudalism and the exploitation of the peasantry by scholars and students began to challenge the official picture of conditions in rural Thailand. During the 1950s the concept of a Thai feudalism, *sakdina*, was applied to Thai conditions and expanded in two major studies, Udom Sriswan's 1950 study, Thailand:A Semi Colony and Jit Poumisak's 1957 study The Real Face of Thai Feudalism Today (Reynolds and Hong 1983:81-83; Reynolds 1987).

Both studies identified the pre 1855 period, before the Bowring treaty with Britain, as a backward agrarian order with authoritarian rule and exploitative means of production. Jit Poumisak's more detailed study of pre 1855 conditions used *sakdina*, ,which literally meant power over irrigated rice fields and was the legal system of allocation of social rank in numerical hierarchical order in Ayuthia and the early Bangkok period, as a direct translation of feudalism. He concluded that Thai pre-capitalist formations mirrored the European experience of feudalism. Jit's use of the term *sakdina* is described by Reynolds as a significant turning point in the way Thai society was understood by both Thai and European scholars and one which "put in place a characterisation of Thai society that unsettled the foundations of rule in Thai society" (Reynolds 1987:150).

Both Udom and Jit characterised post 1855 Thailand as a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society with rural Thailand suffering from the concentration of power in capitalist and landlord hands. The conditions of the peasantry were described by Jit as deteriorating, with starvation, high rents and interest rates, corrupt government officials and declining morals besetting peasant society as a result of landlord and capitalist exploitation. The semi-colonial, semi-feudal thesis was to remain the dominant theoretical formation used by the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). It underpinned their adoption of Maoist principles and their concentration on the peasantry until the demise of the

party in the 1980s. It would also spark intellectual debate as intellectuals discussed the naming of pre capitalist and post capitalist social formation from the 1970s (Reynolds and Hong 1983:77-83).

The English language histories of the late 1950s and 1960s placed little emphasis on growing Marxist traditions. In fact most studies found little evidence of Marxist activity and tended to judge the question as unimportant for the Thai experience. At the same time, Thai intellectuals of this period tended to repudiate the relevance of Marxism for Thai society. After the 1958 coup and the beginning of repressive government, censorship and proscription had brought an end to Marxist analysis. It was replaced with the proliferation of studies friendly to the regime's political philosophy which stressed indigenous values and institutions and the inapplicability of Marxist analysis to Thai society (Reynolds and Hong 1983:91-95).

Rural Dissent

Nevertheless there were signs of rural unrest during the 1950s and 1960s. There was protest from farmers over the loss of land and various other issues affecting agricultural production and livelihood. However protest was localised, did not result in any broad alliances and certainly did not excite a great deal of intellectual analysis. Collective petitioning of bureaucratic authorities by farmers from a few districts and provinces protesting at the loss of land did lead to the passing of the 1950 Rent of Paddy Land Act, the Land Code of 1954 and the establishment of a committee in 1968 to hear farmers' grievances. Turton concludes that these protests had limited and localised aims and that measures adopted by the government actually had little effect on farmers' problems (Turton 1987:36).

The Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) was active in the countryside from the 1950s after their acceptance of the concept of peasant revolution and the acceptance of Maoism in the late 1950s. They were particularly strong in the Northeast, South and hill tribe areas of the North where ethnic tension left the central Thai state with limited legitimacy. The CPT was able to utilise Lao ethnic feeling in Northeast Thailand. The leader of the Samakhi Tham movement of the 1960s in *Isarn* who campaigned for union with Lao and collective farming was made a CPT martyr after his murder by the Sarit government, boosting recruitment in the region considerably. By 1969 armed insurgency was underway in fourteen Northeastern provinces and was to remain a threat to the state for the next decade (Chai Anan and Morell 1981:83).

However it was not until the opening up of the political situation in the 1970s that the socio analysis of the late 1940s and 1950s was rediscovered by students and intellectuals and there was a flourishing of Marxist ideas throughout Thai society. Intellectuals debated the naming of social formation. Was pre 1855 Thailand based on feudalism or an Asiatic mode of production or perhaps a mixture of both? Was 1970s Thailand a mixture of feudalism and capitalism or were there just feudal remnants in ideology and consciousness and what was the relevance of Maoism? (Reynolds and Hong 1983:91-95; Turton 1984:25; Bowie 1992:803).

At the same time social movements proliferated. The growth of organised peasant protest which took place from 1973 was unprecedented in Thai history. Large protests against the low price of paddy were followed by protest around indebtedness and land confiscation. In early 1974 farmers from Central and then Northern provinces assembled in Bangkok demanding land restitution. The failure of government to take any action resulted in an escalation of protest, supported by student organisations. By November 1974 there was

protest from farmers from twenty five provinces, including the Northeast, centering around relief from indebtedness and involved demands for limitations on land ownership, the allocation of land for small farmers rent and tenancy regulation and various other demands. During 1974 a national coordinating body, the Peasants Federation of Thailand (PFT) was formed.[1] At rallies by the PFT in Bangkok in 1975 all provinces were represented (Turton 1978:122, 1987:36-37; Anan 1989:101-102).

The most high profile demands over this period were tenancy and landlessness, which were most common in the Central and Northern provinces. The government responded by passing the Agricultural Land Rent Control Act and the Agricultural Land Reform Act in 1974. After a new and more conservative coalition government was formed in 1975 the PFT campaigned extensively for the implementation of the Land Rent Control Act. PFT activists educated villages of their legal rights, denounced corrupt officials, landlords and other local powers. This work was carried out in the face of concerted official opposition. Local officials, landlords and the government condemned the PFT and labelled them subversive. Political terrorism against the organisation became increasingly common and twenty one PFT leaders had been assassinated by mid 1975, presumably by landlords and right wing groups (Turton 1987:39-40; Chai Anan and Morell 1981:225).

The 1976 military coup forced social movements underground and many activists, including the leader of the PFT, went into the forest to join communist insurgents. Nevertheless, the events of 1973-1976 marked a significant change in the place of the countryside in the political arena. Chai Anan and Morell claim that "after 1973 farmers were involved in the political process for the first time" and Wattana marked this period as having changed the relationship

[1]The PFT is sometimes translated as the *Peasants* Federation of Thailand (PFT) and sometimes the *Farmers* Federation of Thailand (FFT).

between the state and peasantry forever" (Chai Anan and Morell 1981 Wattana 1991:185). The problems of the countryside became central concerns for the governments of 1973-76 and rural issues had the highest profile in the 1975 election campaign (Girling 1981:175).

New Portrayals of the Thai countryside

Certainly after this dramatic period the image of a happy and passive rural population would never again be as pervasive or convincing. Prior to this period there had been little interest from Western Marxist intellectuals in Thailand's revolutionary possibilities or the revolutionary potential of the Thai peasantry. However after the growth of the PFT and the growth of rural insurgency after the PFT had been repressed after 1975, comparisons with Indochina and speculation on Thailand's revolutionary possibilities were more common. A well-known collection of articles from Europe and the United States Marxist intellectuals stressed the potential of Thailand's revolutionary situation and their struggle against imperialism. In the "social war against imperialism" described by this study, the Thai farmer occupied the central role (Fast, Turton and Calwell 1978). In a similar vein Luther posed the possibility of Thailand becoming the next Vietnam, describing a growing militancy and a trend towards armed insurgency in the countryside (Luther 1978:29).

Communist insurgency in rural Thailand, the PFT and the mobilisation of rural people in support of the state made their way into English language histories of Thailand during the late seventies and eighties. Village based studies in both Thai and English became more popular and there were new studies of the pre capitalist peasant rebellions in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century which refuted the distortions of official historiography in new historical narratives (Turton 1984: 65; Chatthip and

Pranut 1980:118-131). At the same time the growth of peasant studies world-wide in the 1970s included extensive study of South east Asian peasants, including Thailand. Questions about peasant ideology and the reasons for peasant rebellion focused attention on the ideas and motivations of peasant populations (Scott 1976; Turton and Tanabe 1984).

In all of these discussions around the orientations of protest the problems and exploitation of the peasant are well in view and the farmer no longer characterised by passivity. However, despite the proliferation of writings around the PFT and rural Thailand, themes of passivity and social equality are still used in the contemporary context also. Note Lewis's 1990 study concluding that "Thai peasants are less discontented than peasants of other Asian countries as the land is fertile and the yield high.... there is relative economic and social equality within the Thai village, consequently fewer country folk than in many other countries seem to live with a daily sense of injustice" (Lewis 1990:1364). The 1989 Asian Year Book compiled by the Far East Economic Review defined democratic forces in Thailand as elitist and based only in Bangkok and stressed the absence of any significant rural based pressure groups despite the growing rural protest over resources (FEERYB 1989:239). Furthermore the political malleability of rural populations has remained a common theme in international media coverage of Thailand over the 1990s.

A fundamental aspect to a lack of attention to rural protest and the characterisation of a passive rural population is the idea that the initiative and momentum behind organised rural protest is the urban middle class. As we shall see, this characterisation was certainly made of the PFT and the rural campaigns of 1973-1976.

Alliances between farmers and students

The role of students and other middle class activists is often stressed as the fundamental force behind political change. In Wyatt's 1984 history he mentions farmers' role in the 1973-76 period only in passing, concluding that the middle class were the really important actors and that "at best farmers' discontent may have served to legitimise student and middle class commitment to political change" (Wyatt 1984:297).

Certainly students and academics were very involved in the social movements of the 1973-76 period. For the participants in the debates over the naming of social formations , such questions had great impact and were closely related to action and visions of a new future for Thai society. New links and alliances were built between students, intellectuals, workers and farmers and this fostered intense intellectual interest in peasant dissent in universities. It was a time of polarisations in Thai society, and many intellectuals and students were closely involved with social movements involving urban workers, farmers and monks. Marxism, specifically Maoism, was a pervasive political ideology amongst students and intellectuals and influenced the social movements. Hong Lysa describes many Thai Marxist intellectuals of the period as having "an unquestioning reverence for and application of Maoist principles" and a "grotesquely tinted ideological colouring" (Hong 1991:101).

The PFT alliance with students drew the organisation into national politics with the PFT supporting the Socialist Party in the 1975 elections. PFT connections with the CPT seem to have seem weak although Marxist ideas were influential. (Turton 1987:39; Cohen 1982:8). The English language literature on the farmers movement identifies a peasants movement in its own

right but portrays the alliance with students as essential to the formation of the PFT. Turton describes student organisations as supporting and involving farmers in campaigns from the beginning of the first few farmers' protests in 1974 and many spontaneous rural protests converging with the student initiatives (Turton 1987:37). Anan also describes protests as initially being encouraged by students who became increasingly involved in agrarian conflicts and greatly assisted the organisation of peasants into the PFT, but he also points out that as protest escalated peasants developed their own leadership (Anan 1989:101). In comparison, Cohen believed that the first protests in 1974 did not involve students and that peasants actually initiated the alliance. However he saw the PFT as the creation of student radicals although it subsequently developed to represent the interests of the peasantry (Cohen 1982:8).

Whichever of these interpretations is the most accurate portrayal of the relationship between students, the PFT and farmers it seems clear that students were important in the coordination of protest and the formation of a national organisation. Whether organised protest and the PFT was the initiative of middle class forces or local farmers, their interests converged and an alliance was formed. Wyatt's dismissal of the farmers' discontent as simply a legitimiser for middle class political ambitions overlooks the political potential of farmers' discontent and the alliance as the result of converging interests.

The importance of growing social differentiation in the countryside

In the English language literature the farmers' protests and the PFT are commonly represented as having been primarily concerned with land rents and landlessness. The proliferation of English language material on rural Thailand and rural protest in the 1970s included a strong tendency to identify increasing

social differentiation within the peasantry and growing landlessness and tenancy as the impetus for rural protest. The significance of growing landlessness and tenancy in Northern and Central Thailand, the emergence of unequal relations amongst the peasantry as the result of the penetration of capital and the urgent need for land reform were all central matters under discussion (Bowie and Phelan 1975 Cohen 1977 Luther 1978 Lin and Esposito 1976 Thaxton 1971 Seiko 1981 Keyes 1976 Turton 1978 1982 1987 Anan 1989 Chai Anan and Morell 1981 Wattana 1991). Similarly the Thai language literature written during and after the 1973-76 period tended to attribute rural mobilisations to increasing social differentiation in the countryside (Bowie 1992:803).

From the perspective of the 1990s and with the knowledge of contemporary rural conflict contemporary rural conflicts where urban-rural, state-village conflict is so central and differentiation and class antagonism within the village so far out of focus, discussion of rural protest in the 1970s seems very focused on growing inequalities within the countryside and village society. Nevertheless there was still a tendency in the literature to see the protests as a confrontation between peasants *en masse* and a national elite.[2] Walker's 1983 thesis, reviewing the English language literature on the farmers protests of 1973-76, criticised this tendency in English language analysis. He described this approach as underestimating the relation between rural class structure and peasant political activity. He described the essence of the protests as a call to the government to intervene and radically transform the nature of social relations within the countryside and saw protests as reflecting a real change in forms of consciousness in peasant culture, a new recognition of local class differences. He uses the bitter disputes between landlords and

[2]Walker cites Turton 1978:127 and Cohen 1981:274 as examples of this tendency (Walker 1983:90).

tenants and wide ranging calls for land reform as evidence for this (Walker 1983:90).

However class differentiation at the local level as the central element of rural protest and conflict in the PFT period and over the 1970s is problematic. Ramsay advances two main factors to support his thesis that tenancy and rural class differentiation were not so central to rural conflict in the 1970s as is commonly argued. First, conflict between tenants and landlords was less intense in the more differentiated Central region and more evident in the less differentiated North. Second, and more convincingly, the CPT were able to recruit the most villagers and sustain serious insurgency in the least differentiated Northeast as a result of poverty and ethnic tension (Ramsay 1982:183). McVey also touches on this point when she observed in the mid 1980s that rural unrest at that time was "based in the country's peripheral regions and not as we might expect from the usual emphasis on Southeast Asian peasant studies on its relatively densely populated and highly differentiated central rice plains"(Mcvey 1984:109).

Indeed even in the PFT protests it seems that despite the central importance of land inequality and local differentiation the farmers' movement did identify the state as a central enemy. The PFT tended to identify the struggle as being against "government and capitalists" (Turton 1987:41). Furthermore, many of the wide range of demands that the PFT brought together concerned conflicts which explicitly involved the state as the protagonist. Although the central demands centred around permanent solutions to the problems of debt, tenancy and landlessness, demands also included issues such as price regulation, the removal of corrupt officials and help for flood victims. There were even examples of the kinds of conflict over natural resources which became more common in the eighties and nineties.

There was conflict between farmers and the state over dam construction and forest conservation. For example students supported a farmer's campaign in Northern Thailand to regain land in a teak forest reserve where they had lived for a generation before the Forestry Department expelled them . A 1976 film by students described students supporting farmers to try and prevent the construction of a dam on the Mekong river by the government (Cohen 1981:7;; Bartak 1993:23 ; Seri 1991: 95).

Growing social and economic cleavages within the countryside were clearly important in fuelling the PFT protests. Nevertheless a growing antagonism and conflict between state and countryside is evident in the protests themselves and in the persistence of communist insurgency in various parts of the countryside. The emphasis on the state-village, urban-rural conflict in the resource conflicts follows this history, it was by no means a new phenonomen.

Utopian visions of the pre capitalist village

Furthermore the focus on growing social differentiation in the countryside was often not as contradictory to utopian visions of the countryside as first appears. The emphasis on growing social differentiation within the countryside as a result of the penetration of capitalist forces implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, was accompanied by an idealised vision of a pre-capitalist village characterised by social equality, self sufficiency and communal living. For example Seiko argued that the penetration of capital was responsible for the destruction of the self sufficient rural economy and the disintegration of rural communities (Seiko 1981:16) Cohen described a marked change in the consciousness of villagers whom he described as developing a new consciousness of internal differences in village society and the gap between

rich and poor (Cohen 1981:193). In fact an emphasis on the destruction of the self-sufficient and non-differentiated village community was already arising as a theme before the farmers movement of 1973-76. In a 1971 study Thaxton described commercialisation and technology as being imposed on the village by a corrupt bureaucracy, undermining the moral basis of peasant society and beginning a process which would "wear away at the very essence of communal life" (Thaxton 1971:257).

Bowie is strongly critical of Thai and English language literature, particularly Thai and western Marxist scholars, for perpetuating myths about the pre-capitalist village. She writes of "an odd convergence between conservative and progressive intellectuals with conservatives romanticising the past and progressives glorifying the past in order to dramatisize the bad impact of capitalism." Whilst Bowie recognises that many myths about a Thai rural paradise for past and present Thailand have been challenged and the question of exploitation has come into focus she finds many examples of how the past is misrepresented. For Bowie the main issue at stake is that the literature envisages the pre-capitalist pre 1855 village as self-sufficient, egalitarian and abundant with few links to the market. Bowie describes quite a different picture of the Thai countryside before 1855 with thriving and growing trade, a marked division of labour, distinct class differentiation, poverty and marked social change (Bowie 1992:819).

In the debates amongst intellectuals from the 1970s over the naming of social formations in pre 1855 Thailand the characterisation of pre 1855 Thai society as being based on the Asiatic mode of Production (AMP) by Chatthip was to foster the idea that villages in pre capitalist Thailand tended to be autonomous from the kingdom run by one central despot. While the king may have owned the land, peasants had effective control over its clearing,

occupation use and inheritance. According to Chatthip AMP meant that the state and village were quite separate and the state did not interfere with production at the village level. Aristocrats were not the direct owners of the land and tribal and kin based cultures, involving communalism and cooperation, were maintained in village communities until the advent of capitalist relations of production and modernisation began to degrade these characteristics (Chatthip 1991:32).

Conclusion

Utopian views of the countryside and characterisations of a passive population certainly changed with the growth of Thai Marxist analysis and the proliferation of rural protest and insurgency in the 1970s. However although the portrayals of passivity, self sufficiency, a lack of stratification and abundance in the countryside were challenged by alternative descriptions, the vision of the *pre-capitalist* village characterised by these characteristics remained persuasive. This was to be fundamental for the development of Communal Culture in the late 1980s.

In analysis of the demands of the farmers' movement of 1973-76 land rents and a growing landlessness were central to the movement. However, although social differentiation was important in the growth of the farmers' movement, it seems it was also overemphasised by the literature. This analysis blurs the distinction between the 1973-76 protests as centrally focused on social differentiation and the resource conflicts focused on village and supra-village conflict.

Finally, the formation of new alliances between currents within the middle class and rural areas and the importance of these alliances provide an

interesting comparison with the natural resource protests of the 1980s and 1990s where middle class groups have also played a central organising and coordinating role.

CHAPTER THREE
A CHANGING RURAL SECTOR

This chapter discusses the development of rural Thailand in the 1980s and 1990s. The persistence of poverty in the countryside, despite Thailand's economic success story, exists alongside a deepening regional, urban-rural polarisation. Although social and economic cleavages within the village have also increased, regional, urban-rural polarisation is more dramatic. Extensive environmental damage in the countryside and growing pressure on land has taken place as part of Thailand's economic development and laid the basis for conflicts over natural resources.

Poverty and differentiation in the countryside

The growth of rural poverty and social differentiation within the village in the 1970s as an associated part of rural capitalist development has already been touched on in the previous chapter. Authors such as Wattana describe the accelerated growth of rural poverty and increased indebtedness, landlessness and insecurity as a result of the capitalist penetration of the agricultural sector (Wattana 1991:4). Witayakorn describes the transformation of central Thailand's agrarian economy as a process of "pauperisation" with increasing landlessness and conflict (Witayakorn 1983:349) and Seri estimated that in 1974 80% of Thai peasants were in debt over 4000 baht, leading to increasing levels of land dispossession (Seri 1991:96).

According to Warr's analysis of socio economic surveys, which he warns is based on data which is "deeply flawed and incomplete", the

incidence of poverty in Thailand decreased consistently between the years of 1976 and 1986. In the early 1980s the incidence of poverty seemed to worsen but it then declined during the mid 1980s (Warr 1993:41). Pranee also describes the reduction of poverty since the 1960s with the incidence of poverty dropping from about 40% of the total population in 1960 to about 21% in 1988 (Pranee 1992:6).

Nevertheless Porpora and Lim describe only a slight improvement of real income in the Thai countryside in the two decades prior to 1987 (Porpora and Lim 1987:88), and the message coming from many NGOs and activists describes widespread poverty. In 1990 NGO leader Prawase Wasi described a countryside of increasing poverty. He wrote, "Although praises are sung for the country's economic progress, alongside the advances are stark poverty and an ever increasing gap between the rich and poor. The transformation is sweeping along, pushing the poor aside" (Prawase 1990:12).

Sanitsuda's collection of articles and interviews about the life of Thai villagers Behind the Smile, typically the first recommended reading for the casual Western visitor to a Thai development NGO, paints a picture of despair and marginalisation. She describes environmental degradation, labour migration, evictions from land for eucalyptus plantations and tourist resorts, the tyranny of the market and loss of control of production processes as widespread phenonoma destroying the fabric of rural life and marginalising rural populations (Sanitsuda 1990).

In their analysis of rural-urban migration in Northeast Thailand Popora and Lim describe widespread migration as evidence of the difficulties of maintaining subsistence in this region. Remittances from

migration exceed subsistence needs, and a substantial proportion of remittance is spent on consumption. It also seems that the socially acceptable level of subsistence in the countryside has risen. However Porpora and Lim are quick to emphasise that consumerism is a secondary motive behind migration and that without consumerism as a factor peasant subsistence at the original level would be problematic (Porpora and Lim 1987:78-79).

Such analysis is focused on urban-rural differences. However in some of the English language literature the growth of internal differentiation in the village is discussed, although it is glaringly absent in literature produced by NGOs. In a 1982 study of rural Thailand, Turton raised the issue of a "new rural middle class" which was beginning to reproduce itself and identified this class as forming a crucial support for the state in the village (Turton 1982:27). Wattanna also identified the development in the 1970s of a dominant stratum with external connections and alliances which linked the majority of villages with the state and the market (Wattana 199:117).

The state is directly implicated in the development of internal differentiation as it increased its presence in the village in order to combat insurgency and push forward the project of rural development. In addition to the cooption of many village officials most government benefits seem to have reached richer farmers who could then be drawn into state frameworks (Hirsch 1990:110). Wattana believes all agrarian reforms were designed to develop a rich peasant class who could then be drawn into state structures (Wattana 1991:154). This is discussed further in the chapter three.

In a 1984 study Turton elaborated on his analysis and found "in village after village we find a small minority, some 5% more or less, of households

who possess a degree of wealth, control of resources, prestige and power which sets them apart from the majority". He defines this stratum as including large landowners, commodity dealers, shopkeepers, village officials, some teachers, rice millers and money lenders who have links and alliances with state and market structures. At the same time he described the emergence of a new rural working class, farmers who may own their land but lack power over the means of production in the sense that they lack control over distribution, exchange and consumption (Turton 1984:30-33). Hirsch, drawing on Hart, also stresses the importance of looking beyond ownership to the dynamics of production control (Hirsch 1993:102).

In a 1989 study Turton concluded that internal social and economic differentiation was marked in the village, that the village could no longer be conceptualised as distinct from the supra village sector and that class elements are represented by local power groups within the countryside. Similarly Hirsch concludes that the concept of social formation characterised by village and supra village is no longer appropriate (Hirsch 1990B:30; Turton 1989:75).

Nevertheless authors shy away from making firm class analysis. The cooption of dominant rural groups into state machinery is described by Turton and Girling as flexible, reflecting fluid political and social relations (Hart 1989:34-35). According to such analysis class formations are not tight, Turton and Hirsch describe class formation and class consciousness as being in a fluid form. However Hirsch remarks that "class formation is incomplete", inferring that he believes the situation will become more clear cut in the future (Turton 1989:75 Hirsch 1993:89).

Trends in the ownership and control of land

Although there has been no marked polarisation between a landlord class and a landless class in Thailand growing rates of tenancy and landlessness were characteristic of the 1970s and seem to have increased in the 1980s, despite smallholdings remaining the dominant form of agricultural organisation. In 1960 it was estimated that 16% of the total agricultural labour force were landless and by 1976 estimates had risen to 25%. A steady increase in wage labour occurred at the same time as a steady decline in exchange labour. The total land area operated by tenants rose from 3.8% in 1963 to 23 % in 1976. Tenancy became most common in the two most highly commercialised areas of Thailand, Central and Northern Thailand. In comparison, these trends remained at a much lower level in the Northeast region (Wattana 1991: 110-112).

In addition to increasing tenancy and wage labour there was also an unequal distribution of land. 1978 figures show 43% of farmers operating 13% of land holdings and 44% operating 16% (Turton 1987:21). During this time there was some polarisation of land, with the sale of land by those already pocessing substantial land holdings and the entry into the market of new urban based interests. Indebtedness and an inability to repay loans were leading factors in this dispossession (Turton 1982:53).

In 1975 it was found that landless farmers were renting 13 million rai (2.08 hectares). By 1994 the figure had risen to 15 million rai (2.4 million hectares). The Office of Agricultural Economics also estimates that there are now two million farm labourers. Variations between regions remain with the Northeast at a lower level than Central or Northern Thailand (TDN

no:26 1994:53). Nevertheless in comparison to the increase in land under cultivation this is not a large increase.

Turton's 1987 study comments that local studies indicate a considerable increase in the use of wage labour and a decline in the use of exchange labour through the 1980's, but he does not mention tenancy as a major factor (Turton 1987 :23). The involvement of capital and urban interests in the ownership of rural land has continued to increase since the 1970s (Hirsch 1989:1), but it seems that tenancy as such has not increased dramatically.

In a 1993 interview Anan concluded that tenancy was currently not a major source of conflict, but it should not be written off as an issue in the countryside altogether, because there are landless farmers involved in unequal and exploitative arrangements with landlords that hold the potential for conflict and protest (Anan 1993 Field notes). Nevertheless other forms of organisation in the rural sector are currently more obvious causes of a loss of control by small holders. For those involved in arrangements such as triple cropping, share cropping and tenancy, new forms of such arrangements have tended to mean that landowners have acquired a greater control over agricultural decision making. As agricultural production has come to involve greater inputs of capital, cultivators have become more vulnerable and less able to exercise control over production processes. In a Northern study Anan concludes that some farmers are becoming more like contracted workers (Anan 1989: 127).

One new development in the rural sector since the 1970s which is affecting the position of small holders is the emergence of large scale agri-business. This second wave of diversification has involved livestock

farming, canned pineapples, aquaculture, rubber and eucalyptus plantations and flour milling among other things. Production is geared to the export market. The government began promoting agro- business in the late 1970s and by the sixth economic pan (1986-1996) it had become the top priority in the industrial sector. Products are produced from the raw materials, processed and exported by the same company, a process called "vertical integration" where the same company is often involved in financing, shipping and insurance as well as agricultural production (Hirsch 1989:7). Companies tend to avoid employing labour directly but use "contract farming." In this system the company plans the production process and sells the agricultural inputs such as chemicals and fertilisers to the farmer (Orawan and Darunee 1992:85).

Non Government Organisations have warned that the activities of agro-business and the increasing incidence of share cropping with agri-business companies will lead to a situation where farmers are very much like contracted workers as a result of the company's greater control over production processes (TDSC 1990: 4). Both Rapin and Girling discuss this trend, and Girling actually speculates on the possibility of this leading to a Latin American scenario where agricultural production becomes divided between large land owners and wage labourers (Girling 1986:190 Rapin 116:1990) However even if this scenario is played out NGO sources predict that agro business will not be able to absorb the majority of Thai farmers and will leave the bulk of farmers as small holders outside of the contract farming system (TDSC 1990:3).

Small holders remain the biggest proportion of agricultural labour throughout Thailand. Although the term "small holder" seems to infer some fundamental control over production, the loss of control over the

means of production is the major problem for small holders as mentioned in the discussion of local differentiation. This loss of control is fundamental to the resource conflicts and current activist discourse. Turton gave one of the earliest analysis of this in English language literature. He listed the lack of land title, mining and plantation activities, state forestry schemes, illegal logging, hydro electric projects, deforestation, new inputs and technology as all leading to a loss of control and choice for small holders (Turton 1984:34).

One final qualification regarding the category of small holder needs to be made. It is not a clear cut category. Hirsch calls the term small holder "a problematic category", because of social differentiation within the village which gives some small holders significantly more power than others (Hirsch 1990A:172). Turton also questions the category; pointing out that people may be many things at once, they may simultaneously be landowner, wage earner, petty trader or hirer. Once again, the fluid nature of class formation makes the naming of rural groups less than straight forward (Turton 1984:34).

Regional differentiation

The divide between rural and urban Thailand and regional disparities in wealth and economic development are more clear cut and have been expressed by many academics with varying degrees of vehemence. Turton identifies "massive regional disparities"(Turton 1989:65). Warr concludes that "absolute poverty is a rural phenonomen, especially concentrated in the North east region (Warr 1993:41). Wattana describes a "skewed pattern of development" (Wattana 1991:100), while Lewis describes the Thai economy as suffering from "extreme dualism" (Lewis 1990: 1373). Chai-

Anan characterises Thailand as a "bifurcated society" with the peoples' rural sector and the corporate industrial sector in deep conflict (Chai- Anan 1992:2).

Although it seems poverty incidence in Thailand declined consistently between 1976 and 1986, national figures on income distribution indicate that the last twenty years has brought with it a steadily increasing inequality. Warr warns that reliable data is hard to come by and socio economic surveys seriously flawed but he advances a set of figures which indicate a widening income gap. According to his calculations the poorest gained in real income by 35% and the richest by 103%. Post-1986 income disparity has continued to increase with no indications of levelling off (Warr 1993:41).

The widening income gap reflects a regional polarisation between urban and rural areas with Northeast Thailand remaining the poorest region. The rate of poverty incidence in 1988 indicated that 11.7 million Thais could be classified as living in poverty, based on a method of calculating nutritional adequacy. An analysis of those 11.7 million found 89% living in rural areas and only 11% in municipal districts. The Northeast of Thailand has the highest rate of poverty incidence and Bangkok the lowest. Bangkok's income share was calculated at 32% of the total and Northeast Thailand's share as only 20.4%, a clear disparity in the light of the Northeast's much higher proportion of Thailand's population (Pranee 1992:7).

The new wealth in Thailand is part of the country's much proclaimed economic success story, which is the product of the conscious restructuring of the Thai economy over the last twenty years. In the late 1960s the Thai government embarked on a concerted program of industrialisation which

brought rapid and fairly stable economic growth. By the end of the 1970s the manufacturing sector had overtaken agriculture in value added at current prices and by 1985 textile products exceeded rice in export value (Suehiro 1992 :32).

The emphasis on industrial development meant that the agricultural sector was comparatively neglected, a criticism which is commonly made in the English language literature on the Thai rural sector. Authors are also quick to point out that despite comparatively low levels of investment the agricultural sector was the main impetus of initial economic growth (Wattana 1991: 3, Warr 1993:46, Chai-Anan 1992:2, Hirsch 1989:1 Porpora and Lim 1987:78). Taylor writes that "essentially the success of Thailand's industrialisation and modernisation program has been made possible by the contribution of impoverished, dependent and increasingly indebted small farmers" (Taylor 1994:2). This reflects a common theme advanced by many rural NGOs who see industrial development as possible only because of the contribution of small farmers who can proudly be referred to as the fundamental basis of the Thai nation (Field notes).[1]

Porpora and Lim describe initial industrial development as relying on the foreign exchange earnings from rice, whilst a price premium on rice exports maintained low food costs in urban centres ensuring low wages and a cheap labour force for foreign investors. They conclude that "the burden of Thailand's urban industrial growth has been borne by the peasantry" (Porpora and Lim 1987:78). This transfer of wealth away from the countryside during the process of agricultural growth is described by Turton as stemming from the fact that "capital accumulation is restricted and

[1]This theme hass actually also long been used by Thai governments, and is one of several examples in where the rhetoric of the state and movements of dissent converge. This tendency is discussed further in chapter three.

surplus from agriculture is maximised" and is described as a "massive transfer" of wealth from paddy producers (Turton 1989:61).

Investment in the rural sector has focused on commercial production for the export market. As a result the level of investment has differed considerably between regions. Infrastructure and investment has been concentrated in the more fertile Central Thailand. Central Thailand has a far greater percentage of agricultural land irrigated and higher levels of chemical inputs and mechanisation, particularly in comparison to Northeast Thailand. Furthermore educational and medical facilities are much more developed (Turton 1989:56, 1987:19).

Meanwhile it seems that the industrial sector has failed to absorb large numbers of the rural population. Recent discussions on the proportion of the population still working in the agricultural sector differ from source to source, but it seems that a majority of the population are still involved in the agricultural sector although the magnitude of this majority is uncertain. Pranee states that 67% of the labour force was involved in the agricultural sector in 1989 (Pranee 1992:4), Warr's mid 1990 figure is 70% (Warr 1993:2), while FEER journalists used a figure of 60% in 1994 (Fairclough and Tasker 1994:23) and Hirsch's description of demographic forecasts describes a predicted increase in the agricultural workforce until at least the end of the 1990's (Hirsch 1990B :2).

Any speculation on these figures is complicated by a high rate of seasonal and non permanent migration from rural to urban areas and the often part-time nature of involvement in agriculture. This is particularly characteristic of Northeastern Thailand where seasonal or non-permanent migration out of the village has been increasing since the 1970s. Large

numbers of rural migrants are involved in the service industry and constitute the backbone of Thailand's manufacturing industry. In fact the industrial labour force in Thailand is tied to the countryside, typically migrants send remittances back to their families and a large number will return to their village, although it seems that increasing numbers of migrants who plan to return remain in the city through necessity (Fairclough and Tasker 1994:24, Popora and Lim 1987:88).

Both seasonal and permanent migration have a major impact on village life. Few villages in the Northeast are irrigated and during the dry season villages empty as people flock to Bangkok and other urban centres. Sanitsuda describes exploitative work conditions for many rural workers in the city and villages occupied by only the elderly and children for the dry season. She describes the strain of life for both those who have left the village and those who have stayed, leading to family breakups and the breakdown of social cohesion in the village (Sanitsuda 1990:31). Similarly Fairclough and Tasker conclude that migration has a serious impact on village life and "the strain on traditional family structures is intense" (Fairclough and Tasker 1994:23). Rural-urban migration and sad stories of the villager living in the city alienated from his/her family and roots are also common themes in popular culture (Field notes 1993).

With these uncertainties and qualifications in mind it seems clear that the agricultural sector involves a majority of Thailand's population who are not in any permanent sense being drawn out of the rural sector into the industrial workforce. In fact it is precisely this issue that absorbs economists analysing the Thai situation. Warr, for example, concludes that there are two main structural issues in the Thai economy: how rapidly the adjustment of output and employment from the agricultural sector to non

agricultural sectors will occur and where expanding non agricultural activities will be located (Warr 1993:49).

Agricultural transformations and the destruction of the environment

At the same time as wealth has become concentrated in urban regions, developments in rural Thailand have led to environmental problems and increasing pressure on land. Transformations in the agricultural sector during the 1970s centred around the encouragement of export production and the diversification of agricultural production away from rice, processes which linked the rural economy much more strongly to the international market. This did not involve any great intensification of agricultural production but was achieved through expansion, increasing the amount of land under cultivation rather than increasing yields. The area of cash crop production increased fivefold from 6 million rai in 1959 to 32 million rai in 1985. At the same time agricultural productivity per hectare has remained one of the lowest in the world (Pinkaew and Rajesh 1992:xiii; Hirsch 1990B:5).

Despite receiving less investment and less attention, Northeast Thailand was fundamentally affected by this process. During the early 1960s large numbers of villagers entered into a market oriented mode of production and began to grow kenaf and new varieties of rice. In the late 1960s Cassava followed as a popular crop for cultivation. This expansion occurred by pushing farmland further and further into forest land. Indigenous forest was replaced by monoculture crops. As villagers were lent money by the government credit agency the process was intensified as they attempted to free themselves from debt by pushing the land frontier forward (Seri and Hewison 1990:106).

The expansion of acreage and the process of deforestation was also intensified by population growth. The population of Northeast Thailand doubled between 1960 and 1980. Furthermore, the drop in productivity of the traditional variety of rice and government rice policy which kept the price of rice low encouraged the expansion of acreage. The electrification of the Northeast in the 1970s also pushed the process along as electric consumer goods led to a greater need for cash (Porpora and Lim 1987:84-85).

Deforestation occurred in Northeast Thailand and right through out Thailand at a rapid rate. According to Royal Forestry Department (RFD) statistics in 1961 forests covered 53% of Thailand's land mass but in 1989 only 27.95% (Pinkaew and Rajesh 1992:21). This figure is disputed by environmentalists on the basis of satellite photographs which seem to indicate that forest cover is actually below 20% (Hirsch 1990A:167). Between 1961 and 1985 Thailand's average rate of forest destruction has been around three million rai per year. In Northeast Thailand the percentage of cultivated land has increased dramatically. Fifty years ago only 7% of land mass was cultivated, and 42% of the region was still forest. Currently only 15% is under forest cover and most of the land suitable for cultivation is already being utilised (TDSC 1990:5). The North east still has the highest rate of forest destruction (Sirisambhand 1988: 64).

This process of deforestation is linked very clearly to the expansion of cash cropping. Hewison and Seri describe the process of deforestation in North eastern Thailand as being a result of villagers' response to Thailand's path of economic development concluding that:

> "there is no longer a richness in nature as before and the villagers have largely destroyed this themselves because they wanted money. They did this under pressure from traders who wanted their r

products for export and the government which needed exports to support economic development: export policies determined villagers' actions" (Seri and Hewison 1990:107).

Hirsch discusses this dynamic in detail. He stresses that deforestation by villagers has not occurred as a result of underdevelopment and a process where poverty stricken villagers were forced to move into forest reserves, but as a direct result of the kind of development path that Thailand has taken. Population growth in Thailand has grown more slowly than the increase in the amount of land being used for agriculture and most newly cleared land has been used for growing commercial crops. It is therefore not simply population growth that has led to the destruction of forest but the growth of commercial agriculture. Furthermore the lack of investment in intensifying productivity, with most state investment flowing into infrastructure such as roads, has meant that large areas are used for comparatively low yields (Hirsch 1990:3). Hirsch writes that an explanation of deforestation "should come from a look at the processes of development rather than a situation of underdevelopment" (Hirsch 1994:9)

This is also stressed by Thai environmental NGOs who are quick to deflect the blame for deforestation away from villagers and place it on government policy and the promotion of export crops (TDN 1990:2; Field notes 1993). The search for a culprit, someone on which to place a definite blame for environmental destruction, is called "the politics of blame" by Hirsch. Much of the discussion about environmental destruction occurs as a debate over who is the culprit and who is the victim of degradation (Hirsch 1993:4). Who can be blamed for forest destruction: the villager or the development process that caught the villager up in a world of debt, consumerism and a growing need for cash? This question is fundamental

in the debates over the conflicts over natural resources and who should have control over resources, villagers or state and business.

As way of a brief qualification on the emphasis on cash crops it is important to remember that there have been other major influences on deforestation which implicate the state and corporate sector as major contributors to forest destruction. Logging concessions given by the government are one major cause of destruction and resulted in such widespread protest that the government introduced the 1989 logging ban (Pinkaew and Rajesh 1992:15). Another key industry which has resulted in deforestation is the tourist industry. This is illustrated by the fifty golf course projects destroying about 100,000 hectares of farmland and the forty golf course and thirty five resorts which were under investigation for encroaching on forest land in 1992 (Pinkaew and Rajesh 1992:xiv).

Encroachment into protected forest areas has also been intensified by government resettlement programs where large infrastructure development such as dams and roads have displaced local people. An added factor has been anti-insurgency activities by the state which have in some areas encouraged settlement in forest reserves. In the late 1970s national security-related programs had a marked effect on deforestation with accelerated deforestation coinciding with a peak in political opposition and tension over national security issues (Thomas 1993:6).

Illegal logging also remains a major factor in forest destruction. Illegal logging has thrived since the 1989 logging ban. NGO sources argue that illegal logging is integrally tied up with influential figures, even at a national level, and local officials, particularly forestry officials. Although the 1989 logging ban has slowed the destruction of forest, it has not stopped

it. A leading NGO in the field, the Project for Ecological Reconstruction (PER), identify timber entrepreneurs, government officials, police and villagers in their employ as the groups engaged in illegal logging (Pinkaew and Petchmala 1992:29).

The expansion of the land frontier for agriculture slowed during the late 1970s, because land suitable for agriculture started to run out. The exhaustion of land suitable for agriculture seems to be a fairly well accepted fact, although one forestry expert claims that by Asian standards Thailand is not yet over-populated and that significant amounts of land suitable for agricultural expansion remain (Scholz 1988 :45). This conclusion seems out of tune with other authors and Hirsch talks about the closure of the land frontier as "a much heralded event"(Hirsch 1990C:3).

Deforestation has resulted in serious environmental problems. The constant expansion of the land frontier and the moves to farming on more marginal lands has meant that average yields for some crops have declined. The increased cultivation of such crops as cassava and kenaf which deplete soil quality has also led to declining productivity since the 1970s in Northeast Thailand. Even more importantly deforestation has led to flooding, soil erosion and the siltation of waterways (Hirsch 1989:4; Porpora and Lim 1987:88). Furthermore deforestation is also blamed for increasingly erratic rainfall (Sanitsuda 1990:19).

As the natural resources of the countryside suffer increasing degradation the options for Northeast farmers become more and more limited. The abundance of land and forest provided a safety net which has been largely destroyed. The forest can no longer be relied upon as a guaranteed source of edible plants or potential agricultural land. NGOs

point out that villagers are the first to be affected by environmental depletion and are therefore committed to restoring diminishing resources (Field notes 1993).

In a 1993 interview Anan identified problems of drought, lack of water and environmental problems as the most fundamental problems for Northeastern farmers. In fact he commented that for Northeast farmers the major problem is simply that farming is becoming less and less "viable" for these reasons (Anan Field notes 1993). NGO development workers from Surin, Sakon Nakon and Khon Kaen listed debt, drought, environmental degradation including pollution from industry and conflict over resources such as water, farmland and forest as major day-to-day problems for Northeastern farmers (Field notes 1993). Both Anan and NGO workers also mentioned increasing problems for farmers throughout Thailand with new forms of land and production control. Anan identified problems with contract farming in Southern Northeast Thailand and NGO workers also mentioned contract farming as a source of concern for development workers in Northeast Thailand (Field notes 1993).

Conclusion

Economic and social cleavages at village level are increasing in the Thai countryside and in themselves beg further analysis. Nevertheless small holders continue to dominate the rural sector and tenancy has not increased dramatically. In fact village level differentiation is overshadowed by an urban-rural polarisation. Poverty persists at a much higher level in the countryside and is accompanied by depleted natural resources, resources which previously provided a safety valve for poor rural dwellers. Who is to blame for the depletion of natural resources, state or villager, is

fundamental to the conflict over natural resources and debate over who should manage natural resources. From this picture the basis for the conflict over natural resources between state and village starts to emerge. Chapter three goes further to explain the role of the state and corporate sector in the conflict with villagers over natural resources, with specific reference to the KJK forest resettlement scheme in 1991 and details of the conflict over forest land.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STATE AND THE COUNTRYSIDE

Chapter four discusses the increased presence of the state in the countryside in a process of incorporating the periphery, a process motivated by political and economic circumstances. Since the 1980s an increase in the direct economic involvement of the state and big business in the countryside, in the context of dwindling resources, laid the basis for conflict over natural resources. The state has facilitated the involvement of the corporate sector in the country at the same time as increasing the involvement of the public sector in large infrastructure projects in rural areas. This is well illustrated through an examination of state involvement with forest land in rural Thailand. However in the case of forest land and the KJK forest resettlement the political ambitions of the military added an extra dimension to the conflict over forest land.

Greater state involvement in the countryside

The state has had a strong political and economic agenda in rural Thailand since the 1960s when the transformation of the economy and the problems of insurgency became pressing concerns. In 1960 the country's first economic development plan proposed a new agricultural system based on the intensification of cash crop production through fertilisers, pesticides, high yield varieties and mechanisation (Orawan and Darunee 1992:83).

Following the start of communist insurgency in the countryside, agricultural development, investment, infrastructure and the promotion of modern technologies have been closely linked to attempts to suppress insurgency. The Accelerated Development Program initiated in 1965, with

substantial United States funding, concentrated on the Northeast and introduced a range of development programs in sensitive areas. The majority of the budget was spent on road construction which was typical of rural development programs in this era. Emphasis was on big infrastrucural development with anti-insurgency in mind (Girling 1981:117).

As insurgency and rural protest escalated over the 1970s military presence in the countryside grew considerably. Programs of both military assault and indoctrination were accompanied by a growing paramilitary presence in the village. The National Defence volunteers, Reservists for National Security and Village Scouts are all such examples. The violently anti communist Village Scouts were created in 1971 by the Border Patrol Police, the Village Scouts later received royal patronage and played an important role "at an elemental level of mass emotion" with their main aim being to defend the country against communism. The Village Scouts were organised in every province and numbered about 2 million in 1981 (Girling 1981:213; Wattana 1991:197).

Rural issues became central concerns for governments in this era for the first time. Both Wattana and Chai Anan and Morell identify the 1973-76 period as the point at which the relationship between state and countryside changed forever because it became impossible for the national public debate to ignore rural issues. Land reform became a central election issue in the 1975 election and campaign promises to carry out land reform proliferated. Electoral politics also meant that the countryside gained explicit political importance as parties sought votes in the countryside. 1979 was made Year of the Farmer and the problems of rural Thailand remained at the forefront

of government policy throughout the 1980s (Wattana 1991:197, Chai Anan and Morell 1981:201).

Over the 1980s government presence at a village level increased considerably. Hirsch describes the state as increasingly acting *in* the village instead of just *on* the village (Hirsch 1991 :328). He describes a broad range of government activity at a local level. One significant development in the early 1980s was the increase in the role of district councils and village committees as part of the machinery of government. As a result, traditional village institutions lost power and procedures became bureacratised (Hirsch 1990:230). Furthermore, there was a greater policing of villages and more political surveillance (Turton 1984:60).

At the same time, government policy in the 1980s and 1990s was characterised by the articulation of concern for the living conditions of the rural poor. From the Fifth Economic Development Plan in 1982 there was a reduction in the emphasis on national security and a greater emphasis on cooperation instead of control. The Fifth Economic Development Plan emphasised the distribution of income in the countryside, the problems surrounding land use and the increasing rates of tenancy, the destruction of forest. The plan also promoted agri business as an important part of economic policy in the countryside (Rapin 1990:73).

The concern with rural insurgency continued to influence policy making in the late 1970s and 1980s. It was recognised that there was a link between rural poverty and communism, and this recognition led to attempts to address the problems of rural poverty. For example Prem's first policy speech took the improvement of living standards and the task of narrowing the income divide as central themes. Prem saw rural poverty as

a danger for the country proclaiming that "the weakness that threatens the whole future of the nation is rural poverty" (Hewison 1989:35; FEERYB 1981:283).

In the Sixth Economic Development Plan (1987-1991)`there was an emphasis on human development, support for local people's participation and strengthening local organisations in order to achieve basic human needs (Rapin 1990:80; Turton 1987:31). In fact an apparent concern by governments to develop the countryside has included a strong tendency to stress the importance of participation by rural dwellers in development. The populist element that Hewison describes as being a part of all government programs since 1932 has intensified since the 1970s as governments attempted to draw the countryside into the development project, a trend that is also in line with changes in emphasis in the world bank (Hewison 1989). Development and participation have become catchwords in government rhetoric throughout the Prem, Chatchai, Anan and Chuan administrations. Hirsch's discussion of "Development Discourse" describes policy in the 1980s as being characterised by a picture of farmers as the backbone of the nation who have rights, duties and responsibilities to participate in the spirit of development and advance their villages towards modernisation (Hirsch 1989:53).

Interestingly, the ideas of participation and the rights and responsibilities of citizens are also strong themes in the protests discussed in this thesis. In discussion of ideological domination and the control of the Thai countryside, Turton claims that formal statements with a modernising and populist content are one way of legitimising oppositional discourse (Turton 1984:56). Of course it is possible to view such statements as actually originating in the village, with villagers under pressure from an

increasingly intrusive state, demanding more participation and rights and these demands then being incorporated by the state in the effort to control dissent in the countryside.

Another important trend over the 1980s in the approach of government to the countryside, which is particularly relevant to the conflicts under discussion, is the increasing attention given to environmental concerns amongst government institutions. One obvious example of this is the 1989 ban on logging. This decision was taken after intense public pressure by a cabinet which had several ministers with enormous vested interest in the timber industry (Pasail 1989:40). In the case of the logging ban, significant pressure came from villager and rural areas to ban logging, particularly from Northern Thailand, and ideas around environmentalism can be seen as flowing as much from village to state as the other way around.

There is a strong contradiction between government rhetoric on the environment and local participation, on the one hand, and their economic intentions on the other. There has been an increase in state facilitation of agro business activity in the countryside and the construction of large scale infrastructure in the 1980s. Agri business in the form of plantations, factories and real estate developments, as well as state activities such as the construction of hydro electric dams and highways and attempts to claim forest land as state property, represent these forces at work. The most clear-cut example of this was the government's economic forest policy which ignored environmental concerns and the participation of local communities because of the potential of the paper pulp in the latter half of the 1980s. This dynamic is clearly illustrated in the case of the KJK forest resettlement scheme.

The incorporation of the countryside into a wider sphere of influence has occurred both politically and economically and the government's political presence in the countryside has increased since the 1970s. In terms of the conflict over natural resources the new economic role for the countryside has had more direct effect. However, before going on to examine the case of forest land and KJK it is important to consider the role of the military.

The Military and the Countryside

The countryside was a power base for the military since the beginning of anti-insurgency operations in the late 1960s. When insurgency ended in the mid 1980s the military suffered a relative decline in Thai society alongside the growing strength of parliamentary politics and the consolidation of capitalist groups independent of the military. The military retained its strong orientation to the countryside, particularly in Isarn, and became increasingly involved in economic development in cooperation with business and government. Nevertheless it maintained a strong political agenda and attempted to strengthen its political position with a military coup in 1990.

As early as the 1960s the military increased its presence in the countryside in order to combat insurgency using military operations and by building links with the mass of rural people. It established village organisations and rural development programs in areas of communist influence. With massive financial support from the United States as a result of American policy to contain communism in the region, the Thai military expanded it's role in Thai society in this period. This continued in

the 1970s and into the next decade. After 1976 the military continues its fight against insurgency and continued to build and organise alliances and organising village based organisations. Organisations such as the National Defence volunteers, the Volunteer Development and Self Defences Villages program and the Militia Reservists for National Security gave the military the infrastructure to mobilise mass support (Suchit 1987:52-54).

At the same time some development programs created by the military in the following decade were aimed at eradicating social injustice and countering the growing power of local business interests. Mass movement programs organised by the military also developed democratic organisations and educated villagers on election procedures and voting (Suchit 1987:14). In the early 1980s some military factions advocated increased political involvement, with the leading clique in the military pushing the importance of an intensification in the military's role in democratic development as the best method to combat communism (Suchit et al. 1991:7). In an early 1980s policy statement the military concluded that a dictatorial government was the major cause of communist offensives and that democratic measures must be used to counter communism. Paradoxically this "political offensive strategy" was very critical of some parties and parliamentarians; it stressed their corruption and self interest to such an extent that senior military officials attacked the whole concept of the democratic system, observing that the appointed senate could be more responsible and undemocratic than the unprincipled elected representatives (Suchit 1987:70-71).

At the same time the military also exposed a critical analysis of capitals role in rural Thailand. A policy statement criticised exploitative business interests as being the basis of insurgency: "some economic groups have been

able to take advantage of and use monopolistic power which inflicts social injustice and material hardships on the people, creating the conditions for war" (Suchit et al. 1991:211). There were factions within the military which had a deep understanding of village life and were genuinely outraged at the exploitation of villagers by officials and other local power groups (Girling 1981:131).

However the military's relative decline position within the state has been the most important influence on both the changing orientation of the military to the countryside and on its broader ideological evolution, including the new critique of capital and parliament. Pasuk and Hewison both describe the decline of the military as a process involving tension with an increasingly powerful and consolidated capitalist class beginning to entrench its rule. As domestic capital has become more independent from military ties, the corporate sector has shifted from being an ally to a competitor of the military (Pasuk 1992; Hewison 1992,1993) . In the early 1980s the military had to start to fight for control over economic policy. After the US withdrawal the military experienced a fiscal crisis and attempted to increase its share of the national budget in return for the management of rural development programs. This brought it into conflict with the growing corporate lobby intent on influencing economic policy and increasingly trying to limit the role of the military and the size of its budget. This process continued over the next decade. With the end of communist insurgency in 1984 and the election of the new Chatchai government in 1988, which was a government dominated by provincial politicians and provincial business interests, the place of the military began to change very markedly. Direct military influence in the assembly was removed and gave civilian politicians the opportunity to intensify attempts to stem the flow of state funds to the military. In parliamentary scrutiny of the military budget

in 1989 and 1990, Mps campaigned for cuts to the military budget for the first time. In 1991 the Chatchai administration continued the reduction of state funds to the military by cutting its budget and refusing a military program for arms. Within months the Chatchai government was forced out by a military coup (Pasuk 1992:14).

The growing strength of the parliamentary system meant that the military had to participate in the electoral process and relied on the countryside as a source of votes for its preferred parties. As insurgency dwindled and the military looked for a new role in Thai society it continued to view the countryside as a power base and looked for an expanded economic role. In the mid 1980s the military's "Dream of peace" program set up a mix of local level infrastructure and ideological training with the military using their own personnel and local volunteers. In 1987 this was followed by the Isarn Khiew, Green Isarn program, which was launched by the military after comments by the king that the military should help drought-stricken farmers in the Northeast. The Green Isarn program was a program of investment and public works. The program's main emphasis was to develop agriculture and the forest in order to support industrialisation in the country as a whole and coincided with corporate and government interests (Hirsch 1987:34).

Green Isarn aimed to increase crop production for the canned food industry, livestock and milk production for local and export markets and to shift forestry production to supply pulp, furniture and fuelwood production. Orawan uses a quote from General Chavalit, the Thai army commander at the time of the conception of Green Isarn, which clearly displays a strong economic vision for Northeast Thailand: "We have to change the attitudes of Northeastern farmers and persuade them to replace

the old subsistence agriculture with large plantations for industry. The private sector has to be prevailed upon to establish agro industry factories in the Northeast because 70 to 80% of the people there are farmers" (Orawan 1992:69).

Orawan describes Green Isarn as a "triple alliance, of the state and army, Thai business and multinationals" with international consultants integrally involved in the plan and international agencies offering low interest loans and grants (Orawan 1992:68) Green Isarn included commercial forestry and this gave the military long experience in the area and added to their commitment to the KJK program. After completion in 1991 surveys from the Community Development Department suggested that the scheme had some positive effects although it ended in the midst of widespread criticism for it's ineffectiveness and speculation on its hidden political agenda (29 Sep 1991 BP).

By 1990 the military had officially declared war on poverty. This was proclaimed by the military to be the most important enemy of all Thai people and it was announced that the primary mission of the military in the next decade would be to fight poverty (Suchit et al. 1991 :22). Nevertheless it is worth noting that despite broad changes in policy, Communism and insurgency did not altogether disappear as factors in the legitimisation of the military role. Despite the end of insurgency in 1984 and the collapse of the communist bloc, some military leaders continued to resurrect the communist spectre. This is evident for example in the treatment of the forest monk, Pra Prajak, who was labelled a "Russian Monk" and "Communist Monk" (TDN 1993 no:22:15).

In February 1991 a military coup overthrew the elected Chatchai government on the grounds of widespread corruption. Pasuk and Baker theorise that at the time of the coup the military were interested curbing the power of the parliamentary system and drawing closer to big business. It attempted to carry this out by installing Anand Panyarachun, an influential figure in formal business associations, as Prime Minister immediately after the coup. However Anand's government concentrated on the kind of economic restructuring that the corporate sector had been proposing for many years, rejected military demands for arms and could not be pressured to allocate large infrastructure projects to companies with close links with the leading military clique (Pasuk and Baker 1993:24).

The military and KJK

The military coup in 1991 was an attempt at the reassertion of military power and Kor Jor Kor was to be an integral part of this reassertion. At the same time the military had a strong set of economic objectives in the countryside which helped motivate their commitment to KJK. The military's economic and political objectives in the forest coincided with those of business and government and led to the formation of the KJK program.

Over its eighty years of existence the Royal Forestry Department (RFD) had only been able to reforest 4 million rai of land and forest reserves were being steadily more populated over time. This failure by the forestry department was used as a pretext by the military dominated agency, the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), to propose KJK. In 1990, General Suchinda Kraprayoon, as head of ISOC, proposed the program and had it approved by the Chatchai government. KJK was made the executory

arm of the National Forest Plan and was officially aimed at helping the RFD increase Thailand's forest cover.

Having initiated the KJK program through ISOC, the military had a strong commitment to the program from its inception. General Suchinda, who originally proposed the program, was a leading figure in the 1991 coup and he was to remain a key figure until mid 1992. After writing a constitution which guaranteed the military significant power over the cabinet and assembly, elections were held in March 1992, but the leader of the largest party in the elections was pushed aside and Suchinda was made prime minister. As a result the KJK program continued to be of high priority under Suchinda and no negotiations on it would be entered into until Suchinda was replaced later in the year.

Hewison argues that one major reason behind the 1990 coup was the military's discomfort at the growing power of the various political interest groups that had gained influence during the Chatchai years. These political interest groups include the alliances built between NGO groups, villagers and others over the eucalyptus plantations and other resource conflicts in the countryside. (Hewison 1992:5). The discomfort of the military with these forces certainly helps explain the forcible nature of the military's role in the KJK program and the abuse of human rights which took place.

Despite the fact that the military's new orientation to the countryside was in large part a direct result of tensions with parliament and capital, the military entered into an alliance with both the bureaucracy and forces of capital in attempts to enforce the KJK program. Both the Royal Forestry Department (RFD) and business groups had considerable investment in the forest resettlement program and their interests were to coincide with the

reassertion of military control and the military's interest in commercial reafforestation. This overlapping of economic interests portrays the over-simplicity of viewing the interests of the military and corporate sector as being in direct confrontation and blurs the divisions described by Pasuk.

KJK occurred during a time of intense anti-military feeling in urban Thailand, and the peak of the KJK controversy coincided with the disgrace of the military over the massacre of democracy demonstrators in May 1992. The second Anand administration entered into negotiations with the anti KJK movement in the aftermath of the May demonstrations, and the decision to revoke the program in mid-1992 was to be another defeat for the military.

The relationship between the RFD and the military is interesting in itself. Several NGO activists interviewed in 1993 advanced the theory that KJK was one major reason leading to the loss of political power by the military in 1991-1992, and whimsically suggested that the whole program was a clever and intricate plot on behalf of anti military forces in government to discredit the military in Thai society (Field notes 1993). It seems more likely that both institutions were involved for their own reasons. Both the RFD and military had strong motivations, and some of these coincided, especially given their mutual support for economic forests and eucalyptus plantations.

In fact the RFD and the military have a history of alliance dating at least from their close cooperation during the threat of communist insurgency. Thomas describes RFD units as finding a "natural alliance with military units". This alliance was formalised in a new forest village program under the local development for security project in the late 1970s.

The RFD at this time expanded to include community planning, infrastructure construction and rural development activities despite a lack of training in these areas (Thomas 1993:7).

The commitment of government, business and the military to plantation forestry as the answer to Thailand's dwindling forest resource drove the creation of the KJK program alongside the military's reassertion of political power The way in which the idea of economic forests was adopted under a conservationist guise and the effect this had on farmers is discussed in the next section.

Economic forests and farmers

Reforestation for economic gain has, in part, emerged as such a prominent issue because officially all reserve forest land in Thailand belongs to the state. The state, under pressure from business interests, would like to reforest forest reserves profitably. There are genuine environmentalist principles adhered to within the forestry department and the RFD has actually become increasingly factionalised in the 1990s between those who want to simply protect forest and those who want to expand economic forestry. However the RFD has been receiving significant revenue from commercial forestry for the last decade and its ties with the plantation sector are strong (Taylor 1994:8). This situation has meant the RFD has not been sympathetic to alternative methods of forest management such as local reforestation through community forests whereby villagers act as protectors of forest, as advocated by many rural based NGOs and villages. Instead it has built a commitment to removing villagers from reserves. The following description of state forest policy illustrates the strong

economic motives of forest policy and how these tendencies ultimately led to forced evictions.

The Reserved Forest Act was passed in 1964. Currently 42% of land in Thailand is classed as forest reserve land. This area of forest reserve actually exceeds the area of forested land but it is land's status as state owned rather than the amount of forest cover that defines it as forest reserve (Hirsch 1990:168).

Hirsch estimates that 20% of Thai farmers live and cultivate on forest reserve land (Hirsch 1990:168), while Lohmann believes as much as 15% of Thailand's whole population are in reserves (Lohmann 1990:3) Uhlig estimates that at a conservative estimate some 5-6 million people live in reserves (Uhlig 1988:11). The legal status of settlers on reserve land is ambiguous. They are called squatters by the Thai government, but there are varying forms of legal documentation that can sometimes be used to claim a legal right to land. Some pocess tax receipts, pre titling ownership documents and various other forms of documentation, although in fact records that exist are often in conflict. In fact outside of RFD land only 15% of land is fully scaled and titled. RFD land is in an even worse situation with only general surveys in existence and unclear boundaries complicating the situation (Handley 1991:15).

Land titling has long been a problem in Thailand and has led to some marginalisation of those farmers without title deeds. A lack of systematic titling has meant that farmers have a lack of security and are less likely to invest in more intensive or sustainable production but instead tend to expand production into outlying areas. Furthermore, untitled farmers are

generally unable to get access to credit facilities and other supports needed for investment in production without title deeds (Hirsch 1989:4).

Whilst the World Bank is currently carrying out a program to complete the titling of private land the problem of land titles on public land remain a problem for the Thai government. Various government schemes have given some "squatters " legal documents to their land in the last twenty years and the Ministry of Interior continued to officially recognise new villages in forest reserves until 1986 because of concerns about rural political stability (Thomas 1993:6). Since this time there has been a concerted effort by the Thai government to deal with the problem. In 1988 the Thai government began an effort to give official land titles to settlers in forest reserves. Those in reserve areas were divided into communities settled before 1967, communities settled between 1967 and 1975 and those settled 1975-1981. Under this scheme the first group receives proper land titles, the second group receives deeds to make use of the land and the group settled before 1975 receive permission for temporary usage. However before settlers in forest reserve are issued land titles they can be evicted at any time (Apichai 1992:193).

Government measures to provide legal status for some reserve settlers represent only one part of an inconsistent approach to "squatters". In large part this inconsistency derives from the fact that at precisely the same time that some squatters are granted title, forest reserve land continues to be seen by the government as an economic commodity belonging to the state, and as such government and agro business have claimed large tracts of forest land for commercial forestry with little or no regard for "squatter" inhabitants.

In 1985 The National Forest Policy of Thailand was introduced. This policy aimed to increase forest cover back to forty percent of land mass for two main purposes. Twenty five percent of the total was to be "economic forest" which would be used for wood and forest products for economic purposes. The plan explicitly stated that this would be achieved by the provision of incentives by the state for the promotion of silviculture by private enterprise. Only fifteen percent of land was to be put aside as conserved forest (Apichai 1992:189; Orawan 1992:49; Lohmann 1991:6).

The National Forest Policy followed the emphasis on economic forests in the Fifth Economic Development Plan (1982-1986) in which the government planned an annual planting area of 300 000 rai of economic forest. The private sector was encouraged to participate in the reforestation. In March 1984 the government passed a resolution, proposed by the Joint Economic Commission of the state and private sector, to promote private sector reforestation. Soon afterwards a commission for forest planting by the private sector was established by the government. These developments marked the beginning of the government's promotion of eucalyptus plantations as the core of reforestation policy. Since this time the rehabilitation of degraded forest land has taken the form of eucalyptus plantations except for some replanting of teak species in Northern Thailand (Orawan 1992:57; Hirsch 1990:169).

The interests of state and capital in reforestation with eucalyptus plantations the interests have coincided on a national, and even international level. By 1992 about 500 000 rai of eucalyptus had been planted in Thailand, 200 000 rai of which was in the Northeast. Eucalyptus farms are geared to supply paper pulp and chip wood to expanding domestic and international markets and have strong international and domestic

support from industry. Apichai describes the development of the eucalyptus industry as occurring under "strong pressure from business through political connections, transnational corporations and international aid agencies as well as financial institutions". The rapid increase in the demand for paper pulp world wide and the rapid decrease in the supply of raw materials has generated high levels of interest in Thailand as a potential site for the production of eucalyptus. Apichai documents the strong influence of Japanese and Taiwanese transnationals in the concerted political lobby for the development of the eucalyptus industry (Apichai 1992:189-191). Lohmann also gives a long list of international organisations involved in the promotion of eucalyptus including aid agencies from Japan, Canada, Finland and Australia (Lohmann 1991:10).

The emphasis on eucalyptus is an international trend articulated by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the World Bank in 1985 in the Tropical Forestry Action Plan which recommended economic forests and eucalyptus plantations as the solution to tropical forest destruction. Thailand's Tropical Forest Action Plan, begun in 1991, has been supported by Finland's bilateral aid organisation and has been formulated in conjunction with the Finnish consulting engineering firm Jaakko Poyr Oy, renowned for it's commitment to plantation forestry and economic forests (Taylor 1994:33; Orawan 1992:66-67;Lohmann 1991:15).

There are also strong links between domestic business and political actors in the promotion of eucalyptus in part brought to light by various corruption scandals The Democrat Party has controlled the Ministry of Agriculture and the RFD within this ministry since 1981 and has been particularly implicated in corruption scandals concerning the use of forest reserve. The most well-known example of this prior to the KJK campaign

was evident in the 1990 Suan Kitti scandal when workers from the Suan company were arrested for clearing forest reserve land in order to plant eucalyptus trees. The owner of Suan kitti was a patron of the Democrat party, and as a result the Director General of the RFD displayed particular leniency to the case, arguing in favour of Suan Kitti. Apichai cites this and other examples as evidence of the strong influence of patron-client relations between politicians, the bureaucracy and business and concludes that this situation means that government policies will be geared to the needs of business as indicated by the support of government for the eucalyptus tree (Apichai 1992:195-197).

The extent of government promotion of eucalyptus illustrates the importance of commercial forestry in the official vision for an agri industrialised Thailand. Reforestation is carried out by plantation firms including Thai national firms, joint ventures and transnational firms all of whom received various incentives from the government. Incentives for eucalyptus plantations included duty exemption on imported machinery and raw materials and various tax exemptions. Land was granted in the form of thirty year concessions at remarkably cheap prices. In 1990 five paper mills, eight eucalyptus plantation projects and twelve wood chip companies received privileges from the Board of Investment, and in 1992 six more received similar privileges. A plantation bill was also introduced with the intention of supporting and accommodating tree plantation projects and ensuring that land is available for commercial reforestation (Orawan 1992:66-68; Apichai 1992 : 193).

The use of forests for eucalyptus cultivation has affected villagers in plantation areas through formal evictions and through changes in the local environment. Environmentalists, villagers, NGOs and academics have

opposed eucalyptus plantations on the grounds they destroy the livelihoods of villagers and actually increase the rate of deforestation in the process. Plantations in Northeast Thailand have resulted in the displacement of villagers previously living in forest reserves without providing any significant demand for labour, let alone work which might be attractive to farmers who are traditionally small holders. It is difficult to see where displaced farmers can go. Migration to urban areas provides limited options of a permanent nature because the industrial sector has not and is not producing large numbers of permanent jobs. At the same time agricultural labouring is lowly paid and insecure. One final option is for farmers to move on to new lands but in the face of the shortage of land this can only lead to an even greater pressure on forested land (Lohmann 1991:7-8).

Eucalyptus plantations have had wider effects than just the direct displacement of farmers. Plantations have also consumed communal grazing grounds and community woodlands. The nature of the eucalyptus tree means that when it relaces the degraded forest villagers then receive few of the benefits they traditionally get from the indigenous forest. Lohmann points out that eucalyptus cannot be used for fodder. It damages the soil, depletes the water table and provides little firewood. He says, "it provides none of the natural forest products that rural dwellers on the edge of the market economy rely on and every five or six years it is cropped" (Lohmann 1989:10). Documentation from environmentalists on the destructive effects of eucalyptus are detailed and describe lowering of the water table, reduction in the fertility of the soil, high fire danger and adverse affects on wildlife (Apichai 1992 200-201; Orawan1992:72).

At a meeting of village headman from around the Northeastern region which was organised by a Surin-based NGO in late 1993, villagers

and NGO workers were quick to voice their hatred of the eucalyptus tree. Of ten village headmen interviewed, all firmly believed that the eucalyptus tree was as a danger to the local environment. In fact in discussions over comparisons of the Thai and Australian environment villagers were quick to advise that Australian authorities cut down Australia's eucalyptus trees and plant less selfish species to improve the fertility of the land. It was clearly indicated that villagers have experienced the eucalyptus tree as a destructive force (Field notes 1993).

During the late 1980s there was widespread and sustained opposition to eucalyptus plantations. Protests and rallies demanded that land expropriated to grow eucalyptus plantations be returned, that permission be given to replant with other species and in some cases, that there be a complete stop to eucalyptus plantations (Orawan 1992:72-3). This conflict came to a head over the Suan Kitti scandal. After this incident all reforestation was suspended by the Chatchai government. However in March 1992 the Suchinda government introduced the Tree Farm Act permitting land in degraded forest reserves to be leased out to agri business for commercial reforestation (Orawan 1992:75).

Hirsch describes conflict within and between these actors. If there is fundamental conflict between them there is also inconsistency in state policy, competition between commercial interests and competition for land, class divisions and factionalism between small holders (Hircsh 1993:8). There are obvious conflicts between RFD officials trying to protect the forest and officials involved in illegal logging . There is in fact a high casualty rate among RFD employees patrolling forests from illegal logging interests (10 August 1993 BWR). There is also obvious tension between those villagers working to conserve the forest and those employed to illegally cut trees.

The tension within these forces is worth keeping in mind in this conflict between state and commercial interests which, of course, emphasises the conflict of interests between state and the small holder.

Nevertheless the fundamental dynamic behind forest management was the use of plantations to reforest. Under KJK it was planned that 14, 720 sq km of a total 22, 530 sq km was to be reclaimed by the state would be replanted with eucalyptus trees (Hubbel and Rajesh 1992:2) The level of distrust and anger directed at the state, notably the Forestry Department, by villagers over the promotion of eucalyptus plantations was very high at the time that the KJK program was launched. Forestry officials were old enemies for villagers opposing eucalyptus and the economic agenda of the state to develop the forest would bring about fundamental conflict under KJK.

Conclusion

The motivations of military, RFD and corporate sector for resettling villagers out of the forest, in the name of forest regeneration and assisting the landless, clearly converged. The political motivation of the RFD to bring forest under their control and the political needs of the military attempting to maintain their hold on political power led to forceful policies in the forest. Just as importantly the economic interests of both the state and corporate sector led to an interest in taking control of forests. The reasons given by state and corporate sector for the eviction of villagers from the forest were interestingly enough the same reasons used by the forces opposing eviction. Forest conservation and regeneration and the democratic rights of the villagers in the forest were the rallying cries of the movement against KJK.

CHAPTER FIVE

MIDDLE CLASS ACTIVISM AND COMMUNAL CULTURE

Chapter five explores the middle class forces which have joined with villagers in the conflict over natural resources against the state and corporate sector. Through an analysis of Communal Culture[1] discourse and the work of NGOs the tendency for these forces to form romantic notions of the village and push internal village differences out of focus is discussed. The strength of themes around democracy, social justice and environmentalism are also examined and found to be fundamental to the middle class visions for the countryside.

Middle class activism

The chief allies of villagers in the resource conflicts have been middle class elements. These include NGOs, students, academics and monks. In the farmers' movement of the 1970s the student movement took a central coordinating role. In the resource conflicts this central role has been taken by NGOs.

After 1976, the erosion of faith in Maoism, and the disintegration of the CPT there was a large flow of middle class activists into NGOs. This process began in 1978-79 and NGOs proliferated over the 1980s. They became particularly active after 1987 as economic development intensified. Many NGO activists still claim descent from the 1973-76 movement and emphasise their shared history. A leader of a Bangkok NGO which is active in promoting democratic ideals, the Campaign for Popular Democracy

[1] Communal Culture is sometimes known as "community culture". One example of this is Chatthip (1993).

(CPD), commented in 1993 that "NGOs owe their fundamental strength to the student and intellectual movement of October 14. This is a special characteristic of Thai NGOs: many of them have a shared history "(17 Oct 1993 BP; TDN 1987:29).

By the 1990s NGOs were well established as a prominent component of Thai political life. NGO's are under the public eye in Thailand, in fact one Bangkok journalist described "NGO" as "one of the most familiar acronyms in Thailand" (17 Oct 1993 BP). NGOs are widely perceived as an important political force and evoke both passionate praise and condemnation. The concept of a Thai NGO movement integrally involved in social change and acting as advocates of the powerless was developed in Thailand through the 1980s and has come even more to the fore since the resource conflicts and the 1992 democracy campaign. Defining the Thai NGO movement is problematic however. Which NGOs are part of this movement and how can we define such a movements ideology and culture? This is certainly under discussion in many Thai NGOs who puzzle over the concept of an NGO "movement". Some activists conclude that NGOs should be more structured and political with a clear platform of beliefs, and others are committed to the loose networks and individual autonomy that currently exists (Field notes 1993).

A good beginning is to try to make some distinctions about which NGOs this discussion covers. NGOs are commonly divided into two categories in Thailand: the welfare sector and the development sector. A total of 13,683 organisations were registered under the Private Organisations Relations Division in the welfare category in 1991. Research from Chulalongkorn university identified 395 organisations as registered as "development organisations"(TDN no:22 1993:53). These "development"

NGOs, as well as the uncertain number of organisations not registered, include organisations working on human rights, economic development and democracy. This includes NGOs with nationally high profiles such as the Campaign for Popular Democracy, an integral part of the 1992 democracy campaign (Field notes 1993).

The NGOs active in resource conflicts, and more specifically the KJK project, are predominantly those NGOs grouped under the umbrella body the "NGO Coordinating Committee on Rural Development" (NGO-CORD). NGO-CORD was first established in 1985 and is a coordinating body aimed at fostering communication and cooperation amongst the 220 development NGOs in rural areas. NGO-CORD has area committees for North, South and Northeast Thailand. However there are Bangkok based development NGOs not directly involved in NGO-CORD who engage in advocacy work for villages and have been involved in campaigns, such as the Campaign for Popular Democracy, human rights NGOs and environmental NGOs (Field notes 1993).

Nevertheless there is some evidence of tension between urban NGOs and rural based NGOs. Organisers of the 1992 democracy demonstrations and participants were criticised for not involving themselves in the protests against KJK and the Pak Mun Dam, and some democracy campaigners are said to have condemned KJK protests because they created a situation which the military could define as chaotic and use as an excuse to carry out a coup in the name of reimposing order (17 Aug 1992 BP).

In fact there is also some regional disparity between NGOs. In the opinion of the Thai worker on NGO funding for AIDAB, Northeastern NGOs tended to be "quite desperate" and were more hostile and militant

than their Northern or Southern counterparts who were more able to forge links with local government forces. He explained this situation as stemming from the escalation of state and industry's economic activity in Isarn (Field notes 1993). These comments came after the KJK campaign and during the revival of the Pak Mun Dam campaign and reflect the feeling of urgency at work in Isarn in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Furthermore Hirsch describes NGOs in the central region as far more concerned with local class relations than other rural NGOs because of the greater social differentiation in this region (Hirsch 1993:151).

There have been considerable tensions between government and NGOs throughout the country. Provincial politicians in the Northeast have been vocal in their condemnation of NGOs as tools used by foreign powers to propagate foreign economic policy and allege that funds are granted to NGOs with many conditions attached (17 Oct 1993 BP). NGOs have also been accused by the military of receiving funds from the KGB to propagate communist ideas and various campaign leaders have been said to be under communist control although this old and somewhat tired use of communist paranoia seems to have all but disappeared by the mid 1990s. NGOs are also condemned for their political motivations and in the case of the Pak Mun Dam and KJK campaigns they were accused by government ministers of coercing villagers to join rallies (1 Sep 1991 BP). Furthermore the NGO criticism of industrial culture has been ridiculed by the government who see no practical alternatives to it However the reality is that the government has had to work increasingly with an ever more articulate and organised movement. Indeed more liberal elements of government encouraged the development of NGOs and participation of NGOs in policy making (Gohlert 1990; 17 Oct 1993 BP).

Whilst NGOs are the focus of the broad movement critical of government development policy and there is nothing in Thailand resembling the student movement of the 1970s, students are still an identifiable group in Thailand. The Students Federation of Thailand (SFT) have participated and organised protest in the resource conflicts and in the democracy movement of 1992. According to SFT documents, from 1987 and the emergence of escalating problems on the road to NICdom, the organisation started to work more closely with environmentalists and villagers. A student committee for the conservation of natural resources has also been formed, bringing together students from sixteen institutions to campaign around environmental issues (SFT 1991:3). Students are sometimes perceived as a particularly militant group and have been accused of inciting villagers into militant action. On the other hand students were also portrayed as NGO cannon fodder in the 1992 massacre of democracy demonstrators by Siam Rath (17 May 1993 BP).

Academics have also been influential in the campaigns, often giving public comments and organising public forums. In fact many NGO leading figures are eminent academics such as Professor Saneh Chamarik and Professor Prawase Wasi, and the national newsletter of the Thai Development Support Committee (TDSC) is full of contributions from academics. NGOs have also built strong links with professional groups, lawyers, nurses and teachers who participate in campaigns in both urban and rural Thailand. These links are a source of pride to many NGOs who seek broad and diverse alliances in order to strengthen their campaigns (Field notes 1993).

The cooperation of forest monks with villagers and NGOs has also been important. The monkhood in Thailand is comparatively

undifferentiated. Unlike other Buddhist countries such as Sri Lanka, monks have not come to form distinctive power groupings (Taylor 1993A:78). Nevertheless, individual monks have become affiliated with social movements since the 1970s and a number had a high profile in politics during the polarisation's of the 1973-1976 period.[2] Alliances between local villagers and monks have become increasingly common in conflicts over natural resources, particularly forests. Forest monks have become important agents of forest protection and have convened local conservation groups and facilitated local environmental campaigns. Forest monks in Northeast Thailand have been particularly active (Taylor 1991:110).

Communal Culture

"Communal Culture" is the one brand of intellectual thought that is rooted firmly in the activism and movements of the 1990s. Communal Culture has been developed as an ideology by intellectuals and development workers, particularly those in regional areas. It is the main school of thought in NGOs and influences NGO policy and activity significantly.

The central motif of the Communal Culture school is the village. It advocates the need to strengthen village culture, communal culture, in order to withstand the pressures of industrial capitalism. A village is seen as having a value system , a culture which has developed over time and has ensured community harmony. It is believed that there is no need for the

[2]In fact the activism of monks on the left and the right became such a point of contention in this period that Chai Anan and Morell conclude that monks' involvement was one of the main factors that resulted in the withdrawal of support for the farmers' movement and student movement by many ordinary people who had previously joined the student demonstrations (Cha Anan and Morell 1981:221).

villager to surrender to modern capitalist culture and rupture the ideal and harmonious society of the village. The role of the development worker is to reinforce the continuity of the community's culture and join villagers in social construction by helping to revise and analyse the history of communities, which will in turn lead to a realisation of their heritage and spiritual recovery. It is in this way that communal Culture describes it as being possible to develop a genuine ideology of the disadvantaged which is resilient to the domination of the ideologies associated with privileged urban groups, the state and industrial capitalism (Field notes 1993; TDN 1987 no: 14:30; Chatthip 1993:118-122).

Of the four leaders of Communal Culture identified by Chatthip, Bamrung Bunpanya and Prawese Wasi, both active and high profile NGO leaders, articulate the idea of Communal Culture in the most overtly political terms. At the centre of their analysis is the need to decrease the power of the state and decentralise power and decision making in Thai society. This is fundamentally connected with a rejection of centralised industrial capitalist society and the promotion of a return to self-reliant lifestyles and subsistence production for the benefit of people and the environment. In a 1987 NGO press forum Prawase advocated a return to the "communal culture of self help" and to subsistence production as the basis for village life. Prawese described a village which had changed its production system from production for profit to subsistence production and concluded that communal culture had begun to be restored, villagers were happier and the village became a place where "murder is a thing of the past ... back is our precious culture" (TDN no:14 1987:11).

The analyses of both Bamrung and Prawase point to the "triple alliance" of state, capital and international capital in the same tradition as

Orawan (described in the last chapter) with the West directly implicated in the destruction of the communal culture of the village. Local wisdom, Thai wisdom uncorrupted by Western culture, is Prawase Wasi's inspiration. He believes it can show how "man, nature and society can be in harmony. We must learn from our small people" (8 Oct 1991 BP) and sees an "Eastern" world view as a guiding light for an environmentally sound system of development in comparison to Western materialism which he sees an environmentally destructive (11 Mar 1992 BP). Prawase Wasi is particularly forthright in his criticism of western culture describing it as having spread materialism and destroyed indigenous culture, ie village culture. Prawase believes "we modelled our system and based our beliefs on the belief that the West is the ultimate model, leading us to look down on our cultural background ... authorities are victims of the education system which teaches contempt for villages" (8 Oct 1991 BP). [3]

Bamrung identifies two main cultures in Thai society: village culture and capitalist culture. He describes the state as the agent of capitalist culture and says that it caters to the needs of the westerner not those of Thailand. He characterises village culture as being in touch with nature, kinship and community, representing the oldest kind of community and one which is truly Thai. Villages need to return to self reliant lives, strengthen their village culture and utilise their ancient knowledge and expertise (Chatthip 1993:120).

Bamrung is from an Isarn farming family and is particularly focused on Isarn village culture and Isarn identity. He portrays the grassroots

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[3]In fact Prawase goes as far as to lay the blame for child prostitution on western culture and influence. He said child prostitution "lays bare the fundamental attitudes in Western society , the rotten moral core of a world view based on affluence as the primary criteria. This way of thinking has spread to other parts of the world with depressing results" (TDN no:20 1991/2:13).

movement as a back to the roots movement to save Isarn identify from being swallowed by industrial capitalism. He says:

> To regain self confidence, to shake off our sense of inferiority, we must go back to our identity. This cultural, ideological aspect is not at the Fringe of grassroots democracy and environmentalism. It's at its very core (27 July 1992 BP).

Both Bamrung and Prawase advocate an explicit role for the middle class. Bamrung identifies the middle class as playing a crucial role in strengthening the village. Although he views the middle class as an entrenched part of Thai Society which will not disappear, the village needs to enter into an alliance with the middle class to resist the state. The middle class is currently the agent for the importation of Western ways of thinking but its role should be transformed into the agent for the expansion of village culture. The middle class should disseminate village culture, increase the distribution of resources from the city to the countryside and oppose state pressure on the village (Chatthip 1993:121). In Prawase's analysis the middle class should also play an important role in strengthening communal culture and local knowledge. NGOs need to encourage the reconditioning of village culture back to its original base. In addition, a stronger form of Buddhism needs to be added to village culture in order to fully unite communities and to enable them to resist the state, greed, selfishness and exploitation (Chatthip 1993:125-126).

Chatthip's belief in Communal Culture leads him to utopian conclusions. In analysis of communal culture Chatthip concludes that communal culture can lay the basis for the success of anarchism in Thailand. Restoring the village economy, self reliance and recovering the consciousness of communality from past generations will provide the

environment in which anarchism can be fostered. Chatthip believes that the significance of anarchism is that it is an ideology consistent with the people's spirit, with feelings and emotions, it stresses kind heartedness and humanity which are "characteristics of Thai consciousness which from ancient times have been inseparable from Thai communities" (Chatthip 1993:136).

Going "back to the roots" of Thai culture is an idea that has been evident amongst progressives in Thailand for some time. In a 1980 international conference Sulak Sivaraska, a well known social critic and activist, identified the need for a Buddhist road to development, a path that is neither socialist or capitalist because it is important to keep the state from becoming too powerful. He looked for inspiration back to the agrarian communal society of Thailand's past where he described people as "living in villages never thinking of killing or stealing", a situation which has changed because of the advent Western materialism. Sulak's solution was "Buddhist economics" where if people are going to be poor they can be poor together but remain full of generosity and able to share their labour and thought (TDN no 14 1987:11).

Buddhism and Communal culture

Buddhism is drawn in as an integral part of all spheres of political debate in Thailand and is used as a legitimising tool for diverse political viewpoints and visions for the future. Against the background of increasing criticism of Buddhist clergy for misconduct and various long running and lurid scandals there are increasingly fragmented interpretations of Buddhism. Amongst these interpretations is a moral reformism warning against materialism and stressing the importance of

traditional values. This idea is entwined with respect for nature and environmentalism and manifests itself most strongly in the case of forest monks, some of whom have entered into political alliances with villagers in forest conservation campaigns.

In urban Thailand Buddhist sects such as Thammakai and Santi Asoke set forth with a new vision for the future in the 1980s. While Thammakai operates as a money making venture with "unabashed materialism", Santi Asoke has a moral reformist platform condemning amoral capitalism and encouraging work, diligence, moderation and a simple moral lifestyle; a radical ascetism which advocates a need to return to early social values and go back to Buddhist communalism (Taylor 1989:112-114). The leader of Santi Asoke, Pra Bhodirak was actually deemed a dangerous religious teacher and disrobed in 1989. However Santi Asoke has remained a relevant force in Thai politics with Chamlong, leader of the May 1992 democracy demonstrations and leading figure in the Palang Dhama Righteous Force party, retaining strong affiliations with Santi Asoke. Chamlong in his farmers' shirt and with his simple lifestyle is very much part of a "back to the roots" vision based on Buddhist spirituality in Thailand and he and Palang Dhama were popular in rural development NGOs in the interviews I carried out in 1993. However although Santi Asoke has established bases in rural centres, these are made up of professionals and bureaucrats who often originate from Bangkok and Santi Asoke is essentially an urban middle class phenonomen (Taylor 1993C:39-42; Field notes 1993).

Sulak Sivaraksa's, use of Buddhism also centres around the destructive influence of materialism and the importance of spiritualism. Sulak describes modern development as encouraging competition and

success, whereas Buddhism encourages collaboration and contentedness. Materialism is seen as harmful to Buddhism, and he believes that the poor need to be warned about the exploitation inherent in modern development and the reality behind modern materialism. For Sulak, Buddhism is a prescription for the restructuring of human consciousness and society (Sulak 1984:104-108).

Pra Buddhadsa was an eminent example of a visionary Buddhist monk in this tradition. Buddhadsa has portrayed political conflict and social tension as arising from the modern world. Moral laxity was seen by Buddahadsa as arising from the dominance of the desire for material objects at the cost of spiritual values; he saw materialism as a dangerous force for humanity. Buddhadsa was actually a political conservative believing in absolute monarchy and benign dictatorship (Jackson 1988). Nevertheless his stress on the need for greater spirituality and less materialism is a familiar theme, and one I have often heard articulated in the rural development NGO (Field notes 1993).

International trends and Communal Culture

If Communal Culture draws inspiration from Buddhist critiques of modernisation some of its fundamental ideas conform to the discourse of rural based movements in Europe, Africa and America over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The idealisation of peasant life and the rejection of centralised state power and industrialisation are familiar themes. During industrialisation hostility to the suffering and dehumanisation inflicted by change arose and rural movements in nineteenth Europe were characterised by populist ideas which criticised industrial capitalism and championed the moral superiority of rural village life (Kitching 1989:77-79).

Kitching defines similar ideas which have arisen from the experiences of developing countries in the twentieth century and highly influenced modern development theory, as neo populism. He describes neo populism as emphasising the primacy of agricultural development, opposition to large scale industrialisation and anti urbanism with nationalist overtones. His presentations of the work of three modern neo populists, Nyerere, Lipton and Shumacher all provide interesting parallels with Communal Culture. The vision of small scale agricultural producers remaining a dominant force in society, hostility to centralisation and a belief in the nobility of traditional rural life are all cornerstones of neo populist thought evident in communal culture. Kitching argues that in fact widespread industrialisation cannot be avoided and rejects the possibility of small scale agriculturalists remaining a dominant force in society. He argues that those people advancing such ideas in the name of rural populations are working against the interests of those people they are trying to assist (Kitching 1989:77-79).

Evaluations of Communal Culture

Many of Communal Culture's basic assumptions can be criticised. Communal Culture's claim to represent the true essence of "Thainess' in the face of Western style thought is called into question by the fact that it strongly conforms to global trends in development theory. Calls for decentralisation and self reliance can also be criticised by those, such as Kitching, who argue that industrialisation and the centralisation of the nation state are an inevitable part of development. However the most relevant issue to this thesis is Communal Culture's interpretation of the village and its past.

Communal Culture rests on a utopian vision of the pre-capitalist village and can easily be accused of being backward-looking and simply wanting to return to a glorified past. Communal Culture's description of the pre-capitalist village has come under criticism from Kemp. Kemp's criticisms stem from his rejection of the traditional communal village. His research leads him to believe that there is a historical absence of village community in rural Thailand and that there is no evidence of a framework of sustained cooperative or communal goals (Kemp 1988:326-327). Hirsch is also doubtful about the portrayal of the traditional Thai village as a harmonious rural community, pointing to cleavages in village society which he believes contradict such a vision (Hirsch 1991:322). Nevertheless he does not write off the existence of elements of harmony and communal action although he recognises that traditional forms of cooperation have been decreasing (Hirsch 1990:149).

Hirsch's main interest is actually in the role of the state in shaping conceptions of the village and he sees the village itself as fundamentally changed by the state. According to this analysis, the back to the roots vision imposes an identity on the village rather than seeking it out (Hirsch 1991:322-327). The extent to which the nature of the village has changed is very important for Communal Culture. Apichai argues that traditional traditions and norms that supported communal action have been eroded to the extent that village level organisations are not sufficiently united or strong to undertake the management of natural resources (22 Sep 1993 BP). However for activists in rural NGOs the erosion of communal values is not complete, although communal values need to be strengthened.

Seri Pongphit's reply to Kemp's criticisms centres around the and repudiation of the notion that the "back to the roots" concept is simply an effort to return to a glorified past. He describes the call to go "back to the roots" as a strategy to strengthen communities, taking the best of traditions and renewing them. He says, "it is not an escape from change, but a strategy for survival to avoid being broken down, losing human dignity and freedom, not only socially and culturally but especially politically and economically" (Seri 1989:6).

Two main points need to be made here. First, there *is* extensive and mounting evidence from NGOs of the communal management of resources and the ability of villages to organise against outside attack, particularly in the Northern village but also in the Northeastern village. Turton has also commented on the notable ability of the Northern village to form extensive organisations against outside attack (Turton 1984:4).

Second, it would be wrong to over-emphasise the romantic vision of the village. Utopian visions of the village and over-emphasis on the unity of the village do have the potential to distort reality. However, in the practical application of Communal Culture in NGOs, just as Seri argues, equally important themes involve strong ideas around, democracy, social justice and environmentalism. These themes are all fundamental to the resource conflicts. Nevertheless the stress on the village as a largely undifferentiated unit is having its problems for NGOs as will become clear in following chapters. The view of the contemporary village as undifferentiated and characterised by a unity of interests is evident as a problem for NGOs. Although in fact in the natural resource conflicts there often has been a unity of interests at village level, this was not always the

case, and Communal Culture can assume a unity of interests when none exists.

The work of NGOs

The role of the NGO in the village is described by the Thai Development Support Committee (TDSC), the NGO which acts as an central information base or development NGO and produces a quarterly newsletter, as being to strengthen the community and popular wisdom, to encourage those with traditional knowledge, to make villagers aware of their self esteem and collective power and thus enable them to bargain for their democratic rights. Reducing dependency on external sources in the form of the market demand for village products and the provision of production inputs is central to this, with NGOs working to give the control of the production process and marketing back to villagers (TDSC 1990:8).

This is essentially seen as a process that strengthens villagers enough to be able to survive within the free market system. Professor Saneh Chamarik from NGO CORD stated a representative view when he stressed the role played by NGOs in strengthening communities in order that they are able to live in the existing system. Thus he does not reject business and industry because he believes villagers, business and industry can coexist harmoniously in the right environment (1 Sep 1991 BP)

The state is described by many rural NGOs as having taken the independence and power of decision-making away from the people. Since the absolute monarchy centralised the Thai state and expanded its power the state has steadily been increasing its level of intrusion into villagers' lives.

First, the development process itself has disempowered villagers, and this process is intensifying with increasing agri-business activity. The encouragement to plant monoculture crops has tied villagers into debt and the world market and has taken away their self reliance. Cash cropping has all occurred in the name of industrialisation which can offer villagers no security and has resulted in a widespread destruction of the very environment villagers rely upon. Furthermore, changes have impacted greatly on rural culture and rural family structures, which have begun to disintegrate with urban migration. The result is the beginning of the erosion of community bases of mutual help, accompanied by an associated loss of indigenous culture and tradition (Field notes 1993; Vitoon 1991).

Second, the extension of central control to the periphery has gradually stripped villagers of their community rights over land and resources. Before the 1930s community rights were recognised but now villagers' community rights are ignored, and it is assumed that the state and industry are the rightful guardians of natural resources (TDN No 24 1994:14; Field notes 1993).

NGOs argue that there is an international aspect here to complete the triple alliance of state, domestic capital and international capital. NGOs recognise that the production of tapioca and cassava which destroyed vast tracts of forest in Northeast Thailand were produced in order to supply the animal feed market of the EEC (TDSC 1990:2). Furthermore the role of donor governments, multilateral development banks and transnationals in rural development is a focus for some NGOs. A notable example is Professor Saneh Chamarik who describes the theft of resources as being strongly linked to the interests of transnational companies and the desire of rich countries to centralise resource control (TDN no 21 1992:14).

One fundamental assumption behind this analysis is not simply that industrialisation is anti-rural and anti-people but that it is simply not desired by the bulk of the rural population. In 1991 NGO-CORD and several faculties at Chulalongkorn university organised *Chao Ban Weti,* the People's Forum, or in direct translation the "villagers' forum", an alternative to the 1991 World Bank meeting in Bangkok. The forum attracted 500 villagers, 400 Thai activists and intellectuals and 100 international guests. In the Declaration of the People's Forum, the state is criticised for undertaking the task of development as a process that is done to the people not with the people. The declaration states that "it is thus not surprising that despite many changes of government the people's hardship and suffering has never been alleviated" (People's Forum 1991:1).

The declaration stresses the importance of Thailand as an agricultural country with deep rooted foundations for development in the agricultural sector. The emphasis on export oriented industrialisation is criticised:

> "But for all its positive effects, this impressive economic growth has made poorer a large number of people - those who have lost the opportunity to be self reliant and have been become pawns in the main current of development policy. They have lost pride in their traditional way of life, in their age old artistic and cultural heritage. Existing community resources have been rapidly depleted: and with deteriorating mental health, social violence has been on the increase. While the economy continues to expand, the country is facing a growing social crisis" (Peoples Forum 1991:1).

Promoting alternative agriculture is part of the NGO's vision of returning power to the village. Alternative agriculture is in large part based on the promotion of indigenous plant species which are resistant to disease and do not require chemical pesticides. It also involves intercropping with

various crops which ensures the farming family can provide most of their own food. NGOs argue that the kind of alternative agriculture they promote gives power over production back to the farmer by encouraging networks of communal help in the village and community activities and values.(TDCS 1990:4).

Similarly, the promotion of traditional handicrafts is a common theme. This theme tends to focus on village women and was described by many NGO workers as strengthening the economic power of the women and strengthening their status in village society. Interestingly enough, one source also concluded that weaving gives women tranquillity and stops them from craving unnecessary material things and should also be encouraged amongst middle class women (Field notes 1993; TDN no:21 1992:22).

The loss of cultural heritage is very central to NGO analysis. The documentation of village history and village culture and the strengthening of village culture are regarded as a central tasks. In fact among NGO workers there is a strong sense that village culture is different from the culture of the NGO worker themselves, they view it as a culture to be learnt and disseminated. At the same time discussion around the natural advent of cultural change and the desirability of cultural flexibility was under way amongst NGO workers. Nevertheless the prominence and self-consciousness of this notion of culture can be disconcerting for the Western visitor to the rural development NGO alerting him/her to his/her position as "other". However, the stress on alliances between different groups is fundamental to NGO thought and activity and the exchange of cultures widely considered the task of NGOs by the workers I interviewed (Field notes 1993).

Although development NGOs perceive the main arena of conflict as between rural-urban, villager and the state and corporate sector, they do not perceive villagers as an undifferentiated mass. There is of course the strong idea that each village has its own culture and history and there is considerable interest in the differences between ethnic groups, such as hill tribes and Muslim southerners. Women are also perceived as a distinct group. The particular problems of women are usually seen as linked to the commercialisation of agriculture and loss of self reliance (Field notes 1993).[4]

Nevertheless the issue of class differentiation is not in focus in rural development NGOs. NGO workers were clear that as the main conflict of interests was between urban and rural Thailand it was important for NGO workers to work with all classes in the village against outside interests. Older NGO workers I interviewed laughed at their insistence on only working with the rural poor in the late 1970s, concluding that at this time they were still under the influence of Marxism but had since learnt to work with everyone in the village, an essential process in strengthening the village according to Communal Culture (Field notes 1993).

The promotion of village organisations, *ongkarn chum chon,* or community organisations, is seen as the central task of NGO, activity and other activities such as alternative agriculture and handicrafts are often portrayed as a means of strengthening and creating village organisations rather than as an ends in themselves. Community organisations are

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[4] There were two main responses from NGOs workers in Northeastern and Southern NGOs when I questioned them about women and rural development. One response was that the role of women in the village had been eroded by industrialisation and traditional village culture had different but equal roles for men and women. The second was more critical of traditional village life and believed women's role in the village would become more equal over time. (TDN 21 1992:22 Field notes 1993).

organised and encouraged around cooperatives, credit unions, village decision making bodies and other village issues. Rural development was explained to me by NGO workers as not a revolutionary social movement or an attempt to separate urban Thailand from rural Thailand but as a movement to strengthen the people and to build their organisations. Community organisations are a mechanism to strengthen people's communities so that they can fully function and form the basis grassroots democracy (Field notes 1993; TDN no: 24 1993:60).

Grassroots democracy is a chief slogan of the NGO movement and one that centres around the notion of the decentralisation of power. The world is seen as confined and directed by the industrial sector which focuses on centralisation for its own interests. The calls for decentralisation have adopted an almost militant tone over the 1990s, becoming notably more militant and urgent over the KJK campaign. The notion of grass roots democracy is inextricably linked to environmentalism. The democratic right of villagers to manage their own natural resources and their superior skill and knowledge in managing resources in comparison to the state has been a constant theme of participants in the resource conflicts. These demands have been one of the most vocal and visible manifestations of Thailand's environmental movement.

The Thai environmental movement can be most aptly described as a spectrum of campaigns and organisations centred around environmental issues, with the movement calling for decentralisation of natural resource management currently the most high profile part of that spectrum. Prawase identifies four kinds of environmentalism in Thailand: those environmentalists who are simply nature lovers; international environmental groups; conservationists in alliance with villagers and those

struggling for the decentralisation of political power and the right of villagers to control natural resource management (10 Sep 1992 BP). Hirsch describes various kinds of environmentalism in Thailand. These include the environmentalist campaigns run by prominent business groups and individuals during the 1990s and environmentalist strands within the bureaucracy. Nevertheless, he concludes that "in an organisational sense, environmentalism in Thailand is associated first and foremost with NGOs" (Hirsch 1994:7).

NGOs advocating local control over natural resources describe environmental disaster as the result of taking environmental management out of the hands of villagers and putting it in the hands of elites. As a result, not only have rural people failed to gain equal benefit from economic growth, they have also been forced to bear the cost of a degraded and polluted environment. The Thai government is seen by them as currently unable to take care of existing ecosystems or restore degraded ones, and it is argued that the government should hand over control of resources to local people who are more able to manage resources (Field notes 1993).

Advocacy of the decentralisation of resource management is of course based on a faith in the inherently eco-friendly nature of traditional village life. Environmental destruction is seen as caused by industrialisation and the development process. This is in direct comparison to traditional culture which lives in harmony with nature. TDSC describes a "balance between human life and ecology as "the guiding force in Isarn culture" (TDSC 1990:4). This sentiment was reflected in many interviews I conducted with NGO workers who concluded that villagers practicing traditional agriculture lived in harmony and had a strong respect for nature (Field notes 1993; TDN no:24 1994:8).

Traditional resource management and conservation methods are both researched and promoted by NGOs. The *muang fai* irrigation system of the North and the *muang pracha asa* irrigation of the Northeast involve the small scale diversion of streams and rivers to irrigate crops. Both involve cooperation and collective management, sometimes within one village or even across four or five sub districts. NGOs stress the democratic spirit required by this system as well as its ecological sustainability (TDN no:25 1994:41; Field notes 1993).

NGOs also advocate local forest management which they argue is appropriate given the ability of village communities to cooperatively manage forest and to ensure conservation of forest land. The knowledge and wisdom of villagers over their local forest ecosystem is described as being based on a mutual reliance and respect for the forest. Community forests are traditionally very important for villagers' lives. They are managed by the village and are used for various purposes including spirit worship, the collection of edible plants and insects and the collection of materials for medicinal purposes and cattle grazing The Project for Ecological Recovery (PER) estimate that 90% of *Isarn* villagers collect vegetables and herbs from community forests for subsistence purposes (Chantawong 1992:178). Taylor provides a detailed and inspiring account of local management of forest. In a series of surveys he found that villagers were clearly aware of the limits of sustainable forest exploitation and were able to establish and maintain forests (Taylor 1994).

Conservationist initiatives from villages have been well-documented by NGOs. Many protests against logging, dams and pollution have been initiated by villagers throughout the country. In the few years preceding the

1989 logging ban village protest against commercial logging was common particularly in Northern Thailand. Villagers blocked logging roads, obstructed logging operations, occupied logging camps and made work difficult for timber companies in the Northern, Northeastern and Southern provinces. Furthermore independent village conservation groups have been formed in some villages. NGOs have been able to tap into existing protest and organisation as well as being able to initiate activity themselves (Pinkaew and Rajesh 1992:13; Field notes 1993).

Democratic ideals are fundamental to all these ideas. In interviews with young students and NGO volunteers involved with KJK protests the need for democracy and people's participation was their strongest theme. Their view was that big business in alliance with the state was the new enemy of villagers and the environment. They concluded that the government would never change policy unless villagers were empowered and a real process of democracy undertaken whereby villagers have the ability to choose and regulate their own lifestyle. Empowerment of villagers was the hope and dream of this group which was seen as the only hope for Thailand (Field notes 1993).

Of course the development of Thai NGOs, including the activities they engage in and the ideas they espouse, are closely related to international trends. The funding agencies from Western countries that grant money to the NGOs under discussion espouse many similar view, the Australian example being Community Aid Abroad. They have a vision of a global poor united in the struggle against the erosion of their rights caused by the centralising tendencies of the nation state, the centralisation of resource control and the tyranny of the market. Twelve countries from Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia were represented at the 1991 People's Forum.

Saneh concluded at the end of the forum that "there is a consensus here, an awareness emerging that goes beyond national boundaries, beyond those old versions of national sovereignty" (TDN no: 21 1992:14).

It is easy to identify a movement of NGOs from poor countries with similar forms of organisation and demands. In 1993 a NGO Declaration on Human Rights represented a diverse range of countries and among other demands called for democracy, sustainable development, self determination, freedom of information and international solidarity (NGO declaration 1993).

Conclusion

The discourse of Communal Culture articulated by many rural development NGOs means that many organisations espouse an overly romantic notion of the village and overlook increasing class differentiation within the village. This tends towards a portrayal of the village as victim of the triple alliance of state, capital and the West without recognising the strong ties these forces have with the village or the role they may have played in shaping the village. On the other hand NGOs do work in alliance with villagers in the very real conflict of interests villagers have with the state and corporate sector. NGOs are able to articulate many village concerns through themes around Buddhism, pride in culture, environmentalism, democracy and the ability of local villages to manage their own resources. The point at which communal culture and village protest meet is described in the following account of the protest movement over the KJK forest resettlement scheme in 1991.

CHAPTER SIX

THE KOR JOR KOR PROTESTS

This chapter presents a case study of the protests against the *Kor Jor Kor* forest resettlement program in 1991 and 1992 in Northeast Thailand. The case study clearly illustrates the conflict of interests between the villagers living on forest reserve land and the alliance of military, RFD and big business determined to remove them. The notion of a fundamental conflict between the state and corporate sectors on the one hand and the village on the other, and the idea of an urban-rural divide in Communal Culture discourse, can be seen to reflect basic realities about the conflict. However the case study also illustrates some tension and divided interests within the village over land and forest. Protest themes in the KJK protests emerge as far from utopian but centred around the rights of villagers as Thai citizens, social justice, democracy and environmentalism. The alliance between villagers and forest monks and NGOs emerges as important element in the facilitation of a coordinated region wide movement.

An appropriate starting point for an account of protest and the movement against KJK is with the analyses made by Murray and Taylor, who have both written about the KJK protests. Murray describes the protests as coming from people with no choices left, a kind of moral economy over the ownership of resources as suggested by Hirsch (Hirsch 1994:13). Murray describes villagers as lacking real options "it is their own backs that are up against the wall of a finite, already occupied land resource base. It is their very livelihoods and lives under threat"(Murray 1992:5). He describes the major concern of protesters as being the lack of concern for villagers as human beings with basic human rights. In fact he believes that

the *way* in which the resettlement scheme was carried out was the most fundamental point of conflict; it was the nature of the process rather than the fact of resettlement itself which led to the protests. He concludes that villagers might have accepted that changing national needs required them to move if the scheme had been carried out in a democratic manner and if villages had been provided with proper alternatives (Murray 1992:24).

In comparison Taylor concentrates more on the roles of environmentalism and the role of Buddhist theology. His emphasis is on "a new national green consciousness informed by Buddhist theology", and his analysis is focused firmly on the example of Dong Yai forest in Buriram and the relationship between villagers and their local conservationist monk Pra Prajak Khuttajitto (Taylor 1993B:7). It is significant that Taylor's concentration on Pra Prajak and Dong Yai Forest involves a change of emphasis from some of his earlier work on forest monks. In a 1991 work he conducted a survey of fifty eight forest monks throughout Thailand and concluded that monks considered villagers to be the greatest danger to the forest (Taylor 1991:113). In Taylor's description of the struggle of Dong Yai villagers and Pra Prajak against KJK, it is the state which emerges as the cause of forest destruction, while villagers are portrayed as its protector (Taylor 1993).

Nevertheless, Taylor does discuss the existence of conflicting interests within villages over forest land and conservation. He discusses the situation within Dong Yai forest where some villagers were dependent on employment from commercial logging while some attempted to bring an end to logging (Taylor 1993:7). Murray places little emphasis on this factor in the Dong Yai story, instead his emphasis is on the role of officials in illegal logging and land scams (Murray 1992:13).

The Dong Yai story is a useful starting point as it illustrates both these dynamics, namely the central role of authorities in forest destruction and the divided interests that may arise within the village between those villagers involved in conservation and those involved in logging. It is also the most famous of the forest conflicts in the KJK period.

Conflict in Dong Yai Forest

The KJK program began to make headlines in the Thai and English language press in September of 1991 as evictions began in Northeast Thailand. Evictions in the Dong Yai Forest Reserve, situated on the boundary of Buriram and Nakorn Ratchisma provinces received the most publicity at this time and continued to do so throughout the duration of the KJK program and into 1993. Murray comments that "no other controversy encapsulated as many aspects of land-use conflicts surrounding forest areas as did the events in the Dong Yai forest reserve" and Taylor characterised the conflict as a *"cause celebre"* (Taylor 1993:4; Murray 1992:16).

The Dong Yai forest was declared a national forest in 1959. At that time twenty five villages were already located in the reserve and had been there for more than a generation. After 1966, insurgency turned the attention of central authorities to the area. There was some movement away from those parts of the area where fighting was intense, with 100 families temporarily moved by authorities between 1969 and 1972 and agricultural activity restricted by fighting until 1982 (9 August 1991 BP).[1] However at the same time authorities actually encouraged village settlement in the reserve in

[1]I have used predominantly English language newspapers in this account for reasons of time. However based on some translations of articles from Siam Rath it would seem that the Bangkok Post, The Nation and Siam Rath shared a basically common analysis and account of the KJK protests.

order to combat communist insurgency. Settlers were given land on the understanding that they would be able to stay and as a result a large number streamed steadily into the area to grow cassava. This movement of people into the forest reserve was further intensified when land was granted to surrendering insurgents in an attempt to undercut insurgency (15 Sept 1991 BP; Murray 1992:17; Taylor 1993:6)

In fact this historical irony, whereby the military first encouraged settlers to move into the forest for security reasons and then evicted them under KJK, was a factor which outraged opponents of the KJK project. The historical role of villagers as "protectors of national security" had a high profile in the English language press. The military's actions were portrayed as denying villagers their fundamental rights as citizens and discounting the role that they had played in the fight against communist insurgency. A Bangkok Post editorial accused the military of treating villagers like "sacrificial lambs" who could be disposed of at will when they no longer served the interests of the military (16 Sep 1991 BP).

After insurgency ceased to be a threat in the 1980s official policy was inconsistent and confused. In 1980 officials decided the area needed rehabilitation and set up four projects in the area which involved some relocation and the promotion of cassava and eucalyptus crops. The projects did not succeed in stopping encroachment by villagers and loggers and were plagued by corrupt land deals where investors hired villagers to encroach on reserve land with the alleged support of officials. The fundamental problem at this time was that there was no land to resettle all the relocated villagers. For the 1200 families officials they tried to move, only some 300 alternative sites were found (15 Sep 1991 BP).

In 1982 RFD officials arrived in the area with the stated intention of evicting some villagers from the reserve. However they apparently changed their mind and issued a warning not to encroach further into the forest. Some villagers claim that since that time they have been paying 1000-2000 baht a year in protection money to forestry officials, a claim confirmed by local NGOs in the Northeast (9 Sep 1991 BP; Field notes 1993). A policy change seemed to take place in the late 1980s. In 1988 officials are said to have promised that the existing villages in the area would be officially recognised, land would be allocated, roads constructed, electricity provided and an irrigation program launched (10 Sep 1991 BP).

Pra Prajak arrived and settled in the forest in the mid 1980s at the time when village leaders were demanding an end to eucalyptus plantations and the issuing of land title deeds. Pra Prajak said his decision to stay in the forest was based on the teachings of Lord Budda who had told his followers that they should live and meditate in the forest and were obliged to protect it. Pra Prajak was asked by villagers to stay in the forest and assist them with a forest preservation committee which villagers in Pakham sub-district had already formed. This committee involved every village in Pakham subdistrict, aimed at the curtailment of illegal logging and an end to the spread of eucalyptus plantations and received a conservation award from the Siam Environmental Club in 1990 (25 Sep 1991 BP; Field notes 1993). Pra Prajak and the Pakham villages started to gain a real public profile after the eucalyptus plantation conflicts and the arrests in early 1991 detailed in chapter three. However these arrests were not the major factor in the growth of the public profile of Pra Prajak and the Hua Nam Pod villagers. It was under KJK that the area gained its public notoriety.

Under KJK the Dong Yai Forest was identified as an area needing relocation, and in April 1991 2000 families living in the forest received an order from the provincial governor to leave their land by the end of the month. Local military units were sent to explain the need for relocation but agreed to delay relocations until mid May. After this date it was indicated that villagers who stayed on would be subject to forcible eviction, imprisonment and fines (28 Feb 1991 The Nation).

Open conflict started in late August 1991 when soldiers from the Second Army Region (SAR) clashed with villages in Sra Takien in Soeng Sang district when they attempted to appropriate land in order to resettle villagers from the forest reserve. More than 100 villagers who were tilling the land refused to give it up, and "pushing and shoving" was reported between officials and villagers in early September (6 Sep 1991 BP). News of the conflict reached a meeting of Pra Prajak's conservation group and he led 400 people to Ban Sra Takien to offer support. However they were met by armed soldiers and police before reaching the village. A violent scene resulted and ten villagers were arrested on charges of physical assault and obstructing law enforcement. The police were accused by villagers of physically assaulting Pra Prajak whilst official reports accused Pra Prajak of hitting a policeman. Pra Prajak was arrested a day later in connection with this incidence on charges of illegal assembly and creating unrest (6 Sep 1991 BP).

The arrests created division in the Pakham conservation committee. Pra Prajak and supporters continued to advocate strengthening the conservation committee and the alliance of villages in the Dong Yai forest to oppose any eviction attempts. However several village leaders faced criminal charges wanted to limit their activity and were uncomfortable with

a confrontational approach. For this reason, Pra Prajak formed a new conservation committee but the new group was also divided over the strategic approach of their activism (15 Sep 1991 BP).

If the Pakham villager's conservation committee illustrate the will and ability of some villagers to protect the forest they had neighbours with other motivations. Friction with other villagers in the area resulted. In August conflict broke out between Pra Prajak's conservation committee and other villagers when a local vigilance group from the conservation committee led by Pra Prajak were patrolling the forest for illegal logging activity. The group caught ten villagers in the act of illegal logging in the Dong Yai forest and allegedly physically assaulted one of the illegal loggers. This villager later pressed charges at the local police office. This incident was not only later used by the military to discredit Pra Prajak, but it also led to hostility from the home village of the illegal logger, Ban Sook Samran. Two weeks after the incident a group of villagers from Ban Sook Samran partly destroyed Pra Prajak's religious centre in Hua Nam Pod and later returned to ransack another building (15 Sep 1991 BP). The villager who was allegedly beaten later reappeared as part of a pro KJK and anti Pra Prajak demonstration which met a government delegation to the area in mid September (18 Sep 1991 BP).

Pra Prajak described the hostility from Ban Suk Samran as a military plot and denied that the villager had ever been beaten claiming that he had simply been blindfolded. Local villagers claimed that the Ban Suk Samran villagers involved in the destruction of temple property were paramilitary men organised by the local military. In turn the military claimed that the situation was caused by a local rivalry (11 Sep 1991 BP).

In this mood of confrontation and amidst widespread condemnation of the KJK program by NGOs, students and academics, the military began forced evictions and publicly declared that Pra Prajak's temple complex at Hua Nam Pud was illegal and a liability to the forest. The day following Pra Prajak's arrest the local military was poised to move into Ban Sra Takien and Ban Nong Yai. The Union of Civil Liberties reported that twenty soldiers had destroyed Pra Prajak's living quarters and that two hundred police and soldiers tore down his residence and teaching stage (9 Sep 1991 BP).

In early September village leaders from Dong forest and representatives from human rights groups headed for Bangkok with a petition for the king. Petitioners asked that villages in the reserve be legalised but also recognised that some relocation might be inevitable and added fair relocation conditions to their demands. The petition called for the registration of the villages in the reserve, official permission to continue living in the reserve, the allocation of 25 rai for any villagers relocated and that plots for relocated villagers be taken from land poached by merchants rather than from land already used by villagers for subsistence. A further request was made that a guarantee be given that villagers would not be harassed or arrested while the requests were being processed (10 Sep 1991 BP).

Amidst controversy the Second Army Region (SAR) sent 300 soldiers on September 10 to dismantle houses in Hua Nam Phud a week earlier than scheduled. Residents were shifted to Ban Dong Pattana. The next day the residents of Ban Nong Yai were evicted and shifted to Ban Sra Takien (11 Sep 1991, 12 Sep 1991 BP). Heavily armed soldiers guarded the dismantling of houses and the transfer of residents to their new villages. Accounts from

villagers described village leaders down on their knees asking soldiers for negotiations without success. Villagers reported that they had to carry their own belongings and soldiers refused to assist them. Several hundred rai of tapioca fields were ripped apart four months before the harvest was due (Field notes 1993).

The coercion which characterised the relocations resulted in a considerable media outcry about human rights and the use of violence. The Nation condemned the "unprecedented level of violence in Pakham" (18 Sep 1991 The Nation) the Bangkok Post and Siam Rath called for an end to human rights abuses (19 Sep 1991 SR; 18 Sep 1991 BP). The basic abuse of human rights principles by the military was common theme. "Brute force has a way of stifling open public debate and tends to leave deep scars in the victims of violence and society at large" concluded The Nation (18 Sep 1991 The Nation).

At the time of the first relocations in Buriram the military maintained a publicly confident posture and reported to the press that evictions had gone ahead with very little resistance. The SAR reported that three hundred and fifty households had complied with the evictions in Ban Nong Yai, and only thirty eight had opposed the move and refused to leave. An announcement was made that the thirty eight families resisting the relocation would not be compensated and that the whole of the Hua Nam Pud mountain would be cleared within three days (12 Sep 1991 BP).

The thirty eight families resisting the eviction set up camp in a temple pavilion in Ban Sra Takien with a large banner reading "Thai People's Refugee Camp". How could Thai people be treated as displaced people within their own country asked villagers? Demands from the thirty eight

families centred around requests for a well prepared site and time to harvest their tapioca crops. Food was provided to the villagers by the monks from the temple who donated some of the food they collected every morning. The "Thai People's Refugee Camp" was to remain at the temple for the next nine months with problems caused by insufficient food, sickness and discomfort, making life for the thirty eight families very unpleasant (1 Oct 1991, 17 Jun 1992 BP; Field notes 1993).

Villagers who did comply with the eviction order faced similar problems of discomfort and insecurity. Three weeks after the relocation hundreds of Nong Yai and Hua Nam Pud villagers were living in temporary shelters which did not offer adequate protection from the rain. The villagers had to rebuild their own homes but had no money for roofing materials. There were no schools or toilets provided. Villagers had to pay for their own toilets with loans to be paid back at 15% interest. Water was also a problem; the military provided two trucks of water a day for a village which villagers found inadequate. Water had to be collected from a water source 2km away from the resettlement site. Furthermore, compensation was inadequate. On relocation 15 rai plots were supposed to be allocated for each family but villagers only received 1 rai to build on and were promised the remaining 14 rai in 1992. Families were given 150 kg of rice, tins of canned fish which were found to be past their expiry date and 2000 baht in compensation. For the many villagers who had invested all their money in their tapioca fields and borrowed money for seeds and fertiliser this was a financial disaster (1 Oct 1991 BP; 30 Sep 1991 The Nation).

Villagers from Nong Yai resettled in Sra Takien also experienced hostility from Sra Takien villagers who had portions of their land taken to accommodate the relocated villages. If land had already been planted land

holders received 2000 baht compensation, but if the land had not yet been planted villagers did not receive any compensation at all (1 Oct 1991 BP;; Field notes 1993). NGOs, academics and students warned that a lack of land for relocation could lead to serious conflict between villagers and that taking away a villager's land results in a feeling of desperation that could lead to violence (17 Sep 1991 The Nation). It was noted that KJK had already led to unemployment, homelessness and added to rural-urban migration (24 Nov 1991 BP).

At the same time the military continued to attempt to relocate Pra Prajak's temple in Hua Nam Pod sanctuary within Dong Yai forest. Pra Prajak continued to insist that his decision to remain in the forest was based on the teachings of the Lord Budda who told his followers to live and meditate in the forest. Legal experts concluded that the temple was legal and senior monks supported Pra Prajak's claim that his presence was important in protecting the forest and that damage done to the forest in the temple area was done before Pra Prajak's arrival. Buriram's chief monk and the eccelestial council announced they understood Pra Prajak's decision to remain in the forest. Support for Pra Prajak from international organisations, NGOs, students and intellectuals was also forthcoming. However he also received several death threats (20 May 1991 BP; 25 Sep 1991 BP).

In the new year problems continued and the thirty eight families remained at their refugee camp. For the military and RFD the most pressing dilemma was where to procure land to accommodate evicted villages. In order to overcome this otherwise insolvable problem the RFD simply readjusted the borders of Thaplan National Park, built a 14km road through the forest and by April 1992 had allocated 4000 rai within the

national park to six hundred families. By June, 10 000 rai of healthy forest had been cleared in time for the planting season. Pra Prajak and Pakham villagers unsuccessfully attempted to stop the clearing of forest by ordaining trees (16 Jun 1991 BP).

Meanwhile illegal logging was on the increase in Dong forest. By early 1992 the conservation committee had dissipated as a result of conflict over tactics. Pra Prajak reported that he could no longer protect the forest and that illegal logging had become rampant, in addition to the logging by officials to relocate evicted villagers. He was reported as saying that he could hear "the thunderous sounds of trees being felled each night from deep in the forest...although I can stay here there is nothing I can do now" (3 Jun 1992, , 12 Mar 1992 BP).

After the disgrace of the military which resulted from the May massacre in Bangkok the thirty eight families in the Sra Takien temple made the decision they would return to their homes in mid June, hoping to take advantage of the democratic atmosphere and the need of the military to maintain a low profile. Villagers demanded that they be able to farm for the next planting season until they could be provided with land that was not confiscated from other villagers and did not destroy healthy forest. 500 villagers headed back to Ban Nong Yai and set up temporary shelters. However the reports of new hope and new beginnings were short lived and 300 police and forestry officials moved in and forcibly removed the villagers. Villagers were dragged, beaten and pushed from the site and seventeen villagers were arrested and charged with conspiracy to obstruct authorities and trespass in the second eviction of Nong Yai village. The remaining villagers returned to Wat Sra Takien (17 June 1991 BP; Field notes 1993).

Criticisms made by academics, students and NGOs in relation to the KJK protests at this time tended to raise fundamental criticisms of Thai society and the relationship between rural and urban Thailand and villagers and the state. Authorities were accused of being so deeply involved in illegal logging that it was necessary for the Pakham conservation committee to be destroyed to prevent exposure of illegal logging involving local power groups and officials (16 Sep 1991 BP). The need for participation in decision making and the management of the forest were common themes. The decentralisation of natural resource management was frequently advocated, not only on the grounds that the Forestry Department was incapable of safeguarding the forest because it did not have adequate staff, but more fundamentally because this was seen as an aspect of the democratic rights of villagers (24 Nov 1992, 25 Sep 1992, 1 Oct 1992 BP; 17 Sep 1991 The Nation).

Relocations in other provinces

As relocations in the Northeast continued, other conflicts occurred in various provinces during the second half of 1991. Although one other area in addition to Dong Yai had an organised conservation movement village based protest tended to concentrate on the coercive nature of the relocations and the inadequacy of alternative sites rather than environmentalism. NGO leaders, particularly Bamrung Bunpanya, increasingly drew attention to the destructive effects of the relocations on Isarn ethnicity and at the same time criticisms of the military became more open and harsh.

In Kon Kaen villagers were evicted from Dong Larn National Park in Pu Pa Mam sub-district without being issued documents for their new land, which was in any case rocky and less fertile than their original plots (17 Sep

1991 The Nation). The eviction process itself was coercive; 300 soldiers dismantled houses and fired shots (19 Sep 1991 BP). Tractors were used by the military to dismantle fences erected by villagers who resisted eviction, and in one incident 300 soldiers took over a temple compound, destroyed temple property and were accused of "insulting Buddhism" by students from the Northeastern students Coordinating Committee (17 Nov 1991 BP). Trauma and stress were reported amongst villagers and village leaders unsuccessfully called for a delay and asked for a review of their relocation (19 Sep 1991 BP).

Evictions from the Dong Mae Ped reserve in Kalasin were enforced, even though the villagers there pocessed legal documents for their land and had used them to secure loans to send their children to jobs in the Middle East. The 15 rai granted to relocated villagers was distributed on a family-by-family basis which meant that large extended families did not have enough land to adequately support themselves. They were not provided with basic infrastructure and were refused permission to participate in replanting schemes. Criticism from villagers in this area centred around the inadequacies of their new villages and hostility regarding the fact authorities would replant with eucalyptus trees but destroyed their fruit trees (17 Sep 1991 The Nation; Field notes 1993).

Resettlement of villages on the edge of the Huay Kha Kaeng wildlife sanctuary in Uthai Thani occurred without adequate preparation by authorities in late 1991. Villagers were initially provided with only 7 rai of land per family. Again basic infrastructure such as an irrigation pond, school or health station was not provided (14 Nov 1991 BP). At the same time the on going issue of the relocation of hill tribe communities in Tak

and Petchaburi in Northern Thailand compounded opposition to the relocation program (16 Dec 1991, 8 Jan 1992 BP).

Forced evictions continued into 1992. Evictions in Phu Pa Marn district in Khon Kaen continued and were accompanied by widespread accusations of improper conduct and intimidation. Villagers reported that soldiers threatened to tear down their houses and scatter the wood so that they would not be able to rebuild their homes if they refused to sign documents agreeing to relocation. In another village soldiers threatened to destroy the only bridge that gave access to the village if residents resisted relocation. Others reported that they were physically forced to sign documents consenting to eviction and their personal possessions were smashed as evictions were carried out. Village representatives reported that it was more like an assault than a resettlement and asked why they were being treated like aliens instead of Thai nationals (9 Jan 1992 BP).

In Chaiyphum forced evictions were carried out before villagers could harvest their mango and coconut trees. Villagers were resettled on arid land with no school. One village in this province which was faced with eviction resembled the Dong Yai case in so far as it also had a long history of organising the conservation of forest and had a community land use plan already drafted. Once again, NGO criticism of the authorities focused on the reluctance of authorities to allow villagers to participate in the management of their own forests (13 Jan 1992 BP).

Rallies and protests proliferated throughout the Northeast in the first half of 1992. In the province of Sakon Nakon five rallies were held against KJK with 2500 villagers rallying in February, 4000 in March and 500 in April. Demands again centred around the inadequacy of resettlement conditions

and the call for villagers to be able to return to their land (18 Feb 1992 BP, 20 Mar 1992 BP, 26 Apr 1992). Rally speakers announced that villagers would be boycotting national elections because they had been treated like aliens instead of Thais and that participants in the boycotts would return their ID cards to authorities in protest (18 Feb 1992 BP). In April a rally spokesperson stated that Thailand was about to be set on fire because the military government refused to recognise social realities (26 Apr 1992 BP).

In Nong Khai in March 1992 1000 villagers held a march, protesting impending eviction. A procession led by monks ended with a religious ceremony with an anti KJK message. In this area, where villagers had previously had historical connections with CPT insurgents, the local abbot warned of violent retaliation by villagers who he predicted would escape across the Mekong and return to attack if evictions went ahead (3 Mar 1992 BP).

There was also organised protest from villagers who were not relocated themselves but who were required to give up land to accommodate those who were. 500 rallied in Si Saket to demand the return of their land (17 Apr 1992 BP). Many other smaller local rallies proliferated. Songkran parades and other traditional activities were used as forums where villagers could voice anti-KJK messages (14 Apr 1992, 14 Apr 1992 BP; Field notes 1993).

Later in the campaign a new element emerged in criticism of KJK . By early 1992 there was increasing mention of the destructive affects of KJK on Isarn tradition and culture. The coordinating NGO for NGOs working on Northeast rural development (NGO CORD) described Isarn culture as being under risk under KJK (22 Jan 1992 The Nation). The Bangkok Post described

KJK as having huge social consequences and warned it could tear apart the social fabric of the countryside (23 Jan 1992 BP). Bamrung Bunpanya, as a leader of the anti KJK campaign, was particularly vocal on this subject. He maintained that KJK would destroy the social fabric of traditional settlements, the stronghold of much of what is left of the Isarn folk culture (17 July 1992 BP).

In village level protest Lao identity amongst Isarn villagers did play a part. Villagers involved in KJK protests commented on the strength that traditional ceremonies had given them and NGO CORD staff concluded that the emphasis on traditional culture had been a good tactic and strengthened village protest. However it should be noted that the calls for villagers to have their rights as Thai citizens recognised, were higher profile than those involving Isarn ethnicity. As well as traditional Isarn ceremonies, Buddhist ceremonies such as Pra Prajak's tree ordinations were also used extensively (Field notes 1993).

The Military

Overall, as the KJK campaign proceeded the military became more and more the explicit target of serious accusations. These accusations corresponded directly with the growing anti military mood in the country as a whole. In January to April KJK continued to have a high profile in the print media alongside the increasing coverage of the growing urban democracy movement. However in May as democracy rallies in Bangkok grew larger KJK received very little media attention at all. Following the May massacre of democracy demonstrators by the military KJK continued to have a low profile. However by June, with anti-military sentiment at a high point, the military were openly and frequently accused in the media of

using KJK to control the countryside and bring it under dictatorial rule. For example Sanitsuda accused the military of attempting to move 1 million families into military controlled settlements to ensure a future power base for election purposes and warned that the countryside was set to slip under military rule if KJK was not stopped (6 Sep 1992 BP). The economic ambitions of the military were also recognised with Siam Rath accusing the military of wanting to be real estate agents (10 Apr 1991 SR).

In late Oct the military continued to justify the KJK program and brush off criticisms. The military deputy commander accused activists of inciting villagers and denied that any human rights violations had taken place, calling such criticisms "groundless" (25 Oct 1991 BP). However, opposition prompted the military to launch a public relations campaign in November "to create a better understanding of the aims of relocation in order to minimise resistance from residents"(4 Nov 1991 The Nation). Military officials announced that resettlement areas would be developed to make them suitable for settlement. In answer to criticisms that authorities could not adequately protect the forest to the extent that villagers had, military officials announced that the Governors of the target provinces were responsible for seeking the cooperation of various government agencies in protecting forest areas. Furthermore program officials would pledge to protect the forest before relocating villagers (4 Nov 1991 The Nation).

At the same time military officials announced that the program was a success and that relocation in five Northeastern locations had been carried out successfully. However they acknowledged that mistakes had been made and blamed the violence in Nakorn Ratchasima on poor preparation. One military spokesperson announced that they had genuinely wanted to provide better lives for villagers in forest reserves but budgetary constraints

had made this impossible (14 Nov 1991 The Nation). The extension of the program was approved shortly afterwards with a cabinet recommendation that relocations be carried out "persuasively" rather than coercively and that well-prepared relocation sites be provided (4 Dec 1991 The Nation).

However, by February 1992 dissent had gained enough momentum to push the military to make a surprising apology for the shortcomings of KJK. A public announcement publicly thanked students and academics for pointing out the mistakes in the program and announced that villagers should not be blamed for opposing KJK and that the goodwill of the groups in opposition to KJK was understood (8 Feb 1992 BP). Later in the month the Interior Ministry announced that there would be no further forcible evictions and that all relocation would be voluntary (17 Feb 1992 BP).

This show of goodwill was greeted tentatively by anti-KJK activists. In public statements they were quick to argue that adequate provision of infrastructure was not the solution to the fundamental problems of KJK; rather, they called for plans for economic forests to be scrapped and argued that villagers be given the right to manage their own resources (8 Feb 1992 BP).

In any case this conciliatory note from the military soon appeared as irrelevant. The second eviction of Nong Yai village, described in the previous section of this chapter, sparked a new round of public protest.

The protest at Pak Chong

Within days of the second eviction of Nong village in June 1992 the Anand government announced the suspension of the KJK program. Soon

after the second eviction of Nong Yai village a government committee was appointed to study the scheme for at least thirty days and recommend whether it should be amended or abolished (18 Jun 1992 The Nation). However villagers in various locations started to rally for an immediate end to KJK. In Nakorn Ratchasima villagers began to rally outside the provincial hall and called for the immediate abolition of KJK. Villagers also gathered in Khon Kaen with the same demand (21 June 1992, 22 June 1992, 23 June 92 BP).

In Nakorn Ratchasima demonstrators refused to disperse and threatened that they would march to Bangkok unless their demands were met. The crowd was made up predominantly of villagers from Nakon Ratchisima with NGO supporters. Demonstrators submitted a letter in blood to Prime Minister Anand demanding an end to the program (24 June 1992 The Nation).

On June 26 1000 villagers began a procession to Bangkok on foot and in trucks. Numbers swelled to 2500 within a few days as villagers from other provinces arrived. Demonstrators demanded an end to KJK and recognition of land ownership rights for villagers in forest reserves (27 June 1992 BP). A lack of government response to protest demands soon led villagers to demand a meeting with prime minister Anand, and 3000 gathered at Pak Chong to wait for an official delegation (30 June 1992 BP).

A fact finding mission led by the Deputy Permanent Secretary for the interior arrived but was turned away by demonstrators who said they would only meet with the Prime Minister Anand himself. The rally continued to call on the government for a definite decision regarding the KJK program and the release of the 17 villagers arrested in the second eviction of Nong

Yai village. In answer to Deputy Interior Minister Anek's comments that the rally was organised and run by NGOs, villagers announced that they were not influenced by NGOs and that they had initiated the protest themselves. After the official envoy had been sent away demonstrators spilled onto the Friendship Highway and blocked traffic for fifteen minutes (1 July 1992 The Nation; 1 July 1992 BP).

The following day the mood of the rally was more militant. This mood worried some anti-KJK academics who called for an end to the protest and alleged that villagers had been incited by students (2 July 1992 The Nation 2 July 1992 BP). On July 2 villagers blocked the highway for seven hours and officials finally started negotiations with the rally organisers who were both NGO activists and village leaders (3 July 1992 BP).

The highway blockade is described by NGO activists and villagers who were present as the turning point in the campaign. The blockade had taken on a symbolic importance for participants; they saw it as the final stand that led to the demise of KJK. Villagers and NGO workers who participated in the rally believe that without the blocking of the highway KJK would never have been stopped and villagers would never have been able to enter into negotiation with authorities (Field notes 1993).

The negotiations between officials and villagers accompanied by NGO workers that followed are retold with pride by villagers and NGO workers who were involved in them. Deviating from normal procedure which requires the *phu noi,* (junior less important people), to defer to the *phu Yai,* (important people), rally representatives refused to go to the meeting room prepared by provincial authorities and invited officials to a smaller room. The size of this room meant that only the most important

government representatives could attend the negotiations and ensured that they did not outnumber villagers and NGO workers. The agenda of the negotiation meeting was set by village leaders who presented officials with typed proposals. Officials were then briefed on abuses in the KJK program and were presented with prepared documents and systematic proposals on forest management alternatives for circulation. The meeting was tape recorded and broadcast to the thousands waiting outside. Bamrung led negotiations and informed fellow negotiators that rationality was not enough to convince officials. At any sign of resistance from officials he beat the table and threatened to end the meeting. Apparently NGO workers were worried by such aggressive behaviour, but villagers at the rally site were very impressed (9 July 1992 BP, Field notes 1993; TDN no: 22 1993:41).

After eight hours of negotiations a written commitment from officials was finalised. Villagers and NGO workers were assured that KJK would be abolished and that they would be temporarily allowed to return to their land. Forestry Department officials were the most inflexible during the negotiations and demanded that villagers be defined as their RFD employees and under their legal jurisdiction. This demand was dropped after telephone calls to Anand who decided only families in A1 watershed areas would be under Forestry Department supervision. The next day it was announced that protesters would be allowed to return home for at least the next planting season and that the Forestry Department was instructed to suspend tree planting. However it was made clear that at this stage title deeds would not be issued and that the seventeen villagers arrested in the second eviction of Nong Yai village would have to go to court. However Deputy Interior Minister Anek offered to help pay the fines of the villagers if they were found guilty (3 July 1992, 5 July 92, 9 July 92 BP).

The agreement was greeted by the anti-KJK movement as a victory for the rural poor, and villagers returned home amid a general mood of celebration. Residents of Nong Yai village returned a little later than others as it seemed that forestry officials would not let them return. Although they were eventually permitted to return, the RFD had intensified planting and nearly half the village's farmland went under eucalyptus tree within a week. Planting had also been intensified over the course of the Pak Chong rallies in various other areas (11 July 1992 BP).

NGOs in the KJK protests

The anti KJK campaign obviously involved not only villagers who were directly affected by the relocations, but also a diverse array of other forces. The most prominent of these were NGOs who were involved in organisation and coordination of protest.

NGO activists involved in the anti KJK movement from the Thai volunteer centre, Project for Ecological Recovery (PER), N.E NGO-CORD, and the Northeast Farmers Assembly described the period as one of great change for NGOs and villagers. It was believed that a significant step had been achieved towards strengthening the alliance between NGOs and rural people. NGOs stated that the most important lesson they drew from the campaign was that NGOs alone are nothing, their importance is in their facilitation of the people's will. The most important outcome of the KJK campaign for villagers was seen by many NGOs involved to be the growth of an Isarn culture of protest which would strengthen the villagers in the future; a belief drawn from their belief in Communal Culture (Field notes 1993).

Over the KJK period many networks were created in Northeast Thailand and between regions. Networks of teachers, lawyers, and other professionals were created and existing networks strengthened. A villagers' network for thirty six different Northeast forests, called the Village Committee for Solving the Problem of Land in Thirty-Six Forests, was formed in conjunction with NGOs and Northeastern intellectuals. From this loose alliance developed the Northeast Farmers Assembly for the Protection of Land Rights and Natural Resource Recovery. Following this development various other networks formed around such issues as contract farming, livestock farming, salt mining and dams. A Small Farmers Council of Isarn was also created (Field notes 1993). This council has had a high profile over the last three years carrying out a succession of protest actions which will be described in the following chapter.

NGOs played a crucial role in providing regional coordination and drawing together the concerns of environmentalists and human rights organisations about KJK. NGOs provided avenues for discussion and communication between villages and provinces, brought people from the middle class in the Northeast into alliance with villagers and facilitated regional protest. In the case of the Pak Chong Rally, NGOs and students organised support action in Bangkok, provided food and facilities and made media contacts. It is clear that NGOs contributed greatly to the capacity of villagers to organise the KJK protests, especially by encouraging village level and intra-village organisation and coordination (Field notes 1993).

Conclusion

The most prominent themes in the KJK protests concerned the lack of consultation with villagers over the relocations, the coercion and violence

involved, and the need for a democratic approach to the village. As Murray has concluded, the way in which relocations were carried out provided the main impetus for protest. However the existence of strong village level and village-led conservation movements added a distinct environmental flavour to the protests.

Although the conflict essentially pitted whole villages against the state, there were also divisions between villagers because of conflict over land and the involvement of some villagers in illegal logging. Nevertheless, NGO focus on the importance of village level decision making and village level organisation, from Communal Culture, can be seen to be both a strength for the KJK movement and to reflect basic realities about the conflict.

One final point concerning the military needs to be made here. The fact that the KJK protests occurred at a time when there was considerable nationwide agitation for greater democracy and a diminished role for the military meant that the campaign was particularly intense. Furthermore, the success of the protests was, in part, due to the democratic space opened up by nationwide campaigns for democracy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AFTER THE KOR JOR KOR PROTESTS

The growing plurality of the Thai political arena and diminished military power in the period after 1992 and KJK has not meant that conflicts over natural resources have become less apparent. There have continued to be many conflicts over natural resources between state and business on the one hand and villagers on the other. Although KJK protests changed some government forest policy, land and forest have continued to be central factors in the natural resource conflicts and Dong Yai forest has again been the scene of more conflict in the third eviction of Nong Yai village in 1994.

Low prices for agricultural commodities have also caused protest and conflict between villager and state in this period. In the Northeast, natural resource conflicts and protests over pricing have been drawn together in protest actions that incorporate a range of demands. The coordination of these Northeastern protests has been carried out with NGO support and once again the leadership of Bamrung. Bamrung's central role illustrates the willingness of those activists who believe in Communal Culture to campaign for very concrete and realistic demands.

NGOs and their allies have continued to criticise government and corporate sector activity in rural areas. They have continued to campaign for the decentralisation of natural resource management to the village level and to promote village participation in decision making. However there has been evidence of a tendency to rethink the emphasis on the unity of interest in the village. Fundamental to this questioning were the circumstances surrounding the third eviction of Nong Yai and the decision of NGO-CORD to support this eviction.

Forest policies after KJK

The *Kor Jor Kor* protests curtailed the expansion of large scale eucalyptus plantations and resulted in greater land reform efforts over 1993 and 1994. Military influence in the forest also diminished. However eucalyptus trees remained part of reforestation efforts and villagers continued to be evicted from their villagers in national parks and wildlife reserves.

The Anand government abolished KJK and outlawed the leasing of land for plantations in forest reserves by private business. Shortly afterwards the second round of elections for 1992 were held. Military supported parties did badly and the military's role in politics was seriously curtailed. The party which attained the highest number of elected seats in parliament was the Democrat Party led by Chuan Leekpai who formed government in September. Whilst the contentious Thai forestry Master Plan remained under discussion and review, there were two main changes in forest policy under the Chuan coalition. The first was a move away from large scale eucalyptus reforestation and the second was an escalation of land reform for those villagers in forest reserves.

After KJK the focus on large scale monoculture plantations was revised, and no new large scale eucalyptus plantations were planned. Nevertheless plans for the profitable reforestation of forest reserves were not abandoned by officials. The RFD now plans that small holders will grow indigenous species and eucalyptus trees under contract farming with local pulp mills. Farmers receive subsidies of 2850 baht per year at 5% interest for fast growing species and 3000 baht per year for five years for

other species (Taylor 1994:8). In addition private business is still permitted to lease land in forest reserves in a decision that overturned the Anand government's decision. The future of eucalyptus plantations is not entirely clear (22 Oct 1993 BP). The RFD itself has continued to promote eucalyptus tree projects in their own reforestation of forest reserve land. Such activity led to protest and conflict between the RFD and villagers in Surin and Roi Et in 1994 (16 Feb 1994, 3 May 1995 BP).

In mid-1993 a cabinet resolution was passed which confirmed that all villagers who had lived in forest reserves before the reserves were declared would be granted land title. All those villagers who settled in the forest between the declaration of the reserve and the time land was declared to be part of the land reform program would be granted new land or issued with non-saleable deeds through land reform. Under the 1975 Land Reform Act only 3.4 million rai was distributed to landless farmers but from 1993 the Chuan government planned to distribute 4 million rai a year. It succeeded in redistributing 10 million rai of land in less than two years (22 May 1993, 1 Jan 1995 BP). During 1994 a number of protests were held by villagers dissatisfied with land reform because they were granted non-saleable titles, given unsuitable sites or had not yet received any land or documentation. However the most serious criticism of land reform came from opposition parties who used it in the attempt to bring down Chuan's coalition. It was found that at least eight rich businessmen, including the husband of a Democrat MP, had been granted forest land in Phuket under the land reform program. The size of their plots varied; the husband of the MP was granted 98 rai. Accusations gained momentum over 1994 and resulted in the break up of Chuan's coalition in 1995. A new election had to be held before the government's term expired (18 Feb 1994, 24 Nov 1994 BP).

Reforestation remained an issue of central political importance. A major reforestation effort, involving predominantly indigenous species, was also announced in honour of the king's 50th anniversary. The king's anniversary reforestation project did, however, also involve eucalyptus trees. It was reported that one village had its community forest removed to make way for eucalyptus tree under the reforestation project (6 Feb 1994 BP).

In other major changes to forest policy a National Parks Act was enacted in 1994. This act defined those villagers who lived in national parks as illegal occupants. Evictions from national parks began in the latter half of 1994 resulting in widespread protest and conflict between authorities and villagers.

Two further changes in forest policy represent the weakening of the military's role in the forest and greater powers of decision making for the agricultural minister over the utilisation of forest reserves. In September 1993 the Council of Economic Ministers decided to withdraw the military's privilege of being able to use protected forest land in security programs without having to seek government permission (27 Sep 1993 BP). Cabinet also approved the extended power of the agricultural minister in the forest the following year. They granted authority to the agricultural minister to approve state-run development projects in forest reserves, authority that had previously been limited to cabinet itself (14 Sep 1994 BP).

The movement against KJK did succeed in making some changes to forest policy, and direct military involvement in the forest was curtailed. However eucalyptus trees, evictions and land reform continued to cause conflict between villagers and the state after KJK.

Rural protests post KJK

Conflict over forest reserve land has been one of several high profile resource conflicts since the end of the KJK program. The following description of rural protest since KJK illustrates the perpetuation of conflict between state and village over natural resources, particularly forest land. However, the problems of the market, *panha talad,* specifically the low prices for farmers' for agricultural produce, has also been frequently taken up by protesters. Protests held by Northeastern farmers since the KJK protests have raised a number of concerns together, with particular prominence given to problems of the market. This development seems to vindicate Turton's conclusion in a 1984 study that one of the biggest concerns held by farmers was "problems of the market" (Turton 1984:35).

Conflict between state and village over forest land certainly did not end after KJK. Although the TDN describes forestry conflicts as "relatively subdued" in 1993 (TDN no:26 1994:2), there were constant reports of conflict in the English language press. During the first half of 1993 protests occurred about forest land issues especially in Northern provinces where relocation from national parks began to take place. Chiengmai villagers tried to end large scale logging in watershed areas near their villages and ordained 1000 trees which were subsequently cut down (24 Feb 1993 BP). Villagers in Tak protested at inadequate compensation for relocation from park land (24 April 1993 BP), Udon Thani villagers protested at a village forestry project (1 April 1993 BP) and villagers who were to be evicted from Krochan National Park in Petchaburi and Salaeng Luang National Park in Pitsanaluk also held protests (4 April 1993 BP). Villagers in Chachoengsao who received land under Chuan's land reform program gathered in protest at the

unavailability of suitable fertile land (8 May 1993 BP). Khon Kaen villagers demanded land titles as promised under the KJK settlement in a number of rallies. After two protesting villagers were arrested protest escalated (14 June 1993 BP).

As the year progressed various other conflicts over resources occurred in various provinces. Protests over the construction of Pak Mun dam continued to have a high profile over the year with the government ruling out any review of the project in March (5 March 1993 BP). Plans to build a quarry in Udon Thani were met with opposition by villagers and local monks who wanted to protect local pre historic paintings at the quarry site. Villagers also rallied against illegal pawn ponds in southern mangrove forests (27 March 1993, 8 Oct 1993, 2 July 1993 BP).

However conflicts over resources were not the only cause of rural protest or conflict between state and village. The problem of falling prices for rice caused protest in May. Farmers' representatives expressed disappointment with the Chuan government for failing to solve rice problems. When Chuan visited Khon Kaen in May he was met with rallies of farmers who condemned the falling price of paddy and called for a no confidence motion in the government because of their inaction on the matter (2 April 1993, 25 May 1993 BP). Soon afterwards a rally of thousands of farmers protested over the low price of paddy in Kampaeng Phet. Farmers came from eleven provinces, mainly from Central Thailand. This rally became violent when protesters blocked the Asian Highway and were attacked by police. As a result one protester was killed by police. However the rally did succeed in forcing the government to agree to raise the paddy price (12 May 1993 BP).

Demand for higher farm produce prices was taken up in protest again later in the year in the Northeast. This campaign was held in conjunction with other demands. In November Bamrung led another protest to Pak Chong in his role as leader of the Association for Small Scale Farmers of Isarn (ASSFNE).[1] This began with a rally in Nakhon Ratchisima which demanded official documents to certify land rights for those villagers who had been living in forest reserve for over ten years. The rally was soon joined by villagers who had various other demands, including higher prices for paddy, cassava and pigs and assistance with debts accumulated under unsuccessful government programs for the cultivation of silkworms and cashews. Villagers from Ubon Ratchatini also protested for compensation for losses caused by the construction of Pak Mun dam. As many as 20, 000 villagers accompanied by students and NGO activists started to march to Bangkok to present their demands (3 Nov 1993 BP).

This march was taken seriously by the government who stopped protesters from proceeding to Bangkok by flying six farmers representatives, led by Bamrung, to Bangkok for negotiations. It was agreed that three sub-committees would be convened immediately on the issues of low farm product prices, land rights documentation and the problems of government initiated cultivation projects (4 Nov 1993 BP).

However, within three months the ASSFNE had called another rally to condemn the government for their lack of action and for ignoring the plight of farmers. Rally demands again centred around land ownership rights, compensation for land lost to the Lam Sae Dam, prevention of

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[1]The ASSFNE was formed out of existing networks in response to the formation of the National Agricultural Council in 1993. The council was conceived as an advisory body of business people and government officials which would advise on which crops should be planted and administer a crop registration system. Apichai characterised it as the strongarm of agri business and it was widely opposed by NGOs and farmers (TDN no:22 1993:27).

falling agricultural commodity prices and assistance with debts incurred as a result of government projects (6 Feb 1994 BP). A convoy of 2000 people with 80 trucks blocked the friendship highway and headed towards Bangkok to join a planned protest in front of government house before being blocked by barricades of border police commandos (9 Feb 1994 BP), but protesters were eventually permitted to continue to march whilst negotiations place in Bangkok. Settlement was reached within a few days. Lam Sae Dam protesters were promised quick compensation and commitments given to find solutions for the other problems guaranteed (12 Feb 1994 BP).

Throughout 1994 specific protests over natural resources continued. High profile disputes over land between the state and villagers occurred in various provinces. The Dong Yai case discussed in the next section is one notable example. In the same month, Chachoengsao villagers who had been evicted and resettled on disputed land called on Chuan to return their original land to them (22 Mar 1994 BP), and a seven day protest in Kanchanburi attracted 20, 000 villagers from six districts who were involved in a dispute with the military over the right of villagers to own and occupy land they had lived on for generations but which was officially military owned (30 April 94, 3 May 94 BP). Later in the year villagers in Petchabun rallied against the resettlement of hill tribes in their district, which they claimed could not support an influx of people (16 Oct 1994 BP).

Eucalyptus trees, dams and pollution all continued to cause conflict. In February 1000 villagers in Roi Et gathered in protest at a eucalyptus tree project that had replaced community forest. They were granted permission to clear 1,700 rai of eucalyptus and plant fruit trees and indigenous species instead (16 Feb 1994 BP). Villagers in Surin rallied a few months later over the same issue when the RFD planted eucalyptus on their farming land (3

May 1994 BP). Concerns about pollution from a proposed pulp mill in Si Saket and contamination from a sugar refining factory in Udon Thani sparked protest and the arrest of 22 farmers for encroaching on Thap Khwai National Park attracted thousands to rallies (7 April 1994, 9 July 1994 BP).

Renewed protest over the Pak Mun Dam took place. Villagers whose livelihoods have been affected by the dam construction, including those who found their fish catch was diminished, demanded compensation. A two month sit-in at the Ubon Town Hall was joined by Sirindhorn dam protesters and a fifteen day march to Pak Mun Dam site by protesters ended with violence when police and soldiers beat up protesters at the dam site (25 Apr 1994 BP). A hunger strike by villagers and students also took place but drew no concessions from the government over compensation (4 May 1994, 11 May 1994 BP). Rallies and protest actions continued for the rest of the year even after construction work was complete (16 Oct 1994, 16 Dec 1994 BP).

Similarly the proposed Kaeng Sua Dam in Phrae also sparked protest. In June 1994 thousands of villagers who would be affected by the construction of the dam asked the study team sponsored by the World Bank to withdraw from the project (10 June 1994 BP). In an interesting development the government attempted to gain public support for the dam by using the developing democratic spirit and tradition of rallies and seminars, which had emerged during campaigns around resources. A "public hearing" was organised by the House Monitoring Committee in August. 30, 000 villagers were invited to the seminar which was addressed by pro dam speakers. Participants were handed out survey forms, and 25, 000 forms supporting the construction of the dam were handed in. Villagers who were to be affected by the dam were not invited, and no time

was allocated for critics of the dam on the agenda. The seminar was condemned by many NGOs and criticised in the Thai and English language press as biased and designed to misrepresent public feeling (TDN no:25 1994:29).

1995 started with the third rally organised by the ASSFNE setting off from Nakhon Ratchasima in January with 10, 000 villagers. Demands included a delay in debt repayment to BAAC for the rice mortgage scheme, assistance for debt ridden farmers who participated in failed government initiated cashew, silkworm and cattle projects, and allowance for cattle raisers be allowed to manage the Cattle Fund. Villagers also demanded the allocation of money to villagers affected by the Lamsae dam, assistance for pork and cassava farmers, and investigation of certain land disputes in national forest reserves and national parks, and the right for small farmers to attend the National Farmers Council meetings. Negotiations with government representatives were successful, some demands were won and it was guaranteed that the ASSFNE would continue to be allowed to protest (26 Jan 1995, 3 Feb 1995 BP).

In the same period there were various protests over natural resources. A prolonged campaign in Loei demanded the permanent closure of a quarry which caused serious air pollution problems (4 Mar 1995 BP). Villagers refused to make way for some Eastern Sea board development (5 Mar 1995 BP). Protests over the Pasak and Kompolow dams in Lopburi were also reported (5 Mar 1995 BP). Villagers removed from Khao Ang Rue Nai wild life park in Prachin Buri reclaimed their land (30 Mar 1995 BP). Elsewhere, conflict over the removal of villagers from national parks continued (3 Mar 1995 BP) and the conflict between the military and Kanchanburi villagers flared up (6 Mar 1995 BP).

Conflict over natural resources, particularly forest land, clearly continues to result in considerable conflict between the village on the one hand and state and business on the other. Protest over the low prices of various agricultural commodity has been the other major protest evident since KJK, and this protest has also been a direct confrontation between the government and villagers. The ASSFNE protests are particularly interesting in that they were able to draw villagers with various problems together. This organisation illustrates the presence of significant organisational strength on the part of Northeastern farmers.

One final comment needs to be made about Bamrung's strong role as an activist leader of the ASSFNE protests. Bamrung's ideas about the Communal Culture have already been discussed in chapter four. His rejection of centralised industrial society, his promotion of a return to self reliance and the romanticism of the village do not prevent him from entering into negotiations with the government on a range of demands that are designed to make life within centralised industrial society easier for those villagers involved. Once again it can be seen that those activists who advocate many of the ideas of Communal Culture, in this case a leading figure in the formulation of Communal Culture thought, can be very pragmatic in their political action.

The third eviction in Dong Yai Forest and the disappearance of Pra Prajak

Of the many protests in rural Thailand over land and natural resources he third eviction of Dong Yai forest in 1994 was to be one of the most widely publicised and most violent. If the KJK campaign contributed

to changes in forest policy and the construction of a growing movement in Isarn the central symbol of Pra Prajak and the villagers in Dong Yai forest were not so enduring.

In December 1992 Pra Prajak left Huay Nam Phud Sanctuary with the Deputy Interior Minister carrying his belongings. He was given degraded forest land in Dong Yai forest and was quoted as saying that he had been too rigid in the past and had to adjust himself to a new situation (25 Dec 1992 BRW). It was not clear why he had been convinced to leave the sanctuary, although rumours of corruption and bribery abounded. Through 1993 and 1994 Pra Prajak was often in the news as the central figure in various logging scandals. Photographs implicating him in the trade of illegal logs were printed in a number of newspapers but were eventually found to be a misrepresentation of the truth. The RFD filed several charges against Pra Prajak concerning his presence in the forest, the last one being a charge of illegal tree cutting in a national forest after he cut some dying trees to build an open air prayer hall (17 Apr 1994 BP).

By the end of 1994 Pra Prajak had left the monkhood and disappeared. The English and Thai press and NGOs speculated on his disappearance and various theories were suggested to explain his demise. However the World Wildlife Fund's Project Working with Forest Monks concluded that he has simply succumbed to exhaustion and fear against the power of vested interests in illegal logging (TDN no:26 1994:60). Whatever the truth behind Pra Prajak's disappearance, it clearly brought an end to his role as figurehead for the cause of village management of forests. By mid 1995 reports of his fate in the print media simply reported that he had recently been captured by police in a Khon Kaen condominium wanted on allegations of illegal dice games and forest encroachment (10 May 1995 BP).

The villages in Dong Yai Forest suffered a comparable fate. In the two years since the end of the KJK four villagers had been resettled in Dong Yai Forest. Internal conflict beset Nong Yai forest and a young village leader against illegal logging and relocation was shot in 1993, presumably by someone with a vested interest in the illegal logging trade. His relatives and wife were convinced powerful interests were involved and described frustration and despair at the probable fate of their village and forest (Field notes 1993).

Meanwhile an illegal real estate racket gained momentum in the forest and Thaplan National Park. Villagers from surrounding provinces paid money to a group of Pakham villagers to settle in the forest with the promise that they would receive title deeds under land reform. In fact this was based on a misunderstanding of land reform measures as only those villagers present before October 1992 were eligible for land reform. Nevertheless settlers poured into Dong Yai Forest from nineteen different provinces to live on prepared plots which were powered by an electric generator. Forestry officials were also implicated in the real estate scam and it was alleged that leaders of the scam were ex communist insurgents who had weapons to fight authorities and were organising themselves for armed conflict (3 Mar 1994, 20 Mar 1994 BP).

The National Security Council was given the responsibility to evict villages in Dong Yai forest. NGO-CORD entered into an agreement with the National Security Council to cooperate in the eviction of villages from the forest in order to declare a wildlife sanctuary. NGO-CORD agreed in principle that the villagers had to be evicted in order to save the forest but insisted no violence be used. However, after shots were fired at officials by

villagers in November authorities developed a more aggressive approach. After a February deadline one thousand policeman and border police carried out a pre dawn raid on the village. Shots were fired by both sides and five policeman and twelve villagers were injured. Villager blocked a nearby highway, commandeered a bus and closed the road for several hours. Twenty seven villagers were arrested (3 Mar 1994, 20 Mar 1994 BP).

After this incident the arrest of seven villagers involved in the real estate racket the quiet eviction of the forest was possible. NGO-CORD conducted an inquiry into the violence which had occurred and concluded that the force used was unnecessarily harsh. It was concluded by NGO-CORD that the incident proved the continuing inability of bureaucrats to negotiate with the villagers in the forest. Many of the villagers, in the view of NGO-CORD, realised they had been cheated with the sale of the land and had encroached on the forest and wanted to find solutions to their predicament. However NGO CORD representatives accepted the arrests of villagers acting as leaders for the land scales and logging and announced that the most important outcome was that those people behind the land sales and logging in Dong Yai forest were stopped and punished (20 Mar 1994 BP; TDN no:24 1994). Importantly this incident led some NGO members to question earlier assumptions about the essential unity of the village and to recognise the existence of conflicts of interest within village communities.

The demise of Pra Prajak and the villagers' conservation movement in Dong Yai forest and NGO-CORD's cooperation with the National Security Council in the eviction of Nong Yai village are all, in part, the results of conflicts of interest at the village level. Some villagers worked for the conservation of forests and others carried out illegal real estate

developments and logging. In the third eviction of Nong Yai village government and village were still in conflict over natural resources. However this time the government could safely claim environmental motives whilst villagers could not. In this scenario NGO-CORD chose to support government evictions. Their concern became the humanitarian eviction of villagers, not village management of the forest.

NGOs Post KJK

As the military have receded from the political arena, NGOs, including rural development NGOs in Northeast Thailand, have increasingly focused on the nature of government and big business alliances and the affect of this alliance on villagers. Democracy and the participation of villagers in the national democratic process was a strong focus of NGO work in the 1992 elections. However, disappointment in the chuan government led to some disillusionment with the commitment of the government to dealing with villagers' problems and a growing criticism of civilian politicians. Strengthening community organisations in the village and the decentralisation of the management of natural resources remained at the forefront of NGO policy after KJK, and NGO commitment to such policies were even strengthened by the growing antagonism to civilian politicians and their promotion of big business. At the same time there has been some revaluation of the central motif of Communal Culture, the belief that the village is the main unit of change.

The participation of villagers in the national democratic process was of high priority for rural development NGOs in all regions, including the Northeast in the latter half of 1992. NGO committed themselves to involving villagers in the national elections in 1992 through Pollwatch.

This was the body working to combat vote buying and corruption in the election campaign and its activities drained a great deal election campaign, draining NGO resources and energy (17 Sep 1992 BP).

However after the election of the Chuan government in 1992 and a flush of first optimism in the potential of elected government there was a growing cynicism with the ability and motivation of the government to deal with rural problems. During 1993 NGOs started to express disappointment with the Chuan government. The issue of Pak Mun Dam and the Chuan government's determination to complete the project as planned is pinpointed by NGO workers as being the initial cause of this. As the military disappeared as the main antagonist of democracy the big business- government alliance became the focus of NGO criticism. Chuan started to come under increasing criticism from NGOs, and several NGO activists and students compared the Chuan administration unfavourably with the Anand government who were perceived as far more conciliatory (Field notes 1993). The CPD claimed the government were actually jealous of NGOs for being so close to the people (2 Apr 1993 BP), and Saneh Chamarik accused the Chuan government of being authoritarian (TDN no:22 1993:21-22). Prawase predicted a massive bloodbath in the future because of the problems of poverty, emphasising that this was a problem caused by civilian politicians rather than the military. Chamlong accused Chuan of forgetting about the rural poor (23 Feb 1992 BP).

The domination of the minority in the business industrial sector over the majority rural agricultural sector was articulated in increasingly militant and urgent tones in NGO literature. In the words of the Thai Development Support Committee, "Thai society has now come to a crossroads, marked by the direct confrontation between the Business-Industrial sector on the one

hand and the disadvantaged rural agricultural sector on the other"(TDN no: 24 1994:1). Sanitsuda described the cult of industrial development being overtaken by and the power of industrial giants. She envisaged the task of influencing this trend as very difficult and described the last two decades of NGO work as being like "banging our heads on a brick wall " (31 May 1994 BP).

The environment and the right of villagers to manage their own resources remained a central theme in NGO work and the government was urged to speed up the progress of the Community Forestry Bill to display their commitment to community forests (3 May 1994 BP). [2] However it is worth noting that there was significant dissent about the possibility of the decentralisation of natural resource management from a minority participants in the regional environmental forums organised by NGOs in 1993. In the Northern forum Apichai told the forum that it was futile at this stage to hope that the government would give more power to communities to manage their own resources. Apichai believed that people's organisations had not yet proved themselves to be capable of resource management. In fact Apichai was doubtful about the potential of people's organisations because he believed that the local traditions and norms that supported conservation and community action have been severely eroded and people's organisations are not sufficiently united or strong (22 Sep 1993 BP; Field notes 1993).

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[2]In fact some Environmentalists can be seen to now use the possibility of village protest as a threat to authorities.- Environmentalists warned EGAT that the construction of a nuclear power plant would result in trouble from nearby villagers who had recently sustained a protest over illegal prawn ponds (29 Oct 1993 BP).

Since the KJK program ended Northeastern NGOs tended to change their strategy and withdrew from the very public role they had during the height of the KJK campaign. Instead they have gone back into the village to carry out education campaigns and strengthen community organisations. This trend has been strengthened by the fact that foreign funding is increasingly being directed to Indochina instead of Thailand. There has been discussion about the need for new tactics and strategies to deal with this. One result has been that there is a greater feeling of urgency to create and strengthen self sufficient village organisations. In Southern Thailand NGO CORD is creating small fisherman's clubs along the coast to negotiate with big fishing companies and in Northeast Thailand the ASSFNE remains a focus (Field notes 1993).

The final issue in the NGOs under discussion is the increased questioning of the NGOs theoretical and strategic orientation to the village and the question of broader societal alliances. A 1993 NGO panel discussion on NGOs and the middle class illustrate some of the differences in approach which have emerged over the role of the middle class. To a large extent differences are based on different ideas of exactly where the interests of the middle class lie, with some NGO representatives equating the interests of the middle class directly with the interests of the corporate sector. A Project for Ecological Reconstruction (PER) representative defined the interests of the middle class as being in conflict with those of NGOs because the Thai middle class has not yet developed into a progressive force and stressed that it is essential for NGOs to retain their role as a force to lessen the power of the state and as facilitate peoples participation in society . On the other hand some participants emphasised the potential of the middle class to strengthen the NGOs cause and the important role that professionals already take in the NGO movement (17 Oct 1993 BP).

Of course this debate on the participation of the middle class seems rather strange coming from institutions who actually represent progressive middle class forces at work themselves. NGOs represent the largest face of middle class dissent. The discussion is really one about strategy and about how to best affect future developments in Thailand. Is it better to make strong alliances with middle class forces and government and participate in national politics or should strengthening the village and grassroots democracy be the central role of NGOs?

Many NGOs are hesitant to work with authorities. NGO CORD was criticised by some NGOs for working with the NSC in the third eviction of Nong Yai. However in one particularly interesting report NGO-CORD representative Anek Nakabut concluded from the illegal land deals in Dong Yai forest that NGOs need to broaden their alliance because criminal influences have infiltrated all levels of society, including the village. Therefore he drew the conclusion that NGOs need not only identify themselves only with local villagers, but try harder to form a broader movement. He believes that although the NGO's goal is to strengthen local communities against outside forces there needs to be a redefinition of the word "community", because the village is simply no longer a good enough definition, society has become more plural than that (31 May 1994 BP).

These comments and the debate about definitions of the "community" and the place of the village in NGO strategy illustrate some weakening in the commitment of NGOs to the acceptance of the village as a central entity in Thai society. This trend could be very significant for rural NGOs if their focus on the village shifts and broadens. However the discussion on the village is simply one noticeable tendency. Just as importantly, NGO

commitment to decentralisation to the village level and the creation of and strengthening of community organisations within the village remains central to their activity. Furthermore, experience with the Chuan civilian government did not lead to the establishment of strong links between rural development NGOs and the government and new commitments which could draw such NGOs out of the village.

Conclusions

Natural resource conflicts and conflict over the pricing of agricultural commodities continue to illustrate a conflict of interests between the village on the one hand and state and corporate sector on the other. An urban-rural divide is clear, and villagers often emerge with a unity of interests. For NGOs and their allies involved in the conflicts, the state and corporate sector continue to disempower and deprive villagers. The essential unity of the village remains central to NGO work. However this essential unity is not going unquestioned.

CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSION

State and corporate sector in conflict with the village

The conflict over natural resources in Thailand has occurred primarily between the state and corporate sectors on the one hand, and villagers on the other. Conflict has also been characterised by a broad dichotomy between urban interests and rural interests, rural interests being represented by the village and urban interests by the state and corporate sector.

The Kor Jor Kor example clearly illustrates the struggle over forest land and the motivations of the state, the corporate sector and the villager. Villagers needed to retain their place in the forest to preserve their livelihood, and in the Dong Yai example protect the forest from illegal loggers and eucalyptus plantations. Big business, government and the military all had economic interests in reforestation with eucalyptus plantations. Furthermore, the military had strong political motivations in the countryside and the government had urgent environmental considerations.

Amongst the many high profile resource conflicts in the 1990s the KJK conflict had the peculiarity of being directly connected with the political ambitions of the military. The KJK conflict took place during nationwide calls for democracy and a diminished role for the military. As a result, the demands from villagers in the forest were in unison with urban middle class calls for democracy, which gave the campaign a particular strength and intensity. Nevertheless the KJK conflict conforms in essence to a host of other conflicts over natural resources. It is the increase in the 1980s of the

direct economic influence of the state and big business in the countryside, in the context of dwindling natural resources, that laid the basis for resource conflict to occur. The conflict over eucalyptus plantations that preceded KJK are of course directly connected to the conflict under KJK. Villagers had already experienced the negative affects of the extension of state and corporate economic activity in the shape of eucalyptus plantations. KJK was in many ways simply an extension of these earlier conflicts over forest land. In addition conflicts other than forest conflict, such as conflict over the construction of dams and pollution from industrial enterprises, illustrate the economic objectives of government and business in the countryside and the resulting conflict with villagers.

After KJK there were many conflicts over resources between state and business, and villagers, predominantly over forest land, dams and pollution from business enterprises. These conflicts often stemmed from the extended utilisation of natural resources in the countryside by state and business. However there is another factor that caused conflict between state and village in this period: the environmental objectives of the government evident in the eviction of villagers from national parks and reserves.

Environmentalism and environmental objectives have been claimed by both state and village at various times during resource conflicts. During the KJK conflict villagers and NGOs campaigned extensively for the conservation of the forest against the intrusion of eucalyptus and the destruction of indigenous forest. The state and corporate sector were characterised as destroyers of the forest and villagers as protectors. The activity of the Dong Yai conservation group, the clearance of Thaplan National Park and the strong economic motivations of state and business to reforest with eucalyptus vindicate NGO and villagers' claims. There is

indeed strong evidence of the ability and motivation of villagers to protect natural resources and to campaign for environmental objectives, and for the state and business to pursue economic political objectives regardless of environmental costs.

However village and government interests in conservation are not undifferentiated. There are strong environmental tendencies within the RFD and conflict among officials working to protect the forest. RFD employees patrolling the forest suffer a high rate of intimidation and injury from those people involved in illegal logging. Furthermore there are conflicts of interest at a village level between those villagers involved in conservation and those involved in illegal logging and real estate development. This dynamic is clearly illustrated in the developments in Dong Yai forest and the third eviction of Nong Yai village.

Social and economic cleavages within the village

It has been clear from the beginning of this thesis that the conflicts under discussion are a stark illustration of the conflict between the state and corporate sectors and the village but this picture also obscures the reality of a differentiation of village society, or at least a conflict of interests at village level.

A comparison of the farmers' movement of the 1970s, and the literature written about it, with the situation today illustrates a fundamental difference. The 1970s emphasis on rural differentiation, and the polarisation between land owners and landless in the countryside, is very different from contemporary conflict. Contemporary conflict and the literature about it emphasises the dichotomy between rural and urban, state and village.

There is a regional factor here. The farmers' protests of 1973-1976 involved a lot of farmers from the central plains, the most highly differentiated region of rural Thailand, where issues of differentiation were most explosive. However, it was a national movement and had its strongest base in Northern Thailand and included involvement from Northeast farmers. Since this time tenancy has simply not emerged in any region as an issue that has fuelled significant discontent from villagers in rural Thailand.

We know from the literature described in chapter two that in fact social and economic differentiation in village society has been steadily deepening, even although tenancy has not increased substantially. Yet authors do not describe any definitive class formation and describe differentiation as both fluid and flexible (Turton 1982,1984,1989; Hirsch 1990b, 1993; Wattana 1991). In comparison regional differentiation, particularly urban-rural differentiation, is concrete and obvious.

In the resource conflicts institutionalised social and economic cleavages within the village do not emerge as factors that fuel protest. Nevertheless a conflict of interests at village level does emerge clearly. The conflict of interests between those villagers interested in conserving forest and those villagers interested in exploiting the forest was clearly illustrated in the example of Dong Yai forest in the Kor Jor Kor campaign and the evictions that followed the abolishment of the program. Evidence of fundamental conflict of interests over natural resource utilisation at village level is important. Such evidence challenges some of the fundamental ideas in the discourse of the middle class groups who campaign in support of villagers in the resource conflicts.

Communal Culture and middle class activism

Non-government organisations (NGOs) and the other middle class groups who have allied themselves with villagers in the resource conflicts, such as students, intellectuals and environmentalists, have been highly influenced by Communal Culture thought. This influence has put the village, often a very romanticised village, at the centre of theory and action, an approach that has both strengths and weaknesses. Romantic notions of the village hold fundamental problems for those organisations working with villagers. Nevertheless NGOs and their allies have been able to organise and coordinate significant protest at a village level and strongly articulate demands for environmentalism and democracy.

Communal Culture rests on the vision of the pre-capitalist village as an abundant, non-stratified, self-sufficient, communal and harmonious unit. Communal Culture encourages the middle class activist to strengthen these characteristics, which are said to have been weakened by modern capitalism and the triple alliance of state, capital and international capital in Thai society. Such visions of the pre-capitalist village actually echo older traditions within Thai historiography which stressed rural abundance and utopian visions of a non stratified village. Many of the ideas of Communal Culture also conform to populist traditions which have arisen in other parts of the world in periods of industrialisation, indicating that some of these ideas about the village are part of a universal response to the effects of industrialisation on the countryside. Furthermore there are strong international trends in contemporary world development theory which advocate models of development that concentrate on local grass roots community organisation and as such strengthen Communal Culture discourse.

The increasing social and economic differentiation within village society discussed in chapter one casts doubt on the validity of treating the village as a unified unit (or a potentially unified unit if the communal values of the village are strengthened according to Communal Culture theory). Nevertheless in the resource conflicts, and certainly within the KJK protests, the clear polarisation between village interests and the interests of the state and corporate sectors emphasise the village as a pragmatic and obvious orientation.

With Communal Culture discourse NGOs are committed to strengthening the village and unifying villagers to make use of their common strength. In the KJK protests NGOs played a crucial role in facilitating inter-village discussion, and coordinating central protest rallies. With the help of a forest monk, NGOs also supported existing village conservation efforts, encouraged new initiatives and lobbied for decentralisation of forest management to the local level. Such campaigns were crucial to the success of the KJK movement.

Furthermore NGO campaigns for the decentralisation of natural resource management and promotion of village conservation efforts have greatly benefited many local communities whose ability to manage local resources are not readily recognised by the government. NGOs also play a strong role in encouraging participation and democracy for villagers at a village and national level.

However we know that it will not always be possible to work with the village as a unit. Villages are not always united. There will always be divisions within villages and elements within the village which NGOs cannot work with. In the third eviction of Nong Yai village NGO-CORD

chose to support the government in the eviction of villagers because those communities who had recently resettled in Dong Yai forest were not committed to conservation of the forest. NGO-CORD could not build village organisations and campaigns within these communities because they did not share the same vision for the future of the forest.

Nevertheless NGO-CORD did advocate for the villagers in Dong Yai forest in the third eviction of Nong Yai village. Their support of the eviction was based on the condition that villagers would be respected and that no violence would be used by the government. Campaigns for the democratic rights of villagers are central to NGO work. This is certainly illustrated in the campaign against KJK when the coercive and brutal nature of the evictions, the importance of involving villagers in consultations and awarding appropriate compensation were the most central demands of the campaign.

Utopian visions of the village in NGO discourse has not necessarily meant that programs are not realistic. Bamrung, as a leader of communal Culture thought, has recently coordinated campaigns for compensation for dam construction, higher agricultural prices, and financial help for farmers involved in government agricultural development projects which sent farmers bankrupt. Such campaigns are not attempting to recreate a communal village, which may of course never have existed, but are reacting to the urgent problems of Isarn villagers.

The emphasis on the village is fundamentally connected with a commitment to local politics. However NGOs and those activists influenced by Communal Culture will find situations in which there are divided interests in village communities or village interests that do not

coincide with NGO interests. It will be interesting to see if this problem will indeed lead to more flexible definitions of a community and greater recognition of village level differences.

Village activism

Villagers are not passive actors in the process of Thailand's modernisation. Not only have they grasped the possibilities of modernisation, as described in chapter two, but they have actively campaigned to influence the transformations taking place in the countryside.

The division between rural and urban Thailand has been, and is continuing to be, a major theme in international media coverage of Thailand (Handley 1993:48). During the 1995 election campaign FEER journalists titled their article " The Instability Within"; the instability being that leadership and politics means different things to Thailand's rural and urban voters and that without politicians to bridge the divide another period of instability would follow. Authors stressed the paramount importance of local concerns, patronage networks and vote buying in the countryside as opposed to a more issue based approach in urban areas that focuses on democracy and efficient management of a globalising economy (Tasker and Vatikiotis 1995:14).

However we have seen that the conflict over natural resources between village and the state and corporate sectors involves villagers in issue based politics. We have also seen that urban middle class interest in democracy and environmentalism does converge with village interests, bridging the urban-rural divide. If perhaps the work of NGOs in the

resource conflicts misrepresents village level ideas it has not become clear in this thesis. In fact it seems there is significant common ground.

Rural villagers in Thailand remain significantly the most poor and disadvantaged group in Thailand. Natural resources have been villagers' safety valve and source of wealth but are now diminished and in increasing demand from the state and corporate sector. Whether greater numbers of the rural population are absorbed into the non-agricultural sector as a result of structural reform or not there will be a need to ensure rural populations have choices and can make a comfortable space for themselves within modern Thailand. In the short term, resource conflicts between the village on the one hand and the state and corporate sector on the other, will continue to proliferate. Furthermore NGOs and their middle class allies will continue to coordinate and organise campaigns with villagers, using utopian visions of the village to inspire campaigns to strengthen villagers bargaining power with state and corporate sector. However if social and economic cleavages at a village level and conflicts of interest within the village become more serious, NGOs and other middle class actors who subscribe to ideas about Communal Culture, will have to do some revaluation of their vision of the village.

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Field notes

Fieldwork for this thesis was undertaken from September-December 1993 in Bangkok and various provinces in Northern, Northeast and Southern Thailand. Fieldwork was carried out as a series of interviews and discussion in both Thai and English and recorded in notebooks.

In September 1993 I carried out interviews and discussions with the following organisation and institutions in Bangkok: Project for Ecological Recovery (PER); Local Development Agency (LDI); Australian International Development Aid Bank (AIDAB); NGO Cordinating Committee on Thai rural development (NGO-CORD); Thai Volunteer Service (TVS); Media Centre for Development; Faculty of Economics; Chulalongkorn University and Siam Rath.

In October and November 1993 I carried out interviews and discussions with the following organisations and institutions in Northern and Northeast Thailand: Chiengmai University, Northern Development Workers Association; Khon Kaen University; Isarn Information Centre; Northeast NGO-CORD; Northeast Farmers' Federation and Kalasin Forest NGO. I also visited Pra Prajak Kutachitto's Buriram forest temple and a Kalasin forest temple and attended Northeast NGO-CORD's regional meeting of village leaders in Khorat.

In December I carried out interviews and discussions with the following organisations in Southern Thailand: Phuket Environmental Group (PEG); Wildlife Fund Thailand (WFT) Yadfon Association and People's Organisation Development Project.

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