Relations Between Malay Rubber Producers and Thai Government Officials in a Development Project in Southern Thailand

by

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Declaration

Except where otherwise indicated this thesis is my own work.

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Abstract

Very few ethnographies have been written about the Malay-speaking areas of southern Thailand. Those that exist concentrate on Malay villages largely in isolation from their situation in the modern Thai state. Studies of local politics have focused on Malay separatism, and speak in terms of a Malay-Thai dichotomy which ignores internal divisions on each side. This dichotomy between Thais and Malays is a dominant theme in the social life of Yala province, and is partly characterised by a competition between the two groups to define the area's history, but it is complicated by other social divisions between town and country, and civil servants and rural dwellers. A study of the relations between urban Thai government officials and rural Malay rubber producers helps to highlight some of these issues.

The Department of Agricultural Extension carries out development projects, but is internally factionalised in a way that unevenly distributes power and knowledge. This limits official understanding of project implementation and the ability to change its course. The internal economy of rubber production and marketing in a Malay village is also factionalised, depending on people's relations to land, leaders, and creditors. The differentiation of power and knowledge in a Malay village affects people's desire and ability to participate in government schemes.

In the villages of Khala and Maju there are different outcomes of Malay participation in the same government project. In economic terms, the project failed in Khala but was a success in Maju. However, explanations by officials and villagers in both cases were inconsistent, and meant that no clear policy direction could be seen or implemented. Events in the two

villages also demonstrate a deeper crisis in the Thai government's relations with southern Malays.

The internal factionalism in both Thai officialdom and Malay villages is ignored in ethnographic, historical, and political studies of the south. Additionally, historians and political scientists have been unable to explain the absence of mass insurrection, given Thai-Malay political antagonism and campaigns for secession of the Malay region from Thailand. The events in Khala and Maju help to explain both this absence of revolt, and the failure of government development schemes. In doing so, they show that internal divisions of government and village are crucial to understanding current economic and political behaviour, and in assessing the prospects of future development in the area.

Explanatory Notes

(1) The names Khala and Maju, used for the two villages described in this thesis, are pseudonyms. The name Khala was used by Patya Saihoo (1974) to denote the same village, and I have followed his usage. The names I give to residents of Yala province are also pseudonyms.

(2) The Thai measurement "rai" commonly occurs in this thesis. It is a unit of area equivalent to 1,600 square metres. The Thai unit of currency is the baht. At the time of fieldwork $1 Australian was equivalent to about 18 baht: US$1 was the equivalent of about 25 baht.

(3) Abbreviations are explained where they first occur, but not subsequently. The three most common abbreviations I have used are:

DOAE - Department of Agricultural Extension

GPM - Group Processing and Marketing

RCM - Rubber Centre Marketing

(4) The name 'Pattani' is the official Thai transliteration for that town and province, and I have followed that usage. When referring to the local dialect of Malay or to Malay texts, I use the Malay transliteration of 'Patani'.

(5) Fieldwork was carried out in Thailand from November 1985 to April 1987, and again from July to August 1988. Research was conducted in both Thai and Patani Malay. Where I first use a Thai word, I have generally given a transliteration followed by the Thai script in parentheses, but subsequently I only use the transliteration. References to Thai language texts are in Thai script only and the texts are listed separately at the end of the bibliography. Patani Malay differs markedly in pronunciation and

vocabulary from Bahasa Malaysia, and in Yala is always rendered in Jawi script. I have transliterated Malay words in Roman script, and used spellings which conform to the Jawi rendition rather than local pronunciation.

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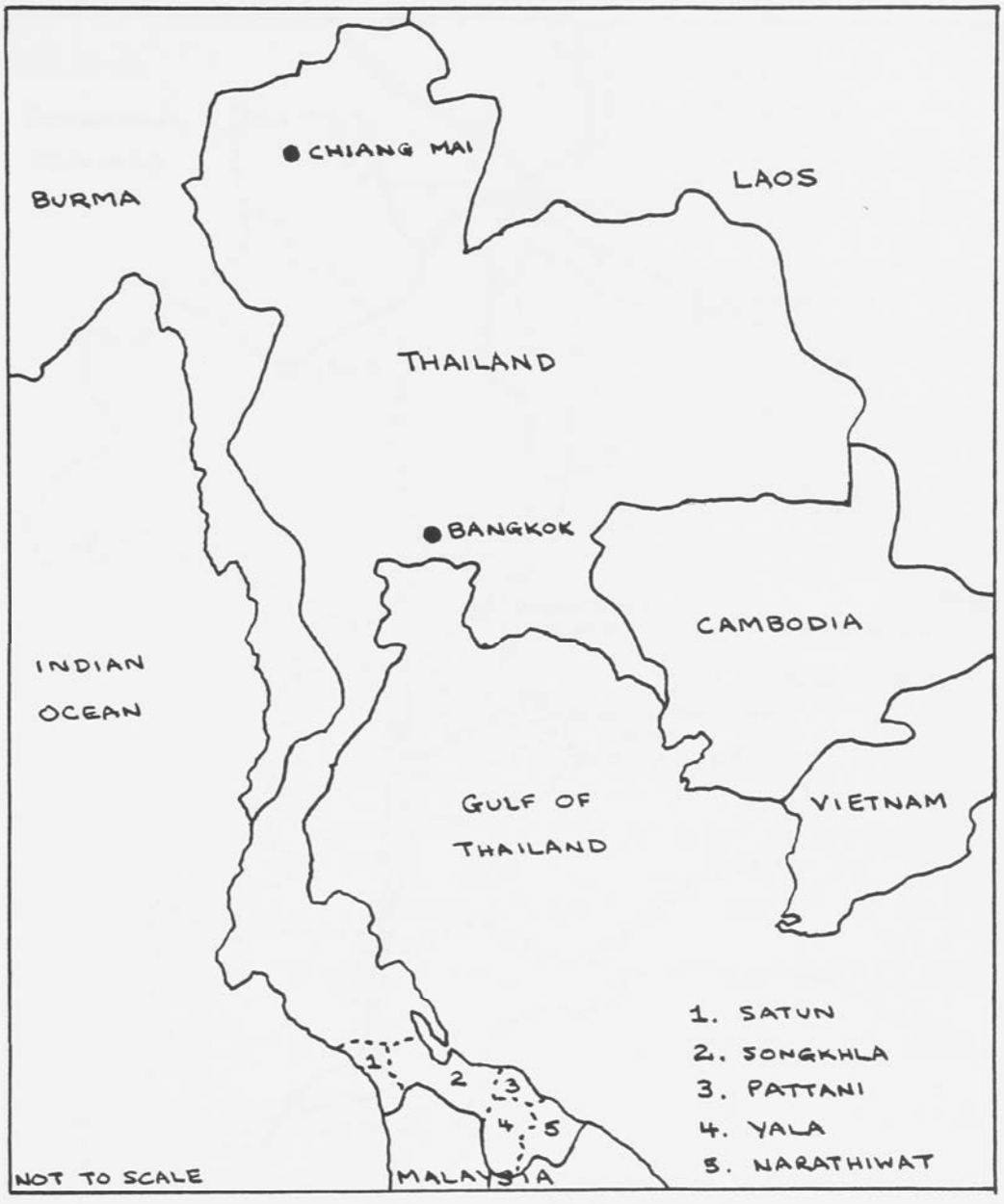
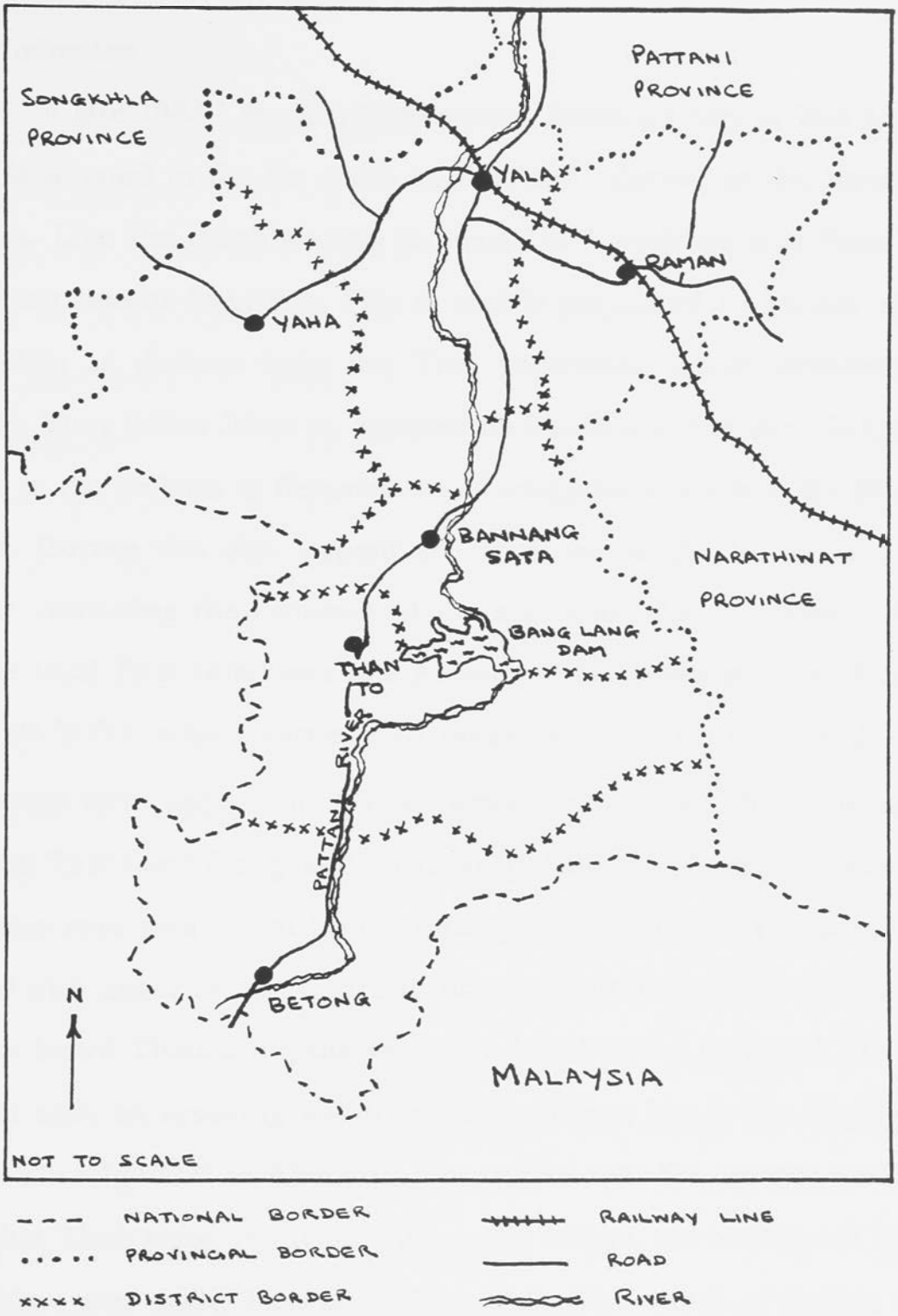


Map 1: Thailand, showing the southern border provinces



Map 2: Yala province

Chapter 1: Social Divisions in Yala

1.1 Introduction

In late 1988 I made a brief second fieldwork trip to Yala province, which is situated in the far south of Thailand adjacent to the border with Malaysia. Like the neighbouring provinces of Narathiwat and Pattani, and to a lesser extent Songkhla, Yala is mainly populated by Malays who see themselves as distinct from the Thai population which dominates the country. They follow Islam as opposed to Buddhism, and their language is similar to the dialects in Kelantan and Trengganu just across the Malaysian border. During this visit I spent an afternoon in the house of a Malay villager, discussing the economy of the area and relations between Malays and the local Thai administration. At one point I mentioned the Thai term *khaek* (แขก), which carries two meanings. On the one hand, it is a derogatory term applied to Malays, Arabs and Indians, but it is also the common Thai word for "guest". Thais keep these two meanings distinct, but the Malay man with whom I was speaking clearly did not. His face became flushed with anger and in a rare display of emotion he told me that every time he heard Thais using the word *khaek* he became incensed. He said it was not only an insulting way to refer to Malays, but it also implied that Malays were "guests" in Thailand. He argued that the reverse was in fact true, that Thais were invaders in the *negeri Melayu*, the traditional lands of the Malays (see Ladd Thomas 1974, p.561). The depth of feeling in this man's outburst was by now familiar to me, for I had seen it repeated in the words and actions of hundreds of Malays with whom I had lived, and with

whom I had discussed my research, from late 1985 to the middle of 1987, and again for two months in 1988. My home had been in Yala province, a dangerous border area to most Thais, but part of the heartland for Malays, their *negeri Melayu*, a term which conflates notions of settlement, state, and country (Coope 1976).

This thesis explores the relations between rural Malays and local officials of the Thai government in the context of a government-sponsored development scheme. It is not primarily concerned with what constitutes Thai or Malay identity, but rather with the mechanisms by which the two groups maintain their separateness while dealing with each other, and in particular, the ways in which rural Malays to a large degree have successfully resisted the encroachment of the Thai state into their daily lives. Scott (1985) has described how poor rural dwellers in the Malaysian state of Kedah have resisted economic changes that weaken or destroy their relations to land, arguing that the absence of open rebellion does not allow us to assume that these people are acquiescent or inactive in the face of onslaughts by the state and rich landowners, and delineating their forms of "everyday resistance". In Thailand, mass violence has occasionally formed part of Malay resistance to the incursions of the Thai state (Pitsuwan 1985), but that part has been minor, and since the late 1970s, non-existent. However, active resistance has continued in hundreds of villages throughout the southern border provinces where Malays are concentrated, and in the thousands of daily interactions between rural Malays and the Thai government officials sent to administer them.

This thesis describes some of that daily action, and looks at how effective Malay resistance and Thai inroads have been. After outlining some of the divisions in the social life of Yala province in this chapter, I will

describe in Chapter 2 the work and practices of Thai officials in one government department which carries out development schemes at village level. In Chapter 3 I examine the economy of a Malay village in detail, and in the following chapter look at how a development project was carried out there, and why it was unsuccessful. A contrasting example in Chapter 5 shows how the same project flourished in another village, but questions the nature of that success. In the final chapter, I discuss the way that previous authors have dealt with Thai-Malay conflict in this region, setting out my own four-stage argument to explain the success of Malay rural resistance to Thai domination, and the concurrent failure of the Thai state to be effective in penetrating Malay village life. I conclude by offering some thoughts on the prospects for economic development projects in the Malay areas of southern Thailand.

My decision to focus on an economic development project was largely determined by the fact that in the latter half of the twentieth century the Thai government has relied on such projects as a major strategy to intensify its control, and to extend the influence of central Thai culture over the full geographical extent of the Thai state (Riggs 1966; Feeny 1982). This phenomenon is not confined to the south, nor simply to the integration of minority groups in the country. In a monograph which examines development schemes in northern Thailand, Rubin's opening paragraph describes Thailand as a kingdom united by loyalty to the monarchy and the Buddhist religion (1974, p.2), yet a mere two paragraphs later he repudiates this introduction by admitting that the area is not fully integrated into the Thai state, and that the local Thais still retain a different dialect and different religious and agricultural practices. He tells us that central Thai

political control is relatively recent, and that government officials are far from happy about being posted so far away from Bangkok (ibid.).

The spread of central government control has of course been affected by the different character and problems of each region in Thailand. The southern border region, comprising the five provinces of Songkhla, Satun, Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat, has been of particular concern, because it is the home of Thailand's largest indigenous minority, the Malays. In 1986 there were 313,000 people in Yala province (see Map 1), about 80% of whom were Malays adhering to Islam. Similar concentrations of Muslims are found in the adjacent provinces, with the proportion steadily decreasing as one moves further north up the peninsula towards the central part of Thailand. There are Thai-speaking Muslims in Bangkok and other parts of the country, but the Islamic presence is most obvious in the south. A bus or train ride covering the 1,300 kilometres from Bangkok to Yala proceeds out of a central plain dominated by rice fields and temples, down a progressively more mountainous peninsula where mosques begin to denote settlements and rubber trees cover huge tracts of land. Closer to Yala, the Thai language is heard less often, replaced by the sharp rapid sounds of Patani Malay, while local dress increasingly resembles that of rural dwellers in Malaysia and Indonesia.

This part of Thailand has not been fashionable with anthropologists. Two ethnographies on Malay-speaking areas have been published, both by the same author, and both over twenty years ago (Fraser 1960; 1966). A substantial thesis describing a rubber growing village in Yala remains unpublished (Saihoo 1974). Even the Thai-speaking Muslims of Songkhla province have aroused little interest (see Burr 1974; McVey 1984). Golomb's recent study of traditional curing in Thailand covers practitioners in three

main areas of the country, including Malays in Pattani and Thai-Muslims in Songkhla, but the focus of his work means that little attention is given to Malay village social structure or aspects of life unconnected with traditional healing (Golomb 1985). The researchers who have given greatest attention to the border area are historians and political scientists concerned with the Malay separatist movements which have been a constant feature of political life in the twentieth century and at times an overt threat to Thai government control. I discuss the work of some of these authors in the final chapter of this thesis, but my main focus is on the less conspicuous yet far more common daily contacts between government officers and rural Malays.

The division between Thais and Malays is a persistent element in the social life of Yala. I noticed that in conversation people would regularly categorise themselves and others into either group, and that they generally ate in different shops, patronised different market stalls, used their respective languages in conversation, and avoided each other's places of worship. When they interacted there was a consciousness on both sides of dealing with someone who was different, something people told me, but often could not explain beyond saying that the other person did not understand them. There was no doubt that I was in Thailand. The Malaysian border, settled by treaty between Britain and Siam in 1909 (Hall 1981, pp.741-742), was 150 kilometres to the south, and the signs of Thai administration were everywhere in street names, government buildings, official uniforms, television and radio programmes, and the products on sale in the streets. Yet it was also clear that the geographical extent of the Thai state was not coterminus with the settlement of people who considered themselves Thai. The Malay presence here was unmistakeable and unavoidable. What struck me was that this pervasive social fact, this constant opposition between Thais

and Malays in the border provinces, had found little expression in the ethnographies of Fraser (1960; 1966) and Saihoo (1974). Their studies deal with Malay villages largely in isolation from their location in the Thai state, preferring to focus on the internal logic and structure of village life. That is partly a function of the period in which these authors wrote, and I will return to the problems with this perspective at the beginning of Chapter 6, but the point I wish to make here is that my own study adopts a different focus. I take the conflict between Thais and Malays, the location of rural Malays in the Thai state, and the attempts by the Thai state to penetrate and control the social life of this region, as central facts that people in the countryside must deal with regularly in their daily lives, and therefore as central concerns for my thesis.

In the rest of this chapter I look at how the conflict between Thais and Malays is expressed in competitive views of history, and then outline two other kinds of social division which complicate the basic Thai-Malay dichotomy, in order to place my own material in a wider social context.

1.2 Thais and Malays: creating history

A major arena of conflict between Thais and Malays is the struggle to tell the history of Yala, and of southern Thailand generally. This struggle takes place in both text and action. The foremost Malay history of the area is the *Hikayat Patani* (The Story of Patani), which was probably written before the early part of the 18th century (Teeuw & Wyatt 1970). It details the long history of Islam in the region, and chronicles relations between the sultanate of Patani and the royal court of Siam. A number of conflicts between the two are described, but Patani is characterised throughout as a free agent, seeking to establish ties with both the Siamese to the north and

other Malay states to the south, always aiming to preserve its independence. While the text portrays the culture of the Patani court, little mention is made of the majority of inhabitants and their way of life. Few Malays now living in Yala are familiar with this text, or aware of its existence, but on the other hand I commonly encountered people who could retell some of the episodes recorded in it. When recounting events from the *Hikayat Patani*, locals typically stressed the historical independence of Malays, though they were also often critical of the moral laxity of the sultans and their lack of commitment to Islam.

Another text that is little known outside a literate elite in the towns and those who are politically active, is the *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani* (History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani). This was written under the pseudonym of Ibrahim Syukri in about 1950, and was published in Kelantan in Malaysia (Syukri 1985). Those who translated the text into English note that it was published in Malay using Jawi script, the common written form of Malay in southern Thailand (Syukri 1985, p. xv), but there also appears to be a Thai version of the text (Pitsuwan 1985, p.293), so it may have been available in both languages. Whatever the case, the major reason that so few Malays in southern Thailand are familiar with this text is that it was banned by the Thai government because of its alleged promotion of Malay nationalism. The ban remains in force, but some copies of the book do circulate in Yala and neighbouring areas.

The first three sections of Syukri's book cover much the same historical ground as the *Hikayat Patani* before it. However, here the Thai designs upon, and jealousy of, the Malay kingdoms in the south are made more explicit from an early stage (Syukri 1985, pp.25, 44, 48-49). At the same time, the desire of Malays for independence and their loyalty to native

rulers are more strongly emphasised (ibid., p.36). The main task of Syukri's work is to catalogue events that occurred subsequent to the period covered by the *Hikayat Patani*, and here, especially in the fourth and final section of the book, Syukri puts great stress on the oppressive nature of Thai domination and the desperate plight of Malays under Thai rule.

Several themes run through this last section of Syukri's work, particularly the imperialist nature of Thai expansion (ibid., pp.49, 60-62, 65) and the arrogant nature of the Thais, who are said to care little for the welfare of Malays and have no wish to understand the Malay way of life (ibid., pp.48, 63, 67, 76). Thai officials are depicted as corrupt (ibid., pp.63-64, 69), their minions disposed to physical violence and oppression (ibid., pp.52, 66-67, 69), and the Thai administration is accused of taxing the wealth of the southern border region for the benefit of Thais elsewhere, leaving little or nothing to improve the conditions of Malays (ibid., pp.63, 76). Finally, the government's actions are represented as intentionally directed against the integrity and survival of Islam (ibid., pp.63, 67-68, 76). While Malays in Yala may not have read Syukri's book, all of these themes persist in their assessments of the Thai administration in Yala today.

Government suppression ensures that the texts of the *Hikayat Patani* and the *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani* are not commonly available in Yala, but the constant oral transmission of opinion and history by Malays guarantees that their themes are constantly kept alive. Tales of the former Malay rajas are still familiar to older people, and most villagers can give some account of the rajas that ruled in their areas and point to associated landmarks, though these are becoming less well-known amongst younger Malays in the towns. It is noticeable that the rajas are often depicted as cruel and vindictive leaders, and older people say that Malays are now better off

being led by religious leaders than by traditional aristocrats, reflecting an historical shift in power that has occurred since the late 19th century (see Pitsuwan 1985, Chs.2-4).

Muslim newspapers such as *Sanyalak* (สัญญลักษ์) and *Thang Nam* (ทางน้ำ) are Thai language publications from Bangkok which are supportive of Malay causes and points of view, and the Thai government suppresses issues or closes the presses when they challenge the government's view of history too openly. The government does not allow the publication of any local newspapers or magazines in Malay, so the large segment of Yala's population which is literate in Malay but not in Thai must rely on word of mouth to gather news and interpret their current and past history.

Malays have their view of history reinforced by the local settlement patterns of Thais. Rural Thais are few in number, their villages scattered sparsely in a wide Malay landscape, a pattern which continues into the northern states of Malaysia. Thais in the towns are more numerous, but most of these are newly settled civil servants. The small minority of Thai villages in Yala province is regarded by Malays as indicative of Malay historical dominance in the area, while the concentrations of Thai civil servants in the towns are seen as the outposts of invaders, necessary to control Malay lands and to subjugate the local residents. The government's programme to settle villages with Thais from areas further north, begun in 1954 (Hanna 1965b, pp.5-6), is seen as part of this subjugation process, and an attempt to falsify history by decreasing the proportion of Malays in the population.

Along with increased Thai settlement and administrative control has come a new vocabulary of names for sites and settlements throughout the south. Older Malay names have been replaced by unrelated Thai names, so that Yala town, for example, is always known as Nibong to Malays. This division holds true for hundreds of places in the region (Golomb 1985, p.192n), and the choice of name a speaker makes is thus a political choice. Malays consciously opt for the traditional Malay names in their daily speech, even using Malay terms for more distant places, such as Singora for Songkhla and Ligor for Nakhon Si Thammarat.

Malays accuse Thais of under-representing their numbers in official statistics. In 1986, the Malay population of Yala was officially listed as 75% (สำนักงานเลขานุการคณะกรรมการพัฒนาจังหวัดยะลา 2529, p.6), and Malays argue that this is a deliberate under-representation. They charge that the population count is based on whether people have Thai or Malay names rather than a survey question on religion, and that Malays are often given Thai names in official documents in order to under-represent them in statistics. Some Malays told me that if a baby was born in hospital, doctors would give it a Thai name on their records, and others told me they now had Malay names only because their relatives had gone to hospital and threatened the doctors in order to change the records. I was never able to confirm these stories, but Malays firmly believe that Thais do such things in order to disguise the fact that Malays have always been the large majority of the population and that the area is the Malays' traditional homeland, their *negeri Melayu*. Thus when looking at events in their daily lives, Malays in Yala constantly use and fashion history to

analyse what is currently taking place and to decide how it should be understood.

The Thais in Yala have quite a different view of the area's history and their role in it. Students in government schools are told of a long history of Thai settlement in the region, and this view is substantiated by Thai historians (see Jumsai, n.d., for an English language version of such a history). The Collected Chronicles (องค์การค้าของคุรุสภา 2506), a large anthology of historical records from the Thai royal court giving histories of its various domains, has sections in volumes two and three dealing with the southern Malay states of Kelantan, Pattani and Songkhla. The rulers of these areas are described as having their power endorsed by the Thai king, paying tribute to him, and seeking his assistance in times of trouble. Their status is clearly that of vassals. Emphasis is placed on Malays seeking succour and assistance from the Thai king and nowhere are the Thais portrayed as unwelcome invaders or as being in the Malay peninsula without right (see Wyatt 1974 for an English translation of the Chronicles' history of Kelantan).

Much of the modern Thai view of history in the south stems from the cultural chauvinism encouraged by Field Marshal Phibun Songkhram, who was dictator of Thailand from 1938 to 1944, and again leader from 1948 to 1951 (see Ray 1972, pp.189-217; Terweil 1980). Under Phibun's rule, attempts were made to enforce his own notion of Thai culture on all residents of Thailand, regardless of their origins. These attempts were initially directed at immigrant Chinese, whose loyalty as relative newcomers Phibun suspected, but later the drive was extended to all minority groups, including indigenous ones. By blurring the distinction

between immigrant and indigenous groups, the movement was able to propagate the notion that all minorities were "visitors" or "guests" in Thailand and should conform to "Thai" social behaviour when living in the land of the Thais (Ray 1972, p.197).

Another idea encouraged by the Phibun administration was that the borders of Thailand once extended far beyond their present limits, and that large segments of the country had been stolen by foreign, especially colonial, powers (Crosby 1945, pp.112-114). A Thai Navy poster dated 17 November 1938, which is still on display in the National Museum in Bangkok, has the surrounding countires of Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore labelled as formerly being part of the Thai kingdom (เดิมเป็นเขตต์ไทย).

Although more than thirty years have passed since the end of Phibun's rule, his ideas remain fixed in the minds of many Thais, especially the military elites, and continue to be part of the way that Thais in Yala explain their history. In 1986 I attended an army concert put on for the public in the district town of Yaha (see Map 2). The concert was a mixture of light comedy and popular songs, but had a serious finale in which the performers depicted Thai history in front of a large map of Thailand. The map at first showed the borders of Thailand extending well beyond their current limits, and as the narrator spoke, actors in various foreign costumes strode onto the stage to steal successive pieces from the map and run away with them. The narrator explained how the Thais were a people constantly under threat, who needed to be constantly vigilant against attempts to steal their territory. One of the stolen segments comprised the whole of present-day peninsular Malaysia, and the southern

border region where Yala is located was specifically indicated as one of the areas still under threat.

Recent Thai writing has introduced some new terminology into discussions of southern Malays. Non-Thai groups are now generally referred to by historians and others as "minorities" (ชนกลุ่มน้อย), abstracted out of the mainstream of Thai society and characterised as territorially internal but socially external (eg. ลิขิต ธีรเวคิน 2521). Malays in the southern border area are referred to as a "problem" (ปัญหา) in Thailand, shifting the responsibility onto Malays as opposed to the social behaviour of other groups (eg. ขจัดภัย บุรุษพัฒน์ 2515). On the other hand, a newspaper article in the Bangkok Post (21 Nov. 1986, p.38) discussing archaeological finds in Pattani constantly referred to "Thais" when in fact discussing Malays, thereby downplaying the distinctive Malay character of the area's history. Such examples are common in Thai academic writing and in the popular media, and strongly influence the ways in which Thais in Yala can, and do, speak of their history and current circumstances.

Nowhere is the conflict over history played out more clearly than in schools. Primary education in Thailand is compulsory, though many children in Malay villages attend only four of the six years of instruction, and some even less than that. Government primary schools not surprisingly teach the Thai view of history, but they must also compete with the informal religious classes which almost all Malay children attend after school hours from the age of about seven to early teenage years. These classes are held in mosque schools or the homes of religious leaders and their main function is to teach children to recite the Koran in Arabic. Malay

language and stories of Malay history are also commonly taught, and thus children are presented with a view quite opposed to that which they encounter in day school.

At the end of primary school, Malay children continuing their education are faced with a choice between attending a government high school or an Islamic high school (*pondok*). These pondok must be registered with the government and teach part of their curriculum in Thai, but they are chiefly concerned with instruction in Islam, Malay language and literature, history, and quite often, Arabic. Thai children do not attend pondok, so are never exposed to the Malay view of southern Thailand's history. However, the choice of education during childhood is an important influence on the world-view of Malay adults. For this reason, it is not surprising that the government has constantly sought to suppress pondok education (Pitsuwan 1985, pp.175-204). In 1986 the Ministry of Education refused to register any new pondok, or even to replace an existing pondok which might close down, prompting protests from Muslim groups (Bangkok Post, 9 Dec. 1986, p.4). However, the government has remained intransigent on the issue.

In the Prince of Songkhla University's Pattani campus, the conflict over history has been to some extent institutionalised with the establishment of a Centre for Southern Thai Studies (ศูนย์การศึกษาเกี่ยวกับภาคใต้) and an Islamic Studies Centre (ศูนย์ศึกษาอิสลาม), which tend to promote Thai and Malay views of local history respectively. In August 1988, the government approved the establishment of a Muslim Institute in Yala, which will grant bachelor degrees in religious studies in association with the Prince of Songkhla University, and this should

strengthen the academic resources for Malay history. The establishment of the Muslim Institute appears to contradict the government's usual approach towards Malay studies, but I would argue that it arises from three extenuating causes. Firstly, it is hoped the Institute will reduce the flow of Malay students to Middle Eastern universities, where the Thai government fears they become radicalised. Further, the Institute can act as a flattering advertisement for Thailand in the Middle East, where governments voice periodic concern over Thai treatment of Muslims. And thirdly, it is hoped that the project will recover some political support for the government coalition parties in the wake of their poor showing in the border provinces during the 1988 elections.

The struggle between Thais and Malays over a history of southern Thailand thus remains an active one, and while both sides adopt opposing historiographical perspectives, they are united in the view that the object of the exercise, the victory of one side's notion of the past, is important. For it is in terms of ideas and perspectives inherited from the past that present actions will be understood and justified. An attack on one group's view of history is no mere academic exercise, but a direct challenge to the legitimacy of that group's behaviour in the present. While social conflict persists between Thais and Malays in Yala, history will always be an important dimension of it.

1.3 Town and country

Another major social division in Yala is that between town dwellers and rural villagers. This urban-rural distinction is generally paralleled with that between Thais and Malays, the former constituting a majority in the towns and the latter in the countryside (e.g. Fraser 1966, pp.4-5; Hanna

1965b, p.1; Pitsuwan 1985, p.23; Tugby & Tugby 1973, p.273). But the fixation of most writers on the division between Thais and Malays has led them to ignore both fragmentation within the urban and rural sectors, and also contrasts between towns and villages which add to the complexity of the more obvious Thai-Malay antagonism.

The two main urban centres in Yala province are the towns of Yala and Betong (see Map 2). Each of the six districts in the province has a central town, but none apart from Betong is particularly large, and district towns are regarded by both urban and rural dwellers as large market places and minor administrative outposts quite different in character from the province's two large towns. In 1986, the town of Yala had a population of 61,000 and Betong 19,000, together comprising about 26% of the province's population, so it is clear that the vast majority of people fall into the rural category. Betong is situated at a border crossing into Malaysia. Prostitution and smuggling are important elements in its prosperity. Hence, the place has much in common with other border crossings in the south, but is exceptional when compared with the other main urban centres of the region. My own data on urban life is based mainly on material collected in the provincial town of Yala, which is the main commercial and administrative centre as well as the largest town.

The oldest settlement in Yala town seems to have been south-west of the present site, where there are large rice fields and a shallow crossing over the Pattani River, which marks the western edge of the town. Probably in the last century the town moved to its present location, but remained relatively small until the advent of the railway about sixty years ago and then the completion of a road bridge over the river in 1962. At present it is one of the most thriving towns in the south of Thailand, its economy

largely based on the fortunes of the rubber industry, but increasingly driven by public sector employment and a large number of educational institutions.

The town can be conveniently divided into four areas: the old market (called *kedai buruk* by Malays, and ตลาดเก่า by Thais), the main commercial area (*kedai* in Malay and ตลาด in Thai), the "civic" area, where most government buildings are located, and the student quarter (*kuru'* or กรุรุ), where there are several schools and colleges, and many student hostels and shared houses. Only the "civic" area is not given a separate name by residents, though it is recognised as a distinct part of the town.

The old market area on the northern side of the railway line contains the central mosque for the province, a large structure built with government funds. While many local Malays attend this mosque, some fundamentalist Muslims avoid it on the grounds that it was built with non-Muslim money and labour, and that the roof dome has the appearance of a lotus bud, a symbol of Buddhism. The vast majority of the shops and houses in this area are wooden, and in poorer repair than those in other parts of town. The residents are predominantly Malay, with a substantial minority of Chinese. It is by far the busiest area of Yala at night, with many street stalls selling food and a large number of people milling about. A small market operates next to the railway line each day, and it is a common place for townspeople to buy second-hand clothes and manufactured goods of all kinds.

Across from the old market on the southern side of the railway line is the main commercial area of Yala. Much of this was destroyed by a fire

in the early 1970s, but has been rebuilt with modern four-storey shophouses. Most shop names are in Chinese, always duplicated in Thai and often in Malay. The majority of shopkeepers here are Chinese, speaking southern dialects of Chinese and maintaining Chinese literacy by means of locally available magazines and newspapers. A minority of shops and restaurants are run by Malays, but there are very few Thai merchants. Most people live above their shops, so that the main commercial area is also the main residential area for the Chinese.

Further south is what I have termed the civic district. Here the streets are noticeably wider, and there are roundabouts at the major intersections. Almost all government offices are located here, as well as comfortable residences for senior civil servants. The governor's offices are near the largest roundabout, and in the centre of the roundabout is the city pillar. Housing for married civil servants is also found in this district, and as most civil servants are Thai, it is the main residential area for Thais in the town. Local facilities include two major parks and a sports ground, and public places are kept neat and well-trimmed. It is mainly on the strength of this part of town that Yala has several times been the winner or runner-up in the annual government contest for the cleanest town in Thailand.

To the east of the civic area lies the student quarter. There are several large primary and high schools here, as well as technical, physical education, and teachers colleges. Most of the students come from Yala province, but a solid minority come from neighbouring provinces, where Yala's schools have a good reputation for success in the university entrance examinations. While many of the students at these institutions are Malay, the numbers of Thai and Chinese far outweigh their representation in the local population. On the other hand, a few private commercial colleges in

the town, which are not geared to university entrance and have a poorer academic record, are almost wholly attended by Malay students. Student hostels and shared houses are usually divided between those catering for Malays and those for Thais, and as most students eat in local shops and cafes, these are similarly divided. While Thai students will sometimes go to Malay shops to eat with friends, the reverse is almost never true. Malay students in Thai shops will only drink tea, coffee or other non-alcoholic drinks, avoiding the food because of Islamic restrictions on the preparation of food and consumption of pork.

The residential patterns in the various quarters of Yala town reflect the division between Thais and Malays in Yala's social life, but it is also true to say that all town dwellers share some common attitudes about themselves, and about people living in the countryside. Those living in town have specific terms for rural dwellers (*orang kampong* in Malay, and ชาวบ้าน in Thai), and these always carry the connotations of lack of sophistication, poor education, an inferior command of language, and unbending conservatism. A number of jokes about rural people centre on these supposed aspects of their character. Those from the countryside are thought of as less clean in their personal habits and in the care of their homes. Thai town dwellers regard rural Malays as even lower down the scale on any of these attributes, while Malay town dwellers will think the opposite, but both Thai and Malay residents of the town tend to regard themselves as superior to rural villagers on any of these scores. Thai is more commonly spoken in the town than in the countryside, and a good command of Thai is an indication of urban sophistication. Western-style dress is also very common in town, and traditional Malay or Thai dress is

looked down upon or mocked as backward and rural. Perhaps the most vivid effects of this urban-rural division can be seen in the student quarter, where young new arrivals from outlying districts quickly learn in their first year to disguise or discard patterns of behaviour regarded as fit only for the village. People in town enjoy a good infrastructure of facilities and services, and are generally unwilling to sacrifice this to live in rural areas. If urban dwellers must visit villages in the countryside, they like to keep the visits brief, and will usually make the division between them and their rural friends clear in their topics and style of conversation, and the way they dress and behave.

The highest concentrations of rural dwellers are in the districts of Yaha, Muang and Raman (see Map 2), which are nearest to the provincial town. The population density decreases as one moves south through Bannang Sata and Than To, though there is a rise in the population in the border district of Betong. The northern half of the province has a large amount of flat arable land where most rice is planted, but any hilly areas are given over to rubber or fruit. To the south and south-west, the land rises steadily to steep limestone hills along the Malaysian border, and in these areas rubber and fruit are planted wherever possible, though many places are too steep to cultivate. People in the countryside are almost always clustered in villages, with the land that they own and cultivate located nearby. They identify strongly with the villages they come from, and each village has a headman (*Tok Neban* in Malay, ผู้ใหญ่บ้าน in Thai), who acts as an intermediary between the village and the government administration.

Rural people are well aware of the low esteem in which they are held by townspeople, and tend to be self-conscious about this. They will change their style of clothes to visit town, and those Malays with a command of Thai will often walk about town speaking Thai to display their sophistication. The degree of discomfort felt by rural people in town also leads them to mock one another. Villagers will laugh at one of their fellows who dresses in a way that townsfolk would consider rustic, or poke fun at someone who makes a social gaffe because of their unfamiliarity with town ways.

But on their home ground, in the villages of the countryside, rural people have another view of urban life in which they re-assert their self-esteem. People in towns are said to be unfriendly, and to display lower standards of hospitality than villagers. Country folk find it extraordinary that people living in Yala sometimes do not know their neighbours, or will purposely avoid having to deal with people living near them. Such behaviour is considered hostile and threatening to the social harmony which villagers in small communities value very highly. Town people are said to be greedy, and willing to cheat even friends or relatives to get access to the greater wealth that circulates in a town. For this reason they cannot be trusted. Corruption, both economic and moral, is said to be rife in towns. Buddhists and Muslims alike consider that town dwellers are morally lax, and say that this is encouraged by the easy availability of immoral pleasures in an urban environment. Urban religious scholars of either persuasion are considered exceptional. Because of their literacy and wider contacts in the religious world, they are thought to be more sophisticated than their rural counterparts. The pace of life and the cost of living are both considered to be better in villages than in the towns, and rural people tend to

describe their lifestyle as more comfortable (สบาย for Thais, *senang* for Malays). Thai villagers often express a preference for rural life because it is closer to nature (ของธรรมชาติ), a view popularised by Thai students and writers in the 1970s.

Nearly all villages in Yala province are exclusively Thai or Malay. Chinese who live outside the towns are traders or shopkeepers rather than farmers, and their number in any village is therefore small. While rural Thais and Malays share many stereotypes about urban people, there is very little intercourse between Thai and Malay villages, and residents of one will often be quite ignorant of lifestyles in the other (Ladd Thomas 1974, p.547). There is certainly no ideology of common interest between the two. Thais say that Malay villages are dirty and the people hostile, while in turn Malays regard Thais as idolatrous, polluted through pig raising, and pork and alcohol consumption, and aggressive towards outsiders. Not surprisingly, neither group shows much interest in getting to know the other, preferring the comfort of these stereotypes.

Quite a few old Thai villagers are able to speak Malay, and this may indicate that there was greater communication between the two groups in the past. Very few young Thais can speak more than a word or two of Malay, and show no desire to progress beyond this. Old rural Thais will sometimes have Malay friends in their social circle, but this is unusual for young rural people. On the other hand, old Malays in the village where I lived said that formerly they were afraid to visit Thai villages, and remain reluctant. Not many younger people in the village had the same attitude, but it was also true that few showed any great desire to strike up friendships with Thais. Those who have met Thais in high school or college will often

have visited Thai rural homes, but only a very small number of village Malays fall into this category. So while rural Thais and Malays share many attitudes that distinguish them from people in the towns, this does not translate into shared interaction, and Thai and Malay villages in Yala province usually remain small islands of mystery to each other.

1.4 Civil servants and others

Another major social division to be found in Yala is that between civil servants and other residents. This is not to say that government workers are an homogeneous group. Clear divisions can be seen within the hierarchy of the civil service, and high-ranking bureaucrats in Yala would regard themselves as quite different in many respects from the government officers doing extension work at village level. At the same time all civil servants are aware that they form a social category that is easily distinguished from the rest of the population, and this consciousness arises out of common opinions which they hold about their own character, attitudes and work, and the views they share about other groups in the province.

An attitude firmly embedded in the thoughts of civil servants, and a large segment of the population besides, was neatly summarised by a senior official who chatted to me one afternoon after reading a newspaper article critical of corruption and laziness in the civil service. He told me that such critics were ungrateful and showed no respect for the hard work of civil servants. He said that government officers were the elite of society, and had studied for many years to obtain degrees in order to secure their jobs. As a result they merited the benefits of government employment and deference from other members of society. The quality of civil service work, which

had been the central concern of the newspaper article, was not addressed in his outburst. Rather, the official focused on the social standing of civil servants and the hierarchical benefits derived from that. Status, not productivity or competence, was the crucial issue.

All civil servants see themselves as an elite when compared with other members of society, and many people outside the government bureaucracy share this view. Whenever a civil service job is advertised, there are scores or hundreds of applicants. Partly the motivation is security of employment and the fringe benefits, legal and illegal, which are available, but the salaries are not overly attractive, and a much better living can be earned in agriculture or commerce. No other job, however, could provide the prestige of a civil service position or its military equivalent. In a country where hierarchy is a major social motif, the status of a bureaucratic appointment is a valuable commodity that people will strive to attain. School and university courses are largely geared to civil service entrance requirements, and most students pursue higher education with an eventual government posting in mind.

While the English term civil servant carries the notion of public service, the Thai term (ข้าราชการ) is closer to the English expression "servant of the Crown". There is no sense among Thai bureaucrats that they are servants of the people. Rather they look upon themselves as benevolent administrators of the less educated masses. Respect from the latter is axiomatic, and thus criticism of government officials is seen in terms of disrespect. As a corollary of this, any reform to the practices or ideology of government administration will not be thought of as coming from outside

the bureaucracy, or from its lower ranks, but disseminating solely from the top.

In Yala, civil servants see themselves contrasted with two major groups, the commercial elite in the provincial and district towns, and the mass of rural villagers. One of the things that determines a person's position in the Thai social hierarchy is wealth (Hanks 1962), and in a province like Yala, far removed from the major government ministries and bureaux of Bangkok, it is common for the wealthiest local merchants and business people to be far better off financially than even the most senior civil servants. The richest traders in Yala live in opulent houses that put the governor's residence to shame. Their material possessions and political influence are commensurably great. Yet while civil servants show a decent degree of respect for such people, they are considered, in the final analysis, to be socially inferior. They have wealth and power, but status is not only composed of these elements. Civil servants inhabit a hierarchy that at its highest point ends with the person of the King, and there is no higher point in Thai society. Businessmen and their sources of livelihood belong to another world, based on individual effort and the marketplace. No matter how successful a person is in that context, its highest point can never match the apex of the civil service hierarchy.

Those in the realm of business of course have their own replies to the views of government bureaucrats. For them, the virtues of hard work and the accumulation of wealth are paramount, and while they respect the power of the bureaucrats they generally do not see that power as deserved. Government workers are often described a lazy, corrupt, and without the skills or business acumen to succeed in any other field. The complicated bureaucratic formalities of the civil service are seen as deadening the

motivation to work, and wasting precious opportunities where a businessman would take a risk on making a profit. However, one rubber dealer told me that the laziness and corruption of the bureaucracy was sometimes advantageous to merchants, as civil servants were easily bought if offered a course of action where there was financial reward, but little work, for the official involved.

When it comes to rural dwellers, government officers perceive no elements in village society that should engender their respect. Residents of the countryside are regarded as deficient in all the elements that make for high social status, and are simply looked upon as a peasantry that must be kept in order and productive, and to whom officials should attempt to bring beneficial instruction and example. Bureaucrats administer, lead, and educate, while rural folk obey, follow, and learn. Like any generalisation, this can be faulted with examples to the contrary, but it is true to say that the attitudes outlined here prevail among the vast majority of civil servants in Yala, and that little effort is made to change them.

Most civil servants are Thais, and as one moves up the official hierarchy, the number of Malays dwindles rapidly. It is also true that most government workers have little or no knowledge of, or interest in, Malay language or culture. Perhaps as a result of this ignorance, Malay villagers are held in even lower esteem than rural Thais, and are commonly depicted as lazy, stupid, and dirty. Thai villagers fare somewhat better, as they are not usually looked upon as dirty. Although government departments in Yala conduct development programmes which presuppose frequent contacts between officials and villagers through visits to rural areas, many officers show a definite aversion to this aspect of their work, and will attempt to minimise the time they spend in the countryside.

Rural people are acutely sensitive to these bureaucratic attitudes, and while they are polite and welcome visiting officials, they often hold them in low regard, as they will tell anyone who cares to listen once the government workers have left for home. Civil servants are seen as arrogant, a characteristic much despised in rural society, and as dishonest and corrupt in their dealings with people. Although government workers come to villages to offer assistance or give instruction, much of what they have to present is seen by people in the countryside as irrelevant to village needs, and this is often blamed on the fact that civil servants are educated through books rather than through practical experience. Both Thai and Malay villagers adopt the tactic of humouring officials by showing the required amount of enthusiasm for the programme or project at hand as long as is necessary to keep the relationship between village and government administration running smoothly. Malay villagers make the additional criticism that civil servants are ignorant of Malay customs and culture, and show no interest in, or respect for, such matters. Most express the view that relations between them and the government would be much improved if more civil servants were Malays.

1.5 Malay villagers and Thai officials

In the preceding pages I have outlined some of the major divisions in Yala social life. The sketch is admittedly broad, and obscures some complex social groupings, but was necessary to establish a context for the issues on which the rest of this thesis will focus.

My concern lies with the relationship between rural Malays and Thai government officials. I selected these two groups for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is clear that the vast majority of people in Yala and

surrounding provinces are village Malays, and therefore any insights into their social life will be helpful in understanding much of what happens in southern Thailand. Secondly, the conflict between Thais and Malays is such a dominant social feature of the area that focussing on one group to the exclusion of the other can only result in a distorted view of what happens there, a problem which I feel has not been overcome by anthropological studies of this region to date. Thirdly, as I have outlined in the previous sections, rural Thais are few in number and there is little interaction between them and rural Malays, so that this aspect of social life in Yala is not a major arena of Thai-Malay conflict. The Thai state primarily seeks to penetrate and control Malay society through regular dealings between Malay villagers and Thai civil servants, and it is here that Malay resistance is most often given the opportunity to express itself. The decisions and practices of bureaucrats aim to transform the economic and social life of Yala province, and constantly impinge on the lives of rural people. The Thais that Malays confront in defending the integrity of their homeland are government officials, and the importance of these civil servants as the local manifestation of central government policy certainly deserves anthropological attention.

In terms of the social divisions I have described in this chapter, it will be noted that the two groups on which I have chosen to focus are those most diametrically opposed. On the one hand there are the Malays who live in the countryside and work outside the government bureaucracy, and on the other hand there are the urban Thai officials. Social conflict in this part of Thailand has consistently been written about in terms of an opposition between Thais and Malays (see Ch.6 *infra.*), but the simplicity of that approach is inadequate for insight into the complexities of social life in the

region. The other divisions I have outlined clearly influence social attitudes and behaviour, and these cannot be ignored.

I will now give a detailed description of civil servants in Yala by focussing on a department that has responsibility for delivering government services to the rural population, and for the establishment of economic development programmes as part of the government's strategy to integrate Malays into the nation state.

Chapter 2: Thai Civil Servants

2.1 The spread of the Thai state

Until the 1890s, Thailand was ruled at the centre by the King and a small coterie of his relatives who dominated a combined civil and military government (Dhiravegin 1978, Ch.2). Direct rule under this system only extended to areas within easy reach of Bangkok, which in practice meant the central plains of Thailand. More distant parts of the country were ruled indirectly through governors whose basic duties were to maintain order and to ensure a steady supply of tax revenue into the heart of the kingdom. Governors had a large degree of autonomy, and there was little check if they sought to expand their own coffers in the process of revenue collection. It was said that governors had a licence to "eat" (กิน) the countryside over which they held sway (Riggs 1966, pp.140-141). A system of indirect rule is relatively easy for a central government to operate, even if revolts on the periphery sometimes occur, but it is an ineffective way for the state to ensure the implementation of its policies or to retain control of its vassals, and provides a smaller income than could be gained if the state could "eat" the countryside in a more direct way.

In 1892, King Chulalongkorn restructured the civil service to give Bangkok greater control over the countryside. His reforms ended the system of indirect rule. All provincial governors were to become salaried officers of the Interior Ministry and responsible for their tax collecting and administrative duties to superiors in Bangkok (Dhiravegin 1978, pp.33-43; Terweil 1983, Ch.8; Riggs 1966, Ch.4). The transformation was not instant, taking longer to come into effect in more distant parts of the country. In the

southern border region it was to be a decade or so before these reforms were introduced, but their progress was sure and increasingly brought the area into the orbit of the Thai state. At first some of the local administrators were Malays, partly continuing the previous system of rule, but after successive revolts by Malay leaders, Thai governors and senior officials became the norm and this remains the case to the present day (Koch 1977). In all the current seventy-three provinces of Thailand except for Bangkok itself, governors continue to be career officers of the Interior Ministry. The reorganised system did not eliminate bureaucratic corruption, which continues to be a problem throughout the country, and in the 1970s in particular this was one of the major complaints of Muslim separatist groups in the south (Pitsuwan 1985, pp.217-218). People in Yala told me that things had improved a great deal in the 1980s, especially after the beginning of the decade when the southern border area was effectively under the administration of General Harn Linanond, the southern region army commander, whose campaign against corruption led to transfers of a number of senior officials. Many local Malays recall this period as the one time they had an effective channel of complaint to the administration. Since then, officials have been more responsive to local needs, but during the period of my fieldwork many Malays felt the situation was worsening and returning to the conditions of the 1970s.

The governor of Yala operates from a large old building in the provincial town, which has its own branch of the Interior Ministry, and a number of offices of other ministries, including the cashier for all civil service salaries and payments. In the grounds surrounding the building are a small golf course, tennis courts and other recreational facilities, which many civil servants use in the evenings after work. The governor's office

faces onto the main roundabout in the civic area of Yala, and also facing this roundabout are the headquarters of the Muang district officer and the police, the provincial courts, the local branch of the national radio network which relays government programmes from Bangkok and also produces some of its own, and some other provincial-level government departments, including the Department of Agricultural Extension, where I carried out my research. Most other government offices are nearby.

The Border Patrol Police, formed to operate in "sensitive" areas of the country, have a large headquarters in Yala, and there is also a major military establishment and a sizeable police training school. The two deputy governors are civil and military officers respectively, and much of the latter's work is concerned with intelligence operations against Malay groups considered to be politically threatening, and against Communist groups which operate mainly in the Betong area, although much of the impetus behind anti-Communist operations was eliminated in a series of large-scale amnesties in 1987. There is no civil or military airfield apart from a small unused strip southwest of the town, so that both army and police rely mainly on helicopters for work in distant areas.

While military operations to subdue the local population were the main preoccupation of the Thai government until the late 1970s, since 1980 the emphasis has shifted to socio-economic development programmes (National Economic and Social Development Board 1981), and a number of government departments operate these in districts and villages throughout Yala. The governor was particularly enthusiastic about these projects and often intervened if he felt they were not progressing satisfactorily. A number of civil servants commented to me that such involvement was unusual for a high-ranking bureaucrat, and his behaviour would seem to

underline the importance now given to this form of social intervention by Bangkok.

The advent of Thai rule has imposed certain limits on the way that people in Yala can go about their work and conduct their daily lives. The most striking has been the imposition of Thai as the language of all official business. Street signs and notices on government buildings, and every newspaper or magazine on open sale are in Thai, as are all programmes on television and most on radio. School attendance is compulsory, and all instruction is in Thai. In an area where the vast majority of the population speak Malay as their first language, and most Malays are still not fluent in Thai, their awareness of Thai rule is marked most obviously by its association with the Thai language.

A government not only needs to communicate, it must also collect income to survive, and with the changes in administration at the beginning of the century came changes in the collection of taxes. Most Malays in Yala are agricultural smallholders, so that their major form of tax is land tax. This is collected annually by Thai officials who visit each village for a few days, collecting money according to government records of land holdings which people are required to have registered. Historically, land holdings in Yala were mainly acquired and passed on by oral contract, though some people might make a written will in order to modify Islamic rules of inheritance and ensure equal shares for all their children. Boundaries were marked by geographical features, or in the case of rice holdings, by the low mounds of earth that divided the fields from each other. Land was disposed of by inheritance or sale, and the oral contract was witnessed by fellow villagers, preferably including the Imam (the village religious leader) or one of his two assistants from the mosque. This system provided an

inefficient basis on which to build a government revenue collection, so that the government progressively instituted registration of land holdings and recording of land transfers. Currently it is introducing cadastral surveys, and titles to land based on these in all parts of the country, but in Yala this has only taken place near the provincial town and some district towns, so that the vast majority of landholders still hold land on the basis of a certificate that gives them rights of use and transfer rather than full title (Takahashi 1976). A few people still hold land under oral contracts, but the number is fast diminshing. Land provides the livelihood for tens of thousands of people in Yala, and in order to ensure security of tenure, the right to pass land on to children or to sell it for profit, or to mortgage it to raise funds, all landholders must now conform to the government system of registration. Disputes over land can potentially end up in the courts, and it is the Thai government which operates the court system and prescribes the rules and laws according to which it functions and makes its decisions. In that vital area of their lives which provides income and sustenance, people in Yala are thus forced to acknowledge the omnipresence of the Thai state.

Bureaucratic presence in the countryside has also been evident in the persistent collection of facts and figures by government workers. Statistics on population, agriculture, public facilities, natural resources, and a host of other topics are assiduously collected by Thai officials, and on entering any provincial government office a visitor confronts large display boards of statistics relating to the department's work. Thousands more statistics, in booklets and reports, are constantly being produced. Their accuracy is somewhat suspect, so that amounts of the same item will often vary between departments, but the obsession to list, collate, and classify is seemingly insatiable. For those in rural areas this obsession is regarded with some

amusement, and there is generally little appreciation that it is on the basis of such statistics that government technocrats in Bangkok frame their policies.

All citizens of Thailand are required to carry an identity card, with a photograph, thumbprint, and personal details on it. A person without a card cannot deal with the administration, and is liable to arrest if stopped by the police, especially at road blocks which are common in the area. Some Malays in the south first register their children in Thailand then take them across the border into Malaysia, in order to register them under a similar identity card system there, but this practice seems to have decreased as the Thai regime has become less oppressive. An important aspect of registration in Thailand is that it makes men liable to military service. In many ways Thailand remains a military state, with governments ruling by concession of the most powerful factions in the armed forces, and the prime minister almost always a retired military officer. All civil servants have military-style uniforms and ranks, and the population falls to attention every morning and evening for the national anthem, which blares from loudspeakers all over the country. Military cadet training for both boys and girls is almost universal in high schools (and popular with boys as a means of waiving conscription in later years), and the military also carries out development work in rural villages. For Malays in Yala, the most resented impact of the military, other than the anti-insurgent operations which occasionally sweep through villages, is conscription. Men are chosen by ballot and serve for two years. Those who dread this most are Malays who have little or no command of Thai, and strict Muslims who regard the eating habits and heavy alcohol consumption of army life as ritually unclean and sinful. On the other hand, some Malays able to speak Thai may look upon conscription as a form of steady employment for a couple of

years, and an opportunity to save some money which can later be used to purchase land or expensive goods. Very few Malays see the army as a career prospect, though this is common with Thais, because Malays realise that as Muslims they are unlikely to ever rise above the lowest ranks.

Nor do most Malays set their sights on a career in the civil service. Although virtually all government departments have offices in Yala, and the civil service is by far the largest single employer, the proportion of Malays it recruits is far below their numbers in the local population. Where Malays are employed, they are generally found in the lower echelons, and in temporary or casual positions. People in Yala can produce a variety of reasons for this: the poor Thai language ability of Malays, the loss of prestige in the Malay community by those Malays seen to be allying with the government and its aims, the inability of Malays to socialise with Thai colleagues outside work, the failure of many Malays to reach the required educational level, and the general prejudice of Thais against Malays. All these reasons have their measure of truth, though that of language ability becomes less defensible as each year passes. It is also true that many Malays, seeing no models of success in the civil service, discount the administration as a career choice at a very early stage, and thus do not make their educational choices with that end in mind.

This is not to say that no Malays are successful as civil servants. A few do occupy quite senior positions in Yala, and during my stay one was a departmental head. Senior positions are concentrated in the provincial town, so these officers must come and live away from daily contact with their friends and relatives in the countryside, though they will usually live in Malay areas of town rather than government housing. Some adopt Thai names and give Thai names to members of their family, but Malay names

will be retained for dealings with fellow Muslims. Malay bureaucrats must also attend official ceremonies which often include some degree of Buddhist ceremonial, and strict Muslims at best find this uncomfortable, and often insulting. Some will socialise with their Thai colleagues and superiors after work, but generally eschew the food and alcohol which inevitably accompany such occasions. Malays who attain senior positions in the civil service have done so in a large measure because of a solid grounding in the Thai education system, and are aware of this fact. They also have a keen appreciation of the dominance of the Thai state, and the need to deal with it on its own terms. They consequently stress the importance of Thai education to their children and favour further studies in Thai schools as opposed to Malay pondoks, but not to the neglect of Malay studies. Officials and their families regularly attend mosques, send their children to Koran and Malay reading classes, and for religious studies.

Relations between Malays and the Thai bureaucracy in Yala have varied between polite toleration and open hostility (Satha-Anand 1987). The relationship fell on particularly hard times in the late 1970s, after Thailand's experiment with democracy between 1973 and 1976. The military resumed rule of the country in October 1976 in a vicious and bloody coup that remains a deep scar on the national conscience. From then until the early 1980s Muslim insurgent groups in Yala and surrounding provinces became highly active, killing both Thai officials and villagers, burning schools, attacking public transport, and attempting regicide by bombing Yala's railway station during the King's visit in 1977 (ibid.). The installation of General Prem Tinsulanond as prime minister by a moderate faction of the military in 1980 saw a more restrained administration in the south, and in the country as a whole. The style of government changed noticeably and

was far more appreciated by Malays. The southern border area received special attention from the Prem administration in order to deal with insurgency, and the Southern Thailand Administration Centre (ศูนย์อำนวยการบริหารจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้), based in Yala, was established in May 1981 to co-ordinate military and civil officials in solving administrative problems in the provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat, Satun, and Yala, and to ensure policy co-ordination between departments for the implementation of government social and economic development programmes (Chandumpai 1987, p.230).

2.2 The Department of Agricultural Extension

My research on the government bureaucracy in Yala was carried out in the Department of Agricultural Extension, because of my decision to look at a rubber marketing project as a focus of relations between Thai officials and Malay villagers. The Department of Agricultural Extension (DOAE) was set up in 1967 under the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives, with the role of passing on new technology and practices to farmers (Maneekul 1985, p.10). The department's officers use a "dispersal" method to achieve their aims (see Barlow & Jayasuriya 1984, pp.90-91), visiting farmers and establishing projects which officials consider will improve local agriculture and the national economy. Participating farmers are given financial and technical support for varying periods, usually between one and two years. The intention is that the projects will show improved production and increased income, and will both encourage those participating to persist with the new technology and practices once support ceases, and also encourage neighbouring growers, motivated by the visible success, to adopt

the new measures themselves. In Yala, DOAE's work is mainly geared to project initiation and support, with little or no assessment of whether the "dispersal" method has the desired twofold result.

In 1967 the ratio of extension workers to agricultural households was only 1:4,000, but the system was expanded with money from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the United States Agency for International Development. In late 1976, DOAE was also given reponsibility for developing co-operatives to process and market rubber, and the extension system was expanded to cover this function (Maneekul 1985, pp.9-11). In May 1981, the programme was further boosted by funds supplied equally by the Thai government and the World Bank, the latter as a repayable loan, and DOAE officers in Yala told me that facilities and personnel levels only reached a satisfactory standard after that time. The reliance of the agricultural extension programme on overseas loans adds to Thailand's foreign debt repayment burden, which would seem to be a strong incentive for the government to monitor the successes and failures of the scheme and to apply the lessons learnt, but in fact, very little attention is given to this aspect of DOAE's work.

In Yala, DOAE had a head office in the provincial town, and branch offices in each of the six districts. The main office was split into two sections, administration and technical support, with the latter responsible for extension programmes. In the administrative section a high proportion of the staff were women, though the most senior positions were held by men. This section dealt with personnel and financial matters, and provided administrative support for extension work. The technical section when I first arrived had seven employees. Five were male technical officers, and two were women providing clerical support.

In September 1986, staff cuts were made due to budget restrictions and all contract and casual staff were dismissed. Before the dismissals, Malays accounted for three of the twenty employees in the head office, ranking twelfth, sixteenth and eighteenth in seniority, but only one Malay remained when the staff was reduced to thirteen, and he ranked twelfth in the new configuration.

DOAE's six district offices employed a total of seventy staff, six of whom were Malays. Only one of these occupied a position above the lowest levels of the hierarchy. The largest staff numbers were in the districts of Muang, Raman, Betong and Yaha (see Map 2), but neither Betong nor Yaha employed any Malays. In each district office there was a head officer, an assistant, a clerical officer, and extension workers. All district heads were men, and only one assistant head was a woman. Women also accounted for a very small number of extension workers, and were usually allocated work with women's and youth groups.

2.3 The head office

During my fieldwork, all DOAE head office staff lived in the provincial town, though one or two also had homes in rural areas. Workers in the technical section responsible for development projects all held degrees in agriculture from colleges or universities, and one had obtained a postgraduate degree from overseas. None were able to speak Malay. Their responsibilities were to supervise the progress of projects and to report to the Ministry in Bangkok. They conducted regular inspection visits to DOAE projects, held training sessions for extension workers, met with farmers'

groups when necessary, and advised Bangkok each year on suitable future projects.

Mr. Sanit was the head of the technical section, and originated from a Thai-speaking province just north of Songkhla. Like most others in the head office, he spoke central Thai fluently, but often chose to speak southern Thai dialect at work. He was a quiet and competent man, and unlike most of his colleagues, not given to socialising after work. While he was a keen student of agriculture, he found life in Yala rather difficult, mainly because of the language barrier when dealing with local Malays, and the low success rate of many projects compared with other parts of Thailand. At one meeting with a farmers' group, Mr. Sanit had been speaking on administrative matters for several minutes before he realised that hardly any of the audience could understand what he was saying. A bilingual farmer was co-opted to translate and Mr. Sanit began again. He was patient and persistent, but his disappointment was clear. His assistants, though aware of the problem, had not mentioned it to him because of the impropriety of interrupting the speech of someone with a higher official status. I saw such situations many times in Yala, with government officials incapable of passing on what was often important technical information to the people they were meant to help, forcing them to rely on bilingual villagers for translation. Government policy is that Thai, being the official language of the country, must be used in all government work, but in Yala this clearly conflicts with the daily reality of extension work, where Thai is often a useless medium.

For the major part of 1986, Mr. Sanit's superior was also a man from a Thai-speaking southern province, and he was popular with all provincial and district staff. In Yala he shared a house with other senior civil servants,

while his family continued to live in his home province. Such an arrangement was quite common for senior officers, who were rotated through different provinces at regular intervals. The chief officer greatly enjoyed socialising with other bureaucrats and was light-hearted and good-humoured with his staff. While these qualities made him a popular boss, it was his light-handed approach to supervision and his eagerness to delegate responsibility that endeared him to his immediate subordinates. Seni, one of Mr. Sanit's assistants and a particularly ambitious officer, was a major participant when policy decisions were being made. He was always polite and deferential to Mr. Sanit and the chief officer, but persistent in placing his ideas before them and organising the administrative support for his proposals beforehand. For the chief officer to accept Seni's suggestions and delegate work to him was often the easiest course to take, and the course very often taken.

The chief officer, along with Mr. Sanit and his two deputies (including Seni), formed an elite in the technical section of the DOAE head office that engaged in debate and competition over the course of policy implementation in Yala. When these men socialised outside office hours, it was often with each other rather than with more junior officers. All had private incomes besides their civil service salaries, and came from well to do families. Mr. Sanit's deputies were both from Yala, but Seni's father was a wealthy businessman and had been able to afford a good education for his son. These senior officers often belonged to social clubs and cultivated friendships with senior bureaucrats in other departments. They were acutely conscious of their status, and meticulous about the ranking of seniority between themselves, expressed in deference and the exchange of social favours (see Hanks 1975).

Those senior workers not born in Yala looked upon their term of duty there as something to be endured while awaiting a better future. All told me that ideally they would have liked to work in central Thailand, because working there was much easier. They said that in the central region all the farmers were Thai, keen to adopt new ways, eager to learn, and obedient when following government directives. In fact few of them had actually worked in the central region, which no doubt helped to sustain its image as a lotus land. Much of their dissatisfaction with life and work in Yala stemmed from the fact that the vast majority of farmers with whom they had to deal were Malays. Although these senior officials had the least contact with Malays, they generally had the strongest prejudices against them (cf. Ladd Thomas 1974). Malays were commonly described as being stupid (โง่), lazy (ขี้เกียจ), and dirty (สกปรก), and the fact that many DOAE projects failed was put down to the stupidity or obstinacy of villagers. The inability of many Malays to comprehend and converse in Thai served to reinforce these views. Shortly after my arrival I made it clear to senior officials that I wished to go and live in a Malay village in one of the outlying districts. To put it mildly, they were horrified. Constant arguments were presented in order to convince me to stay in town, on the grounds that village life was unclean, the people untrustworthy, the food and water unhygienic, and toilets totally absent. None of these officials had actually lived in a Malay village, or gained first hand impressions beyond their fleeting inspection visits.

The prejudice of senior officers affected my own standing with them, and their views of my research. Some of them later confessed to me that they could never live in a village as I did, and wondered how I was able to

bear the wretchedness of it. To Thais generally, and these officials in particular, social status was of prime importance, and social standing had to be displayed in dress, manners, and personal conduct (Mulder 1985, pp.65-80). In their eyes, as a doctoral student I had a high status to maintain, and living with Malays in what they saw as beggarly conditions was seen as a betrayal of my own social position. It no doubt also lowered their own prestige for others to see that I was associated with them.

Like senior bureaucrats in all socieites, they fed off compliments and loathed criticism. When I indicated that DOAE workers had achieved positive results, my views were much appreciated, but criticism, even when minor, caused great offence. What I found interesting about this was not that it occurred, for it is rare to find anyone who finds criticism palatable, but that my criticism was usually taken to mean that I was pro-Malay and anti-Thai. My criticisms of DOAE's work were recycled in office discourse to become attacks on the Thai government, the nation, and Thai culture in general. It was an unpleasant but fascinating experience. Because I had chosen to live with Malays, any criticism I made was taken to be a "Malay" criticism and therefore an attack on Thais rather than on work methods. For this reason it did not surprise me when I later observed criticisms by Malay farmers being greeted with similar reactions.

The attitude of senior officers to their juniors, both in the head office and district branches, is a mixture of paternal chastisement and benevolence. Criticism of junior workers was common where projects had collapsed or did not meet targets, and rather than question the project design, senior officers preferred to attack the character of juniors, describing them as lazy or failing to carry out instructions properly. Some senior workers told me that junior officers were thriftless in their lifestyles and

that this affected their work, as they wasted time on outside endeavours to supplement their salaries. Outside work was common among senior staff, and took the forms of absentee landlordism or income earned from interest on investments, but these were seen to be free of adverse effects. If I repeated the criticisms that junior officers made of DOAE's work, the tactic of labelling me as anti-Thai could not be adopted, so senior staff would assail the characters of their subordinates, their indolence and profligacy, their lack of education and their intemperance, in order to undermine the credibility of junior staff.

For most of the time, however, relations between senior and junior staff were amicable. Criticism by senior staff was rarely open, but relied on office networks for the message to filter down the hierarchy. While all civil servants recognised a clear pecking order, marked by rank and length of service, there were limits to how oppressive senior officials could be. Those lower down the order were required to be deferential, obedient, and to accept their superiors' interpretations of events. Junior workers, whatever their private views, generally upheld this deferential form in the workplace, and in return senior officers were expected to be protective, courteous, and benevolent. High ranking civil servants who were perceived as incompetent or oppressive by workers never found themselves the target of open criticism, but rather became the subjects of gossip and private accusations which would reach the intended recipient only by indirect, but nonetheless effective, means. Resignation to escape a bad superior was not considered, and transfer was difficult to obtain, so the voluntary nature of affiliation with an entourage seen by Hanks (1975) as characteristic of Thai social organisation, was severely compromised in this government setting, and other tactics of coping were regularly employed.

Junior workers in the head office in Yala were a small group of four young men, conscious of their distinction from both senior officers and those working at district level, even though their seniority was sometimes lower than district workers. Suchart had obtained a position in the head office after several years as an extension worker during which he built a good record of achievement in projects. A Thai native of Yala, he had earned a university degree in agriculture, and was strongly influenced by ideas of small-scale agriculture and appropriate technology for rural dwellers popular among students of his time. While happy that he had obtained a more senior and secure job in the head office, Suchart regretted the enforced separation from rural dwellers and his clearer demarcation as a junior officer that the shift to the provincial town had brought. As an extension worker he had been in the lowest grade of the hierarchy, and poorly paid, but he had also enjoyed a greater degree of autonomy in how he conducted his work. Much of his satisfaction had previously come from dealing with villagers on a daily basis and solving their problems, and in the provincial office he felt less productive. Being with senior staff every day, he had also become more conscious of the low regard in which extension workers were held, and this made him feel uncomfortable when caught between loyalties to those above and below him.

Another junior officer, Chai, was a contract employee who lost his job as a result of the budget constraints in late 1986. He often complained that senior staff were lazy and cared little about the success of DOAE projects, and said they were more concerned with the initiation of a large number of activities in order to have impressive statistics to send to Bangkok. He was particularly bitter when he received the news of his sacking, because he felt that he had worked much harder than some of the senior workers

employed on a permanent basis. Suchart was less forthcoming in his criticisms, more conscious that his future lay in the head office. While privately he regarded some senior workers as lazy and unwilling to deal with rural needs and problems at first hand, he never voiced these criticisms to colleagues at work. The responsibilities of a wife and family, and the need to keep an eye on future security made him tolerant, if not accepting, of his situation.

The junior officers in Yala occasionally criticised extension workers, but more often felt that the remarks of senior staff were excessive and unwarranted. With senior workers they were polite and deferential as expected, but were also keenly aware of the foibles, prejudices and mistakes of senior officers as a result of being in the same building with them every day. This often made them more aware of, and articulate about, changes they felt should be made, but also left them feeling powerless because of their junior status in the head office on the one hand and their exclusion from practical policy implementation as extension workers on the other.

2.4 The district offices

In DOAE's district offices, the seniority of the chief officer ranked on a par with the lower senior staff in the provincial town, and the chief officer's assistant and clerical officer were equivalent to the head office's junior staff. Extension workers were on the lowest rungs of the DOAE ladder, and were the most numerous staff at district level, ranging from four to twelve officers depending on the area. District heads worked in the same office as their colleagues, and tended to follow the projects in their region on a far more regular basis than provincial level staff. Hierarchical distinctions amongst district workers were less marked than in the head office. While

chief officers and their assistants often went out to inspect local works, clerical officers, with responsibility for administrative and budgetary work, rarely ventured out.

Phisan, the district head in Yaha (see Map 2), had a close relationship with his staff, and spent much of his time supervising their work and lending a hand on projects. He lived in Yala, but commuted to Yaha every day, and was generally happy in his work. The extension workers lived in government accommodation next to the district office, and usually socialised with each other and with civil servants living in similar quarters nearby. Neither Phisan nor any of the extension workers could speak Malay, and although Phisan recognised that this affected DOAE's work locally, he was satisfied with the levels of success achieved. He told me that he had few problems with his staff, who were good workers, and contrasted this with staff problems in some other districts. Although Phisan's rank would have placed him among the senior staff at head office, the need for him to report district progress and problems to provincial staff, and to receive orders from them on local policy direction, put him in a more ambiguous position. Phisan acted very much as a middleman between his staff and the head office, in one direction trying to present the work of his staff in the best light, while in the other seeking to soften the impact of policy decisions higher up that he felt would be detrimental to his staff or their work. Phisan was usually quite responsive to his workers and their practical problems, but often expressed frustration at being unable to translate the information and insights gained from below into changes in policy or practice above. Although equal in rank to senior staff in Yala, Phisan generally did not see himself as one of them, but as an individual isolated by his own work

situation and his need to struggle with senior staff to obtain better services and resources for his own office and workers.

The extension workers in any district office had the primary responsibility for carrying out development projects in rural villages. They contacted interested farmers, organised meetings, held training sessions, collected statistics on village economy and project implementation, and acted as on-the-spot advisers in solving problems. DOAE projects covered a wide range of agricultural work, but those dealing with rubber, the main primary product of Yala, covered four areas: (1) cultivation - seeking to improve fertilisers, pest control, grafting, and tapping; (2) improving the quality of latex sheets produced by growers; (3) the establishment of rubber processing and marketing groups; and (4) the establishment of marketing co-operatives to hold large scale rubber sales.

Extension workers begin on a low salary, about one quarter of that received by senior staff in the provincial office, and even after several years of service their income is not high. All hold at least a diploma from an agricultural college, and many have university degrees. Those who are ambitious might pursue higher education in an attempt to move up the hierarchy, but promotion opportunities are few. Many feel that Yala is a bad place to work, because projects are often unsuccessful, and career advancement is largely based on a record of successful assignments. Most extension workers are unable to speak Malay, which compounds the difficulty of their work, and some pointed out to me that an extension worker lucky enough to work where there was a cluster of Thai villages would have a better chance of success and thereby promotion, despite the fact that he may put in far less work than someone in an exclusively Malay area.

Because of their low salaries, extension workers often took on other employment. The ideal of many was to buy land and cultivate rubber or profitable fruit crops, and some of the wealthier ones managed to achieve this. Others sold tree cuttings, seeds, fertiliser, or agricultural equipment, and devoted at least some of their official working hours to these activities in order to earn a decent living. All extension workers went into debt when they commenced work, taking a low interest government loan to purchase the motorcycle essential for their job, with the repayments on that loan automatically deducted from their salary. As motorcycles were subject to a great deal of wear and tear in the course of extension work and were regularly replaced, paying off a motorcycle tended to become a permanent feature of an extension worker's life. Those unable to make ends meet were forced to borrow money to supplement their salaries, and this could lead to a recurrent cycle of debt. Extension workers were aware that senior staff blamed this borrowing on a spendthrift lifestyle or a predilection for gambling and alcohol, and were quick to point out the same weaknesses in senior staff. The irony of a senior officer in Yala sermonising about extension workers' debt was not lost on those struggling to get by from month to month when the superior himself earned a far greater salary, received an income supplement from investment or family businesses, and regularly socialised in the provincial town.

All extension workers in the Yaha district office were Thai, though most came from southern provinces. None of the permanent staff showed any inclination to learn Malay beyond acquiring a handful of simple expressions. This meant that extension work was done through the medium of Thai, and officers usually had to rely on bilingual middlemen when dealing with villagers. Extension workers felt that this made their job more

difficult, but also felt that the obligation was on Malays to learn Thai, and they were confident that in the long run all local residents would speak Thai, reinforcing their aversion to learning Malay.

Extension workers lived in or near the administrative compound in Yaha, and had good social and working relationships with each other. When making generalisations about the Malay villagers with whom they worked, extension officers tended to repeat the stereotypes common among more senior staff in the provincial office, but when asked to elaborate would discriminate various types of Malays they had encountered. Villagers who could only speak Malay, and who consistently refused to take part in government projects, were described as lazy and opposed to development because of religious beliefs. Bilingual Malays who did participate in projects but failed to persist were regarded as simply lazy, and this characteristic was felt to apply to most Malays. Extension workers would argue that the dirtiness of Malay homes and people's dress were evidence of this. However, it was also conceded that some Malays were hard-working and did make an effort to improve their conditions. Bilingual Malays keen to join in projects and diligent in following directions were always regarded approvingly and often cited as role models to other Malays.

This classification of Malays according to how well they fitted into the demands of government projects was an inevitable result of the pressure placed on extension workers by, in turn, Phisan, the head office in Yala, and the Ministry in Bangkok. An extension worker's success and worth were measured in terms of statsitics related to the projects under his supervision, and villagers who did not co-operate failed to provide good statistics. This pressure on extension workers was compounded by the fact that they were expected to carry out projects which had been formulated in

Bangkok, but which they knew were not always suitable for the people in their areas. In these cases they would often show great persistence and ingenuity in trying to make the project work, but many were resigned to failure before they began.

Arun was the extension worker for the sub-district which included the village of Khala, where I lived most of the time. He was a Thai born in Yala, but was unable to speak Malay and was not interested in Malay language or culture. However, he enjoyed working with people in Khala, as he had made a good number of bilingual contacts and they were generally keen to have DOAE projects in the village. Two houses and a meeting hall had been built by the government in Khala to accommodate extension workers and act as a centre for government projects, and Arun had lived in one of these for several months before finding village life lonely because of the language problem, and the fact that his house was located some distance away from the main settlements. He eventually moved back to the administrative compound in Yaha and was living there for the whole period of my fieldwork.

Arun felt that his work in Khala could have been more successful, but said that progress was hindered by his poor relationship with the village headman, whose command of Thai was very limited. He felt that his relationship with the village Imam, the religious leader, was far better, and that the Imam was more committed to development, but said that encouragement from the Imam did not always translate into wider village interest. While people in Khala were keen to participate in DOAE projects, Arun observed that their interest was not sustained. He had tried several times to establish a youth group, and one had flourished for a while, but by the time of my arrival he had lost interest in another attempt. Projects to

introduce new tapping, fertilising, or rubber processing methods were eagerly followed, but in the long run villagers tended to revert to their old ways, and while Arun accepted this, he did not understand why it happened, though to his credit he rarely let this dissuade him from persisting.

2.5 Power and knowledge in the DOAE hierarchy

All levels of the DOAE hierarchy in Yala province met together on a monthly basis in technical training workshops. Two meetings were held on consecutive days each month, the first for workers in the three southern districts of the province, and the second for those in the three northern districts. The meetings lasted all day, and a lunch was provided by the host office. Attendance was compulsory and absenteeism was rare, so that no disciplinary measures had ever been taken against fieldworkers for non-attendance. At each meeting, topics of administration, technical advice, social skills, and project supervision were covered.

Mr. Sanit from the head office usually spoke on administration, but the topic and his method of delivery clearly held little interest, and people often became bored and dozed off, stared out the window, or chatted furtively to each other. Seni once told me that some extension workers had complained about Mr. Sanit's talks, but no-one was willing to broach the subject because Mr. Sanit was the most senior technical officer. Instructions about technical matters were given by various senior officers, and the interest for junior staff varied according to both topic and speaker. This was also true for the instruction on social skills. Extension workers were most interested when required to participate, or when the speaker was entertaining, but such occasions were rare.

Senior officers saw their job in the workshops as imparting knowledge to fieldworkers. Although they often spoke in the meetings about the dual role of extension staff as both disseminators of knowledge and gatherers of information, in practice senior staff never allowed for this dual role in their dealings with subordinates. This was most clearly seen in the handling of current project reports. At all training workshops, extension workers had to complete a project report detailing their work in the past month and plans for the coming month. These were often prepared beforehand and copied onto standard forms at the meeting. For this purpose workers were divided into district groups, and elected someone to give a district summary to the general meeting when it reconvened. On every occasion that I observed save one, the elected person would stand, say there were no problems to report, then sit down. Thus the only formal opportunity on these occasions for knowledge to pass from lower to higher levels in the hierarchy was never used.

The sole exception I observed was a meeting attended by an inspection team from Bangkok. At this meeting, all those reporting from the district groups outlined problems associated with their projects, writing details on an overhead projector slide, and discussing them in turn. Mr. Sanit and another senior officer then offered comments and suggestions. The meeting was in stark contrast to all the others I had attended, and clearly geared to the inspection team's visit. A two-way flow of knowledge is assumed in departmental policy on extension work, consistent with similar World Bank funded schemes in other countries (Benor and Harrison 1977), and staff in Yala were clearly aware of this, and of the fact that their usual practices diverged from what was expected. Their perception of what the Bangkok officials wanted to see therefore guided the conduct of

the meeting on this occasion, in order that the appropriate form was on view and a suitable report could be made to the Ministry in Bangkok.

At all workshop meetings there was a coincidence of intent between senior and junior staff to make the form of the meetings run smoothly. Nobody wanted problems with Bangkok, so everyone made the effort to put on a good front when an inspection team arrived. At other times, senior staff were happy to keep their talks brief. They prepared clear and simple lessons to pass on to extension workers, but did not attempt to gain any information or knowledge in return, assuming there was none to gain. Extension staff for their part saw the workshops as a classroom exercise which ran a very poor second to practical experience gained in the field, and kept their questions and participation to a minimum in order to lessen the duration of the meetings. Discontent with Mr. Sanit's long-winded talks always included the point that he made meetings run late in the day. Both sides were happiest when meetings were short, when they were able to engage in some pleasant socialising over lunch, and completed project report forms in a way that would satisfy the bureaucratic demands of the provincial and national offices.

Yet this kind of interaction between levels of the hierarchy meant that senior officers were often left ignorant of problems being encountered by extension workers on a daily basis, and only became aware of difficulties when they grew too large to conceal. Similarly, knowledge passed from higher to lower ranks consisted mainly of formal technical information and generalisations about social skills in dealing with villagers which had been passed down from the department's office in Bangkok. This material was often inappropriate for local conditions, and was never based on the experiences of local workers. In turn, extension staff were left

ignorant of how policy decisions were made, and of the long-term implications of their work. Policy decisions simply appeared from above and extension workers were expected to carry them out as best they could, while senior staff received a picture of departmental work that was composed of statistics representing those patterns that extension staff felt their superiors wanted to see. The effect of this was to limit different items of knowledge to particular segments of the hierarchy. Staff at any level kept a certain amount of what they knew to themselves, and fed a picture of events to those above or below them which helped to maintain their hold over that knowledge. The work of DOAE was thus not fully understood by anyone in the hierarchy, for every member of staff had to compete for knowledge of what was going on. The formal picture of what was happening, tabulated in departmental statistics, written up in reports, and intoned at meetings, provided an alibi that everyone could repeat when necessary, but knowledge of the actual course of events remained a commodity parcelled out unevenly among officials.

The flow of gossip up and down the hierarchy both helped to increase a person's knowledge of events and to protect information that someone wished to keep a secret. Junior officers who were discontented with their work conditions or had some problem with a superior, would often chat informally to someone a little more senior whom they felt they could trust. If that person was unable to effect a solution, he would approach someone higher up, and so the process went on until someone was reached who could have an influence on the problem at hand. The route was always indirect, sometimes unsuccessful, and even when the gossip reached an intended target did not always result in action being taken, but it could also be effective, and therefore continued to be used. Direct confrontation would

have threatened the harmony of the hierarchy and most probably have led to a junior complainant being shifted to some unpleasant posting. Similarly, a superior who openly berated one of his subordinates without first having tried the channels of gossip to bring about a change in behaviour would have risked losing the support of his staff by his abandoning the role of benevolent patron. Workers would have been unlikely to openly confront him in return, but could have adopted tactics of foot-dragging and negligence to tarnish his image further up the ladder.

Difference of knowledge within the hierarchy also extended to matters outside office life, into DOAE's projects in the countryside. Senior staff in Yala regularly went out on inspection visits to look at what was being done, and could make observations about whether crops appeared well-tended, whether equipment and buildings were kept in good order, and whether project records were up to date, but for their knowledge of the daily operations of a project, the incidence and nature of any problems, satisfaction among users, and the diligence of field staff, there was great scope for villagers and extension workers to filter and manipulate what senior officers could know. Villagers who only spoke Malay had to be dealt with through intermediaries, and these latter might represent events quite differently from the way that interviewees saw them. Even when officers spoke to bilingual villagers, these would often switch the conversation to Malay first in order to discuss how to respond, or which stance to take, before resuming in Thai to present the agreed position to officials. Extension workers spent far more time observing rural dwellers and their activities, but they too were subject to the same methods of restrictive access to the workings of village life. On the other hand, government officers at all levels were not fully open with villagers about the nature of projects, their

intended consequences, or potential negative effects. Projects were assumed to be beneficial and DOAE officers largely acted as salesmen. While senior bureaucrats in Bangkok might be aware of long-term dangers, such as over-reliance on a single cash crop, they would not necessarily communicate this fear down the hierarchy, and extension workers could find themselves unwittingly supporting a project about which, with greater knowledge, they might have been less enthusiastic.

Some extension workers who established a good rapport with people in their area were aware that government projects often did not meet villagers' needs or reach the poorer segments of communities, but few bothered to take this issue to senior staff because of their perception that the latter were not interested. At best they would not push a project too hard. In theory there were committees with village representatives to advise DOAE on the needs of local people and the kinds of projects suitable for an area, but while such committees did exist in Yala, no Malay villagers sat on them. They were filled by government officers, local merchants, and Thai village or district headmen. When I asked senior officials in Yala why this was so, they told me that rural people did not really know what they wanted, and that if villagers sat on the committees they would opt for no change or development at all because of their conservatism and laziness. Some also mentioned the language barrier and the anti-government sentiments of many Malays as obstacles. By failing to establish formal lines of communication with villagers, DOAE staff voluntarily limited their knowledge of what was happening in areas under their control. An active extension worker on such a committee might have been able to put some points across, but was likely to be drowned in the attempt by the platitudes of

other members, whose rosy view of local life would be more appreciated by the upper echelons of the civil service.

In earlier sections of this chapter I indicated that real and substantial differences in wealth separated government officers. Greater wealth usually paralleled higher status and seniority in the administration, though there were a few exceptions. What seniority in the civil service did give people was greater control of the promotional chances of those below them. Good reports by senior officers on their subordinates meant pay bonuses at the end of each year and more promotion opportunities for junior staff. A good relationship between senior and junior workers meant that senior staff would adopt an indulgent attitude to claims for allowances and to the use of departmental resources. By exercising power in these matters, higher level bureaucrats could influence the behaviour of lower grade workers through the manipulation of benefits. In Yala, a wayward middle ranking officer in one of the district offices was brought into line by the absence of an annual bonus, while an extension worker who was particularly critical of policy implementation at village level had his activism curtailed by promotion to a middle ranking position that took him away from regular contact with rural dwellers. Those in the lowest rungs of the hierarchy had little power to oppose or circumvent these actions, and this could be a cause of discontent with their work.

Clearly there were divisions of both knowledge and power in the DOAE hierarchy in Yala, divisions which influenced the conduct and implementation of development projects. These could be subsumed or downplayed when the need arose for civil servants to show group solidarity, as became obvious in the training workshop attended by the inspection team from Bangkok, but it would be wrong to assume that solidarity was the

dominant pattern in the bureaucracy. Staff at various levels in the hierarchy competed with each other for both knowledge and power, and the study of interactions between Thai officials and Malay villagers cannot ignore this fact. Having outlined the work and practices of the Thai officials in DOAE, I will now turn to look at the domain in which they most commonly seek to influence the social life of Malays, the rural village.

Chapter 3: The Rubber Economy of Khala

3.1 The village of Khala

For most of my stay in Thailand I lived in the village of Khala, about 25 kilometres west of Yala town, and four kilometres from the district town of Yaha (see Map 2). I had decided to do research in Yaha district for several reasons. It was an area that had a project under way for the improved processing and marketing of rubber, and its economy was heavily weighted towards rubber production. The majority of the population was Malay and I had established good relations with the local DOAE staff. Through the efforts of local extension workers I was able to choose between several villages where the people were willing to let me stay, and after visiting each I opted for Khala, as it was participating in DOAE's rubber project and I had found the people particularly friendly. In Bangkok I had spoken to Professor Patya Saihoo about carrying out research in the south, but at the stage I went to live in Khala I had still not read his work on the area. It was thus by an odd coincidence rather than design that I ended up in the community where he had carried out his fieldwork in the mid-1960s and again in 1973.

Most old people in Khala said that the village was settled some time in the last century, and some believed that Thais had lived there previously (see Saihoo 1974, pp.31-32). Malays were definitely settled there before the advance of rubber into Thailand during the early part of the twentieth century. It seems that in the 1930s there was a fairly large migration into Khala from Nong Chik district in neighbouring Pattani province. Many families traced their origins to that area or still had close ties with relatives there, and a small number of absentee landlords from Nong Chik held land

in Khala. Almost everyone in Khala was Malay, the exception being a Chinese shopkeeper, who with his Thai wife ran the largest store in the village and had lived there for over forty years.

People usually described Khala as an amalgamation of eight *kampong* (hamlets), the thirteen *kampong* listed by Saihoo (1974, pp.23, 26-28) having grown and merged over time. Three stream beds ran through the settlement from the hills to the north, and these were widened out and cultivated as wet rice fields. The oldest hamlets in the village were situated alongside these fields, but newer *kampong* were built on more elevated land when people began to establish rubber holdings. Most land around Khala was unsuitable for wet rice cultivation, and older people told me that in the past uncultivated land had mainly been used for collecting wood, forest products, and for hunting, though wildlife was less abundant now, and large animals such as tigers had disappeared.

The opening of land for rubber cultivation allowed an increase in population, and was probably the stimulus for the migration from Nong Chik, similar to movements inland from the coast of Pattani noted by Fraser (1960). Land around Khala was cleared as recently as the late 1950s, but all village land is now utilised. Saihoo (1974, p.46) recorded a steady increase in Khala's population from 1956 to 1972, but boundary changes between the time of his fieldwork and my own make comparison of figures very difficult. During 1986, Khala had about 256 households, with 1,600 residents, 790 of whom were aged 21 or older. My household and population figures may be compared with statistics collected by Arun, the local DOAE extension worker, which showed 248 households in 1982 and a population of 1,488. Population in the district as a whole has steadily increased, with Saihoo recording 16,800 in 1965 and 24,610 in 1973 (1974, pp.21-22), and local

government statistics in 1986 showing 39,721 people (สำนักงานเลขานุการคณะกรรมการพัฒนาจังหวัดยะลา 2529, p.4). In Khala itself, even the eight *kampong* which people usually distinguished were becoming blurred in some cases, as people built new and often larger houses to replace old ones, and more young couples set up on their own away from earlier extended households.

Rice growing in Khala steadily declined in importance as the area under rubber increased. Rice was grown on only 7% of village land when I was there, compared to 83% of land planted with rubber. Many people no longer bothered to reserve land for rice cultivation, and holdings were small, often fragmented, and insufficient to sustain a household's needs for a full year. Rubber, despite fluctuations in the world market over the past fifty years and a steady overall decline in real returns (Stifel 1973), has remained a better income generator than rice, and people in Khala preferred to generate cash from rubber and purchase their rice in the market. The shift from rice cultivation to rubber growing decreased the amount of co-operative labour that was required in agriculture, and shifted the emphasis in the village economy from payments in kind to cash transactions (Saihoo 1974, pp.283-298).

The penetration of Thai rule into the southern border region has increased the transport connections in and out of Khala. In the 1960s a sometimes impassable main road from Yala to Yaha was upgraded and eventually sealed, and a bridge replaced the old ferry that was once necessary to take people and vehicles across the Pattani River into Yala. The government, concerned about the security of the region, carried out substantial road building programmes in the south, allowing for increased

traffic throughout Yala and extension of services by buses, taxis, pick-up trucks, and motorcycles. Roads to the outskirts of Khala had been widened and sealed, but roads within the village were still narrow and liable to become muddy in heavy rains. Government projects led to the construction of small bridges over the most commonly crossed stream beds, and the annual levelling and regrading of roads. Many households had motorcycles and several wealthy people owned pick-up trucks, so that few people walked to the district town. When large groups went to special events in neighbouring villages or more distant parts of the region, truck owners were usually willing to lend their vehicles in return for a contribution to expenses. Communications between villagers and the wider region have thus become a lot easier and quicker, but I would argue that it is wrong to imagine Malay villages as isolated backwaters in the past (cf. Suhrke 1973, p.298; 1975, p.194). There has always been a great deal of contact with Malays to the south, and Patani Malays have been a significant group in Muslim communities overseas (Matheson and Hooker 1988, pp.13-14).

Thai political rule has wrought changes in the material environment of Khala. A government primary school was built there in the mid-1950s, and provides classes in all six grades of primary education. In 1986 there were about 350 children at the school and eighteen teachers, though none of the teachers lived in the village. School attendance in Thailand is compulsory for all children between the ages of six and fifteen years, but most children in Khala left school by the time they were twelve years old, and only about one in five remained in the government education system beyond primary level. The school buildings were in good condition, and a new wing had been completed shortly before my arrival. All instruction was in Thai, though once a week an hour-long class on Islam was given in

Malay by a visiting teacher. Permanent teachers at the school were both Thai and Malay. The Thai teachers when chatting to me always referred to the villagers and their language as *khaek* (see Ch.1), and said the children were often in poor health and came to school dirty, though admitted the situation had gradually improved over the previous ten years. They said that most of the children were not interested in school, especially the girls, who were often married by their mid-teens. Like the DOAE officials, these teachers were concerned at my having to live in Khala, because of the problems of language and the supposed lack of hygiene. Their attitudes contrasted quite sharply with those of the Malay teachers in the school, who described the children as enthusiastic, and who told me that education was admired and respected by most Malays. However, they did admit that it was difficult to encourage children to continue their studies beyond primary level, and argued that this was because there was no obvious benefit for children to sacrifice more of their time to study.

A desire for knowledge or perceptions of future job prospects might spur some children on to further education, but many families who desired more schooling for their children were constrained by the expense. Post-primary education in Khala meant a considerable outlay for school fees, clothing, stationery, transport, and in the case of studies beyond middle high school, board and lodgings in Yala or some other large town. It was a fact of life that most families could not afford such an investment, or at best could only manage it for one child, in a place where four or five children was the norm. If a choice had to be made between sons and daughters, daughters usually lost out, for although it was accepted that education was beneficial to both sexes, it was also felt that in the long term girls were less likely to seek work outside the village and therefore needed the education to

compete outside less than their brothers. This was a self-fulfilling prophecy perhaps, but was not due to a denial that women should receive an education, as Thai bureaucrats often assumed. If a family owned land, daughters might receive a share enabling them to generate an income from rubber tapping in place of a longer period of education. Both boys and girls, if their parents owned, or had use of, rubber land, learned early on how to tap rubber and to process the latex sheets. With such a skill and the opportunity to use it, the immediate lure of an income was often more appealing to a young person than further years of study in an often dull and foreign education system.

In the grounds of the primary school there was a child welfare clinic, but there were no other government offices in Khala. A large meeting hall had been built as part of a development project on one of the entrance roads, and behind it two houses for agricultural and community development extension workers. As I mentioned in the last chapter, Arun, the local DOAE worker, lived in one of these for a short period, but since then the buildings had remained unoccupied and hardly used, though when I returned in 1988 a family was squatting in one of the houses. A large wood and bamboo pavilion had also been built in another part of Khala as a meeting place for the women's agricultural group organised by DOAE, but when I lived there it was in a dilapidated state and unused. In 1988 I was surprised to see it smartly reconstructed and the road leading to it spruced up with new fencing and trimmed bushes. I asked if the women's group had had a resurgence of interest, but the people with whom I spoke laughed and explained that since I was last there, the Crown Prince of Thailand had visited the village, and that the civil servants had been through in their usual fashion to tidy and beautify anything he was likely to see.

Each of the *kampong* in Khala had at least one person selling small stocks of household dry goods, and almost all had a coffee shop where people liked to congregate and chat, especially after the first round of rubber tapping in the morning, and in the late afternoon when latex sheets had been made and hung out to dry. In the *kampong* nearest the school there were several shops and stalls, and it was often called the "market" *kampong* (*kampong kedai*). In the past the weekly market took place there (Saihoo 1974, pp.313-314), but by the time I moved to Khala, most villagers went to the large Thursday market in Yaha, where a wide range of goods could be bought and people could meet with friends and acquaintances from outside the village.

On other days the market in Yaha was still open, but only a few stalls operated. Every day two vendors in small vans and several on motorcycles visited local villages, including Khala, to sell fish, vegetables, dry goods, ice, ice cream, sweets and snacks, while a young illegal immigrant had the more arduous task of pushing his cart from dawn to dusk through the district selling pancakes. Rubber had made many people in the district relatively well off, and they supported a prosperous sector of small traders and service people. It was a sobering realisation that this intricate web of exchange and people's livelihoods was largely supported by the world market price for rubber, a price which was so far beyond the control of people in Khala.

The mosque in the village provided a physical focus for the inhabitants, and virtually all men gathered there on Fridays for communal prayers, making it a useful site for discussion for both indigenous leaders and visiting government officers. Construction of the mosque began in the mid-1970s, to replace an old wooden prayer house (*surau*) that had been

used for many years, but which was in poor repair and therefore a source of embarassment for a village where dire poverty was rare. Fund-raising activities were held in the early 1970s to help finance the project, and it was built in stages over the next ten years. Everyone I spoke to was proud of the achievement. A small religious school stood next to the mosque, and children received evening and weekend instruction there in Islam, Koran recitation, and Malay. Some funds had been received from Saudi Arabia to purchase books and materials, but facilities were still basic. The mosque had religious significance, but it was also a symbol of the community's wealth and a demonstration of the influence and support of particular leaders, and both community wealth and leadership depended very much on the fortunes of the rubber economy.

Rubber cultivation requires a warm moist climate and Khala was fortunate in this regard. In 1986 there were 124 days of rain, with a total of 1,414 mm. . The highest falls were in April-May and from September to December. Little or no rain fell in February and March, or in July and August. Although heavy rains could make roads difficult to negotiate, Khala's hilly location meant that it was not subject to the severe flooding that often occurred in other parts of Yala. Householders obtained water from wells on their own land, or from neighbours' wells, so that no payment was necessary, but use of a neighbour's well did require the maintenance of good relations. During long dry seasons the wells ran dry or only yielded water in the early morning, as happened in February 1986, when no rain fell for a month. Additional water was then brought from streams or rice fields. During 1986 a water tower and pump were built in the primary school under a rural development project, but a second pump had to be installed to reach the furthest *kampong*. The government allowed access to

this water supply on a metered basis, and households were charged for usage. When I returned in 1988, almost all households still relied on their own wells, but this may change if population pressure increases or there are long dry spells.

Electricity reached Khala in the early 1980s, and nearly all houses used electric lighting, while many had electrical appliances and water pumps. Cooking was still done over charcoal or gas bottles bought in Yaha. Rubber holdings were not irrigated, and none of the equipment used in tapping or processing could be replaced by electrical appliances, so the advent of electricity did not affect the practices of rubber production, but the wealth gained from rubber did enable the acquisition by some households of a variety of electrical goods.

To my untrained eyes, people in Khala appeared reasonably healthy. Drinking water was not boiled, and stomach upsets were common, but severe gastric disorders were unusual. The most menacing infection was malaria, endemic in the whole of the province and often resistant to medication. Malarial mosquitoes were especially prevalent in rubber holdings, which surrounded every house in Khala, and as the mosquitoes were active throughout the night, people always wore protective clothing when tapping before dawn, though few worried about this when sitting outside their houses in the evenings. The local hospital had a malarial unit which most people used, but many were still unwilling to go to the hospital for other ailments, preferring to trust traditional medicines and healers.

In the above description I have tried to sketch some of the general features of life in Khala, and how these relate to the rubber economy. In the next section, I will examine in more detail the cultivation and processing of rubber, before looking at the issues of ownership, leadership, and debt,

which are central to the functioning of the economy, and essential in understanding the fate of government intervention.

3.2 Rubber agriculture

The rubber tree (*hevea brasiliensis*), originated in South America, and has been known to Europeans for a few hundred years, but it was not until Charles Goodyear invented the process of vulcanisation of rubber in 1839, producing a durable and elastic material, that it began to assume great importance as a commercial commodity. Before the latter half of the nineteenth century rubber trees were only found in South America, but in the 1870s seeds were shipped to Kew Gardens in England, where small numbers germinated, and plants and seeds were subsequently sent to the Calcutta Botanical Gardens in India, and thence to gardens in Ceylon, Java, Burma, and Singapore. From these sources it spread rapidly throughout Southeast Asia, where the climate was conducive to its cultivation (Voon 1976, Ch.1).

Official Thai accounts say the first rubber was planted in Thailand at the turn of the century, with seeds brought from Perak in Malaya. Seeds were distributed to government officials in various areas of the south, and many early holdings derived from this propagation. A large, unofficial influx of Chinese planters into southern Thailand at this time introduced rubber growing to Yala, initially in the border district of Betong, and along the road from Kedah to Songkhla on the west of the peninsula. Previously pepper growers or tin miners, these Chinese settlers shifted to rubber cultivation as demand for the former two products declined (Stifel 1973,

pp.116-117). Later, as Malay rice growing and fishing communities on the coasts of Pattani and Narathiwat obtained rubber seeds, they also moved southwards and westwards into Yala to open holdings and plant the new crop (Fraser 1966, pp.13-20).

Rubber growing has been the most profitable occupation for rural people in southern Thailand in the twentieth century, despite the gradual decrease in real prices since its introduction (Stifel 1973, pp.131-132). Increased production of synthetic rubber beginning in the 1960s tended to depress the price of natural rubber, and to counter this research was carried out in order to produce high-yield varieties of rubber trees that could replace the "native" varieties imported into Southeast Asia. The Rubber Plantation Aid Fund and a Rubber Research Centre were established in Thailand in 1960, modelled on similar programmes in Malaysia, but because of budgetary and staff restrictions, these had only helped to replant 8% of mature tree area in the south by the end of 1969, compared to a figure of about 65% in Malaysia (ibid., pp.126-127; Hanna 1965a, p.3). Corruption and nepotism tended to undermine the scheme, and growers were often unable to participate because they did not have clear title to land (Hanna 1965a, pp.4-5).

Villagers who participated in government replanting schemes had to adhere to government methods and allow frequent inspections, leading to dependence on fertilisers and the adoption of new labour practices necessary to preserve the more fragile high-yield varieties of tree. In the village of Nathawi in Songkhla province, only the wealthy families were able to take part in the replanting scheme. Those with small holdings were unable to replant without other sources of income to support them until the new trees could be tapped, a period of four to six years. Replanting thus

increased economic differentiation in the village and led to a decline in share tapping for landless villagers because of the lower frequency of tapping for high-yield trees (McVey 1984, pp.123-125). In much of the south, the high-yield varieties remain popular with only the wealthy growers, and the government's own figures show that the income benefits of replanting are greater in the short term, when assistance is paid, than in the long term (สำนักงานกองทุนสงเคราะห์การทำสวน ยาง n.d.).

Rubber tapping did not require radically new knowledge or sophisticated technology. Apart from land and labour, the new requirements were seeds, tapping knives and containers, coagulants for the latex, mangles to press the latex sheets, and transport to merchants (Stifel 1973, pp.112-113). The major skills to be learned were the tapping technique, and how to coagulate and press the latex. However, the shift did mean social adjustments for many people. Fishing and rice growing, which had previously been the main occupations of Malays, were organised on a co-operative basis, and were accompanied by religious and social events throughout the year (Fraser 1960; 1966). Rubber growing was a far more individual activity, and I would argue that a major distinguishing characteristic of rubber growing villages is their paucity of religious and social events related to people's work.

In Khala, rubber growing probably began about 70 or 80 years ago, but the major planting boom that people recalled was in the 1950s, when prices were so good that many completely abandoned their rice crops to grow rubber (see Saihoo 1974, p.42). It was around this time that the final parcels of uncultivated land were cleared and utilised, so that today a person can only obtain land in the village through inheritance, gift, or purchase. Most of the

rubber grown in Yaha district is of the "native" variety. In 1986, about 87% of agricultural land in Yaha was planted with rubber, and 54% of this with native varieties (ฝ่ายวิชาการ สำนักงานเกษตรจังหวัดยะลา n.d., pp.5-10). In Khala however, where 83% of agricultural land was used for growing rubber, 73% of the trees were high-yielding types, an extraordinary pattern. This however was not a result of governmnent efforts, for most of the high-yield trees that people had purchased were obtained from private nurseries rather than under the government's replanting scheme, or had been grafted and transplanted by growers within the village. This made rubber holdings in Khala more productive than most, as yields for the new varieties of tree ranged from 170 to 200 kilograms per rai annually, compared to 80 to 90 kilograms for native types. This pattern reflected a desire for increased productivity amongst growers, but also indicated that people in Khala were willing to pursue that end without government instruction or assistance.

Native varieties remain popular in many places because they require little in the way of attention and can be tapped every day. After seedling transplantation, these trees need seven years of growth before tapping can begin, and are extremely sturdy. The high-yield types come in about ten major varieties, mostly bred by the Rubber Research Institutes in Malaysia and Thailand, with the former considered the best. These only need four to five years' growth before tapping, and should only be tapped every second day. They require greater attention to soil preparation and fertilisation, and are sensitive to some soils. Planting them leads to growers becoming dependent on manufacturers of soil improvement chemicals in Thailand and overseas. DOAE officers encouraged replanting with high-yield

varieties and the programme had clearly had an impact in Yaha district, where 46% of rubber trees were high-yielding types, compared to 37% in the province as a whole (ibid.).

Growers in Khala were keenly aware of the yields their trees produced and of variations in yield at different locations within the village. When cutting grafts from old trees, they would select those which had been particularly productive over the years, thereby seeking to improve the overall quality of their holdings. Some growers who still planted native types found that in this way they could achieve high yields while retaining the sturdiness of the trees, and were willing to forego the greater yields of the new varieties in order to escape the burden of regular use of fertilisers and the risks with more fragile trees. Government projects, however, did not support this avenue of improving productivity, and focused solely on replanting with new hybrid varieties.

After rubber trees reach thirty years of age they cease to produce latex in sufficient amounts for a reasonable return, and at that stage growers usually "slaughter tap", literally tapping the trees to death for the last drops of latex. The trees are then felled and chopped up, usually by hired labour, and the roots burned rather than poisoned. Much of the wood is left in the holding to aid water retention, but people in Khala sold the large logs to timber merchants in Yaha. The timber was often used for making charcoal, but in 1988 I noticed an increasing interest in the use of rubber timber for carpentry and furnishings, which may provide a significant additional source of income in the future.

New trees in the village were planted in rows three to four metres apart, and the trees within a row were spaced about five metres apart. Before planting, the soil was dug over by the owner and a team of friends or

relatives, who in return were usually allowed to plant vegetables or fruit in between the rows for the first two or three years. This inter-planting helped to aerate the soil, aided water retention, and provided good ground cover to protect against the effects of the sun. Pineapples, beans , and cucumbers were most commonly planted this way. If a useful tree such as a cashew, kapok, or fruit tree sat within the holding, it was normally left there so that the owner could continue to use it, rather than replace it with a rubber tree.

The main tasks in the years preceding tapping were keeping the ground cover in check, controlling pests and diseases, and fertilising the soil. Most villagers in Khala kept the undergrowth in their holdings reasonably trimmed, as high-yield trees were very susceptible to competition from ground cover plants. Those growers with native types, however, often allowed jungle-like growth in their holdings, much to the despair of Arun and other DOAE officers who were ardent advocates of neat holdings. In their defence, the growers argued that native varieties could easily tolerate such undergrowth, and that as a holding was not economically productive during the pre-tapping stage, it was a waste of time trimming undergrowth. It was a hard case to rebut. When pests or diseases were a problem, people in Khala tended to seek the advice of others who had experience in dealing with them, though some who were more confident and capable in Thai would ask Arun when he visited. Some of the chemicals recommended by DOAE in such cases were quite expensive by local standards, and growers often preferred to fell the affected trees if the number was small. Fertilisers were a mixture of nitrogen, phosphate and potassium, with the proportions varying according to soil type, and were purchased from government agencies or private sellers in Yaha. Growers of native varieties rarely used them, and others restricted the amount they

used because of the cost. In 1986, I calculated that an owner with ten rai of land would have had to spend about 40% of a month's income to fertilise a holding once, and this usually needed to be done about twice a year, an outlay that many simply could not afford without putting themselves into debt.

Tapping commenced 4-5 years after planting for new varieties, and after 6-8 years for native types. However, girth of trunk was the decisive indicator. DOAE workers recommended that before tapping, trees should measure at least 50 cm. in circumference at a height of 95-150 cm. from the ground, depending on the variety of tree, but few people in Khala were so precise, and relied on their judgement of eye. Tapping began when most trees in a holding were mature, the remaining trees being incorporated into the daily round when they were ready.

The latex ducts in a rubber tree are located in the bark and fall in a spiral from right to left around the trunk. The maximum amount of latex is obtained by an incision sloping from left to right half way round the circumference of the tree at an angle of 35-45 degrees to horizontal. All trees in a row are tapped on the same side to make latex collection easier. The tapping cut must not be too deep or the bark will be damaged irreparably, and the technique takes some practice to master. The bark is gradually shaved away at each tapping, so that over time the tapping cut works its way down the trunk until it reaches the ground. At that stage, which takes several years, tapping recommences on the other side of the tree so that the original side can restore its bark. When the second side is exhausted, the original face of the tree should be ready for tapping once more.

At the lower point of the tapping cut, a perpendicular line about 15 cm. long is scored into the trunk and a small V-shaped metal duct inserted into

the bark at the base of this scored line. A short way below this, a ceramic cup or half coconut shell is attached to the tree by a wire loop. When trees are tapped in the early morning, the latex oozes out of the bark, runs down the sloping cut, down the vertical scored line and along the small metal duct, to drip into the cup suspended below. DOAE leaflets recommend tapping between 6 a.m. and 11 a.m., but many people in Khala began before dawn, as early as 4 a.m., using torches or gas lamps fixed on their heads to enable them to see what they were doing. This meant an increased risk of malaria, as well as the usual hazards of leeches and the occasional pit viper, but it meant that work could be completed before the hottest part of the day.

Both men and women in Khala tapped rubber, sometimes with children tagging along. Young children were usually left at home to be tended by siblings or older relatives. Tapping time varied according to the size of plot, but the average was about four hours. At this point people would either return home or go to one of the village coffee shops to have breakfast, a welcome break which provided an opportunity to chat with friends and neighbours. They would then return to the holdings to collect the latex, scooping the cups into pails with a small spatula. Again both men and women would perform this task, though DOAE workers commonly told me that in Malay villages women did more tapping work than men, which to them was an indicator of both the laziness of Malay men and their poor treatment of women.

Wandering around Khala it was easy to get this impression, as most of the tappers close to the *kampongs* were women and children. At the same time men could be seen sitting and chatting in the coffee shops. But a visit to holdings further away would reveal a different picture. Here men were the vast majority of tappers, and any women were working with at

least one man present. He was not only a chaperone who discouraged flirtation with other men, but also a guard. Outlying holdings were more subject to attacks by bandits, and whereas these raids were usually intended to extort money, if women were present they could involve sexual assault. Men in Khala and elsewhere thus aimed to counter both types of danger by keeping women workers close to, and generally in view of, the houses in the village, but in doing so helped to sustain an image of their own laziness in the eyes of Thai officials who came to visit.

Native varieties of rubber tree in Khala were tapped daily, but those growers with high-yield types would often work every day as well, because they needed the money. This was lucrative in the short term, but ultimately led to these trees having a far shorter working life. Most people did not tap on Sundays, though some made Friday their rest day, and no-one tapped on the major Muslim festival days during the year. Tapping could not take place during rain or for some time later, as the trees would be wet and the latex tended to run over the bark rather than down the tapping cut. Trees could not be tapped when their leaves were changing, a period of about six weeks around March to May each year. Personal motivation and current financial circumstances also influenced whether someone would go tapping, though few people in Khala could afford to cease work for too long. Some had a general reputation for being lazy, and others were praised for their hard work, but most regarded themselves as lying somewhere between the two extremes. The number of days per year when a person could tap rubber thus varied according to several factors, but I estimated that it ranged between 120 and 170 days in most years.

Once latex was collected in pails, it was carried to the site where it would be processed into sheets. This could be under an open shelter in the

holding itself or near the grower's home. In the latter case the transport was usually by bicycle or motorcycle. Processing began with straining, typically through a nest of dried grass, which removed only the grossest impurities. After dilution with water the mixture was poured into aluminium trays, and coagulated by stirring in a large cupful of formic acid. Both trays and acid were purchased from shops in Yaha. The latex was then left to set, but trays were often placed in the open air so that dust and other impurities settled in them. Bubbles would also form on the surface as it set, and these should have been scraped off to avoid flaws in the final sheets, but few people bothered to do this.

When the latex set it was turned out onto a sheet of galvanised iron and kneaded with the feet to a rough rectangular shape, then pressed further by hand or with a rolling pin, and finally passed through mangles. Throughout the kneading and pressing water was poured onto the latex sheet to keep it clean and wash out excess acid, but people varied greatly in how much water they used, and the water was often dirty, especially in the dry season. Men and women did this work, often working in married pairs. Ideally a rubber sheet should weigh 1 to 1.2 kilograms, but sheets in Khala were often heavier as people wanted to reduce the number of sheets they had to process, in order to save time. Most told me that they aimed to produce five sheets per day, despite variations in the amount of latex collected. Thicker, heavier sheets took longer to dry, and it was more difficult to remove excess acid, reducing the quality of the rubber.

Pressed sheets received a final wash, but this was often perfunctory, and the water itself dirty and acidic from too much re-use. Sheets were hung in the open air to dry, usually over bamboo poles or fences near the grower's house, or under a house which was raised off the ground. Dust

settled on sheets hanging in the open and clung to sheets that were still wet. In some villages I saw people lying sheets on the ground to dry, which made them extremely dirty. A common complaint of both DOAE workers and rubber merchants in the province was the low quality of local rubber sheets, and this certainly affected the markets that Thai exporters were able to penetrate overseas as well as the immediate price return to growers. While the stages in rubber sheet processing were not overly complicated, it was clear that many of the practices of people in Khala contributed to their producing low grade rubber, and much of the time and energy of Arun and other DOAE workers was devoted to changing people's behaviour in this regard.

I will consider the marketing of rubber sheets in the final section of this chapter, but I now turn to the question of land tenure in Khala. When discussing agricultural practices I have usually referred to owners or growers, but I adopted these labels solely for convenience of expression. In the next section it will become clear that the position is more complicated, and that a variety of relations to land exist in the village, a fact which becomes important for the possibilities of government intervention in Khala's economy.

3.3 Land Tenure

The territory cleared to grow rubber around Khala had not previously been used for agriculture, and before 1955 the local administration had no system for registering interest in land. Clearing and use were sufficient in the eyes of local people to constitute ownership, and the transfer of rights, either by lease or sale, was done by oral contract. As the Thai government

sought to increase its control over the south a major concern was land ownership, as land tax was a leading source of revenue. Adoption of a consistent system of title was a very slow process which remains incomplete. This lack of security and clarity in tenure was a factor in deterring foreign investment in rubber agriculture in Thailand (Voon 1976, p.142), but there were other legal restrictions on foreign ownership which acted against the formation of large estates (Jumpasut 1981, p.18) and these two factors combined to give rubber agriculture in southern Thailand its distinctive character of being based largely on smallholdings. This has meant problems both in taking advantage of economies of scale and in organising the marketing of rubber, but has given Thailand the distinct advantages of allowing a larger proportion of its population to hold land and of ensuring that a greater proportion of the profits from land use has remained in the country.

All landholders in Khala had government-issued certificates to show they had right of use in their land, though district officials in the Lands Department told me that only 80% of land in Yaha district was under such certification. In 1955 a registration system using SK1 forms was introduced in the area (Saihoo 1974, p.236; Takahashi 1976 gives a history of land legislation). These forms showed the use to which land was being put, the name and address of the occupier, and a sketch of the land with dimensions, but rarely the geographical relationship to surrounding plots. The forms were issued by the district office of the Lands Department, and could be inherited but were not otherwise legally transferable (Takahashi 1976, p.79). In Khala, 84% of land was held under SK1 forms, so that when land was sold, the buyer had to go to the district office to obtain a new SK1 form, using the same details appearing on the previous form.

In 1978 a new system of registration using NS3 forms was introduced. These were also issued by the district office of the Lands Department, and were based on an aerial survey of the province. The forms showed details of land boundaries and their relation to surrounding plots, but were not always accurate. The forms were not transferable, so that a buyer still had to apply for a new form. Full title, which requires a cadastral survey, was only recently introduced to Yaha district, and by 1988 was only available for land close to and including the district town. One of the reasons the government sought to introduce geographically exact surveys of land was to make its collection of land tax more efficient. Land Tax officials acknowledged that their records on land holdings were an underestimate, and after they had collected tax in Khala in 1986 I noted that their estimate of land holdings in the village was about 10% below the figure of the Lands Department, which operated from the same government building in Yaha.

In 1986 I recorded 3,950 rai of agricultural land in the village. This total is much lower than Saihoo's figures for 1955 and 1975, despite the fact that he relied on land tax statistics, which in themselves are underestimates (1974, p.245). The discrepancy is due to changes in local boundaries since the mid-1970s. However, it is still possible and useful to compare our figures on the basis of percentages. In 1955, 82% of land was planted with rubber (ibid., p.236), a proportion almost the same as my 1986 figure of 83%. Rice growing in 1955 accounted for 10% of land use (ibid.), but this had fallen to 7% by 1986. Although rice cultivation had decreased, it had not been replaced by rubber, because the low and wet terrain was unsuitable for rubber trees. Instead the area was either used for ground crops or left fallow for grazing cattle. In 1955, 7% of rubber land was held by people from outside the village (ibid., p.246). By 1986 this figure had jumped to 16%, but

this rise was deceptive, as the new village boundary meant that several owners formerly listed as residents of Khala were by 1986 considered residents of other villages. Taking this into account, I would estimate that a figure of about 7% would still hold in terms of former boundaries, so there has been no dramatic push of absentee landlords into the village.

Thirty-four households from outside Khala held land in the village in 1986. Of these, sixteen were households formerly included within Khala's boundaries, and eight were households in Pattani province. The rest were located in two villages nearby, or in an area close to the provincial town of Yala. One owner in Songkhla had moved there from Pattani. All these absentee owners either worked the land themselves or on a share basis with relatives in Khala. The Pattani owners were generally people who had obtained land in the past and then returned to Pattani, or who had acquired land through inheritance from relatives settled in Khala. The households close to Yala town were mostly ex-residents of Khala, while a few had never lived in the village, but did have relatives there.

Many residents were of the opinion that village land had become concentrated in the hands of fewer owners over the years, but it was very difficult to make statistical comparisons on this issue, as Saihoo gives figures for individual owners only, not households. What I am clearly able to say on the basis of my own data for 1986 is that land ownership was very unevenly distributed in Khala. Of 256 households in the village, 197 owned land, and in individual terms, there were 327 landowners in a total population of 931 aged 15 years or over. Table 3.1 shows the distribution of ownership of rubber holdings in Khala. Most people regarded ten rai of rubber land as the minimum amount necessary to support a married couple with a small family of about three dependants. Over half the individual

owners in Khala (55.3%) held less than this. That is to say, the income generated from their land was generally insufficient to meet their needs. This figure appeared to improve in regard to households, with only 32% or 63 land owning households having less than ten rai. However, as the

Table 3.1

Ownership of rubber holdings in Khala

Area held (rai)	Individuals		Households	
	No.	%	No.	%
0	23	7.0	12	6.1
< 5	53	16.2	18	9.1
6 - 10	105	32.1	33	16.8
11 - 15	38	11.6	25	12.7
16 - 20	42	12.8	33	16.8
21 - 30	38	11.6	28	14.2
31 - 40	15	4.6	20	10.2
41 - 100	13	4.0	21	10.7
>100	0	0.0	7	3.6
Total	327	100.0	197	100.0

average household had about five dependants, this amount of land would have been even less capable of providing a sufficient income. Furthermore, if the 59 landless households in Khala were added to these 63 with insufficient land, then nearly half of the households in the village (47.7%) were unable to support themselves from the land they owned.

The middle range of income, covering people with rubber holdings of 11 to 30 rai, accounted for 44% of land-owning households, but only one

third of all households in the village. While no individuals could be considered very wealthy, that is, owning more than 100 rai of rubber land, seven households fell into this category. No-one in Khala was very rich by national standards, or even compared to the elites in the provincial town, but those with over thirty rai of rubber land led very comfortable lives by comparison with their neighbours. This meant that the poor majority relied on sources of income other than their own rubber holdings for sustenance. Share tapping on the land of wealthier families, wage labouring, and selling produce in the market were the occupations most commonly pursued, but none of these could really match the revenue generating power of growing and tapping rubber on one's own land.

A few examples of individuals in Khala may help to illustrate the differing capabilites of families to meet their needs, and some of the factors which constrained their ability to pursue other avenues of income. Hassan was the son of a wealthy villager. In his late 20s, he was married with one child, and his wife had come from Nong Chik district in Pattani. He owned thirty rai of rubber land, which afforded him a good income, and he also owned some rice plots and several rai of fruit trees. His wife had no land of her own, so they tapped Hassan's rubber, along with two of his sisters who were employed on a share basis, taking 50% of the sale price of the rubber they produced. The rice Hassan and his wife grew was sufficient for only about six months of the year, and they purchased the remainder in Yaha. Hassan's wife sold their fruit produce in the weekly market in Yaha and also sold some groceries from home. Hassan had inherited the land from his father. He had studied for four years in a Thai high school and was keen to take advantage of government projects. His rubber trees were mostly high-yield types and he was the deputy chairman of the government

project to improve rubber marketing which I will look at in the next chapter. The processing shed for the project was built near Hassan's house, and he and his wife went there to make their latex sheets. Towards the end of my stay, Hassan began building a brick house to replace the large old wooden dwelling where he and his wife had lived since their marriage.

Razak was born in Nong Chik, Pattani, and came to Khala with his parents as a young boy when they purchased land in the village. They eventually decided to return home and leased their holding of twelve rai to share tappers. Razak studied up to the fourth year of high school and spoke Thai very well, and after leaving school worked as a driver for several years. After marrying, he and his wife Aliza came to live in Khala and worked the land which Razak's parents transferred to him. As the holding was relatively small, Razak tapped it alone, but the couple made the latex sheets together. Aliza earned a small income by selling food and coffee in the evenings, and Razak also made money from breeding singing doves, which are extremely popular throughout southern Thailand. Their house was a wooden and galvanised iron building on brick and concrete supports, and accommodated the couple and their four small boys comfortably.

One of the poorest houses in the village belonged to Suhaimi. It was a simple structure of wood and bamboo, and had no electricity. The parents of both Suhaimi and his wife were landless, so neither could inherit land to generate an income. Neither had received more than a minimal formal education, and Suhaimi's wife was unable to speak Thai. As a young man Suhaimi had worked in labouring jobs in several parts of southern Thailand and Malaysia. His spoken Thai was good, but his reading ability was poor. There were five young children in the family, three of whom were of school age, but only two ever attended school, and then very irregularly,

wearing clothes in bad repair and without shoes. Suhaimi was middle-aged and had worked for several years share tapping ten rai of land belonging to one of the wealthier men in Khala, receiving half the sale price of the latex sheets he produced. In addition to this, both he and his wife sought labouring work clearing land, helping to plant, transplant or harvest rice, and picking fruit. They regularly borrowed money to make ends meet and part of their income was always spent in paying off loans. In late 1985 the wealthy villager for whom Suhaimi had been sharetapping gave the land to one of his sons who was saving money in order to get married. Suhaimi was thus left without the mainstay of his income and was unable to find sharetapping work elsewhere in Khala or neighbouring villages. As a result he took a job with a local merchant as a porter, loading and unloading latex sheets on a truck which collected rubber from producers throughout the district. Normally this work was done by much younger and stronger men, but Suhaimi had been unable to find other regular employment, and was constantly worried about how long he could continue in this job before he became physically incapable of doing it.

Among Khala's landless was the village headman, Cik Osman, but his circumstances were far removed from the poverty of Suhaimi. Cik Osman had two wives, both of whom made a living from tapping rubber on their own land, the elder wife alone and the younger with the help of her children. Cik Osman's wealth derived from his income as one of the two major rubber buyers in Khala. In the past he had inherited land, but sold it in order to establish a rubber dealership. Between 200 and 300 people sold rubber to him every week, and the profit of reselling this to a trader from Yala was sufficient to generate a good income, especially given that his two wives already had good incomes of their own. Although his own Thai

education had been poor, Cik Osman used his wealth to provide Thai schooling for all his seven children, so that they were all able to speak Thai and could be at ease when speaking to officials who made courtesy calls to the headman's house. Cik Osman felt he would be able to buy land or give the purchase price of land to each of his children as they reached adulthood and planned to marry.

Each of these residents had quite different land resources on which to draw in order to make a living. Hassan, with his extensive holdings, was able to gain a good income simply from his agricultural pursuits and his education enabled him to take advantage of government projects where he felt these could be beneficial. Razak's land holdings were not quite enough to be his sole source of income, and he and his wife had to pursue some other activities in order to maintain themselves and their sons. Before inheriting land his education had enabled him to make a living in town, but after his marriage he had been able to make his living wholly in Khala. Suhaimi had no such opportunity. Even when he had been able to share tap on someone else's land, the money was insufficient to provide for his family, and both he and his wife had been forced to seek labouring work. Their poor education meant that jobs requiring any literacy were closed to them, and their origins in landless families meant that they began married life with only a minimal chance of building a future in agriculture. Poverty deprived their children of an education and of the chance to inherit land. Landlessness of itself, however, did not mean poverty. Cik Osman was able to make a good living in the village from his trading activities, although it was also true that this career had been made possible by the earlier sale of real estate.

What becomes clear in this small sample of individuals extracted from the anonymous statistics on landholdings is that access to land and its produce determined to a large extent the comfort in which people would live, the economic opportunities which would be available to their children while growing up, and when seeking work in the future. The limited availability of land in Khala made the problems even more acute. In 1986, good rubber holdings sold for about 15,000 baht per rai, the equivalent of one to two months' income for a person in the middle range of landowners, or a year's income for a landless sharetapper. Ten rai, a subsistence holding, thus became a ridiculous prospect for Suhaimi or anyone like him in the other 58 landless households, and was to a large degree unaffordable for those further 63 households whose land failed to give them enough income to escape a regular burden of debt.

Assumptions about land ownership were important in the design of the DOAE project aimed at improving rubber marketing in Khala and neighbouring areas, and I shall therefore return to the issue in the next chapter. But land ownership was also related to leadership in Khala, and the following section examines this topic.

3.4 Leadership

A few writers have looked at village leadership in this part of Thailand (Fraser 1960, 1966; Saihoo 1965, 1974; McVey 1984), but before examining their conclusions I want to give brief portrayals of some men who were politically influential in Khala, and make some general

observations about the way leadership was practised, and how it was viewed by people in the village.

Haji Kasim was the second largest individual landowner, and by rural standards a very wealthy man. He lived near the market *kampong* and was well-known throughout Khala. Moderately fluent in Thai, he also had a very high standard of literacy in Malay, and was one of the few villagers to have a small library of Malay texts, which he treated with great care and respect. He was actively involved in mosque affairs and a devoutly religious man who contributed generously to the annual poor tax (*zakat*), and to members of his extended family. Closely related kin share-tapped on his rubber holdings, but work was also given to some unmarried young men who had studied in high school or beyond, or who showed interest in that direction. These often slept together in an empty house on Haji Kasim's land, and would help with other work around his household. The political influence of Haji Kasim was somewhat limited. His use of material resources was almost exclusively directed to close kin and young scholars, the latter because of his personal inclination towards Malay and Islamic education. Although his generosity and upright moral character ensured that people in Khala gave weight to his opinions, the limited range of his dependants meant that he could be outmanoeuvered politically by those whose net was cast more widely.

Both Cik Abdul and his wife were born in Khala and came from wealthy families. Each held moderately large amounts of rubber land individually, and both had a number of relatives working on their lands as share-tappers. Cik Abdul was fluent in Thai and took a lively interest in current affairs and Thai national politics. He was one of the handful of men who regularly read the Thai daily newspapers and was often keen to talk to

me about politics and social issues. Although the number of people working on his land was small and most of them close relatives, Cik Abdul was always willing to participate in government projects in the village, and was a committee member on several of them. Although the projects were rarely long term, a new batch would appear each year, and Cik Abdul encouraged friends and relatives to take part in order to share in the material benefits on offer. In this way he reached a wide range of people in the village, and his regular visits to coffee shops around Khala and active participation in discussions there gave him a high profile in public life.

Hassan, whom I mentioned in the preceding section on land ownership, was still relatively young but earned a good income from his land holdings, which gave employment to two sisters. With a good Thai education, Hassan was enthusiastic in dealings with Thai officials and had a good relationship with Arun, the DOAE extension worker. He often participated in development projects and like Cik Abdul was a regular member of committees. Older men like Haji Kasim and Cik Abdul usually dressed in sarongs, and lived in simple, if large, wooden houses. They appeared little different from most other men. Hassan was more keen to display his wealth by wearing western clothes, riding an impressive motorcycle, and building a new brick cottage to replace the wooden one he had inherited. He was also generous to men of his own age group or younger, and often invited them home or on visits to Yala town. A few lived in a house behind Hassan's, and he regularly socialised with them. All of these young men were working and likely to inherit good sized rubber holdings in the village, so that in the future Hassan would have a wide web of close contacts in Khala obligated to him for his generosity. Like Cik Abdul, he encouraged friends and relatives from around the village to

participate in government schemes, but also gave thought to developing schemes of his own, as will be seen in the next chapter. Though still a relatively young man, Hassan was already well-known and well-respected, and his standing with older men was enhanced by the fact that he regularly attended the mosque, showed an interest in religious affairs, and encouraged the young men around him to follow suit.

Cik Osman, the village headman, was a well-established leader in Khala and had a particularly wide following. He was the main buyer of rubber sheets in the village. As will be seen in the next section of this chapter, he was also an important moneylender, and as a result occasionally acquired land from mortgage defaults. He would never keep this land for himself, but always re-sell it to others. Such land could be sold to a current or potential follower at an attractively low price and thereby put the recipient in a position of obligation to Cik Osman. The headman was also well-known for his generosity, and often invited villagers to his home for feasts or treated a circle of men with whom he had been talking at a coffee shop. Despite his wealth, Cik Osman dressed very simply and both his homes (one for each wife) were basic wooden structures. People often commented to me that this was a sign of Cik Osman's humility in the face of his neighbours, a quality much appreciated by Malays. Though not deeply involved in mosque affairs, he strongly supported Islamic morality in public and was quick to take action against blatant offenders in the village. In the past he had been a major organiser to raise funds for the construction of the mosque, and this had made him a very popular leader. His command of Thai was not good, and his relationship with Arun was rather distant. Arun consequently saw him as having little interest in the economic development of the village. However, Cik Osman had organised

many successful works in Khala, including the mosque, a dam and wells, all without government assistance, using funds and labour raised internally. He regularly visited families and individuals, and kept a close eye on village affairs, and it was true to say that most people in Khala saw him as an effective leader, despite being subject to poor health for much of the time that I knew him.

The men I have introduced thus far were by no means the only leaders in the village. In all there were about ten to twenty, depending on the assessments of people with whom I spoke. But they do typify some of the characteristics to be found right across that group. All operated from a sound financial base, mostly arising out of land ownership. While it was true that a few large landowners were not considered to be leaders in the village, no landless individuals or men with small holdings, save for Cik Osman and a timber trader, were regarded as leaders. Wealth was therefore necessary, but it also had to be used to build a following, and this was done through giving employment on the leader's own land or in projects he organised, and through the generosity of small loans or gifts and entertaining guests. The public display of upright moral conduct and the public support of Islamic virtues , including generosity, were common to all leaders, and these were the main characteristics that other people looked for in a leader. The strong ethic of egalitarianism propounded by Islam meant that leaders rarely displayed their social position to a great degree in their dress, possessions, or houses, though this was less true of younger up and coming leaders. Increasingly leaders were well-versed in Thai and confident in dealing with Thai officials, and the material benefits available in government projects were thus becoming a new item in the catalogue of

resources that a leader could call upon in order to build and sustain a following.

Saihoo in his discussion of leadership in Khala stresses the distinction between formal and informal leaders, that is, between those elected to an office such as headman or Imam, and those who were politically important but not in a government recognised position (1974, Ch.10). This division is the one on which DOAE officers base their contacts with the village, and the more senior the officers the more likely they are to recognise only formal leaders as having power or authority. Arun, at the lowest level of the DOAE hierarchy, and in regular contact with people in Khala, was aware that the situation was far more fluid, and that other men in the village could be important for the success or failure of government work.

DOAE had previously operated a system of contact farmers (abolished at the end of 1987) to help in its work. Contact farmers were bilingual men who could spread the word about DOAE projects and hopefully raise some enthusiasm about them, and they received a small monthly stipend for this work. When I first arrived in Khala there were twenty-four of these men, including Hassan and Cik Abdul, but important men such as Haji Kasim and Cik Osman were not included. Reliance on bilingual villagers meant that DOAE was often unable to establish links with older and more experienced leaders in Khala. Arun, and his immediate superior Phisan, were aware of this problem but unable to overcome it because the older leaders could, or would, only speak Malay.

Fraser writing in the 1960s about the fishing village of Rusembilan in Pattani province noted that moral goodness was the prime quality that Malays sought in a leader (1960, p.131), and described leadership as a slow, gradual process dependent on building a following (1966, Ch.4),

observations that would still apply to Khala. Fraser observed that the relationship between villagers and Thai officials was poor, but emphasised the role of language in creating the problem (1966, pp.48-49, 53). Over twenty years later in Khala the relationship was still not good, but I hope that it will be clear by the end of this thesis that language is only one of several factors involved. Finally, Fraser makes it clear that committees established under government projects often failed to reflect the power structure in the village, thereby rendering them ineffective (1960, p.223), and in Rusembilan the role of intermediary between village and officialdom was left very much to the Imam (ibid., pp.165-167; 1966, p.41). In Khala there were a number of men who were willing to take on this intermediary role and who had the Thai language skills to do so, and they often put themselves forward for election onto project committees, but they could still be ineffective if the committee was dealing with an area where other leaders, unwilling to deal closely with the Thai administration, were important.

In the early 1970s, McVey made a study of leadership in the Thai-speaking Muslim town of Nathawi in Songkhla province. While leaders there were reliant on networks of kin for support, government-appointed leaders generally reflected the power structure in the town (McVey 1984, p.113). Traditionally leaders had depended on the accumulation of followers through largesse (ibid., p.114), but when McVey lived in Nathawi leaders were becoming increasingly dependent on official appointments to secure their status (ibid., pp.116-118). No such change had occured in Khala, but what factors were involved in this contrast between Nathawi and Khala is difficult to assess given the brevity of McVey's account.

Fraser devotes much attention to the fact that leaders in Rusembilan were the owners of fishing vessels, an important source of income, but Saihoo and McVey give little consideration to the way in which leaders manipulate material resources. This was important in Khala, and while greater Thai fluency and increased contact between villagers and officials in the future might affect the distribution of resources in development projects, I doubt that they could undermine the current pattern of leadership altogether. To do so, development projects would have to become a more lucrative and stable source of wealth than land ownership or trading in agricultural products, and that appears unlikely in the foreseeable future.

DOAE's intervention in Khala's economy attempted to transform the system of rubber marketing. Three village leaders were involved in marketing rubber before the scheme was introduced, and they continued to operate both during and after the lifespan of the project. In the next section I look at the practices of these men, describing the setting into which DOAE brought its own plans and actions.

3.5 Marketing and debt

Cik Osman was the major purchaser of rubber sheets in Khala. Every Thursday over 200 individuals would bring their sheets for sale to his small shop in the market *kampong*. Besides air-dried sheets he also bought scrap rubber, latex droppings rolled together in a sticky ball. Children often collected this scrap, and could receive up to five baht per kilo for it. The prices paid for rubber sheets varied according to several production factors: the weight and thickness of the sheet, dryness, the presence of impurities or air bubbles, and the transluscence of the sheet. In the major export market at

Hat Yai, these factors were used to distinguish five grades of rubber, but Cik Osman used a simpler three-grade system common amongst district level merchants, which roughly corresponded to the lower three grades at Hat Yai. Hat Yai prices were announced daily on the radio, and dealers throughout the province kept track of them, setting their own prices sufficiently below those of Hat Yai to take account of their position in the chain of middlemen between village and export market.

Every Friday, a Chinese merchant from Yala would visit Khala to purchase Cik Osman's stock, and the two men had a good relationship built up over the previous ten years or so. Cik Osman had bought his business from the Chinese shopkeeper in the village, who used to send assistants to each house to buy their rubber. Cik Osman discontinued this practice because of the increased ownership of vehicles in Khala, though occasionally one of his sons would go and collect rubber if necessary. One or two sons also assisted him in the shop, weighing and storing the rubber, but there were no paid employees.

The thing that most surprised me when I first observed rubber buying in Cik Osman's shop was the absence of bargaining. The seller would arrive with the rubber sheets, Cik Osman would quickly sort them according to grade, weigh them in the seller's presence, write out a receipt and hand over a cash payment. Both Cik Osman and the other large buyer in Khala, Haji Kadir, paid the same prices for rubber sheets, and there was little variation between them in grading. It was possible to sell sheets to dealers in Yaha, but only one or two people did so, and then only rarely. Competition appeared to be absent. Equally surprising was that although Cik Osman used only three grades, he paid sellers at several different rates, so that two people

selling top grade sheets might differ noticeably in the amount of cash they received per kilo.

An alternative to selling air-dried rubber sheets was to sell unprocessed latex. One man in Khala, Cik Azmi, bought latex from time to time, and sold it to a Chinese merchant from Hat Yai, but the business was irregular and thus for most villagers too unreliable. Merchants were not overly keen on buying latex, either. Before sale, latex was mixed with an equal amount of water, and the buyer used an hydrometer to calculate the expected dry weight of the sheets it would produce. This was a fairly accurate calculation, but could easily be distorted in the seller's favour by urinating in the latex before bringing it to the dealer, and some more unscrupulous producers did this. Cik Azmi was aware of this problem and restricted his clientele to people whom he trusted, but it appeared from the number of customers that he was not a particularly trusting man.

The vast majority of rubber producers in Khala made air-dried sheets and sold them to Cik Osman or Haji Kadir, or in the case of a few villagers, to both these men. There was thus a lack of competition within the village, but this did not explain why people did not take their sheets to Yaha, or why there was no bargaining at the point of sale. The answer to this lay in the pattern of indebtedness in the village. In the section on rubber agriculture earlier in this chapter, I noted that trees could be tapped for only 120 to 170 days per year. During tapping periods people would put some money away to tide them over the long months when they would have no rubber to sell, and this money was usually stored in the house. Few people used banks, either because they needed the money readily and regularly, or because they objected on religious grounds to earning interest on money, considering it a form of usury.

Most people were unable to save sufficient income to last the whole year, especially if there were long periods of rain, so that borrowing money was a regular feature of life. Banks would lend money, at 20% p.a. interest, or at 13% p.a. in the case of the Farmers' Bank, but they required collateral. Virtually no Malays used them, either because they had no collateral, or because they were fearful of mortgaging their properties to outside agencies. Pawn shops in Yaha were occasionally used if people had gold jewellery items to deposit, or relatives could be approached if the money needed was a small amount, but the most common sources of funds were village leaders, especially the two major rubber buyers. Because these buyers were Muslim, they refused to demand cash interest payments from borrowers, but instead asked for payment in kind, that is to say rubber sheets, which no-one regarded as usury. In 1986, if someone borrowed 10,000 baht from Cik Osman, the repayment on top of the capital of the loan was two kilograms of rubber per tapping day, which at that time was equivalent to an interest rate of 23 to 26% p.a., similar to that demanded by rubber dealers in Yaha, but much higher than bank rates.

People were not only borrowing to get themselves through lean times during the year. Most of those wanting to buy land also borrowed money from Cik Osman or other leaders, and the interest rates were similar to those stated above. In the case of land, collateral in the form of a mortgage was demanded, and where the borrower did not already own land, the lender would claim 50% ownership of the land being bought, and a one quarter share of the sale price of rubber tapped on it for a fixed period. The inability to maintain payments meant that the mortgage could be foreclosed and half or all the land lost. This was not uncommon, and increased the number of

landless households, as well as those with inadequate holdings, while allowing wealthy villagers, and especially leaders, to increase their assets.

In 1986, Cik Osman made about a dozen large loans, of over 10,000 baht, and numerous small ones. Most, if not all, of the customers at his rubber trading shop were borrowers or potential borrowers. Even when someone had finally repaid a loan they would often continue to sell their rubber to Cik Osman in order to sustain goodwill for any future borrowings. Some people sold to both Cik Osman and Haji Kadir in order to cultivate two potential sources of funds, but most people stuck to one or the other. Bonded to rubber dealers by debt, there was no real scope for people to bargain at the point of sale, and the variations in prices paid to people for the same quality rubber was explained by the size of their debt and their rates of repayment, factors which had been taken into account in calculating the cash payments they received for their sheets. Most people in Khala were simply unable to sell to dealers in Yaha because of their debt obligations, and were averse to doing so once they had cleared their debts because they wanted to maintain a good relationship with village buyers in case they needed to borrow again in the future, which was highly likely.

The two major rubber dealers were leaders in the village and relied on their businesses for their wealth. As businessmen, they could be regarded as exploitative, but this was not the general perception of them in Khala. I often asked people why they sold to Cik Osman and not elsewhere, and they would commonly reply: if we did not sell to him, what would he eat? (*kalau tak jual pada dia, Tok Neban nak makan apa?*). He was a businessman, but he was also a leader who gave guidance and brought prosperity to the community as a whole, and people thus felt obliged to preserve his livelihood. To sell rubber or raise funds outside the village

would be to undermine its system of leadership, for the debt relationship was one of the major elements of bonding between leader and follower. Leaders were regarded as necessary for attracting wealth to the village and for establishing good order, but also for defending the community's interests against those outside, especially the government administration.

Land ownership, leadership, marketing and debt were thus intimately entwined in the social life of Khala. People saw leaders as necessary, and the economic mainstays of these men were land ownership and rubber marketing. Land tenure, the system of rubber marketing, and money borrowing, served to tie leaders and their followers closer together, and generated the conditions in which the indigenous economy functioned. The system made for a closely knit community, where wealth was unevenly distributed, but where religious provisions for charity and the ethic of generosity meant that no-one died of hunger or begged for a living. Many people in Khala were unhappy with their economic lot, but strategies for improving it other than through land ownership and rubber production were scarce in the village, and lack of knowledge and skills often limited opportunities in the alien Thai world outside. Into this environment DOAE brought its project to improve rubber production and marketing, intending to provide an alternative way for people to improve their incomes and material wealth. I now turn to look at how this project came about, the way it operated, and the reasons for its ultimate failure.

Chapter 4: The Government Project in Khala

4.1 Rubber marketing groups

Although Thailand is the world's third largest producer of rubber after Malaysia and Indonesia, its rubber is generally of poor quality. In 1983 for example, less than ten per cent of rubber exported from Thailand fell into the top two grades of the international five-grade scale. Most of Thailand's rubber (60% of exports) is sent to Japan, which utilises lower grade rubber in tyre manufacturing (Samosorn 1985, pp.7-8). Poor quality not only causes a loss of earnings, but also limits the overseas markets that Thai exporters can penetrate. For these reasons alone, the Thai government has seen a clear need to improve rubber quality.

Another important characteristic of Thai rubber is that most of it is grown on small holdings rather than large estates, with only 5% of holdings in the country over 250 rai in size (Maneekul 1985, pp.1-2). This necessitates a larger number of middlemen in the marketing chain between grower's household and exporter's factory, which in turn results in lower profits for producers.

These two factors, poor quality rubber and the profusion of middlemen, led the Thai government to intervene in the rubber economy at village level, with the aims of educating people to produce better quality sheets, and encouraging them to form co-operatives to market their rubber and thereby reduce the number of middlemen. Road-building projects and the replanting schemes to increase the number of high-yield rubber trees,

were designed in part to attack these two problems, but in this chapter I want to look specifically at another strategy, the government's scheme to establish Group Processing and Marketing (GPM) groups and Rubber Centre Marketing (RCM) groups in villages throughout the south (in Thai the groups are called กลุ่มปรับปรุงคุณภาพยางแผ่นและขายยาง and ศูนย์รวมยาง respectively).

From 1968 to 1976, GPM groups were established by three different offices within the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives, but from 1976 DOAE was given sole responsibility (Maneekul 1985, p.9). However, two other departments in the Interior Ministry, the Accelerated Rural Development Office and the Department of Community Development, also organised GPM groups, and there was little or no co-ordination between them, or with DOAE. In all cases the aim of a GPM group was twofold: (1) to improve, through education at village level, the quality of rubber sheets that people produced; and (2) to increase returns to producers by organising them into co-operatives to sell in sufficient quantities to attract buyers from the towns and thereby eliminate village and district middlemen. By 1986 there were notionally 81 GPM groups in the province, with 47 of these regarded as "operative" by DOAE officials, though it turned out in the course of my research that only about thirty groups regularly took part in sales. A survey by DOAE in 1984 showed that of all GPM groups actually selling rubber in the province, only 40% were producing rubber of the required grades, indicating that the DOAE education scheme for improving rubber quality was not having any dramatic impact, despite having been in effect for over ten years (สวัสดิ์ พนมธารีรักษ์ 2529, pp.19-35). In 1986, most of the GPM groups were located in the districts closest to the provincial

town: Muang, Raman and Yaha (see Map 2). DOAE listed seventeen GPM groups in Yaha district, six operated by DOAE, five by the Accelerated Rural Development Office, and six by the Department of Community Development. The group in Khala was one of those operated by DOAE. From late 1985 these GPM groups were encouraged to come and sell as a larger co-operative group (an RCM group) in the district town. Between January 1986 and January 1987, I attended all fifteen RCM sales held at DOAE's building in Yaha town, but on only four occasions did the number of participating groups exceed six. The largest number of GPM groups that ever took part in an RCM sale was nine, only about half the number that DOAE claimed to be active. Furthermore, the volume of rubber traded at these sales, which ideally took place at fortnightly intervals, rarely came anywhere near the amount sold at the shops of Cik Osman and Haji Kadir in Khala in only one week. Compared to the volume of rubber traded in Yaha district as a whole, with its 51 villages, the amount sold by GPM groups through the RCM sales represented a miniscule dent in the market. Yet the prices paid to sellers were always higher, and sometimes much higher, than could be obtained in the local villages. This paradox of clear economic benefits and negligible grower participation baffled DOAE officers.

Each GPM group had a committee of not less than five, including a chairman, treasurer, secretary, grader, and weigher. Records had to be kept of participation in sales, including the amounts and grades of rubber submitted by each member, and the balance of money due to them once a sale had been made. Under DOAE guidelines a group was not to have less than ten members, could not sell rubber in lots of less than 1,000 kg., and for the first twelve months of operation was to have a DOAE officer advise

members on any problems (ฝ่ายวิชาการ สนง. เกษตรจังหวัดยะลา 2528, p.5). On paper all GPM groups in Yaha district had an average of twenty members, but when attending the RCM sales in 1986, I found that groups often had fewer than ten participating members, and regularly sold less than the 1,000 kg. of rubber officially stated as a minimum.

RCM sales, bringing GPM groups together, were organised only by DOAE, but aimed at collective sales by all groups in a district, irrespective of which government department established them. Ideally they were held every two weeks during tapping. In 1986, four RCM sales centres operated in the province, one each in the districts of Muang, Raman, Yaha, and Than To. The remoteness of some GPM groups made their access to RCM sales difficult, but both DOAE and the Accelerated Rural Development Office provided vehicles on sale days if required. GPM groups were supposed to grade their own rubber before taking it to RCM sales, and usually had the assistance of their DOAE extension workers, but the sheets often had to be regraded on arrival at RCM sales because of discrepancies between groups. Grading operated on a three-tier system, with an occasional fourth grade of "special" class created for very high quality sheets. DOAE stipulated that only rubber falling into these grades would be sold at RCM sales, but occasionally in Yaha poor quality ungraded rubber was also sold. DOAE officers made regular attempts to stop growers bringing this rubber to the sales, but usually caved in after being harangued by sellers.

Before RCM sale days, rubber merchants would be notified and invited to come on the day and inspect the sheets, and to make bids for each grade. Bids were made secretly, and opened at an appointed time during the sale. The winning bidder was the one who made the highest cash offer for

the total quantity of rubber on sale. He was not necessarily the highest bidder for every grade. There were half a dozen traders in Yaha district, and generally three to five of them attended the RCM sales. There were never fewer than two dealers at any of the fifteen sales I attended, though all six traders came as a group only on two occasions. While traders were consistent in the price differences they set between each grade (approximately 0.30 baht separating one grade from another), they often differed markedly in the amount per kilogram they were willing to pay for any one grade. Throughout 1986 there was thus a good measure of competition between traders, and generally very favourable prices were paid. RCM sale prices were often one to two baht per kilo more than village buyers would pay, a significant amount given that prices in 1986 hovered in the range of 14 to 20 baht per kilo.

When RCM sales began in 1985, there were some boycotts by rubber merchants, and these had caused the closure of RCM sales in Muang district for over a year. However, by 1987 this opposition had been overcome, and most of the dealers I spoke to favoured the scheme on the grounds that having a large amount of rubber concentrated at one sale point made purchasing much easier, though some were still opposed to the sales on the grounds that they raised prices - and thereby, of course, reduced the extent to which some growers needed to borrow money.

On a second visit to Thailand in July 1988 I spoke to Phisan, the DOAE district officer in Yaha. He told me that RCM sales were still small-scale, rarely bringing together more than 5,000 kg. of rubber and only attracting a handful of GPM groups. While prices at RCM sales had maintained a good margin above those paid by village traders, this had still failed, in the three years of RCM sales, to boost the number of participants.

The interest of town-based merchants by 1988 had declined, and RCM sales at Yaha were dealing exclusively with one trader. Only if agreement on a price could not be reached with this trader would participating growers look elsewhere. Phisan attributed this loss of interest to disappointment in the failure of RCM sales to grow and attract larger amounts of rubber. They could easily obtain 5,000 kg., and usually more, by going to any sizeable village.

By any measure, the organisation of GPM groups and RCM sales in Yaha district was a failure. Those taking part rarely accounted for more than a minute fraction of people producing and selling rubber, and the amounts being traded under the scheme were never more than a very small percentage of the district's production. Yet as I have mentioned, there was no question that the prices available to participants were the highest they were likely to get anywhere in the province. Why then was the scheme such a failure? To understand this, I will now look at the history of the GPM group in Khala, and follow with an examination of how the RCM sales for the district were established and operated. It will be seen that diverse explanations arose as to the government's lack of success, and I will show how these relate to the factionalised nature of the DOAE hierarchy and of the social structure in Khala, described in the previous two chapters.

4.2 The GPM group in Khala

In early 1985 Arun, the local DOAE extension worker, approached Thai-speaking men in Khala with a view to setting up a GPM group in the village. Arun held high hopes of success there because Khala had a good history of participation in government projects, and Arun got on well with several leaders, including the Imam. At some stage in the negotiating

process Arun spoke to Cik Osman about the project, but Cik Osman said he could not participate because only his two wives owned rubber holdings. Some people told me that Cik Osman did not tell Arun, nor did Arun realise, that the headman was the major rubber buyer in the village, and therefore Arun did not seek to involve Cik Osman in any aspect of the group's establishment. Arun denied this to me and said that Cik Osman was simply not interested in the idea of the group because he could not see the benefits. It may be that Cik Osman's poor command of Thai, and his perception that the GPM group might threaten his own livelihood, also influenced his decision not to participate, but whatever took place at that stage resulted in one of the lynchpins of Khala's rubber economy remaining outside the DOAE project. Haji Kadir, the other major rubber trader, was not approached by Arun, and so the GPM group from the outset was in competition with the two men who controlled virtually all rubber marketing in the village.

The first to show keen interest in the project included Cik Abdul and Hassan, both prominent men described in chapter 3, and they became chairman and deputy chairman of the group respectively. At the time of the GPM group's inception in 1985, both Cik Abdul and Hassan lived in the same *kampong* in Khala. One of their neighbours, Cik Kamil, also joined the group and became its secretary. Although from a well-established family, the owner of about twenty rai of land, and in his early forties, he had not made a major impact on village politics. Some people said this was because his involvement in an adulterous affair as a young man had become a minor public scandal and this serious breach of the moral code continued to impair his status. Whether this was true I could never decide, but to me he never seemed particularly interested in the machinations

required for leadership. He would involve himself in village matters in accordance with his economic standing, but more as a supporter or team member than as a leader.

The fourth man who made up the core of the group's committee was the treasurer, Cik Wahab. He lived in a *kampong* some distance away from the other three men, but had taken part in other government-organised schemes and spoke Thai well. He owned ten rai of rubber holdings, but his household owned nearly thirty rai and a small rice plot. His family were related to many others in the village and had a long history there. He was a close friend of the deputy village headman, who lived nearby, and took a regular interest in mosque activities. Six other men, three designated as weighers and three as graders, completed the GPM group's committee, and these included Razak (see chapter 3) and Haji Aziz, a relative of the deputy headman and previously a regular client of the rubber buyer Haji Kadir. While each man had a title and function assigned by DOAE, none of them could precisely explain their role on the committee, and the essential functions of weighing and grading, and keeping accounts of the group's sales, in practice were carried out by whoever was available and eager to perform the tasks.

The four core committee members were the most enthusiastic in drawing others into the group. Cik Kamil recruited three relatives, and Cik Wahab two of his closest friends. Hassan's wife joined, and Hassan and Cik Abdul convinced several neighbours in their *kampong* to participate. The vast majority of members were thus friends or relatives of the core committee men. When I looked at Arun's list of members in early 1986, there were twenty-two names, including four women. In fact these names represented only twenty-one people, one man being listed under two

different names, but that was a common error for Thai officials to make. Only nine members owned rubber holdings, and most of these had ten rai or more, putting them in the wealthier strata of the community. The landless members were all sharetappers, several on the holdings of other members. The group thus had a handful of leaders or aspiring leaders at its core, and a retinue of their followers or potential followers.

As Cik Abdul, Hassan, and Cik Kamil all lived in the same *kampong* on the fringe of Khala, as did several ordinary members, they were keen to have the group's activities focused near their homes. In 1985, the Accelerated Rural Development Office built a processing shed in the *kampong* specifically for the GPM group's use, and supplied it with a well, and equipment for coagulating the latex and pressing the sheets. The shed was a physical reminder of the group's existence, but its location in an outer *kampong* which other people in Khala rarely visited meant that it had a limited audience. Everyone knew it had been built, but its site on the village periphery meant that in time it faded from people's thoughts. Even so, I noticed that less than half the group's members used the shed to make their rubber sheets, though other residents of the *kampong* did use it occasionally. Most members had their own processing equipment in any case, and had no great need to use the facility.

No-one thought of the building as their property, and always referred to it as the DOAE shed.Whenever anything went wrong with the water supply, machinery, or equipment, people reported the problem to Arun and asked him to rectify it. No-one regarded it as their responsibility. Some members helped to build the shed, but the planning, ordering of materials, financial management of the construction, and purchase of processing equipment were all carried out by government officers. The shed and its

contents were seen by people in Khala as a gift from the government, and if there were defects it was accordingly the government's duty to fix them.

The ten members of the GPM group committee never met of their own accord, settling any problems on an informal basis by visits between the men most directly involved, and both committee members and others would take part in this. Weighing and grading before RCM sales was done by members on hand rather than the appointed committee men, and Arun closely supervised and often intervened in this process. Though the rubber sheets of many groups had to be regraded when they arrived at RCM sales, the Khala group was rarely subjected to this as Arun's judgement was generally very good. However, there was no real attempt to teach this grading skill to members and they remained largely dependent on Arun's assessments. An account book given to the Khala group by DOAE was intended for recording members' contributions to sales and payments received, but not all sales were entered and figures were often incorrect. DOAE gave no instruction on book-keeping and although Cik Wahab was designated treasurer, he often kept neither accounts nor possession of the book.

Such behaviour by the GPM group committee in Khala led Arun and Phisan to characterise it as badly organised and the members as lacking commitment to the group's success. They typically blamed this on the committee members' laziness. From the members' point of view, their behaviour was eminently logical. The committee was established by Arun to satisfy DOAE guidelines, but it was not a corporate entity in the minds of members. It only met as a committee when Arun called it together, and that was only because he wished to deliver some message from, or gather some data for, his superiors in DOAE. Selling rubber was still regarded as the

business of the individuals involved. The GPM group's participation in RCM sales was seen as an avenue for these individuals to utilise, but there was no sense of it being an avenue for collective action. Only DOAE conceived of the GPM group as a collective.

Not all committee members participated in every sale, so that in Cik Wahab's case for example, if he was not going to an RCM sale that week, he saw no reason why he should bother to assist in weighing and grading someone else's rubber or keep the group's accounts. After all, he had his own rubber to sell elsewhere. This individualistic attitude was common to all members of the committee, so that their sporadic attention to committee functions was quite understandable. In their view the committee was DOAE's business and it was ultimately the responsibility of government officers to ensure that its functions were carried out.

The GPM group in Khala began selling at the beginning of October 1985. There were four sales between then and the middle of November, with traders coming to the GPM group shed in the village to bid. In the first three sales only about half a dozen members sold rubber, and five of the committee members including Cik Abdul, Cik Kamil, and Cik Wahab, did not participate at all. In the fourth sale only three members out of twenty-one took part, leading Phisan to question Arun closely about the viability of the group and the whereabouts of the supposed twenty-one members. Each Friday before the next three sales, Arun waited outside the mosque until after the communal midday prayers, then held meetings with the group in order to whip up some enthusiasm for forthcoming sales. His hard work paid off. At a sale in late November 1985 sixteen group members took part, and at the first RCM sale in Yaha town in early 1986, all members of the Khala group sold rubber.

Seventeen members went to the next sale, but thereafter numbers rapidly declined. Arun's attention was diverted to establishing new groups in other villages, required by the new DOAE budget for 1986, and so he had less time to devote to the group in Khala. The three sales in late 1985 and early 1986 were the group's heyday, but the long term picture was bleak. Nine members, nearly half the group, took part in only three sales or less, and only three members bothered to sell rubber at more than half of the fifteen sales held between October 1985 and October 1986. Cik Abdul, the leader of the group, took part in only three of fifteen sales, and the records of Cik Kamil and Cik Wahab were not much better. After July 1986, the group failed to take part in some of the RCM sales at Yaha, and on several occasions while the group participated in name, only one to three members were actually contributing rubber. By October1986 the group had ceased to operate and on my return visit in 1988 remained on DOAE's inactive list.

In 1985 and 1986, even when members did take part in RCM sales, they usually sold only part of their rubber. Cik Kamil for instance, could produce over 100 kg. of rubber for one sale but less than 40 kg. at another, even though he was tapping regularly before both sales. Some members were selling 20 to 25 kg. through the group but selling about 50 kg. to Cik Osman in the same week. There was thus a demonstrable lack of real commitment to the group.

The notable exception was Hassan, who took part in all sales. The group's deputy leader, he was by far the most committed. Before the group came into being, he had sold his rubber sheets to a buyer from outside the village, aiming to keep himself financially independent from the two major traders in Khala. He had also been using the latex processing equipment of one of his neighbours before the GPM group processing shed

was built, and he and his wife became regular users of the shed and its facilities, even after the group's demise. He was the most optimistic about the group's chances for success during its operation, and recruited the largest number of members. After the group stopped selling, Hassan used the shed in late 1986 and early 1987 to try and establish a co-operative for selling unprocessed latex to a Chinese merchant from Songkhla. On a daily basis, this scheme attracted between fourteen and twenty-two people, who would come and dilute their latex and store it in large tin drums. Hassan and a friend kept a daily account book of the amount due to each producer, and paid out when the trader made his weekly visit. This was a more profitable way of selling than producing latex sheets, and certainly saved time, but the scheme collapsed in April 1987 because the merchant had experienced problems with adulterated latex in some neighbouring villages and ceased operations in the area.

4.3 Competing reasons for failure

People in Khala offered a number of reasons for the failure of the GPM group. Several people who did not join at all said they avoided it because it was government-operated and they were unable to speak Thai. They felt they would have no control over their work because the group's decisions were taken by Arun along with committee members who were able to speak Thai. Those who participated in only one or two sales generally said that they had tried it out because of persuasion from friends or relatives on the committee, but had not found it economically viable because of the small margin of increased income over selling in the village and the time wasted in producing better quality sheets and attending RCM sales. Since most people were dividing their stock, selling some through the

group and some to one of the village traders, the point about the profit differential being too small was quite valid. The more compelling reason for most members was that the GPM group, while it resulted in a higher income in the months when tapping could be done regularly, placed people at an economic disadvantage in the longer term. The access to credit which was part of their relationship with village buyers was not replaced by any lending arrangement within the GPM group, and only selling through the group would mean that the avenue for borrowing provided by village traders would be closed. Core committee members certainly considered acting as creditors to group members and thereby enhancing their positions as leaders in the village, but it turned out that none of them was able to supply enough credit during a rainy period in early 1986 and this was a major factor in the group's rapid decline after that.

Three of the four core committee members, Cik Abdul, Cik Kamil, and Cik Wahab, were middle-ranking leaders in the village and each had seen an opportunity in the GPM group to enhance his position. The GPM group offered not only new and free processing facilities, but also higher incomes, so there was the potential to challenge the established buyers for people's support. It appears that these men had underestimated both the financial support the group would receive from DOAE, and the amount of credit they would need to extend to group members. Furthermore, all three were quite tentative about the project from the outset, as evidenced by their poor record of participation in sales. They waited to see if people would support the group rather than actively fostering support for it, and not surprisingly ordinary members were not inspired by this timidity. When the group failed to grow after the three large sales of late 1985, these three

leaders were quick to withdraw their support and re-open ties with the two established traders.

Hassan's behaviour was quite different. He was the youngest core committee member and was financially secure. Having previously kept himself economically independent of Cik Osman and Haji Kadir, he was not torn in his loyalties to the group. In fact, Hassan saw in the group the potential to establish himself as a leader in Khala. He recognised the economic benefits it would bring and the attraction this would have for producers in the village, and as a result was the most active in recruiting new members and in supporting Arun at meetings. His good knowledge of Thai made him confident about dealing with DOAE officers and negotiating on the group's behalf, while his sound moral reputation and comfortable financial position made sure he would have an audience in Khala. When the GPM group finally ceased operations, he persisted in seeking to establish himself as a leader by setting up a latex-selling co-operative with a close friend, and may well have been successful in this had the merchant involved not ceased trading.

All who joined the GPM group were close friends or relatives of the core committee members. Those who were landless sharetappers were mostly tapping trees belonging to wealthier members, and most of the land-owning participants had reasonably large holdings. People who were surviving on small holdings, or who were landless and had no links with the committee members, did not join the group. These people lived in a regular bond of debt with other leaders in the village, especially the two major rubber buyers, and the economic benefits of the GPM group were simply not sufficient to enable them to break those ties. Participation would have severed links to important leaders and damaged the goodwill that was

so crucial to those links. Few people were brave enough to burn their bridges in this fashion and that is why even those who joined the group divided their produce, selling some through the group and the rest to their usual purchasers.

Several months after the group's collapse, Razak outlined the reasons for its failure in much the same terms that I have described above. He regretted the fact that the group had not been successful, as he was not particularly happy about the prices he received for his rubber, especially now that he had seen the potential for higher returns through RCM sales, but as he said, he was trapped by his need to borrow money from Cik Osman to cover short-term needs during the rainy season and to carry out major renovations on his house. Razak also blamed Arun for not getting Cik Osman and Haji Kadir onto the GPM group's committee. He argued that if these two men, or even one of them, had been involved in setting up the group, its success would have been assured.

Hassan gave a similar explanation of why the GPM group failed to work, but he also blamed the timidity of many members. He felt that if there had been more committment to the project it could have taken off and been quite successful despite the competition with other traders. He still saw the potential for a better system of marketing rubber in Khala, and it was not long after he spoke to me in this way that he began organising the group to sell unprocessed latex. What was clear from these men's statements, and from the way that people were attracted to Hassan's subsequent scheme, was that many people in Khala were not content with the traditional system for marketing their rubber, and were aware that better returns could be made if the avenues were available. The GPM group thus foundered not because of a

lack of interest in new ways to market rubber, but because it did not provide most people with an alternative that was economically viable.

The above analysis of the GPM group's history, which made sense to people in Khala, was quite at odds with explanations that circulated in the DOAE bureaucracy. For people in Khala, a decision not to join the GPM group, or to withdraw from it, made sound economic sense. Within the parameters of the indigenous rubber marketing system, where there was uneven distribution of resources and regular cycles of debt, the short-term rewards of joining the group were not sufficient to offset the long-term liabilities. However, senior DOAE officers saw the collapse of the GPM group in Khala as running totally contrary to rational economic thinking. For them, the central fact was that selling through the GPM group would raise people's incomes. Non-participation meant that people were choosing poverty over wealth, and thus the explanations that most quickly sprang to mind were the stupidity or perversity of the Malays. Seni, in DOAE's provincial office, was disappointed by the failure of the GPM group in Khala, but said that it was not unexpected. He insisted that Malays were lazy and conservative, and would not commit themselves to innovations by the government, even when there were financial rewards for them. He felt much of this was due to Islam, which he depicted as backward-looking and implacably opposed to development.

Seni's view of the economy in Khala, and in villages of the province generally, was quite different from what I had observed. He told me that most people in rural areas were small landowners, and that ten rai was the most common size of holding. He felt that landlessness and sharetapping were minor aspects of the economy, and that few landowners had more than thirty rai of land. He accepted that many people were poor, but

attributed this to their lack of enterprise and the fact that their major products, rubber and rice, were of such poor quality that low returns were inevitable. The solution was motivation, education, and improved methods of agriculture and processing. From Seni's perspective, Malays in the province were for the most part free agents and therefore their refusal to take part in the GPM group scheme had to be explained by irrational personal attributes.

Seni also admitted that as GPM groups had been successful in some areas, some of the blame for the failure in Khala could be due to DOAE's implementation of the project. He saw no fault in the scheme's design, saying that its success in some places precluded that criticism, but he was critical of the conduct of DOAE workers in the Yaha district office, particularly Arun. The RCM sales in Yaha district had a consistently poor record in terms of participation and the quantity of rubber sold when compared with the sales in Raman district, though prices in Yaha were always comparable and sometimes higher. Seni and others in the head office saw this as a reflection on the motivation and enthusiasm of the district office employees in Yaha. In the case of Khala's GPM group, Arun was the extension worker most directly involved, and thus the one who received the most severe criticism. He was condemned for not spending more time persuading people to join the GPM group and encouraging their efforts. While Cik Osman, the village headman, was regarded as a conservative and uninterested in development, DOAE senior officers felt that Arun should have established a better relationship with him in order to give the scheme a greater chance of success (an unrealistic demand given Arun's inability to speak Malay and Cik Osman's poor command of Thai). Other opinions about Arun's character were tossed into people's explanations

of what went wrong, so that he was accused of being too involved with his girlfriend or too interested in the care of his own landholdings to pay sufficient attention to his job.

It was quite noticeable that when analysing the failure of the GPM group in Khala, none of the officers in DOAE's head office advanced reasons that implicated themselves or their provincial-level colleagues. All blame was distributed through the lower strata of the bureaucracy, and beyond that to the villagers themselves, the severity of the criticism increasing with the distance away from senior officials. The vast majority of that criticism was personal, an attack on the attributes and characters of the individuals involved rather than the organisational aspects of the project and its implementation, or the social environment into which it was introduced.

Phisan, the chief officer for DOAE in Yaha district, also continued this pattern of shifting criticism down the hierarchy and across to villagers. He said that people in Khala were usually willing to participate in government projects, but often failed to persevere, and this had been true of the GPM group. People's inability to produce good quality rubber sheets was also a factor. DOAE had organised training sessions for villagers on the production of high grade sheets, but Phisan said people were not patient enough to take the care required, or were too smug about their own abilities to admit that there was room for improvement. He realised there were households that had no land, and that sharetapping was a common practice, but still felt that the vast majority of rubber producers were in a position to take part in the government scheme if they were interested. He also admitted that there was a section of the population that was hard to reach because of the language barrier, but felt that DOAE's links with bilingual

Malays in each village were sufficient to make this a minor obstacle. Phisan was not as harsh on Arun as people in the head office, but he did feel that Arun could have secured greater co-operation from village leaders, especially those on the GPM group committee, to ensure the scheme's success. He regarded Cik Osman as a difficult man to deal with because he was not interested in promoting development in Khala, but saw that it was hard for Arun to change Cik Osman's attitudes because of the language problem.

Arun himself also laid much of the blame for the group's collapse on Cik Osman. He felt that somehow Cik Osman had subverted the group's operations, but had no evidence as to how or why. He felt that the group would have been more successful if the Imam had supported it, as the Imam was usually keen on development projects, but in this case he had shown no interest. Like Phisan, Arun understood that landlessness and the language barrier kept a number of people from joining the GPM group, but he could not understand why the rest of the growers in Khala were not attracted by the group's higher prices. Like other DOAE officers he said that many Malays were lazy and unwilling to produce good quality rubber to maximise profits, and he also blamed the people's inability to persevere and think of the project's long term potential. He saw no fault in the design of the project itself, but resented the fact that his superiors in the DOAE hierarchy had not given him greater support in selling the concept to people at village level. He felt that when it was clear the group was in danger of collapse, more senior officers could have given him assistance in trying to revive it. He also felt let down by people in Khala, and by the GPM group's committee members especially, in that they should have reciprocated his efforts in order to make a go of the project. Arun was keenly aware that he

would incur most of the blame for the breakdown of the group, and this only increased his resentment of those he saw as being truly to blame.

It can be seen from my account that a variety of reasons were advanced for the demise of the GPM group. There were always events from the group's history that could be extracted in support of these reasons, so that the distinctions between explanations lay in which events were considered the more significant. The major division in analysis was between the people in Khala and the DOAE officers, though divergences within these two groups were also evident. In general terms, people in Khala framed their reasons in terms of economic considerations, saying the group was simply not a viable proposition, whereas the DOAE officers framed their explanations in terms of the personal failings of participants.

These types of explanation serve to perpetuate the general division which exists between Thais and Malays in Yala and neighbouring provinces of southern Thailand. Malays argue that the Thai government does not really care about their economic development, and the experience in Khala provides yet another example in support of this. Thai officials on the other hand are convinced that Malays are lazy and prone to subverting socio-economic development projects because of political or religious reasons. The collapse of the GPM group in Khala is one more instance that has joined their catalogue of complaints.

4.4 RCM sales in Yaha

A similar division of thinking can be seen in explanations of the poor record of RCM sales in Yaha. In April 1986 a meeting was held in the DOAE district office in Yaha to establish a committee to run local RCM sales. The first sales had been organised by DOAE workers, but it was

government policy to have a committee of growers take over once the sales were active. Although all seventeen GPM groups in Yaha district were notified of the meeting, only representatives of the six groups operated by DOAE attended. Seni, Phisan, and three local extension workers including Arun, were present on behalf of DOAE. Seni gave an opening speech, explaining the economies of scale in RCM sales, the need for RCM committee members to grade rubber sheets correctly, the necessary liaison with DOAE officers, and arrangements for bidding.

Phisan then began the election of the RCM committee from those attending the meeting. Only twenty-six men were there, from a possible 102 committee members of all GPM groups in the district. Nonetheless, a committee of sixteen men was duly formed. This was done more by bargaining than election, with seventeen of the men putting themselves up for positions, and the sixteen available posts being distributed amongst them (the least enthusiastic nominee being happy to miss out). Several times when a show of hands was required, it had to be repeated once or twice, as some of those attending spoke little or no Thai and could not understand why they were being asked to put their hands in the air. Two of those elected to grading and weighing positions were unaware of this until their friends explained it to them after the meeting.

Neither Seni nor Phisan explained in detail what each committee member was expected to do, and the men elected as secretary, marketing officer, and inspection officer never became clear on their functions, and consequently never carried them out. Seni gave a final address to the meeting, saying that all GPM group members should get to know the RCM committee and give it support, but this seemed rather pointless at a meeting of twenty-six men when there were 323 recorded members of GPM groups

in the district. The new committee's immediate task was to organise the next RCM sale, but in fact the date and location were chosen by Phisan and simply put to the committee for approval.

I attended eleven RCM sales in Yaha after this meeting, but on average only five or six GPM groups came each time, and very often RCM committee members were absent, either individually or because their GPM group was not participating. Although ten members of the RCM committee were designated as weighers or graders, at all the RCM sales I visited their functions were carried out by DOAE officers. Occasionally DOAE workers would ask committee members to assist them in weighing sheets, or to estimate grades of sheets that the DOAE staff had already inspected, but in all cases the final decisions were made by DOAE employees. There was never any organised instruction to enable RCM committee members to take over these tasks. The dates of RCM sales were likewise fixed by DOAE officers, in consultation with local merchants. Liaison with rubber traders, organisation of bidding on the day, and the maintenance of records for each sale, were all done by DOAE staff, despite the fact that all these were supposedly the duties of RCM committee members.

On the other hand, no committee members asserted their right to carry out any of the administrative functions involved in the sales. If DOAE officers took the initiative, then committee members submitted to their will. Yet where growers' interests were threatened, participants were capable of collective action even without RCM committee representatives. This became clear when a problem arose with bidding at a sale in August 1986. Six GPM groups had turned up for this sale, and all lots were delivered to the sale and graded by midday. Phisan was absent, so the sale was conducted by three extension workers from DOAE. Bidding sheets were sent to four traders

with a request they be returned by 1 p.m., but only two traders placed bids. When they were opened the prices were very low and although one of the extension workers announced the sale would go to the higher of the two bidders, participants were clearly not happy and went into a heated discussion amongst themselves. One of the growers showed me a receipt for ungraded rubber which he had sold in town for a price higher than that being offered at the RCM sale for graded rubber, the complete reverse of the usual situation. The basic rationale for taking part in RCM sales was thus being undermined, and growers were understandably angry.

In the face of angry sellers, the three extension workers were at a loss as to how they should respond. Phisan was not there to give advice, and two telephone calls to the DOAE head office in Yala had failed to get any answer. Only two of the RCM committee members attended that day and they were also devoid of suggestions. In the event, other growers took charge of the situation. They ordered one of the extension workers to return to the shops of the two bidders to bargain with them further. The extension worker, unable to offer any alternative and sensing the anger and frustration of the growers, complied. He returned with increased bids from both traders but growers were still unhappy and sent him off again. The two traders would not increase their prices, but a third trader who had just returned to his shop came to inspect the rubber and made a bid that the growers found acceptable. The next problem was that the trader had no cash to pay, and had to contact his central shop in the provincial town to send money. Growers were unwilling to wait until the next day, having wasted several hours already, so one of them drove to Yala with a DOAE worker to collect the cash. Growers eventually received their money late in the

afternoon, and at subsequent sales DOAE officers were much more careful about liaison with traders and the organisation of bidding.

DOAE workers never established strong ties with growers attending the RCM sales. All but two of the GPM groups were Malay and members spoke to each other in Malay. Those who were bilingual would chat in Thai to DOAE officers if the latter took the initiative, but most conversations rarely moved beyond a brief exchange of pleasantries. Rubber traders on the other hand were always fluent in both languages, though they varied in the degree to which they would mingle with growers. It was noticeable that the traders who spoke most with participants, and consequently got a good idea of the prices that growers were expecting, were the ones generally successful in the bidding.

Malay growers often kept their distance from DOAE officers because of what they saw as the latter's patronising attitude. DOAE workers would tell individuals that their sheets were of poor quality or their production was low, or tell groups that they needed to improve their organisation and participation in sales. The Thais tried to put their message across in a jovial manner, but at the same time saw their advice in hierarchical terms, passing from knowledgeable scientific officers to ignorant farmers. There was no intention on the part of DOAE officers to patronise, but in the perceptions of Malays, who attached strong importance to the display, if not the substance, of egaltiarianism, the behaviour of the DOAE staff was inevitably seen as condescending and offensive. Malays commented that DOAE officers explained things to them as if they were children (*dia pikir kita budak*), a sentiment I had heard expressed time and again in villages when government workers visited.

RCM sales at Yaha continued throughout 1986 and 1987, and were still being held when I returned for a visit in late 1988. However, participation rates were never high and by 1988 had not improved. GPM groups attending the sales generally had low memberships, for much the same sorts of reasons that prevailed in Khala.

For growers, explanations of the failure of GPM groups at village level naturally explained the lacklustre performance of RCM sales, the latter being gatherings of the former, but there were also reasons peculiar to the organisation of RCM sales themselves. Irregular attendances and withdrawals were most commonly explained by the fact that participation in RCM sales required extra time spent in producing good quality sheets and travelling to the sales. Many felt it was much easier to sell to someone nearer home who would buy virtually any rubber you produced. People said that the higher profit margins at RCM sales were often insufficient to overcome the sacrifices involved. It will be clear from what I have reported about Khala that those attending the RCM sales were taking a risk, gambling on higher economic returns to break out of the marketing structures in their villages, so it is understandable why the profit margin was so important to them, and acted as a barometer of participation. Generally returns at RCM sales were very good, but when profits threatened to disappear, as in the sale of August 1986 described above, participants could quickly act to protect their interests.

Another reason given by villagers was that a full day of preparation, weighing and grading by each GPM group at home, preceded an equally long and often boring day at the RCM sale. Participation simply was not an enjoyable experience. There were also arguments when grading was changed on the day of sale by DOAE officers, because this threw into

confusion the calculations that individual GPM groups had made about the contributions of each member. While the Thai groups that took part in sales generally got on well with the DOAE staff, many of the Malays did not, and this factor discouraged some sellers from attending.

Control of the RCM sales at Yaha remained clearly in the hands of DOAE officers, despite the election of the RCM organising committee from participating groups. Committee members never clearly understood their duties, but equally they were not particularly interested in discovering what those duties were. Most were happy for DOAE workers to organise things as long as the interests of participants were not jeopardised. The generally distant relations between growers and DOAE officers did not help, and this was compounded by the fact that DOAE staff made no concerted effort to pass on the necessary skills and authority which would have enabled growers to conduct the sales themselves.

The explanations by DOAE staff rarely matched those of participating sellers. While DOAE officers realised the justification for RCM sales was the higher return to sellers, they assumed that if RCM prices simply remained above village prices this was sufficient to attract sellers. Ignorant of the village marketing economies, DOAE workers did not realise the risk taken by growers in attending RCM sales, and therefore the crucial role of very fine price margins on the behaviour of participants. While both growers and officials agreed on the importance of higher returns, the growers' measurement of these was much finer.

DOAE workers varied in their assessments of their relationships with sellers. All agreed that the Thai GPM groups were easier to get along with, though extension workers like Arun also found the Malay groups they dealt with regularly more amiable than ones which were unfamiliar. Phisan felt

that relations could be better if DOAE officers spoke Malay, but found this obstacle a bearable limit in the conduct of his staff's work. Although he maintained that his workers were not more favourable towards Thai growers, he acknowledged that they tended to spend more time with them because of shared interests and ideas.

When I put it to DOAE workers in Yaha that they had not made much effort to hand over the administration and organisation of RCM sales to the elected committee, they countered that this was not due to a lack of desire on their part. They said that committee members showed no real interest in administering the sales and never carried out the tasks assigned to them. DOAE workers felt that the duties associated with committee positions were self-evident in the name of each position and that no great elaboration was necessary. While DOAE staff admitted they often usurped the roles of weighing, grading, and account-keeping, they pointed out that this was necessary to maintain standards, to retain the confidence of traders in the sales, and to ensure that records sent to the head office in Yala were accurate. When pressed, DOAE officers could only nominate one or two committee members with sufficient ability to carry out the organisational duties associated with sales. They explained to me that most of the growers had lived all their lives in small villages and were poorly educated. Quite bluntly, the responsibility for the sales was too great to pass on. This opinion was not particularly directed at Malays. While Thai committee members were sometimes regarded as more adept, in this context the classification of all committee members as rural dwellers as opposed to educated civil servants overshadowed the usual Thai-Malay distinction.

4.5 Differing perceptions of failure

In the above accounts of the GPM group in Khala and the RCM sales in Yaha, there is a common thread of perception which ties all the people involved. No-one disagrees that the GPM group in Khala was a failure, and everyone likewise rates the success of RCM sales in Yaha as minimal. But in their explanations of those agreed facts, people often took radically different standpoints. To an extent these could be paralleled with the dichotomy between Thais and Malays, between DOAE officers on the one hand and the Muslim villagers of Yaha district, and Khala in particular, on the other. To this extent, it would be easy to portray the differing analyses as arising out of cultural differences, and as being symptomatic of the Thai-Malay antagonism which permeates so many domains of social life in southern Thailand.

Yet within these two groups, Malay villagers and Thai officials, it is clear that other divisions exist. The GPM group's failure in Khala is seen quite differently by poor sharetappers and an aspiring leader like Hassan. Seni in the provincial head office of DOAE gives a markedly different account of events in Khala from that given by Arun. People's explanations of events are characterised by the nature of their relationship to the events that took place, as well as the genealogy of their perceptions and beliefs. Differences in social relationship to events mean differences in knowledge of events, and it was clear that people in diverse circumstances in both Khala and the DOAE hierarchy had varying degrees of familiarity with the course of day to day events, and variable access to information surrounding those events. These differences in knowledge could often blur the division of attitudes between DOAE officers and villagers.

While DOAE staff generally used the individual attributes of Malays to explain the failure of the GPM group in Khala, Seni could also make personal criticisms of his subordinates. And whereas Malays usually focused on the economic structure of village marketing to explain the group's failure, Hassan could also voice frustration at the timidity of his co-members. Phisan and Arun in turn could accept some of the explanation based on economic structure. Thus lines between Thai and Malay groupings were often blurred. At the RCM sales in Yaha, DOAE officers found themselves unable to trust either Thai or Malay rubber producers completely, and so often abandoned the Thai-Malay dichotomy for one between officials and rural dwellers.

So while a general consensus existed that the GPM group in Khala had failed, and the RCM sales in Yaha had never really fulfilled their promise, the diversity of explanations for these events meant that there was no resulting consensus on how to transform those failures into success. More importantly, the differing explanations were marked by diverse abilities to implement any changes, that is to say, by clear differentials in power. The poor of Khala, unable even to attempt participation in the GPM group, and painfully aware of the landlessness and debt burdens that prevented them doing so, had no power to transform their situation despite having a clear understanding of the fundamental problems. Senior DOAE officers, with access to government funds and material resources, could have manipulated these in a way that would have made the GPM group and RCM sales much more attractive propositions, but their token knowledge of Malay village economies meant that their power was useless. Differences in power and knowledge on both sides contributed to the failure of GPM groups

and RCM sales, and meant a limited understanding of those failures, so that those involved were unable to find a solution to their predicament.

It is frankly not a difficult task to ferret through the vast literature on development projects in Thailand, or elsewhere, and turn up a rich catalogue of failures. They are popular objects of study and their deficiencies and bungling make easy targets. To that extent, events in Khala and the district of Yaha were not unusual. But what of the success stories? These must also tell us something, and DOAE's projects in Yala province were not totally devoid of them.

In the middle of 1986, senior DOAE staff became concerned at the direction of my fieldwork. I had written short reports raising many of the problems which I have outlined in this chapter, and senior officers, particularly Mr. Sanit and Seni, were concerned that I was getting a bad impression of DOAE's work. Accordingly they suggested that I should do some research on one of their successful projects to balance the picture. I accepted the invitation, and over several months paid regular visits to the village of Maju in Raman district. The next chapter details the history of Maju's flourishing GPM group, and its strong participation in RCM sales. I will show the reasons why DOAE regarded the Maju group as one of their big success stories, and then see what light this throws on the failures which I have so far described.

Chapter 5: The Government Project in Maju

5.1 Raman district

The village of Maju is in Raman district, about 25 kilometres east of the provincial town of Yala (see Map 2). This district has more low-lying land than Yaha, with greater expanses of rice fields and more diverse crops. Rubber nevertheless remains the main agricultural product and in 1986 grew on 75% of agricultural land. Rice accounted for 16% of land use, and fruit or ground crops for the rest. Raman is reputedly a stronghold of Islam, and fundamentalist movements are particularly active there. Thai villages are very few in number, and the Thai presence in the district town is much less marked than in the town of Yaha. The District Officer of Raman, who held the most senior local government position, was a Thai who spoke fluent Malay. Several senior officials were Malay-speaking, but the proportion of Malays in the bureaucracy was still relatively small. The population of Raman district in October 1986 was 58,523, settled in 80 villages, nearly 20,000 more people than in Yaha.

DOAE has a district office in Raman town, and when I carried out my fieldwork, there were three senior officers (one of whom was Malay), and thirteen extension workers. Only two of the extension workers were Malay, but several of the others could speak the language, and used it regularly in their work. DOAE records for 1985 showed thirty GPM groups in the district, but when DOAE produced a report in 1986 for the visit of the Prime Minister (รายงานผลการดำเนินงาน 2529, pp.14-16), they

claimed that fifty-one groups were operating, twelve organised by DOAE, twenty-seven by the Department of Community Development, nine by the Accelerated Rural Development Office, and three unspecified. Extension workers told me in 1986 that a more realistic number of active GPM groups was about twenty. Certainly at the RCM sales I attended in 1986 and 1987, the largest number of participating GPM groups I saw at any one sale was fifteen, and the overall number of active groups appeared to be about twenty to twenty-three. Although RCM sales were organised by DOAE, officers from the other two government departments which had established GPM groups regularly attended, and several of these were either Malays or could speak Malay. As in Yaha, government workers would provide transport for GPM groups to attend the RCM sales if required.

Khun Charin, the DOAE district head, was a Thai unable to speak Malay, but enjoyed his posting in Raman and was pleased with his staff of extension workers. He was popular with senior workers in the DOAE head office, and Raman's good record in development projects meant there was little cause for friction between district workers and more senior staff. Chalerm, who was the agricultural extension worker responsible for the village of Maju, was also a Thai who spoke no Malay. He came from a Thai-speaking province further north, but had lived in Raman for a long time and showed none of the dissatisfaction with his posting that was common with workers sent from other provinces. He did not regard the language barrier as a great impediment to his work, and while he acknowledged that some extension workers had problems with local village leaders, he saw himself as very lucky in that he generally got on very well with those in his area.

The GPM group in Maju was an undeniable success, consistently bringing the largest amount of rubber to RCM sales in Raman and consistently producing rubber sheets of a very high quality. I now turn to consider the circumstances which produced this unusual phenomenon, and then look at how Maju's performance related to the RCM sales in the district town.

5.2 The GPM group in Maju

In early 1984, staff from the Accelerated Rural Development Office visited Maju and discussed the establishment of a GPM group. The main negotiating officer was a Malay, and he approached two rubber buyers in the village who purchased the majority of locally produced sheets. Some people in Maju sold to traders in Raman, but these were a small minority. One of the rubber buyers was the village headman, Cik Rashid, who eventually became chairman of the GPM group. In January 1985, DOAE took over responsibility for the group and Chalerm was assigned as the extension worker. He immediately established a good rapport with Cik Rashid and the deputy headman, Cik Yusoff. Both men, who were close relatives, spoke fluent Thai, which made their dealings with Chalerm much easier for both sides. Under DOAE's administration a GPM group committee of ten was elected, but only seven men filled the ten positions. Cik Rashid became chairman and treasurer, while Cik Yusoff became deputy chairman, secretary, and the only weighing officer. All other committee members were assigned the task of grading rubber sheets. The weighing scale and all group records were stored in the spacious area under

Cik Rashid's large dwelling, where Cik Yusoff also lived in an extended household. These two men carried out all the most important functions of the GPM group, so that its administration appeared very much like that in the shop of a traditional village dealer.

However, there were also clear differences. The group was not established solely for Cik Rashid to make personal profit. Records had to be kept, and these were open to inspection by both DOAE officers and members. The increased profits from selling as a co-operative went to all members according to amounts contributed. Unlike Cik Osman in Khala, who relied on rubber trading to provide his sole source of income, Cik Rashid owned sixty rai of rubber holdings, a substantial amount and one which guaranteed him financial security. Also, his rubber dealership was much smaller than Cik Osman's in Khala, having to compete with another buyer in Maju, an occasional buyer from Yala, and several traders in Raman.

Cik Rashid was well aware of the debt problems in his village, and therefore understood that for the government scheme to be a success and attract a large number of participants, it had both to increase profits to producers and also attempt to overcome the debt obligations that people had to traders. To this end, he instituted a 3% levy on earnings from sales, and used this money to make bulk purchases of coagulants and processing equipment for members to use, and also set some of this money aside to use for loans. In December 1986, the GPM group had stored funds of about 30,000 baht to serve eighty members. While the money was not sufficient to make loans for the acquisition of land or vehicles, it went a long way to covering the short-term needs of people during the months when no tapping took

place. There were 120 households in Maju, with a population of about 840 in 1986, with twenty-five households in the village owning no land. However, all landless households had some work as sharetappers, and there was often scope for labouring work in rice fields and fruit holdings because of the more diverse nature of Maju's economy.

The GPM group had begun in 1984 with only seventeen members, but this steadily increased both before and during my stay. The eighty members registered in late 1986 represented the same number of households, fifty of which were located in Maju, and the other thirty in surrounding villages. Cik Rashid, who had provided rubber producers with a profitable outlet for their goods and short-term credit facilities, was thus able to build a considerable following both within Maju itself, and beyond its borders, by applying his entrepreneurial skills to both his own resources and those of DOAE. In 1985 the Accelerated Rural Development Office offered to build a processing shed and Cik Rashid quickly accepted. He organised people to clear and fill an area of land, and they built it with materials provided by government officials. Though most GPM group members had their own processing facilities, Cik Rashid recognised the shed would be useful for people who did not have their own equipment, and would also have symbolic importance in demonstrating his ability to attract government resources. Whereas the GPM shed in Khala lay tucked away in an outlying *kampong*, the one in Maju was beside the main road, clearly visible to all.

Cik Rashid's fluency in Thai meant there was no communication problem with DOAE officers, and Chalerm's reliability and efficiency made him an effective channel between the Maju group and the DOAE

hierarchy. At meetings between the two men, I observed Cik Rashid discuss and resolve matters with Cik Yusoff and other members in Malay, then detail the agreed decision or course of action to Chalerm in Thai for relay to more senior officers. Often decisions were made by Cik Rashid and Cik Yusoff together, without reference to other members, and it was always one of these two men who passed information to Chalerm, and who received instructions or advice from DOAE. The internal decision-making process of the GPM group in Maju was thus closed to Chalerm, either by the manipulation of language when he was present or by restricting meetings to him and the two leaders. As long as the group functioned well, Chalerm had no desire to probe any further into its workings, and this suited both sides very well.

Cik Rashid was certainly interested in promoting economic initiatives in Maju, both to consolidate his own assets, and to distribute benefits to other residents in order to maintain a following and enhance his position as a leader. He had an inquisitive mind and the ability to apply newly-gained knowledge to conditions in the village, characteristics which were obvious in the way he worked. Over the several years before I met him, Cik Rashid had taken up invitations from DOAE and the Accelerated Rural Development Office to visit agricultural projects in other parts of Thailand, where he observed different growing methods and harvesting practices for a variety of crops. He told me that Thai agricultural scientists had much knowledge that was useful for Malay farmers, and he often took time to talk to people in Maju about what he had seen and learnt elsewhere. He had observed a very successful GPM group in the southern Thai province of Nakhon Si Thammarat a few years before, and said this had

inspired him to support the project in Maju. He knew the resources of DOAE and other government departments were considerable and potentially of great benefit to a large number of rubber growers, and so had cultivated a close and friendly relationship with Chalerm in order to ensure maximum access to those resources. Shortly after I met him he even tried to acquire the long-term use of my own skills to teach English to young people in Maju, convinced that fluency in English would lead to long-term benefits for the village's economy and social life. Cik Rashid's ambition and enterprise were recognised by people in Maju, and made him a popular leader. At the same time he took a strong interest in religious matters and in his personal life both advocated and sought to practise the virtues of Islam. While he had no great liking for the Thai administration, he recognised its political dominance and its usefulness as a reservoir of knowledge and material resources that could be drawn upon and used if the correct approach were taken.

After the establishment of the GPM group and its shift to DOAE control, Cik Rashid requested extension workers to come and give instructions on producing good quality rubber sheets. He encouraged people in Maju to put the methods into practice, and also experimented with adding sodium crystals during the coagulating process. He had observed this during his visit to Nakhon Si Thammarat, and it gave a fine, transluscent quality to the finished sheets. The result was that much of the rubber produced in Maju was first grade or better, a much higher quality than that produced in any other part of Yala province. During the latter half of 1986, nearly three-quarters of Maju's rubber was best quality, and by the time I was due to leave the area in April 1987, this proportion had increased to

nearly 90%, a staggering figure considering that most GPM groups produced little or no top grade rubber at all.

Cik Rashid also advocated that members should sell all their rubber through the group, and not divide their stocks between buyers, in order to maximise the profit margins offered by RCM sales. The founding members of the GPM group were households that had sold their rubber to Cik Rashid as a private trader, so they were able to increase their profits while maintaining their links with him and the credit he could extend. Because the former trader had become head of the GPM group, sellers had no need to divide their stocks between him and the RCM sales, so that the benefits of higher prices flowed with maximum effect to group members. As the scheme prospered and the number of members steadily increased, Cik Rashid's personal assets, even when combined with those of his deputy Cik Yusoff, were not sufficient to meet all demands from members for short-term loans. The 3% levy on sales was thus introduced and the GPM committee was able to lend small amounts to a large segment of the membership. This meant that landless sharetappers and owners of small holdings incurred less risk in joining the group and at the same time were able to reap the benefits it offered. There was certainly no fundamental change in the structure of Maju's economy. Land distribution was as uneven, and household incomes as disparate, as they were in Khala. The major difference was that in Maju, Cik Rashid had adopted and carried out policies that enabled the benefits of the government's scheme to reach a far greater number of people. This in turn had enhanced his own leadership position and extended his influence both within the village and eventually

beyond. The scheme had not transformed or replaced the traditional rubber economy, but had been used to strengthen and develop it.

5.3 RCM sales in Raman

The GPM group from Maju originally sold its rubber as a co-operative to visiting buyers, but in late 1985 RCM sales were organised, and these took place outside the government's district offices in Raman. Sheets were set out according to grade in a large open pavilion, making it easy for merchants to inspect them, or if groups had particularly large amounts to sell, as was often the case with Maju, they could display samples of each grade and leave the remainder at home for the successful bidder to collect later.

During 1986, the number of GPM groups participating in the sales rose steadily from four or five at the beginning of the year to fifteen by the end, and remained in the range of ten to fifteen groups in the first quarter of 1987. While this rate of participation was much higher than that in Yaha, it was still well below the generally accepted figure of about twenty-three active groups in the district, and a long way short of the official figure of fifty-one. While some sellers brought only small amounts to the sales, a few brought substantial quantities, so that the sales of late 1986 and early 1987 had an average of 25,000 kilogrammes on offer, a figure unheard of in Yaha. The Maju group's contribution to these impressive sales was considerable. Their rubber regularly amounted to one third of the total quantity for sale, and on some occasions accounted for over half.

Although participation by GPM groups was good, the RCM sales in Raman were marked by a low turnout of traders interested in bidding for the stocks. There were about a dozen large traders in Raman district and neighbouring areas, but the highest number I observed at a sale was six. More usually, only two or three traders would make bids, though others might inspect the rubber and decide not to make an offer. Nonetheless, competition between traders remained keen, spurred on by the high proportion of good quality rubber. There was no domination by any one trader, nor a drift to dependance on a single trader as occurred in Yaha, even by the date of my second visit in 1988.

Under Khun Charin, the DOAE's chief officer in Raman, extension workers at the RCM sales encouraged GPM group members to take an interest in the organisation and administration, and to learn the functions of DOAE staff, so that members could eventually undertake them. In the early sales DOAE officers took representatives from each group to inspect the stocks of rubber, asking them to assign grades to each one. These villagers were often hesitant at first, not wishing to offend members of other groups and possibly start an argument over grades, but in time they became more aware of the characteristics important in classifying sheets and there was greater discussion as people became more confident in their judgements. Weighing was initially done by DOAE staff in front of the successful bidder, but growers were encouraged to take part and eventually assumed this task, including notation of the weights and grades in DOAE's official records. The more regular attendance of GPM groups and their committee members helped to consolidate these skills and allowed for the eventual transfer of these functions to sellers, but the commitment of DOAE workers

to this end and their willingness to pass on knowledge was also of crucial importance.

An RCM sales committee was elected in Raman at the beginning of 1986, and its members were prominent among those learning the new administrative skills and practices. There were seventeen positions on the committee, with a distribution of functions similar to that in Yaha. All committee members were men, and they represented nine different GPM groups, including those operated by other departments as well as DOAE. The core committee members attended most sales held in 1986. On each occasion, DOAE staff would reiterate the duties of committee members and persuade each one to try his hand at performing the tasks. In practice, the men given the least to do were the deputy and secretary, whose functions were most commonly performed by the committee chairman or treasurer.

Because of Maju's prominence in contributing to RCM sales, and its reputation for being well-organised and producing high quality rubber, the group figured noticeably in the election of members to the RCM sales committee. Maju residents did not dominate it numerically, for only three were elected to the committee, but they did occupy strategic positions. Cik Rashid, the head and treasurer of Maju's GPM group, became the chairman of the RCM sales committee and also its chief marketing officer, responsible for liaison with rubber traders about the timing and location of sales, and the conduct of bidding. Cik Yusoff, who held the position of deputy, secretary, and weigher in the Maju GPM group, became the treasurer and chief weigher on the RCM sales committee. The third member from Maju was elected as a weigher, so that Maju representatives were found in all key areas of the committee's work.

RCM sales progressed through 1986 and into 1987, and committee members from Maju took an increasingly active role in their organisation. Cik Rashid would come to Raman early and spend a long time talking to each of the GPM groups as they arrived, trying to ascertain the range of prices they were hoping for on the day, and collecting information on the weights and grades of their rubber. Once all groups were present, Cik Rashid would call representatives from each one to a large table at the end of the pavilion to check their record books, discuss the general conduct of the sale, and inform them of the results of his contacts with potential bidders. He would then make a report to the DOAE officers present and inform them of how he planned to conduct the rest of the sale. Bids were usually opened by a senior DOAE officer or sometimes a visiting high-ranking official. Once the successful bid had been decided, the lots were re-weighed, and Cik Yusoff as treasurer would make out accounts for each group's due and distribute the money paid by the trader accordingly.

Between January 1986 and March 1987, when I attended RCM sales in Raman, there was a clear shift in participation by DOAE officers. At first they carried out all functions before and during the sale, but took the opportunity to chat with growers and encouraged them to take an interest in what DOAE staff were doing. After the election of the RCM sales committee, administrative work was increasingly performed by committee members, DOAE officers retaining functions only when required. This transfer was facilitated by the ability of several officers to speak Malay, and the high profiles of Cik Rashid and Cik Yusoff, both of whom spoke very good Thai. Growers generally spoke well of the extension workers, and comments about patronising behaviour, often heard in Yaha, were rare here. Some ill

feeling between Malays and officials certainly existed, but was more obvious on DOAE inspection visits or at village meetings than in the RCM sales.

All formal proceedings at the RCM sales were conducted in Thai, including announcements of bids, all written accounts, and reports to DOAE; but all informal negotiations and discussions between RCM committee members, or between other producers, were in Malay. DOAE officers often spoke to growers in Malay, a practice which senior staff in Yala usually discouraged. As Cik Rashid and Cik Yusoff came to be the main functionaries, growers felt much more at ease in coming forward and taking up matters with them. Those unable to express themselves adequately in Thai found they could now put across their views on the conduct of sales, and receive some response.

When I left Thailand in April 1987, the RCM sales at Raman were flourishing, and looked set to continue in that vein. The Maju GPM group was in many ways the central pillar of the sales, and its two leaders, Cik Rashid and Cik Yusoff, were making solid progress in taking over the organisation from DOAE staff. When I returned to Thailand in July 1988, this process had reached a new stage, one that was perhaps predictable but nonetheless extraordinary. The village of Maju had become the centre for RCM sales in Raman district, and groups no longer took their rubber to the Thai government offices in Raman, but instead transported it to the Malay village of Maju, where a large area had been cleared to accommodate the sales. Quantities of between 20,000 and 30,000 kilograms of rubber were being sold, many times the total of any other RCM sale in the province. The quality of rubber remained high and Cik Rashid was actively encouraging

participating groups to adopt the work practices of people in Maju to improve the quality of rubber overall. DOAE officers still visited the sales, but now went as observers rather than as organisers or functionaries. Reports showing weights and grades of rubber sold, and prices received, were sent to DOAE after each sale for its statistical collection, but beyond that the sales and their management were now virtually closed to DOAE staff.

5.4 DOAE's explanations of success

No-one, either within DOAE or the village itself, was displeased with the progress of the Maju GPM group. In fact, there was a general consensus that the group, and the RCM sales in which it participated, were great successes. All parties felt they had either achieved or moved closer to their goals, and could point to benefits they had gained as a result. However, in explaining that success and its nature, a variety of interpretations were put forward. There was agreement on the fact of success, but divergence over its quality and the reasons for its occurrence.

Senior DOAE staff in Yala were very pleased with Maju's record, and indeed this was the reason for my original introduction to the village. For Seni, the group's success was proof that there were no faults in the basic idea behind the project and therefore where the scheme failed it could only be due to problems in implementation. The ever increasing number of people seeking to join the Maju group was seen as evidence that they were free agents and not so overburdened by debt obligations that the scheme was beyond their reach. However, Seni had very little knowledge of the economy in Maju and was unaware of the 3% levy that Cik Rashid had

raised on sales to provide a credit facility, so lack of knowledge meant his view of events could remain intact.

Seni gave much credit to the work of Khun Charin and Chalerm from the DOAE office in Raman. Though Seni had attended few RCM sales in Raman, he knew from reports by other officers and from contacts with these two men in other contexts, that they were hard-working and committed to improving the fortunes of agricultural households. He said that Khun Charin had a particularly good relationship with his staff and was able to motivate them more effectively than most district agricultural officers. On the other hand, Seni also gave credit to the people in Maju. To him they exemplified the ideal to which he felt all Malays should aspire, and I often heard him say this in meetings with Malays elsewhere in the province. For Seni, the people in Maju were diligent, open to new ideas, and followed the instructions of the DOAE staff, having the very opposite characteristics he usually perceived in Malay villagers, and he believed this good attitude on their part was the key to their improved economic condition.

Khun Charin, looking at the situation from the district office in Raman, also focused on implementation as the key to Maju's success and the progress of RCM sales. He gave most credit to his extension workers and their ability to get their message across effectively. In particular he praised the work of Chalerm, who had developed not only a good relationship with Cik Rashid and the people in Maju, but also with people in other villages, though he admitted the results elsewhere were less spectacular. In Maju, he said, DOAE staff had been lucky to find a place where people were receptive to new ideas and had a strong leader to organise them. As with Seni, Khun

Charin saw the success of the rubber marketing scheme as arising mainly out of DOAE's foresight and leadership, tempered by the observation that in Maju the scheme had the good fortune to take root in fertile soil. He felt that all Malay villages had the potential to develop like Maju, provided they were offered encouragement and assistance, and that their leaders were well-disposed to the development ethic. He said that the District Officer of Raman, being a Malay speaker, had done much to foster good relations between Thais and Malays, and the fact that some extension workers spoke Malay also helped to make delivery of services easier and more effective. However, he still felt that most Malay leaders were conservative and unwilling to be as enterprising as Cik Rashid, and did not expect the Maju example to become the norm in the near future.

Chalerm, the extension worker who had the greatest involvement with people in Maju, concentrated far more on their qualities in explaining the GPM group's success. He commented that people in Maju were generally hard-working, and interested in the new ideas he presented to them, though they always made up their own minds whether to adopt those ideas. He felt that Cik Rashid had a broad vision of how the village economy fitted into the wider society, and had a strong commitment to improving the living standards of his people. It was his example which ensured participation in the government's project was strong from the outset. In the longer term, Chalerm saw the economic advantages of belonging to the GPM group as the key to understanding why members remained and why new people were attracted. He said that Malay villagers would eagerly accept a new avenue for making profits once someone had shown the way and proved it was effective.

Chalerm felt the basic design of the scheme was good, and that events in Maju confirmed this, but reiterated that no matter how good the planning behind a scheme, correct implementation was necessary. In Maju, he said his tactic had been to visit regularly and to spend time with key members, and this had not only proved to be a useful way of understanding members' needs, but had also shown villagers that DOAE officers wanted to help improve living standards, and were willing to commit time and effort towards that end.

When DOAE workers spoke about the nature of success in Maju, they laid stress on those indicators that were important to the DOAE bureaucracy. All noted that the quantity of rubber sold regularly increased, and took this as a measure that needed no elaboration. GPM groups and RCM sales were organised to market rubber, and therefore the more they marketed the more successful they were. Officers also pointed out that the quality of rubber sold was improving, which was important because it meant that exporters could get higher returns, and that Thai rubber could penetrate a wider range of markets overseas. Senior officers were especially conscious of the limited number of destinations for rubber exports, and saw this as a major motivation to improve rubber quality in the province. The other common element of success cited by DOAE workers was the increasing membership of Maju's group, and of others in Raman district. Again this needed no elaboration, larger groups being synonymous with better groups. Among the attributes of success mentioned by all DOAE staff, the only one directly involving GPM group members was that the RCM sales had given growers increased incomes. It was significant that all factors listed by DOAE staff could be translated into statistics which displayed regular and constant

growth. In the world of the DOAE bureaucracy, this was the language of development, quantifiable social facts which flourished and increased over time. As long as communities like Maju continued to provide rising figures for DOAE records and reports, this was manifestly success, and the fact that the development schemes originated from DOAE and were implemented by its staff, meant that it was, above all, DOAE's success. In this view, DOAE provided the benefits, and Malay villagers eventually woke up to them.

5.5 Malay explanations of success

Not all facts pointed to unalloyed success. While it was true that RCM sales in Raman were far larger and had greater participation than those in Yaha, the unit returns to sellers were much the same, and at times less, though they were always an improvement on the prices available from village traders. Also, a large proportion of the rubber sold in Raman came from a handful of very productive GPM groups, especially Maju. Other groups usually had low membership and only brought small amounts of rubber to sales. Maju produced large amounts of high quality rubber, but no other GPM group matched this performance, and some never produced any top grade rubber at all. If Maju's contributions were removed from sales in Raman, the comparison with Yaha district would still show a better performance in Raman, but the difference would be far less striking and on some occasions almost nonexistent.

Members of the group in Maju were divergent in their explanations of its success. Cik Rashid and Cik Yusoff, who exercised most control and who eventually also came to dominate the RCM sales, felt that the scheme

had succeeded because of its economic benefits to members. They said the basic desire of all villagers was to improve their income, and the scheme was popular fundamentally because it did this. When I raised the problem of indebtedness, Cik Rashid admitted that this was a flaw in the design of the scheme, but pointed out that he and Cik Yusoff had managed to overcome it by instituting a levy and making small amounts available to members. In this way more people were able to take part and reap the benefits of higher returns.

Cik Rashid also recognised that DOAE officers had played a part in the success of the scheme in Maju. He regarded Chalerm as a dedicated worker whose diligence had allowed the group to have quick access to resources and expertise. More generally, he praised the attitude of DOAE workers at the sales in Raman, saying that they understood Malays better than officials he had met elsewhere, including those in other departments of the district administration. He applauded the work the Accelerated Rural Development Office, whose field staff had originally introduced the GPM group concept to Maju. I was not really surprised by this generous view of the Thai administration. The fact that by late 1988 both the Maju group and the RCM sales had been largely removed from the hands of DOAE and lay under the control of Cik Rashid and a small coterie, meant that Cik Rashid could indeed afford to be lavish in his praise.

Poorer members of the GPM group, and those who were not members, had more mixed assessments. Very few saw the group and its success as resulting from DOAE's efforts. In general conversation, the group was often referred to as Cik Rashid's group (*puak Cik Rashid*), implying that its ancestry lay in the circle of clients who sold their rubber to Cik Rashid when he was a private trader, rather than in the domain of DOAE.

Members almost always cited increased profits as the major benefit of belonging to the group, but stressed that higher income had not come automatically. Many people needed to spend extra time in order to produce higher quality sheets. The work had been onerous at first, but in the long term had paid off. Many admitted that the availability of short-term credit was the major factor that kept them in the group. Some had previously borrowed from Cik Rashid whenever they needed money anyway, but there were others who had relied on different traders for credit. If the lending facility had disappeared, their membership would almost certainly have lapsed. All members indicated their confidence in Cik Rashid as a leader, and cited the ever increasing membership as evidence of his abilities. The success of the group had increased his popularity and secured his position as a major leader in the community.

People in Maju who were not members of the GPM group were all clients of other traders. Their returns were generally lower than those of members, but their current debt obligations usually meant that a switch to the GPM group was not practicable. Some were in a position to change, but had doubts about the long term ability of the group to sustain its high levels of return, and remain capable of extending credit to its sizeable membership. Landless sharetappers who had joined the group were glad of the increased incomes, but as one man commented, it only meant that he was able to buy more necessities and borrow less often. It had not brought him any closer to satisfying his greatest desire, owning and cultivating his own plot of land.

5.6 Competing interpretations

The material in the above two sections reveals various attempts to explain why the GPM group in Maju and the RCM sales in Raman were successful. Some general divisions between Thais and Malays are certainly evident. All DOAE workers argued that the rubber marketing project was a good one, while Malay perceptions were less unanimous. It was also a common theme in the explanations of DOAE officers that people in Maju were somehow different from other Malays. Certain officers felt that all Malays could be like this, but even so those in Maju were considered exceptional. I would argue that people in Maju, like their counterparts in Khala, were constantly seeking avenues to improve their economic situation. The difference was that in Maju an avenue was found, largely through the enterprise of Cik Rashid, while attempts to open such an avenue in Khala were unsuccessful. This view was flatly rejected by senior DOAE staff when I put it to them, for to accept such a proposition would be to admit that it was not government planning and implementation which matched and served the needs of villagers, but that it was the degree to which villagers appropriated DOAE's resources and bent them to serve their own ends that accounted for any successes development schemes produced.

Malays were far more likely to see success in terms of their own efforts. Only those most closely involved in the liaison between people in Maju and DOAE staff, namely Cik Rashid and Cik Yusoff, assigned any importance to DOAE's work in making the rubber marketing project a profitable venture. People in Maju, whether members or not, saw the group's success as a result of efforts by members, and the administration of Cik Rashid. It was they who had produced a benefit from resources which could otherwise have produced no advantage whatsoever.

Although clear lines could thus be drawn to separate Thai explanations from those given by Malays, there were also internal variations on both sides that blurred this dichotomy. Cik Rashid's praise of DOAE often sounded little different from the opinions of Seni in the provincial office, while Chalerm's recognition of the hard work by people in Maju and the leadership qualities of Cik Rashid at times made his thinking consistent with the views put forward by ordinary members in the village. All those involved could point to events, statistics, and individuals to substantiate what they were saying, so that a variety of competing explanations continued to thrive and contend under a seemingly consensual umbrella of opinion that the scheme was a success.

My own view is that there is little difference in the cases of Khala and Maju, despite the appearance of failure in one and success in the other, a contrast which all the people involved perceived. I would argue that while the DOAE scheme had the potential to provide economic benefits to people in Yala, the restricted knowledge that DOAE officers had of rubber marketing, land ownership, and leadership in Malay villages meant that structural aspects of the scheme, and most methods of implementation, were doomed to failure because they did not match the needs and hopes of people at village level. Where success occured, as in Maju, it was due to strong Malay leaders appropriating DOAE's knowledge and resources, and adapting them to the circumstances in their own communities. Yet the fact that existing Malay leaders were the ones to do this meant that any benefits were distributed in a way that reinforced the traditional economic structure.

Beyond this, I would argue that the examples of Khala and Maju illustrate a more fundamental conflict in the relationship between the Thai state and Malays in southern Thailand. The contrast of failure and success I

have described in this chapter and the preceding one, is predicated on economic values, but there is a major political issue at stake here also: the survival of Malay society in the modern Thai nation. I now turn to look at how previous writers have dealt with this topic, and then demonstrate how the material I have presented can be interpreted as examples of Malay political success, and of failure by the Thai state.

Chapter 6: Failings in Thai studies and the Failure of the Thai State

At the beginning of this thesis, I noted that there are few ethnographies describing the Malays of southern Thailand. Those that exist take the village as their focus of attention, and seek to analyse its internal logic. The location of Malay villages in the modern Thai state and the impact this has on the lives of ordinary people becomes a secondary consideration. Penetration of Malay social life by the Thai state, and forms of Malay resistance to this, have been given little attention by anthropologists.

Golomb devotes part of his book on traditional curing to Malay practitioners in Pattani province, and argues that they are a channel of communication and cultural crossover between Thais and Malays. This would link them to historical patterns of conversion to Hinduism, Buddhism, and later Islam, in Southeast Asia generally (Golomb 1985, Chs. 1-2). Yet at the same time he demonstrates that traditional curers who treat people outside their own cultural group purposely restrict the flow of cultural information in order to preserve the exclusivity of their knowledge and a sense of mystery in the eyes of the outgroup. To do otherwise would undermine the practitioner's status with outgroup clients (ibid., Chs.7, 9). When speaking about Thais and Malays, Golomb makes little reference to the internal factions which exist on both sides, and apart from reaffirming the antipathy between the two groups (ibid., Ch.1), gives little account of how the Thai state seeks to penetrate southern Malay society, or indeed of

the role that traditional healers fulfil in relations between local Malays and the Thai state apparatus.

In *Rusembilan*, Fraser devotes one chapter to the place of the village in the Thai nation (1960, Ch.7), mentioning the antipathy between Malays and Thai officials and the gulf of understanding which separates them. It is clear that the Thai state has markedly affected people's lives in Rusembilan, for Malays must deal with officials in order to pay taxes, and there is daily interaction in both informal and formal contexts (ibid., pp.93, 107, 111). Yet amidst this activity Thai officials remain shadowy figures, delineated only by the odd comments of villagers. Fraser pays them little heed. The impression is that the Thai state is peripheral to Rusembilan, and apart from the presence of schools (ibid., pp.114-116), impacts little on people's lives.

In a subsequent book, Fraser is more forthcoming about the changes wrought by the Thai state, briefly discussing government development programmes (1966, pp.97-100) and mentioning Malay separatist movements (ibid., pp.101-102). Thai officials are described as prejudiced, viewing Malays as ignorant, uncomprehending, and lacking civilised attributes, and the antipathy and mutual suspicion between the two groups is reiterated (ibid., pp.49, 53, 101). Apart from these general and scattered observations, Fraser again fails to detail encounters between Malays and Thais, nor allow for variations in attitude within each group. Local manifestations of the Thai state in the form of officials and their administrative practices are pushed to the edges of the richer tapestry of a village life isolated from its political surroundings.

Saihoo's long and elaborately detailed account of life in Khala gives some information about the impact of the Thai state through the primary school, employment of the village headman by the Thai administration,

and visits of community development workers (1974, pp.431ff). He notes that people in Khala had to keep identity cards and be registered with the headman, and that land ownership and property dealings had to be notified to the local administration, and taxes paid. After 1960, community development and agricultural extension workers visited Khala, but achieved little because of the language barrier (ibid., pp.445-446). The major legacies of community development schemes were road construction, the establishment of a market area, the primary school, and some demonstration plots started by agricultural workers (ibid., p.469). This was followed in 1965 by a development worker coming to reside in Khala, who left within a year after making little headway, and his successor only visited occasionally (ibid., pp.470-471). A village development committee was established, but few members understood its role, and they rarely met (ibid., pp.475-480).

Saihoo does not analyse the actions and motives of the Thai officials who came into Khala and attempted to change its way of life. They remain faceless individuals and there is an implied assumption that they carry out government policy as intended by its formulators in Bangkok. Likewise, the people in Khala, though described in much detail by Saihoo, are also portrayed as unvarying in their responses to government intervention. Although it is clear that government schemes have largely been unsuccessful, there is no analysis of this beyond observations that people in Khala do not understand the intent of the programmes, and that apart from younger people educated in the Thai school system, do not place great value on the benefits the Thai government has to offer. The penetration of Khala and hundreds of other Malay villages by the Thai state apparatus demands attention as one of the major political processes in this region during the

twentieth century, but Saihoo relegates it to the sidelines of Khala's social life.

This approach is an easy one to adopt, for an extended visit to any Malay village in this area brings a realisation that despite the concerted onslaught of the Thai state since the late nineteenth century, the impact at village level has been far less than one would expect. The Malay language still flourishes despite strenuous government efforts to make it redundant, and Islamic adherence has only been strengthened by association of the Thai state with Buddhist values. Political power in villages rests in the hands of traditional Malay leaders, irrespective of whether they are approved as village spokesmen by the local administration. Government-sponsored committees become irrelevant and development schemes regularly founder, wasting large sums of government money and undermining the efforts of bureaucrats. Yet village economies in the border provinces are often healthier than those of other regions in Thailand and there is none of the starvation which can occur in the north and north-east of the country. Malay life in the south has remained remarkably resilient to Thai attempts at penetration and control. Malays have effectively resisted Thai advances, and the southern border region is still very much a *negeri Melayu*, a Malay heartland. Neither Fraser nor Saihoo give more than fleeting attention to this fact, or seek to explain why it is so.

6.1 Studies of separatism

Writers who do see the conflict between Thais and Malays as central to an understanding of events in southern Thailand are political scientists and historians concerned with the phenomenon of Malay separatism. Numerous books and articles have been published on this topic, and I can

only mention here a selection of the more prolific and more quoted authors.

Haemindra (1976; 1977) gives an extended history of Thai attempts to dominate the south and Malay resistance to them, tracing the rise of modern separatist movements and their tactics. However, his version of events relies very heavily on official Thai interpretations of the past. It is possible to discern in his account a cyclical pattern of Thai promises to ameliorate political conditions, failure to carry out the promises, and resurrection of the same or similar promises in the next moment of crisis. But Haemindra does not see this as significant, nor seek to explain why it happens. He speaks of Thai officials as if they were an homogeneous group, and similarly describes Malays as having no internal divisions. The only concession he makes to Malay factionalism is a brief mention of old conservatives versus young progressives on the question of a Thai education (1977, p.95), but it will be obvious from what I have described in this thesis that the education Malays can choose is often restricted by wealth and social position rather than being a simple function of outlook. Haemindra presents an idyllic picture of Malay village life (ibid., pp.99-100), so much so that I doubt it is based on long term first-hand observation, and it is clear from his erroneous transcriptions of Malay names and his comment on the dialect spoken in the south (ibid., p.93n) that he has little or no knowledge of Patani Malay.

Nevertheless, he sets out six main reasons for what he terms the Malay "problem" in the south: (1) official ignorance of Malay culture; (2) the inability of officials to speak Malay; (3) the arrogance of officials; (4) the racial prejudice of officials; (5) the continued close relations between Malays in southern Thailand and those in Malaysia; and (6) the poor

economic condition of the south when compared with Malaysia (ibid., pp.98-102). He argues it is important to ameliorate the behaviour of officials because Malays "are hypersensitive people" (ibid., p.104), and to match economic conditions in Malaysia in order to better integrate Malays in Thailand and reduce political tension (ibid., p.105). Haemindra never details the work practices of officials, so it is hard to see on what evidence he bases his criticisms of their behaviour. Furthermore, he tars all officials with the same brush, and fails to examine internal conflicts and divisions in the bureaucracy which may affect relations between officials and villagers. Although he can give a long history of struggles and conflicts between Thais and Malays, Haemindra cannot explain, in the face of his own trenchant criticisms of Thai officials, why large-scale insurrection in the Malay provinces has been conspicuously rare.

Suhrke's depictions of Malay village life are sketchy and also fail to allow for internal economic and political division (1973, p.298; 1975, p.194). The only internal conflicts are said to be those between older conservatives and younger progressives (1975, p.194), but like Haemindra, Suhrke never gives details of how such conflicts are expressed in practice beyond arguments over the desirability of a Thai education (1977, pp.238-239). She equates conservatism with a stronger Malay identity and a progressive attitude with modern Thai culture (ibid., pp.249-250), which is exactly the kind of division that government officials in Yala sought to make. On the issue of Malay separatism, Suhrke sees the integration efforts of the government as being mainly concentrated on education (1970, p.542; 1973, pp.306-307) and believes a Thai education will reduce discrimination against Malays (Suhrke and Noble 1977, p.199). In this view, Malays can then be divided into two groups, loyalists and separatists (Suhrke 1977, p.242;

Suhrke and Noble 1977, pp.197-200), the former accepting Thai education and integration into the Thai state, and the latter supporting an alternative Malay-dominated political structure, again a division that Thai officials in Yala would put to me. While a majority of Malays "probably have not accepted the legitimacy of Thai rule" (Suhrke and Noble 1977, p.200), the separatists "have not demonstrated any ability to mobilize popular support" (Suhrke 1977, p.243), and Suhrke's only explanation of this is "political apathy" on the part of Malays (Suhrke and Noble 1977, p.200).

Suhrke explains Thai-Malay conflict as arising out of "a concept of race based on language and custom", adding that certain "socio-economic factors no doubt tend to preserve these attitudes." (Suhrke 1973, p.298). I would argue that Thai-Malay conflict is embedded in all social practice, and that focussing on vague categories like race is little help in explaining why divisions arise and why they are sustained. I have noted that Suhrke's views often coincide with those of Thai officials, which sits at odds with her own claim at times to write from the Malay point of view (1977, p.237). Her sources are either Thai elites or Malay separatists, and she appears unable to speak Malay (ibid., p.243n), so that it is not surprising her accounts gloss over the lives of the majority of Malays who live in rural villages. Though it lies beyond the scope of this thesis, I would argue that Suhrke's loyalist-separatist division of Malays is true, if at all, only in the urban centres. No villager I have ever spoken to would fit her loyalist category, nor do the vast majority fit the separatist model. Indeed, I would argue that the notion of the state is largely irrelevant to the political thinking of most rural Malays, so that a loyalist-separatist division has little meaning. Most Malays I have dealt with hold strong views regarding the actions of the Thai administration but, as I will argue in the next section, their mode of political

expression has not fitted the categories expected by political scientists. At the same time, it is a grave mistake to brush off rural Malays as apathetic.

The focus of Ladd Thomas' work is political violence in the southern border region, mainly Malay separatism but also Communist insurgency and common banditry (1966; 1975). He extensively interviewed rural Malays (1975, p.12n), but does not give a detailed description of their political and economic practices, and it is difficult to understand why he claims on the one hand that Malays have little interest in economic pursuits (1966, p.102), yet attributes much of Malay discontent with Thai rule to economic factors (ibid., p.100; 1975, pp.6-10). In 1975, Ladd Thomas wrote that Malay support for separatism was growing (1975, p.17), something which was probably true at that time, but he also admitted that the vast majority of Malays were not involved in separatist groups , and stressed that this did not imply that Malays were content with Thai rule (ibid., p.19). In fact he has argued that Thai integration efforts often conflict with Malay sentiments (1966, pp.101-103). Ladd Thomas says that the Thai government hopes a better understanding between Thais and Malays, and use of the Thai language as a common medium, will be sufficient to reduce tension, but feels that this may be a false hope. He hypothesises that use of Thai may simply provide a more fluent medium for conflict (ibid., pp.103-104). Clearly the roots of conflict are perceived to run deep, an impression I assume he gained from his extensive contacts with rural dwellers, but he does not pursue this issue and instead chooses to focus on the more overt expressions of discontent, the activities of separatist groups which are small in number and demonstrably unable to stir large segments of the population.

Surin Pitsuwan, a Muslim from a Thai-speaking area of southern Thailand, a former academic, and currently a member of the Thai parliament, has also written on the separatist movements of the border provinces (Pitsuwan 1985). One of his concerns is the effect of this political unrest on Thailand's relations with Malaysia, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Muslim countries of the Middle East (Pitsuwan 1982). He recognises that Malay separatism has the potential to upset relations within ASEAN and to impair Thailand's image in the international arena if the government is seen as mistreating its Muslim population (ibid., pp.38-45).

Pitsuwan's understanding of Malay separatism is based on religion, arguing that an Islamic state is necessarily theocratic and Malays therefore cannot accept rule by a Thai state based on a Buddhist cosmology (1985, pp.7-14). I agree that this is the theoretical basis on which Malay separatist groups promote their cause, but it is clear that rural Malays, while they publicly approve of Islamic principles and seek Islamic piety in men who aspire to leadership, do not always select religious scholars as their political leaders. All of the men who contended for leadership in Khala and Maju were careful to live according to Muslim beliefs, but few could be categorised as religious leaders. The situation in rural areas is far more complex than the ideologies of separatist movements would allow.

Pitsuwan's history of separatism is largely concerned with the activities of politicians, religious teachers, separatist leaders, and the Thai government bureaucracy (ibid., Chs.3-6), so that the interests and activities of most Malays are given little consideration. In the end, although he has catalogued a long history of Thai assaults on Malay society and shown that a clear separatist framework to oppose the Thai state is in place, he is forced

to admit that "the masses are still passive and not responding to the call" (ibid., p.225). He supposes they will do so "soon" (ibid.), but gives no grounds for this optimism. Why Malays have shown such a lack of enthusiasm he cannot say, nor does he explore the issue. His attention fixed on religious and political elites, Pitsuwan is unable to explain the behaviour of the Malay masses in the countryside.

Che Man (1983), a Malay from Narathiwat province, has written a history of one of the separatist movements, and claims from the outset to be mainly concerned with separatist elites. His early history of the region parallels the accounts in the *Hikayat Patani* (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970) and the *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani* (Syukri 1985), but he goes on to provide a detailed record of the Thai government's attempts at internal colonisation of the south and the growth of separatist movements in response to these, particularly the Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani (Che Man 1983, Chs.3-4). In this wealth of material, the lives of village Malays figure rarely. Che Man deals with their economy in a few pages, despite his argument that economic development programmes are one of the government's most important weapons in fostering integration (ibid., pp.59-66), and instead he devotes much of his work to stressing the theocratic nature of Islamic politics and the importance of religious elites for leadership in Malay society generally and in separatist movements in particular (ibid., Ch.4). Che Man fails to point out that active members of such movements have never been more than a very small proportion of the Malay population, and have never incited mass insurrection. His interest is in the religious elites, and he describes them well, but the reader is left wondering how they relate to the vast numbers of rural Malays.

In reading the works of these political scientists and historians, I was struck by the fact that none had been able to explain why separatist movements had been unsuccessful in galvanising Malays in support of secession from the Thai state. In visits to Yala and Pattani provinces I have spoken to hundreds of Malays about the region's problems, in a wide range of communities besides those of Khala and Maju, and I have never met a Malay who favoured complete integration into Thai society. On the contrary, I was commonly asked whether I felt the southern economy was productive enough to exist outside the Thai state. It was clear to me that there was no shortage of sympathy for the aims of the separatist movements, yet this was matched by the fact that the active membership of these movements was demonstrably weak and limited.

I feel that much of the inability of political scientists and historians to explain this paradox is due to the sources of their material and the perspectives those sources imply. In part, writers have been restricted by the language they use. An inability to speak Patani Malay effectively prevents a researcher from gaining an understanding of Malay village society except through intermediaries. Furthermore, writers have tended to restrict their sources to elites, perhaps reflecting a certain view of what constitutes politics and history. Their attention drawn to these small groups, it is hardly surprising that many writers depict Thais and Malays as largely homogeneous blocs engaged in active conflict, yet are never able to understand why the "masses" have appeared so inert. I am not arguing here against the study of elites, but rather for the view that elites, like the Malay villages depicted by ethnographers, need to be related to the wider Thai state in which they operate.

6.2 The failure of the Thai state

There is no question that rural Malays in Yala see their environment as dominated by Malay settlements. To them, Yala is located in a *negeri Melayu*, a term which conflates notions of settlement, country, and state. The Thais are outsiders and invaders here. Like the man at the very beginning of this thesis, Malays emphatically reject that they are *khaek* , either inferior or "guests" in southern Thailand. In the preceding chapters, I have noted that the Thai government has used economic development programmes as a strategy of penetration into this *negeri*, and described in detail the course of this process in Khala and Maju.

In theory, the programme of GPM groups and RCM sales eliminates middlemen in rubber marketing and increases profits to producers, but in practice it has been a spectacular failure. In 1986, while there were 292 villages in Yala province (สำนักงานเลขานุการคณะกรรมการพัฒนาจังหวัด ยะลา 2529, p.4), only about thirty had active GPM groups, and registered group membership rarely exceeded fifteen people (Ch.4, supra). The number of members actually contributing to group sales was usually far fewer. In the face of this pitiful record, the exceptional nature of Maju's achievement can be gauged, and it is little wonder that Thai officials cling to this example so keenly as an instance of their success. In view of the material I have presented, I argue that there are four basic reasons why Thai attempts at integration of Malays by means of economic development programmes have failed, and after setting these out, I will relate them together in a general proposition.

The first reason runs directly to the heart of the issue I have outlined above, the failure of historians and political scientists to explain the lack of

mass separatist activity by rural Malays in the face of Thai incursions into Malay social life.The fact is that rural Malays have developed their own mechanisms to minimise Thai penetration of their villages. Not a conscious master-plan, but successful strategies which have been developed over time in regular interaction with Thai officials. To use Scott's terminology, these are everyday forms of resistance (Scott 1985). In Khala, Cik Osman decided very early in the piece not to become involved in the GPM group, and his pivotal role in the village rubber economy meant his absence gave the group little chance of success. Rival leaders attempted to make the scheme work, but their efforts were half-hearted or received insufficient backing from other villagers. People in Khala were not averse to making greater profits. In fact they devoted much energy in their daily lives to improving their economic circumstances. Rather, they were unwilling to participate under the conditions offered, or in the case of many poorer villagers, were simply incapable of choosing whether to participate because their relations to land meant a recurrent need to borrow money within the existing economic framework. Had Cik Osman decided to support the GPM group, his own economic position would have been undermined, and with it his political leadership in a community where he represented the interests of many other villagers. In that event, control of Khala's rubber economy may well have been lost to Thai officials. Cik Osman's decision sacrificed increased profits to keep the Thai administration at bay and the village economy in Malay hands.

Cik Rashid, as both a leader and major landowner in Maju, could afford to allow the establishment of a GPM group without threatening his own income and political position. There remained the potential for losing the village rubber economy to Thai control. Cik Rashid overcame this by

becoming an active leader of the GPM group, using his fluency in Thai and Malay to regulate the flow of information to DOAE officers, employing his knowledge of the DOAE bureaucracy to maximinse the allocation of resources to Maju, and then extending these tactics to the RCM sales in Raman, to the point where by 1988 the RCM sales were finally appropriated into Malay hands and transferred to Maju itself. That was an exceptional feat, and much of the reason for it stems from the extraordinary character of Cik Rashid. However, the essential point is that Cik Rashid in Maju and Cik Osman in Khala both acted with the same considerations in mind. Each man considered how to preserve the existing economic structures in their villages, and how to exclude Thai officials from gaining any control over those economic structures. Cik Osman's solution was to ensure the GPM group's failure, while Cik Rashid took possesion of the government's scheme and eventually brought it to Maju under his control. To speak of failure in Khala and success in Maju is therefore to speak in purely economic terms, and to accept a distinction that is more real for Thai officials than Malay villagers. For in terms of the political struggle between the Thai government and rural Malays, the latter successfully resisted the encroachment of the Thai state in both instances.

Such behaviour explains the paradox that confounds political scientists and historians, who are aware of the strong Malay support for separatist ideology, but who see little active support for formal separatist groups. The fact is that separatist groups have been made largely redundant, for in resisting the advent of the Thai state, rural Malays like those in Khala and Maju have been quite successful with their own strategies. They have had no cause to resort to mass insurrection under the leadership of formal separatist groups. From this explanation, I would hypothesise that mass

insurrection against Thai rule has occurred in the past, and will occur in the future, only when the Thai administration wrests control of village social life from indigenous Malay leaders. That is to say, widespread violent Malay resistance and Thai administrative control of village life operate in inverse proportion to each other. I think it would be profitable if historical records on this region of Thailand were re-read in a way that tested this hypothesis, because if true it must have profound implications for the strategies that any Thai government can adopt towards Malays resident in the south.

A second reason for the failure of the Thai administration to extend its control into Malay village life arises out of the clear divisions of power and knowledge in Malay communities. The vital decisions about the GPM groups in Khala and Maju were made by established economic and political leaders, whose decisions were largely influenced by their own personal needs and future plans. A government offer to establish a GPM group is an opportunity for economic gain, but the social structure in Malay villages like Maju and Khala means that many residents are not in a position to take advantage of that opportunity. A poor landless sharetapper like Suhaimi in Khala, regularly embedded in a web of debt obligations to village leaders, cannot even consider GPM group participation. The same is also true for people unable to communicate in Thai, for a government programme comes packaged in a foreign language that automatically places it beyond these people's grasp. Those who lack the power or knowledge that would allow them to make profits out of government schemes, can only hope to exploit such opportunities through the agency of people in their village who do have that power and knowledge.

In Maju, Cik Rashid did not alter the economic structure of rubber marketing, but he did allow those with limited resources and those with limited ability in dealing with Thai officials, to reap material benefits from a government programme by eliminating the economic risks to the former and by allowing the latter to deal with a familiar Malay leadership. People in Maju were given greater freedom to choose how they would market their products, even if they were still constrained by reliance on the actions of established leaders. Thus, in both Khala and Maju, the internal differentiations of knowledge and power limited the extent to which people could have access to, and exploit, the resources of the Thai state.

The fact that Thai officials have failed to understand the internal differentiation of Malay communities is a third reason for the government's inability to penetrate the Malay *negeri.* Arun's limited knowledge of the structure of rubber marketing in Khala meant that he approached leaders who did not command the support necessary to ensure a project's success. Planners in the DOAE head office in Bangkok and senior officials in Yala supported the GPM group scheme on the assumption that Malay villagers were mainly self-sufficient smallholders and would act as economically rational free agents when offered the higher profits that came with GPM group participation. They were understandably perplexed when the vast majority of Malay rubber producers failed to take part.

Significantly, the officer who made the early moves to establish a GPM group in Maju on behalf of the Accelerated Rural Development Office was a Malay. He consulted recognised leaders and major landowners, well aware that their involvement was necessary for the scheme to have any chance of success. In the event, the approach to Cik Rashid proved fruitful, and by the time that DOAE assumed responsibility for the Maju group and

Chalerm was assigned to it, Cik Rashid's support was assured. As I explained in Chapter 5, DOAE officers could not really agree why Maju's group had been successful. Nor could their counterparts in Yaha district interpret the failure of the group in Khala. In both cases, officials lacked a knowledge of Malay political and economic structures necessary to construct a convincing explanation.

The final reason why government efforts founder in the Malay provinces is internal differentiation of the Thai bureaucracy itself. In Chapter 2 I showed that DOAE officers in Yala province had varying perceptions of Malay community structures depending on the nature and degree of their involvement with rural dwellers. In general terms, understanding of Malay social life decreased as one moved up the official hierarchy, so that senior provincial officers were the least able to offer convincing explanations for the outcomes of government development programmes, and had the most stereotyped views of Malays. Those at the lower end of the hierarchy, the district officials and extension workers who regularly visited rural communities, had the most familiarity with Malays, but even so their knowledge was restricted by the barriers of language and the frameworks of the programmes they were sent to implement.

Arun reported problems with the GPM group in Khala from a very early stage in 1986, and it was clear the group's performance was steadily deteriorating in that year. Yet senior officials offered little support, and Arun's awareness of the problems was not matched by a power to allocate personnel or resources in an attempt to resolve them. This powerlessness, and the departmental demands to initiate yet more projects in the district meant that he was overwhelmed by the course of events. Senior staff reacted by laying much of the blame on Arun. In Maju, Chalerm was generally

the bearer of good tidings, and so it was easy for him to attract manpower and material support from superiors as the GPM group prospered.

While knowledge of Malay needs tended to increase towards the lower end of the DOAE hierarchy, power correspondingly decreased. The only way for powerless extension workers to mobilise resources was to bring good news to their seniors. That is, access to power might be obtained by passing false knowledge up the bureaucratic hierarchy. Knowledge and power in DOAE thus operated in conflict with each other. The obsession with status, and the general assumption that knowledge could only move from senior to junior staff, meant that necessary information from village level did not flow freely to senior officers, nor ultimately to policy makers in Bangkok, thus squandering the power that senior officials held.

To summarise my argument, Thai penetration of Malay villages in southern Thailand has failed because (1) Malay leaders have supported participation in economic development programmes only where they are able to minimise the extent of Thai control, but that (2) such a policy choice is not open to many Malays because they lack either the power or knowledge to negotiate with the Thai administration directly. This is compounded by (3) the failure of Thai officials to understand the differentiated nature of Malay village society and their inability to directly deal with the majority of rural Malays in their own language, and further aggravated by (4) the internal differentiation of the Thai bureaucracy itself, where those who have the greatest power to command resources generally have the least knowledge of what Malay villagers need.

It may be thought that eliminating the problems inherent in points (2), (3), and (4) would give rise to greater penetration of Malay society by the Thai administration. However, this would not necessarily be so. Greater

and more direct access between Thai officials and Malay villagers would not necessarily mean that there would be greater co-operation between the two groups (cf. McVey 1984). I would expect that most Malays, given direct access to knowledgeable officials and the possibility of increased access to government resources, would still make decisions as stated in point (1) above. They would only seize economic opportunities presented by the Thai government where Malays could retain control over resources and their use, and where Thai control was kept to a minimum or preferably usurped altogether. This principle guides the actions of rural Malays in all their dealings with the Thai bureaucracy. It arises from the Malay perception that this part of modern Thailand is still a *negeri Melayu*, and must remain so. It is a vehement rejection of the notions of inferiority and alien status implicit in the term *khaek*, which Thais use so regularly to label Malays. The depth of feeling demonstrated by the man in the opening pages of this thesis testifies to the pervasiveness of this principle, and it has been seen to underlie the course of events I have described in both Khala and Maju.

This principle which guides the actions of rural Malays in their dealings with the Thai administration has also meant that separatist movements, with their well-developed structures and ideological frameworks, have been rendered largely irrelevant. There is no need for violent mass resistance when strategies at village level are so effective. The Thai state has spent huge amounts of money and deployed vast resources in attempts to integrate Malays, but the accumulated actions of hundreds of thousands of rural Malays in their day-to-day encounters with Thai administrators, have effectively undermined the best efforts of the state. No separatist group has ever achieved such a success. However, it is also true that separatist groups are unlikely to disappear altogether, for there will

always be some people who see their strategies of resistance as more attractive, and there will always be the possibility that the current strategies of rural dwellers will fail. It may also be true that separatist movements provide a more viable framework of resistance for urban Malays, though no-one has investigated this hypothesis.

6.3 The future of economic development

It is unlikely that the Thai government will abandon economic development programmes as a strategy of social integration in the foreseeable future. To a large degree, such programmes are in the interests of the bureaucracy, irrespective of their economic benefits to rural dwellers, for they can attract substantial funds from foreign governments and agencies and thereby extend the influence of the government departments involved (Riggs 1966). Feeny has also argued that economic changes in Thailand only take place where they serve the interests of the elite (1982, Ch.2), and that development projects are more often guided by perceived threats to national security than by economic considerations (ibid., Ch.8). I would argue that security concerns are paramount in the southern border provinces, because Malay actions threaten not only Thai government control of the countryside, but also Thailand's relations with countries in Southeast Asia and the Middle East (Pitsuwan 1982). In the 1980s incidents where Malay separatists have bombed government buildings, kidnapped officials, burnt schools, or shot Thai settlers have been few, but the separatist groups continue to exist and will continue to be a threat to stability. History has shown that oppressive behaviour by Thai officials only feeds the separatist cause and increases the number of violent incidents. For that

reason, the government has chosen the route of socio-economic development programmes to bring about the integration of Malays. These programmes have had poor results, but the government presently has no other weapon in its armory.

Using development programmes to serve government ends often means a failure to serve the needs of the ostensible recipients. DOAE has no institutional arrangement for assessing the needs of Malay villagers in Yala, let alone incorporating these into the department's projects. This criticism can be levelled against much of the development work that takes place in Thailand (Heim et al. 1986). Nothing in the conduct of GPM groups and RCM sales in Yala has shown that government officers are interested in, or even capable of, determining the needs of Malay villagers. While some hard-working and conscientious officers have a strong commitment to the notion of helping to develop smallholder agriculture, they are too often constrained by their lack of power to change things, or by an insufficient knowledge upon which to act. Many others take a dim view of rural people, and see their job solely in terms of delivering services planned and approved in Bangkok. Exploration of rural needs is beyond such a framework.

It is patently wrong to suggest, as some government officials do, that Malays are not interested in bettering their economic circumstances. The actions of people in Maju and Khala are unambiguous testimony that this is not true, and my experiences with Malays elsewhere in Yala show that they are usually keen to improve the productivity of current activities and to develop new sources of income. If government programmes served these aspirations, then Malay antipathy towards the Thai government would be substantially lessened, and much of the Thai government's wealth would

not be squandered in unproductive schemes. In 1988 the planned expenditure for the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives in Yala, which covered the work of DOAE, was over 190 million baht (สำนักงานเลขานุการคณะกรรมการพัฒนาจังหวัดยะลา 2529, p.29), and Yala is among the smallest of Thailand's seventy-three provinces. The enormous amount of money involved, and the potential for its misuse to deepen Thailand's foreign debt, should give the government cause to reassess the bases on which it plans and executes its economic development programmes.

It is unlikely that rural Malays in southern Thailand will accept, even in the long term, complete integration into the Thai state. The notion of the *negeri Melayu* is far too strong and pervasive for that. And while the Thai state remains associated with an identity that incorporates elements such as exclusive use of the Thai language and Buddhist principles, it will be anathema to Malays. As I have argued in the previous section, a major reason for the failure of government programmes has been a conscious decision by Malays to resist government intervention where their control over social activity and communal life is threatened. Given that fact, the best that can be hoped for in the short and medium terms is the design of government programmes which are based on sound research of villagers' needs, which offer genuine avenues for bettering the economic circumstances of most rural dwellers, and over which the government is willing to relinquish control to Malay communities. The result is likely to be a more amicable relationship between government officers and Malay villagers, reduced political tension in the border areas, a considerable saving of money, and a diminished potential for conflict between Thailand

and its neighbours. The question is whether the Thai government and its bureaucracy has the will and ability to make such changes.

Finally, I should reiterate the point that any future changes to development programmes in Yala or neighbouring provinces must be based on research that takes account of the social life and aspirations of rural Malays, for they constitute the vast majority of the population. Historians and political scientists have given little attention to them, while anthropologists have downplayed the importance of the Thai nation state in shaping the circumstances of village life. These omissions weaken our understanding of social life in this region, and do a grave disservice to the people who live there.

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