

C H A P T E R V I

RELIGION AND THE ECONOMY

CHAPTER VI

Religion and the Economy

An attempt is here made to examine the complexity of economic activities concerning production distribution, exchange and consumption of scarce goods and services, and to analyze (i) how these activities are structured into social roles and collectivities, (ii) by what values they are legitimized and motivated, (iii) by what norms and sanctions they are regulated, (iv) how these economic variables interact with one another and (v) how the economic interests and other interests, especially civic and religious ones, are interrelated in the community and the larger society, in the context of internal and external environment.¹ Further, how and whether cultural values or religious ethos, either facilitate or hinder such secular economic activities? The focus will be, first of all, on the cultural values, affecting the economic activities, then, their organization development, their structures of different kinds and role relations between economic units and their conditioning environments.

1. The Value-orientation and Work-ethics

Economic Ethic of Buddhism : a General View

"Right Livelihood" is one of the requirements of the

Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. It is to be understood and practised in close company with "Right Conduct and Right Speech" with the indispensable help of other five components or steps (Right View etc.). Indeed, the first three (Right Speech, Conduct and Livelihood) refer to the social and moral requirements or acquisitions for the mass Buddhists. They are unmistakably expressed and summed up in the Pancha Sila - Five Precepts, as already cited in Chapter IV, which give a clearer picture of fundamental and obligatory ethic in Buddhism for all the Buddhists with no exception.

As far as the Buddhist secular work-ethics or suggestion on the means of livelihood is concerned the texts on the subjects abound in the Buddhist literature. Only some of them are here addressed as to supplement those already cited earlier. Above all, to quote Buddha himself :

Whoso is virtuous and intelligent,
 Shines like a fire that blazes (on the hill)
 To him amassing wealth, like Roving bee,
 Its honey gattering and hurting nought,
 Riches mount up as ant-heap growing high
 When the good layman wealth has so amassed,
 Able is he to benefit clan.
 In portions four let him divide that wealth,
 So binds he to himself life's friendly things,

One portion let him spend and taste the fruit,
 His business to conduct let him take two,
 And port four let him reserve and hoard,
 So there'll be wherewithal in times of need.²

Somewhere, one of the Four Principles of Value-in-Present
 (Dhithadhammikathapayojana) reads :

Utthanasampada : in this case whatsoever occupation one...
 follows for the means of livelihood, whether it be that of
 agriculture, trade, cattle farming, archery, civil affairs
 or one or other of the crafts, one should be skilful and
 industrious, possess a mind inquiring into the ways and
 means, and able to do, arrange and manage such work and duty.³

If man possesses these four conditions, namely, living in
 a suitable region, association with good fellows, right
 preparation of one's self and meritorious deeds accumulated in
 previous times, he soon finds an opportunity to achieve
 greatness as well as a state of material wealth.⁴

Besides, one should "avoid" the habit of indulging in
 various kinds of intoxicating drinks which create circumstances
 for negligence; the habit of addiction to fairs; the habit of
 gambling; the habit of association with bad companions and
 the habit of laziness and so forth.⁵

By and large economic activities are, according to Buddhist lore, morally motivated and facilitated in almost all occupations with exception of the following specific occupations as appear in the Majjima Nikaya and the Anguttara Nikaya :

To practise deceit, treachery, soothsaying, trichery, usury : this is wrong livelihood;

Five trades should be avoided by a disciple : trading in arms, in living beings, in fresh, in intoxicating drinks and in poison.⁶

In the trade of living beings is included the slave-trade of any form, the abolishment of which is anticipated and inspired by Buddhism. As regards the trade on arms and weapons the Buddhist ethics by all accounts speaks in dispraise of such occupation because they make much more harm than good to human beings in particular and to the world of living beings in general.

The layman who successfully earns wealth enjoys the blessings of ownership of possession and of independence and blamelessness, in that he does not run into debt and bankrupt. Poverty is, according to Buddha himself, a woeful thing for worldly life and becomes a root cause of social evil.⁷ Hardly has Buddhist mundane ethics disapproved or found fault with

such possessions, rather; it wants man to be emancipated from, not enslaved by selfish desire of any form. Never are all the possessions allowed to be master over man, but the reverse is preferred and the necessities are always upheld by the Buddhist ethics which at the same time condemns or protests against gaining wealth, or against use of luxuries in the sense of selfish desires. A monastic life of several devout monks, illustrates this point. The rest of possessions beyond necessities should be socially utilized in the wellbeing of humanity to personal luxuries or "conspicuous consumption" in the words of Veblen.⁸

The keynote of Buddhist economics, according to Schumaker, is simplicity and non-violence.⁹ To use goods, especially those that are nonrenewable materials, such as, coal, oil, wood etc., headlessly or extravagantly is an act of violence. Simplicity and nonviolence are obviously closely related. The optimal pattern of consumption, producing a high degree of human satisfaction by means of a relatively low rate of consumption, allows people to live without great pressure and strain and to fulfil the primary injunction of Buddhist teaching: 'Cease to do evil; try to do good'. While the materialist is mainly interested in goods, the Buddhist is mainly interested in liberation. But Buddhism is "The Middle Way" and therefore, in no way antagonistic to physical well-being. It is not

wealth that stands in the way of liberation but the attachment to wealth; not the enjoyment of pleasurable things but the cravings for them.

The Buddhist point of view takes the function of work to be at least threefold : to give a man a chance to utilize and develop his faculties; to enable him to overcome his egocentredness by joining with other people in a common task; and to bring forth the goods and services needed for a becoming existence. Again the consequences that flow from this view are endless. To organize work in such a manner that it becomes meaningless, boring, stultifying or nerve-racking for the worker would be little short of criminal; it would indicate a greater concern with goods than with people, an evil lack of compassion and a soul-destroying degree of attachment to the most primitive side of this worldly existence. Equally, to strive for leisure as an alternative to work would be considered a complete misunderstanding of one of the basic truths of human existence, namely; that work and leisure are complementary parts of the same living process and cannot be separated without destroying the joy of work and the bliss of leisure. Production from the local resources for local needs is the most rational way of economic life, while dependence on imports from afar and the consequent need to produce for export to unknown and distant peoples is uneconomic and justifiable only in exceptional cases and on a small scale.

But Weber has this to say : Ancient Buddhism offers no this-worldly asceticism which encourages a man to value highly the rational and methodical mastery of the social and in particular the economic environment; and the ideal community of the Buddhist monks who live a homeless (economyless) life is the case in point.¹⁰

In the Thai situation in particular several scholars are of different opinions but accept the hypothesis about religious influences, especially Buddhism on Thai society. Ingersoll,¹¹ among others, writes that Thai Buddhism stands in favour of economic development but Ayal¹² is of the opinion that the extreme Thai individualism derived from Buddhism is detrimental to the economic development; while Kuafman¹³ argues that Buddhism makes the Thais passive and fatalistic. Embree¹⁴ and Hanks¹⁵ hold that the loosely integrated Thai social system based on Buddhist value discourages, the organizational work-patterns and so also does Benedict.¹⁶ Sutton,¹⁷ Mosel,¹⁸ Riggs¹⁹ and Reynolds²⁰ point out that Buddhism conditions Thai administrative polity to be patriarchal as pointed out in Chapter V. Jacobs²¹ recommends that Buddhism with its dif^fused social values of neither absolute nor universal standards does facilitate modernization but neither initiates nor directs an interest in development; while Evers²² says that several scholars on Thai society suffer from the confusion of ideology and social reality in Thailand.

With these considerations in view it may suffice to say that in Thai society as in Sri Lankan society, Buddhism as a great tradition, as also at the folk level is presently in a dilemma in dealing with the modernization process.²³ This is often expressed by several modern Thai liberal activists. For example, the 1975 Religious Exposition at Thammasat University, Bangkok, was explicitly intended to redefine the normative structure of Thai Buddhism and tend to reorganize the institutional structure of the Thai Buddhist Order in particular and of the Thai society in general in the light of the redefinition.

In response to the above stated views one has to agree that Buddhism does strike a compromise between the elite and folk elements with a view to facilitate a comprehensive coverage for individual as well as social activities, in which the religious and the secular are combined in agreeable proportion, at various levels. Thai Buddhism has, through the twin processes of universalization and parachialization (great and little tradition) made an indisputable contribution to the requisite secular life so much so that the non-Buddhist elements of Court and Folk Brahmanism, magico-animism and to some extent occidental civil culture, are well-integrated into a Thai way of Buddhist living. The social ethical imperatives (Sila) as earlier shown, are designed for an individual endowed with a different degrees of capacities and opting

for it at his own discretion. Buddhist cosmology is broad enough to encompass virtually many aspects of non-Buddhist elements of religious beliefs and practices.

As a result, the Thai religio-social life and the bulk of the culture of the masses, from the cradle to the grave, stem from the ritualistic ceremonies and festivals as the First Poughing, the Bun Bangtai etc., almost all of which are concerned with what happens in life here and now, including good health as against illness, prosperity as against poverty, and happiness as against misery. That is, the activities of the sort have something to do with the this-worldly problems, especially those of economic life or welfare of the people. These activities are organized around or on the basis of the conceptions of merit and merit-making, which are considered as the motivating forces of action at the core of Buddhist religious system.

Thus the principal problematic to be talked is, whether or not the injunctions by Buddha himself on "Right Livelihood", are appropriately translated into action and to what extent. More specifically, whether the actual norms and values which are followed by the Thai Buddhists are those based on the Buddhist ethics of its origin; or are they a distorted and corrupted form as a result of rationalizing everything that is done as Buddhist? The moot question then is, "What kinds

of norms and values are followed by them?", These questions have been partially answered by Tambiah,²⁴ Terwiel,²⁵ Kirsch,²⁶ and Reynolds.²⁷

The Value Attitudes towards a Job-taking

The Thais do not conceive of life as merely a round of duties and responsibilities. They accept work as sort of life and try and make it as gay as possible; when it is done, they are free to take their leisure to enjoy. They have no cultural inventions of self-castigation and have many of self-indulgence and merriment. The work to them must be sanugful activities which afford the greatest pleasure, being novel, diverting, comfortable and frevious. Work is not regarded as good in itself; rather, there is a good deal of attention paid to things which give enjoyment. Pleasure is often considered a good thing per se; do only what is absolutely necessary and make it as enjoyable as possible; beyond that, slight work obligations wherever possible.²⁸ Embedded in these attitudes, the Thais generally go in for the comfortable and subsistence occupations. The more comfortable, less committed, and less labourious the occupation is, the more they like it. Table 6.1 highlights the occupational preferences by 419 lay respondents, for themselves and for their siblings or relatives.

It is not implied that the Thais are not hard-working men, nor that their economic or occupational behaviour is .

Table : 6.1 : Distribution of Rural-Urban and Male-Female Responses for Occupations by 419 Respondents (based on empirical study in Thailand) 1975.

	R u r a l			U r b a n			Prefere- nce Order
	N	190		N	229		
		Male (%)	Female (%)		Male (%)	Female (%)	
The Occupation of their own preference :							
Profession	48	20.0	5.26	48	13.12	7.87	2
Government job	80	20.0	22.12	105	29.69	16.16	1
Agriculture	35	12.63	5.78	19	6.11	2.18	4
Trade	22	8.42	3.16	42	12.22	6.11	3
Entrepreneurship	5	1.05	1.57	15	2.18	4.36	5
Total	190	62.10	37.90	229	63.32	36.68	
The Occupation-preference for their siblings or relatives							
Profession	71	22.65	14.74	90	24.46	14.84	1
Government job	68	18.95	16.86	67	17.47	11.79	2
Agriculture	27	11.57	2.63	13	4.80	0.87	4
Trade	18	7.36	2.10	46	13.97	6.11	3
Entrepreneurship	6	1.57	1.57	13	2.62	3.05	5
Total	190	62.10	37.90	229	63.32	36.68	

not in congruence with Buddhist ethics. It is only to emphasize the defects of the loosely structured Thai social system.

The concept of time and cultural orientation of the Thais are interrelated by virtue both of the basic dominance of agriculture in society and of the people's deeply felt and functional connection with Buddhist religion. Life is regulated for the majority of the Thais by seasons consisting of Cool Season (December-March); Hot Season (April-June); and Rainy Season (July-November). During the rainy and cool seasons the Thais are busy doing agricultural works. Planting and harvesting demand intense activity but it is an activity based on the long cycle to be prepared for, during the rest of the year. This rhythm affects even Bangkok-Dhomburi Metropolis and other urban centres - as the pinnacle of an agricultural society and economy - and Westernization has not yet altered it although the cities and towns are per se less responsive to the changing seasons. And both in the urban and rural sectors religious celebration commemorates the swing of the seasons and furnishes immutable time-marks, throughout the year, that serve the people as one of their most potent securities.²⁹ Table 6.2 shows correlation between the religious ceremonies and the economic activities.

Table 6.2 : Main Religious-Ceremonies and the Agricultural Cycle in Thailand.

Name of ceremony	Western calender	Phase of agricultural cycle
Songkran (Traditional New Year)	13-15 April	Dry season Approximate end of dry season and expectation of rains Change in seasons
Visakha Puja (day of birth, enlightenment and death of Buddha)	May	Rain First Ploughing (Rack Na) Rain and Wet season begin, Time for ploughing fields
Khaw Pansa (entering Lent)	July	Growing rice Transplanting completed, Growing period of rice, Season of rain
Bun Khaw Sak or Sart (making merit for spirits of the dead with puffed rice)	September	Rice at critical stage when grains begin to form Height of growth season
Ok Pansa (leaving Lent)	October	Grains have formed and are maturing; end of rain
Bun Kathin (Kathin presentation)	Between full moons of October and November	End of rains
Loy krathong (Festival of Lights)	November	
Makha Puja (All Saints Day)	February	Harvesting
Bun Mahachart or Phraves (merit-making for Phraves)	February to March	Harvest celebrations
Family ceremonies : Birthday ceremonies Marriage ceremony House-warming ceremony Presentation of food to monks Funeral ceremonies etc.	Occasionally held	Life circle ceremonies

Sources : Adapted from S.J.Tambiah, Buddhism and Spirit Cults, op.cit., p.153; Kenneth E. Wells, Thai Buddhism, op. cit.; and King Chulalongkorn, The Royal Ceremonies of Twelve Months, op. cit., (in Thai).

Having viewed the concept of time in this context, it is possible to say that the Thai cultural time-conception is far from the rational conception of socio-economic time as expressed in the occidental culture. A unit of time in relation to work-performance followed by the Thais, has not yet been translated into a unit of economic production and human labour, in relation to a time unit measured by monetary unit.

2. The Occupational Structures

A Thai is a rice-consumer. Throughout a Thai history rice-based agriculture has been the primary source of wealth. The productive unit has by and large been the small peasant farm. Most of its economy, especially in the rural peripheries is still organized in a relatively self-contained traditional units with a large measure of self-sufficiency. The main agricultural producers are controlled neither by landlords nor gentry, but largely composed of independent peasants owning a small piece of tillable land subject to state taxation. The majority types of modes of production and distribution are simple and mainly for domestic consumption to maintain a nuclear family rather than for marketing. In the urban sector there are complexes of commercial and industrial activities, professions and services operated by the modern complex organizations.

To the Thais a man of riches and better-paid status is understood to be a person of well-stored merit and vice versa. Table 6.1 suggests a hierarchy of the occupations preferred by a Thai. A government job is highly valued with its rank as superior to all, and most desirable, followed by professions, trade, agriculture and entrepreneurial enterprises. The manual labour is considered most undesirable. Well-paying occupations and, within any of them, the well-paid status are understood to have more of stored merit, and lower rank or low-paid status is said to have stored less merit. The symbolic expression of the higher status in the Thai language is "Chaonai" (patron or boss), whereas the expression of the lower status is "Luknong" (Client). The Chaonai also means Phu Mee Bun (a meritorious person). However the occupation of any kind is ethically and practically valued on the basis of achievement rather than ascription, as is the case of merit itself.

3. The Development of the Economic Organization

The installation of Siamese economy and simple forms of its organization

From very early times and especially from the Sukhodayan kingdom down to this day Siamese hydraulic economy has been shaped mostly by the valleys of the Chao Phya river and other

river systems and the hillsides. Water was and is the central problem of Siamese hydraulic agriculture which in turn determines the social patterns and political authority in the nation. The irrigation works have been one of the main responsibilities of the administration. Canals and dikes have become symbols of well-organized and eminent administration.

Under Sukhodaya the military and political dominance was supported by rice economy. Land-ownership was officially vested in the absolute monarch. All the land was theoretically the king's property. He by all means held the residual right to confiscate and/or interfere with the utilization of land. Land was not inheritable by kinship or lineage groups. It was distributed or granted by the ruler to his deserving cultivator subjects in prebendary rewards or as recompenses for their services, - especially the military ones. The organizational unit was a peasant family (Krobkrua) or village (Muban).³⁰ The family or a kingroup was the labour unit, producing goods for domestic consumption. Main items raised included the essential items of rice, and livestock such as, buffalos and oxen. Mostly primitive implements were employed such as, the wooden plough, the iron ploughshare and the harrow.³¹

In this connection, two oft-quoted passages from King Ramkamnaeng's Inscription of A. D. 1293 are in some way

suggestive of the type of the economic activities at Sukhodaya :

" In this land (Sukhodaya) there's fish in the water, there's rice in the field. The lord of the country levies no duty on his subjects who all along the road go in company, leading oxen to market, riding horses to be sold. Whoever wishes to trade in elephants, does so; whoever wishes to trade in horses, does so; whoever wishes to trade in silver or gold, does so."³²

"... We were five children born from the same mother : three sons and two daughters. Our eldest brother died when he was still young..... During my father's lifetime I served my father, I served my mother. If I obtained game or fish, I used to bring it to my father; if I had my fruit, sour or sweet, savoury and tasteful, I used to bring to my father. If I hunted elephants and caught any, I brought to my father. If I went to attack a village or town and brought back elephants, boys and girls, silver or gold, I gave them to my father. When my father died, there remained to me only my elder brother. I continued to serve my elder brother as I had served my father. When my elder brother died, I inherited the entire kingdom."³³

On the other hand there were agricultural products beyond

the subsistence level, which may be classified as peasant surpluses. The economic surpluses of Sukhodayan peasantry were demanded for supporting the affairs of the state which in turn provided general peace in the realm to provide security to the farmers' productive activities. In order to protect hydraulic culture, the economic activities were organized in such a manner that the ruler could control peasant surpluses in the form of tributes, dues and labour services. The prime characteristic of that economic structure is that the ruler theoretically owned all the land, which he could grant as economic prebend to his subjects. He did hold a residual right to confiscate and/or interfere with the exploitation of the land at his discretion. What's more, everyone in the realm was the property of the ruler.

There were two sets of tax-collecting officials under Sukhodaya kingdom. The first set consisted of the central bureaus at the capital city and its nearby periphery and were under the direct control by the king and his aides. These were the royal domains. Beyond this domain was the domain indirectly controlled by the king through his tributary princes, personal clients, or aides known as "Chao Muang or Political overlords" who as his prebendaries were positioned at the provincial strategic centres of military and economic significance. Under the political overlords were the districts that were formed as

part of their jurisdiction. They were granted the domain over the specified tracts of land from which they were fully authorized to collect the tribute in the form of rice and other valuables, some of which were transmitted to the king's power centre at the capital and some kept for themselves. Importantly, they were supposed to provide the centre with manpower, especially at the time of war and to encourage agriculture as well. This is, according to Jacobs, the relationship between land-granting by a ruler, and in return military responsibility by grantees, which has suggested to some observers that early Thai society was feudal. Such relationships between the land-grants and the society were helpful to facilitate the king's and/or the centre's control over the rural economy, based on the hydraulic economy.³⁴

Second to these are the economic activities of the non-agricultural sector, such as, trade and manufacture, the development of which was very much limited, although the commercial or transit-duty taxes were not levied. This may be due to two conditional factors. Firstly the status of a merchant was socially recognized as inferior and insecure, and the state exercised absolute control over rice economy. No clearly defined class or category was formed on the basis of commercial-manufactural activities except for those based on manufacture of pottery at Sangkalok as earlier noted. Money economy was scarcely developed. Its creation and development

must have been retarded by the relative sufficiency of the peasant households and their dependence upon exchange in kind by the traditional ascriptive-reciprocal arrangements within a village, between groups of villages or amongst kinship groups. Similarly the government relied heavily upon taxation in kind and on payment of stipends in grains. The capital at Sukhodaya, for example, was fed by grain supplied by the political overlords (Chao Muang) from the provinces.

As regards the coinage used in Siam for commercial purposes, and in which part of the revenue was collected, Le May states that the Thais were the first rulers of Siam to introduce a standardized silver currency, and Siam was the first country of the Far East to adopt such standard. To him, they probably borrowed the idea of currency from Burma, as neither China nor the Khmer Empire, nor the (pre-Malay) Malay peninsula ever had any standard currency as distinct from the use of gold and silver by weight.³⁵ The well-known "bullet" type of coin or "bullet-shaped lumps" of silver, later known as tical and baht respectively, probably originated in some district of northern Siam in the twelfth century or earlier and was adopted and standardized by the Thais of Sukhodaya and Ayudhya in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The weight of the standard tical was about 230-235 grains. There were also lesser bullet coins and for smaller transactions cowrie shells were used, rated at about 6,400 to the tical.

This method was in use up to the reign of Rama IV.³⁶

Just to complete the development in the series, the present currency consists of coins and banknotes. The unit of currency known as "Baht" is divided into one hundred "Stang". The responsibility on the national monetary system is assigned to the Bank of Thailand, which was set up under the Bank of Thailand Act B. E. 2485 (1942). It serves as the central bank of the country and is responsible, finally, to maintain a currency reserve fund as per the Currency Act 2501 (1958), in force.³⁷

In a word, the structure of the economy covering the whole nation was first organized by the Sukhodayan kingdom and was based on the hydraulic cultivation of land. It was pyramidized with the absolute monarch exercising absolute rights over the political overlords, who in turn exercised the domain over the peasants, who actually worked on land. The peasants were at the base of such an organizational pyramid, sustaining it with their surplus production, which was delivered in the form of labour as well as in kind. The production was limited to domestic consumption and the means of production quite primitive. The surpluses were demanded for the state affairs. The waterways were the main means of transportation for both military and civil purposes. The

exchange of goods and services was characterized and mainly done by the intensive mobilization of various economic resources for implementing the goals of the state or the ruler. This was the nature of the hydraulic economy that was organized in favour of the despotic political system of Sukhodaya kingdom and thereafter.

The economic organization of other sovereign states (also Thai) bordering on Sukhodaya, such as Uthong, Chiangmai, Phayao etc. and other principalities, may have been substantially similar to that of Sukhodaya.

The rice-based economic organization of the sort has served Thai society at Sukhodaya and thenceforth, for centuries, and to some extent at the present time also in a modified or readjusted. This trend has kept pace with the development of the polity, and in adjustment to the social requirements of the time, especially in the 15th century and in the critical period of the 19th century when the polity was reorganized, and reaching right upto the present time.

However, it appears that the economy is by and large treated as second to, and by-product of, the polity, because of the fact that the economic wealth can be accumulated if and when a man is well-placed in the bureaucratic polity, which is not always necessarily based on the economic wealth

(landed class), but may be based on his basic acquisition in education, through the traditional religious institutions and/or the national education institutions in modern time. As a matter of course the sons of the poor farmers have undergone a training through the former, whereas the children of the bureaucrats and to some extent, businessmen through the latter. As it is, the former institutions seem to have been losing ground to the latter.

The patrimonial Structure of economy : the prebendal domain

Semantically, the word, "Sakdi" means "dignity" and "Na" refers to the "land" or "field". Together Sakdina implies land on the basis of which the dignity can be marked. The more the quantity of land granted by the ruler, the greater the economic and social dignities of the grantee. In compliance with the sakdina system, land was organized and distributed as the king's grace to his subjects, in line with the patron-client relations.

The quantity of land was normally in conformity with the defined civil and military role-performance or service rendered to the state or the ruler. The sakdina grades in keeping with the Civil, Military and Provincial Laws, could be as high as 100,000 rai of land for a prince who headed one of the major agencies of the government, 10,000 rai for an official who

headed an important assignment, as well as to the governor of the first and the second class provinces; 3,000 rai for their deputies, 5,000 rai for the governor of the third province, and 3,000 or 1,600 rai for the governor of the fourth class provinces. The sakdina of various lower grades was fixed for officials under the governors, and 25 rai for a freeman or commoner, and the lowest for a slave. The sakdina-based land distribution was done so systematically that it could enable one to tell the number of clients attached to a patron and how many from amongst them he was expected to provide for government service. A patron of 400 sakdina grade controlled 16 clients with 25 rai each, while a minister of 10,000 sakdina grade controlled 400 clients. Notably, a client was allowed to choose his patron and the land was not inherited on kinship basis, but was granted or confirmed each time by the king, who could confiscate it at any time. All the grants were supposed to return to the king after the death of the grantee.³⁸

Closely associated with the sakdina land, was the distribution of the labour force. The division of labour was organized in such a way that the peasant surpluses in the form of tributes and labour services were more systematically controlled. As a result, a clearly defined pyramidal gradation of social classes emerged accordingly. The first three categories of aristocracy, bureaucracy and clergy have

already been discussed. However, in this section their roles in connection with labour management and tax-collection deserve an attention. In addition there is the need to discuss the main focus of those engaged in actual economic production of rice and other goods and services. They include peasant commonners, merchant-artisans and slaves.

The foremost economic manager was the king under whom were his subordinate aides with hierarchical ranks of different sakdina grades. They were employed by him at the central bureaus in the capital and the nearby towns under his direct control. At the provincial peripheries beyond the direct royal domains, were the domains assigned to co-chief ministers (Aggramahasenabodi), ministers (senabodi), governors (Chao Maung) and their aides of different degrees of hierarchy. Under these officials were producers, namely, the freemen or commoners, who, as the lowest base of the social pyramid, actually cultivated their land, and those who were engaged in the activities other than rice-production, such as the traders and artisans. The unprivileged lowest social status consisted of the slaves who served their masters who were well-placed in the state bureaucracy with higher sakdina grades.

More explicitly the entire population was organized on a

territorial gradation, namely, the centre, province, district and the village at the base. However the emphasis was on the civil and military functions rather than simply on territory as under the Sukhodaya. This man-power organization consisted of different departments controlled by their warlords or political overlords or both. Their offices were hierarchically attached to the power centre at the capital city so as to serve effectively the goals of the state or the ruler. The human relations were structured in such a manner that the superior patrons were positioned to control the clients of the Sakdina grades of different degrees at different organizational levels from the centre down to the village as the basis. The tributary overlords as economic managers had no personal role in actual production but were sent out to govern the outer provinces. They were to manage land revenues, land tenure, criminal justice, police and military enlistment etc. They were helped out by the specialized officials of different ranks. However differentiation of their roles was not perfect.

The actual rice-producers were the peasant commoners, each owning land units of 25 rai. They could socially move upward as well as downward. By the Thai social upward mobility it depended on their qualifying to be included in the state bureaucracy with the help of the Buddhist-oriented social

values and training. Through this religious channel there are instances of peasant commoners moving socially upward to occupy even the post of co-chief minister, the powerful post second only to the throne. The best example is that of Somdej Chao Phya Srisuriyawongse who had risen as above. On the contrary by downward social mobility peasant commoners sold themselves into slavery to any master who could protect them.

What matters here is the economic role-performance by the peasant masses who owned only 25 rai of land per family. The population of the peasant masses by all account exceeds that of other sectors in society. Their contribution to the economy was substantial as per the works by Wales,³⁹ Thompson⁴⁰ and Ingram.⁴¹

Basically the peasants and their families were each granted by the ruler or king, as much land as they could cultivate, i.e., upto 25 rai, on which they were supposed to subsist. In case of an increasing of family members by way of marriage they could require the additional land from the ruler, which seems to have facilitated a neuclear family pattern pretty well. They were obliged to deliver a portion of their produce to their immediate lord, some of which the lord retained for himself and some he himself was obliged to deliver up to his superior lord or to the prince. The peasants

were also obliged to render their labour service (corvee) to those from whom they directly held their land, and thereby were indirectly linked to the king, as their ultimate lord. Each noble or lord was responsible for providing a certain number of men whenever a levy was required for public works or welfare. In return the freeman peasants received all possible protection from their lords.

In a word the relation between the patron and the freeman was personal, not territorial. Every freeman had to have a patron for whom he was obligated to produce and also to render services. However a freeman could choose his own patron and could move from place to place. In return the patron had the duty of protecting his clients and of lending them money when they needed it. If he failed to do so, they might sell themselves into slavery, in which case, the patron lost their services completely.⁴²

In this connection the Siamese system of the pre-20th century land tenure is worth discussing for a while. In all parts of the country there was abundance of unused land, which merely needed to be cleared and cultivated. One of the most important duties of the minor officials was in connection with the registration and distribution of land. Anyone who wanted to cultivate the land was to get an official permission,

otherwise he was to face punishment as per Article 47 of the Law of Offense against the Government. When a freeman wanted to clear land not exceeding 25 rai for cultivation, the procedure was as follows :

He approached the local official in charge of the district where the land in question was situated. This was known as "Chongna" or literally, "to take possession of a field". The official concerned drew up a document known as a "Bai Yiab Yam" (measurement document) in attestation of this step having been taken, and then this document was valid for a year. During that time the matter had to be brought before the notice of the local representative of the Ministry of Lands who publicly proclaimed it with the object of discovering whether the land had already been allocated to some other owner. If it was not claimed, a title-deed called variously "Tra Teng", "Bai Chong" or "Chanot" according to the nature of the land, was drawn up in which full particulars were set forth; and after payment of suitable fees to the officials concerned, this deed gave the applicant full rights over the land granted to him. Then he could sell, mortgage or devise it but nevertheless his right remained in theory only that of a usufructuary since the king retained the right of expropriation. This the king gave effect to as and when the land was required for public purposes or if it was left uncultivated for three years, cultivation being from earliest times, the

first essential condition for the occupation of the land. If the owner sold, mortgaged or devised his land, the title-deed had to be renewed; or he did not wish to hold it any longer he had to report the fact and renounce his right to its disposal, which act was called "Ven na gun".⁴³

To the last point it so happened in many cases when the peasant owners generally renounced their land allotment when they felt they were oppressed by the immediate patron. In such case the peasant freeman was allowed to choose a new patron, or he sought the shelter of the jungle or sold himself as slave to some powerful prince or very high official, such as, a provincial governor who was strong enough to protect the runaway and at the same time found it profitable to do so rather than be oppressed by an official of a lower degree. The more merciless and oppressor any patron was, the more he lost his clients' services. This led to ineffective rice-production and supply of labour service to the centre and finally brought in former interference by the central authority or the superior patrons. Such a patron was to face the punishment as per the Law of the Offenses against the Government. The Law of Treason, Article 6, of the latter, for example, provides for the punishment of officials from 10,000 down to 800 sakdina grade, who oppress the people with the result that they become discontented, go and associate with robbers and outlaws. In the fourth reign of the

Bangkok dynasty the government was still confronted with the perennial problem of dealing with those who oppressed the people.⁴⁴

Side by side with the land tenure system is the forced labour service (corvee) which was imposed on the masses of the freeman peasants by the state. By the tributary obligation the patron was responsible for providing to his superior patron and ultimately to the king his quota of men when they were called upon for service in connection with their particular department or krom. It was the duty of the krom officials to control the main mass of clients attached to the krom jurisdiction. These officials were the chao krom or chief, the palat-krom his deputy, and the samuhabanji or registrar. It was the duty of these officials to go among the clients and round them up for service when required. The supervision of this work was carried out by a special government registrar's department which, in connection with the Samuhabanji attached to each krom, kept a strict record of the members of each family, particularly with reference to the number of able-bodied men available for service.⁴⁵

As per the Law of Distribution of the People, when young men reached the age of 18, they were obliged by their patrons to enter the category of "Praisom" (recruits) in

which they remained for two years. During this time their patrons were required to instruct them in the type of work which would be required of them, whether civil or military; and, they could also make use of them as servants or as labourers on their own estates during a greater part of the year. When their period of training was over, they became "Prai laung" or king's men whose duty was to do personal service in the royal corvees or in the military units, the patron being allowed to retain for himself their services during only a small part of their time each year. The prai laung remained in that condition until they reached the age of 60 years, a year of retirement. The prai luang had to perform six months' service every year, but this was reduced in the Dhonburi period to four months, and afterwards to three months only, till it was abolished by King Rama V. During their service they were supplied food and other necessities by their family members, and not by the government.⁴⁶

In case of the clients living in the far distant parts, they were allowed to supply produce for the government use, instead of personal service except in time of war. Also the skilled artisans followed this kind of practice. This pattern later became more practical and developed into a system of paid labour called "Kha Rajakan", which was evidently replacing the corvee service (unpaid labour),

during the early period of the Bangkok regime. After the Chakri Reform, it was replaced by a per head tax, as in the Western revenue systems introduced by King Rama V in the latter part of the 19th century. No doubt, this replacement of the corvee service resulted in the creation of modern bureaucracy, both civil and military, by way of transformation in line with the Western model.

Economic activities other than agriculture, and money economy were hardly developed. In this regard there was hardly any further advancement during Ayudhya period vis-a-vis Sukhodaya. Such non-agricultural economic activities were quite limited in scope except for an expansion of trade in primary agricultural products, with European countries initiated in the reign of King Ramadibadi II, in the early 16th century. The trade was monopolized and carried out by the Department of Port and Foreign Affairs. As a result there was not much of institutional growth in Thai society at the time in this direction.

Most of the internal trade of Siam before and during 1850s was probably carried out through barter and was restricted to the villages. The movement of goods between villages and between regions must have been relatively small. On the main rivers and in the Central Plain, trade was probably brisker because of better transportation by water.

As already noted, by 1850 the Chinese seem to have gained almost complete control of the internal trade of Siam. They carried goods into the regions accessible by water transportation and, to a lesser extent, even into the remote interior villages, exchanging them there for money or the products of the area. Among the Siamese themselves women were the traders. They carried their products to the market and bargained with itinerant Chinese traders.⁴⁷

Apart from the above, production of handicrafts and manufactured goods was conducted as a part-time activity or an household industry. Full-time specialization existed chiefly in the households of wealthy nobles where artisans were employed to produce the luxuries desired by their masters. Artisans were retained for such skills as metalwork, lacquer, gilding and inlaying, gold- and silversmithing, and jewelry.⁴⁸

Siamese artisans were originally organized into their own craft-labour bureaus (Krom) under the same bureaucratic, occupational control and supervision, similar to those who were placed in farm-labour kroms. Artisans at first were used primarily to build military fortifications. By the seventeenth century, they were employed in building and maintaining the temples and palatial edifices which had become an important patrimonial service for the ruler. If any artisan demonstrated superior craftsmanship, he was

taken (by force if necessary) to the palace in the capital where he and his descendants were put in perpetual, involuntary, craft servitude. Hence many artisans understandably either exercised their talent in secret or forsook it. This not only discouraged an artisan's occupational creativity and initiative, but also robbed the rural areas potentially of that significant role in creating a revolution as did tinkers in nonpatrimonial feudal societies.⁴⁹

Only recently in the late 19th century or after Bowring Treaty (1855) commercial, industrial and banking systems were encouraged and began to develop in line with the Western capitalist approach. The later development will be further discussed in the following section.

Institution of slaves (Kha or dasa) as already mentioned, existed in the Sukhodaya kingdom but became so highly elaborated in the Ayudhaya kingdom. In King Mongkut's time slavery was widespread and there were a great many forms of it. But in general it appears that slavery was in a far milder form than that known to the Westerners.⁵⁰

There were two well-marked sections of slavery : the redeemable and the nonredeemable. The former were the debt slaves who had sold themselves, or had been sold for a portion

only of their full value, which was fixed according to their age and sex by the Law of Compensation, and who could at any time regain their freedom by repaying to their masters the sum that the latter had given to them. On the other hand, the non-redeemable slaves were those that had been brought outright for their full value and over whom their masters had absolute power except to kill them, and could sell or bequeath them as they could their other goods and chattels. Their fate depended entirely on the good will of their masters. Children whose mothers were redeemable debt slaves were free; but those of mothers who were non-redeemable slaves were also slaves (luk dasa or birth slaves) though they could become free on payment of their value according to the Law of Compensation. They were given the sakdina grade of 5 rai of land. They were exempted from the corvee labour service. Slavery was later abolished by King Rama V as already noted.⁵¹

The Sakdina System : an obstacle to economic modernity

The Sakdina-based distribution of labour forces appears to be a more clearly defined, and functionally more differentiated as to serve more effectively the goals of the state or ruler. As a result, the agrohydraulic patterns of the economic organization based on the patron (Chao or Nai) and client (Kha or Prai) relations were for the first time systematically

instituted and gave rise to total submission and domestication of the masses. Prostration to cite an example, is the outstanding indicator of total submission.

More to this point is the recognition that the sakdina-based reorganization of land served to consolidate the politico-economic power of the tributary overlords. The change from the Sukhodayan territorial-based feudal system to the patron-client personal attachment, was the result of a change in the system of administrative politics rather than an intention to reform the hydraulic economy. It was reorganized in such a way as to facilitate the larger works of irrigation and flood control which accordingly required massive labour forces to work on. To manage such works effectively the forced labour (corvee) of unslaved peasant masses was organized by means of the bureaucratic polity in line with Weberian patrimonialism,⁵² or in favour of "prebendal economic domain" to use Wolf's expression⁵³ as well as in line with, "Hydraulic Civilizations" in Wittfogel's words favouring despotic political system.⁵⁴ This corvee labour system was not only a milder kind of restriction of personal liberty but also an immediate stage in the transition from being a peasant freeman to being a slave.

As a result of this, the economic development in the commercial and industrial fields was retarded and arrested by

the corvee labour system. The six-month unpaid labour service yearly devoted to the state affairs by every peasant freeman was, on the producer's part, so much "wasteful" in terms of productive time and labour; so that no large-scale economic organization could survive, not to talk of any possibility of further development. The corvee did discourage one's occupational creativity and initiative, too.

The revenue system introduced by King Rama V was in no way in favour of land reform but was obviously intended to reorganize the tax-collection system. The abolition of the corvee service and slavery had nothing to do with land reform, nor did it make any contribution to labour organization in terms of economic activities. As people were set free and especially as their children became free, they sought their own land. Fortunately there was enough land for all who would clear and cultivate it.

However it has so far failed to get transformed from the corvee-based agro-hydraulic economic activities, to the commercialized and industrialized market exchange in terms of modern economy. The socialistically oriented plan in favour of land reform proposed by Dr. Pridi Phamonyong in 1947 was challenged by his strong opponents and defeated. They totally blocked any radical change in Thai agrohydraulic economy, the

development of which has not so far reached the take-off stage.

In addition to this the peasant surpluses found no possibility of being invested because nearly all the surpluses went to maintain or feed the unproductive segments of the population concentrated at the urbanized centres particularly the capital city.

Similarly modernization of both civil and military bureaucracy seems to have been a hindrance to democratic political development which in turn hindered the economic development. The Chakri Reform of the polity had no political philosophy, nor functions on the basis of which the peasant masses could be motivated to take an active part in the national politics. Change was due to Western pressure and merely resulted in an extension and elaboration of the Sakdina-based bureaucratic polity instituted long time before by King Trailok. Politically the masses were left out in a vacuum just as they had been previously. For the most part, their political awareness was still arrested by the Ayudhyan perspective of divine kingship (Devaraja) and so it has remained to a considerable extent till the present time.

Still further, the Sakdina-based land tenure was helpful to the nuclear family pattern, too, because a family could

depend on the land granted by the king, which was not possible to inherit on the basis of kinship. The product from 25 rai of land could economically uphold and maintain a small nuclear family but not a large extended joint family. The independent individual nuclear family could be considered a social unit upheld not only by such economic activity but also by the social value based on Buddhist individualism. The present Thai land tenure and family structure has been inherited, and influenced by the Ayudhyan pre-20th century social patterns. However the Sakdina-based land tenure was useful when there was a surplus of land and the population was small; but would hardly work under conditions of scarcity of land and increasing population as at present.

All these may suffice to say that the much-troubled Thai polity, the agriculturally predominated economy, the nuclear family structure and other attendant social setbacks have resulted from the traditional hydraulic sakdina-patterned economy coupled with the political and economic management, based on corvee labour. This certainly was not consequent on Buddhism alone, as stressed by some scholars. Buddhism is a part of the totality of Thai social conditions. But nonexistence of rigidified social classes, promoting social mobilization, slavery-abolition, debasement of superstition and social taboos etc. under Buddhist world view is, by all accounts, an

undeniable fact and deserves enough credit for contributing to social integration rather than the reverse.

4. The Agricultural Structure : the Peasantry

Labour force and agricultural products

Agriculture retains the most important place in the economic system of Thai nation. From the economic point of view, as calculated in a 1966-67 survey, Thailand had 14.55 million people in the labour force. Of this number, 11.62 million people or about 82 per cent of the total labour force was in agriculture and the rest in industries, commerce, services and miscellaneous jobs.⁵⁵

As already noted, the Thais are by and large engaged in agricultural activities and government service. Table 6.3 outlines the economically active labour forces and their products of the country in general.

The social life and economic activities of the Thais, particularly in the rural centres are organized around agriculture. Rice, among other things, is the staple crop which is primarily produced for domestic consumption. Of about 10 million hectares or about one-fifth of Thailand's total cultivable area in 1963, some 70 per cent was in rice and the rest in other crops, such as maize, tapioca, sugar-cane, kenaf

Table 6.3 : Relative Contribution of Different Economic Variations to Gross Production and Economically Active Population in Rural and Non-rural Sectors in Thailand, 1960-1965.

	Gross domestic product 1961-1965		Domestic exports 1961-1965 average		Economically active population 11 years and over (1960)	
	M. baht	% of total	M. baht	% of total	000	% of total
Rice	7,924	11.3	3,830.5	36.1	11,187	81.2
Other crops and livestock	13,236	18.9	5,103.1	48.1		
Forestry	2,014	2.9	340.4	3.2	36	0.3
Hunting and fishing	1,675	2.4	84.9	0.8	111	0.8
Total rural sector	24,849	35.6	9,358.9	88.3	11,772	82.3
Rest of economy	44,999	66.4	1,245.9	11.7	2,438	17.7
Grand total	69,848	100.0	10,604.8	100.0	13,772	100.0

Sources : National Statistical Office : Statistical Year Book, 1965, National Economic Development Board; National Income Statistics of Thailand, 1964; and Ministry of Agriculture; Agricultural Statistics of Thailand, 1965, re quoting T.H.Silcock, ed., The Economic Development of Thai Agriculture (Canberra : Australian National University Press, 1970), p. 15.

etc., and other primary products, such as rubber, timber and so on.⁵⁶ The economically active population can be divided into four main agro-based regions :Central, Northern, Northeastern, and Southern. With the exception of rice production, more or less common to all the four regions, each has some kind of specialization. The central zone is the richest of the regions and one of the world's major rice-producing areas. Added to rice are such products as sugar-cane, maize, cassava, pepper, banana, fruits, vegetables and fish. In the North, in addition to rice the main products are soybeans, maize, tobacco, peanuts, garlic, pepper, cotton, livestock and teak. Here the primitive hilltribes grow opium poppies although the opium is illegal. In the Northeast, the main products other than rice are maize, kenaf, jute, tobacco, sesame, mulberry bushes and vegetables. Livestocks are also raised. And in the South the main products are rubber, tin, fruits, coconuts, fish and livestock.⁵⁷

Land tenure, equipments and irrigation

Problems of land tenure are not acute in Thailand. Tenancy and absentee ownership with the accompanying disincentives to farm production are not widespread. By and large land is individually owned by a family throughout Thailand and for all practical purposes there are no customary restrictions on

land sale. The central government, for example, exercises a few controls, prohibiting the sale of agricultural land to Thai-born foreigners. Table 6.5A indicates the land holdings for use and size. Table 6.5B reveals land holdings by size and tenure.

Practically, almost all the Thai farmers own the land they cultivate either wholly or partially. Their land sizes on the average are larger than elsewhere in the whole of Southeast Asia. However, farms in Thailand also on average are upto 3.5 hectares in size. Average holdings between the Thai regions are the largest in the central plains - 4.3 hectares, and the smallest in the northern valleys - 2.6 hectares.⁵⁸ By geographical zone average holdings for the regions are as follows : Central, 25.9 rai; South, 23.0 rai; Northeast 21.6 rai and North, 8.6 rai. Table 6.4 indicates region-wise and size-wise distribution of land holdings in Thailand in 1963.

Table 6.4 : Percentage Distribution of Land Holdings in Rai by size and by Region, Thailand, 1963.

Size-class	Central Region	South Region	Northeast Region	North Region	Total
5 - 9.9	-	-	1	7	8
10 - 14.9	2	1	1	2	6
15 - 19.9	3	1	4	1	9
20 - 24.9	5	6	8	2	21
25- 29.9	10	6	1	2	19
30 plus	6	-	-	2	8
Total	26	14	15	16	71

Source : T.H.Silcock, ed., Thailand : Social and Economic Studies in Development (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967), p. 78.

Table 6.5A : Land Holdings (in Rai*) by use and size in Thailand, 1963
(Holdings under 2 Rai excluded).

Size-class (in Rai)	Number of holdings (in Rai)	Irrigated land (in Rai)	Fallow land (in Rai)	Land in tree crops (in Rai)	Pasture land (in Rai)	Wood-land (in Rai)	Other land (in Rai)	Total (in Rai)
2 - 5.9	467,876	195,180	23,676	188,546	5,154	19,343	399,715	393,394
6 - 14.9	944,526	467,357	104,101	418,573	23,233	108,106	838,523	894,103
15 - 29.9	884,411	415,616	160,020	413,816	32,160	188,625	782,360	850,983
30 - 44.9	422,710	210,667	96,493	205,027	18,788	116,474	376,451	408,123
45 - 59.9	193,262	97,819	49,687	98,013	10,040	63,955	172,251	185,170
60 - 139.9	163,183	89,219	47,168	88,296	9,787	56,475	146,210	155,097
140 plus	11,173	4,978	3,603	7,017	914	3,778	9,545	9,481
<hr/>								
Total	3,078,141	1,480,836	484,748	1,419,288	100,076	556,756	2,725,055	2,896,351

* Rai = 0.26 Hectare = 0.395 (2/5) Acre.

Source : Thailand, Statistical Yearbook 1970-1971 (Bangkok : National Statistical Office,
Office of the Prime Minister, 1972), p. 181.

Table 6.5B : Land Holdings by size and Tenure in Thailand, 1963.

Type of tenure	Number of holdings (in Rai)	Irrigated land (in Rai)	Fallow land (in Rai)	Land in tree crops (in Rai)	Pasture land (in Rai)	Wood-land (in Rai)	Other land (in Rai)	Total (in Rai)
Owner	2,562,677	1,162,816	420,839	1,246,911	90,119	498,692	2,302,626	2,399,049
Cash renter	49,048	26,481	2,334	14,304	332	1,281	31,910	41,424
Crop renter	68,523	50,876	2,352	7,109	635	2,127	37,170	67,759
Others	406,893	240,663	59,223	150,964	8,990	54,656	353,349	388,119
Total	3,078,141	1,480,836	484,748	1,419,288	100,076	556,756	2,725,055	2,896,351

Source : Thailand, Statistical Yearbook 1970-1971, op. cit., p. 181.

Until the turn of the century, when the land distribution was based on the Sakdina system, a farmer could secure upto 25 rai or about 4 hectares of land by merely clearing and cultivating. Today farmers continue to obtain uncleared land in many parts of the country merely by complying with liberal-and often ignored - Government Regulations. The 1908 Land Act did not specify the exact amount of land, but gave people the right to take as much as they could turn to profit. In practice the amount varied from 20 to 50 rai. The Land Act of 1936 specifies 50 rai as the amount which could be taken. Both laws provided that the cultivator was to receive the title to the land after he had cultivated it for three years. If the land was not cultivated for three years or more, it reverted to the state. These laws and customs are still in force with some modifications. They have prevented the growth of a class of large landowners, as also encouraged the growth of small and independent owner-formers.⁵⁹

This system of land tenure has held down growth of tenancy over most of the country, and has virtually eliminated farm unemployment. Thailand is nearly free of landless peasants. Nevertheless, tenancy does exist particularly in the Central Plain since World War II and several farmers have lost their land. This creeping transformation is a disincentive to growth in farm investment and production.⁶⁰

With regard to the agricultural techniques and equipments Thailand follows two major methods of rice-planting as practiced by other Southeast Asian countries. The first method requires more labour but is also the more productive. The rice is planted in a nursery plot and allowed to grow there while the fields are being ploughed, harrowed and flooded by rains or water admitted through the terraces around each plot. As each field is prepared, the seedlings are transplanted to it by hands. In the second method fields are prepared as before, but the grain seeds are sown directly into the field. This method uses less labour, but the yield per rai is smaller, as also more seed is required. The fate of the crop rests with the water supply. Terraces have to be inspected now and then and granaries must be prepared. Reaping of the ripened grain is done by hands with knives and sickles. The plants are cut and bound into sheaves and threshed either by hands or with the aid of buffaloes.⁶¹

Most farmers work on the land with simple tools and implements such as wooden ploughs with an iron share, wooden harrows, hoes of various sizes and sickles. Water buffaloes or, less frequently, cattle are employed for draft purposes and for threshing rice by trampling. Modern equipments such as tractors, hay and grass mowers are by and large found in service in the Central Plain.⁶² Use of modern equipment is given in Table 6.4B and the types of power used are indicated in Table 6.4A.

Table 6.6A : Land Holdings by Types of Power and by size, Thailand, 1963 (Holdings under 2 Rai excluded).

Type of Power	Size of Holdings							Total %
	2 - 5.9 %	6 -14.9 %	15-29.9 %	30-44.9 %	45-59.9 %	60-139.9 %	140 plus %	
Human power only	33.9	13.3	9.8	8.9	10.0	10.5	20.6	14.5
Animal power	58.6	76.4	74.8	70.4	65.7	58.6	37.0	70.6
Mechanical power	2.2	3.1	3.3	2.9	3.2	3.9	14.6	3.3
Animal and mechanical power	4.3	7.3	12.1	17.8	21.1	27.0	27.8	11.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source : Thailand, Statistical Yearbook 1970-1971, op. cit., p. 183.

Table 6.4B : Land Holdings by Types of Equipment and by Size, Thailand, 1963 (Holdings under 2 Rai excluded).

Type of Equipment	Size of Holdings						Total	
	2 - 5.9 %	6 -14.9 %	15-29.9 %	30-44.9 %	45-59.9 %	60-139.9 %	140 plus %	%
Electric or Gasoline motors	3.7	4.7	7.3	10.5	12.6	16.0	20.3	7.3
Tractors	2.3	3.3	6.1	8.3	10.2	14.9	29.9	5.9
Sprayers	2.6	3.4	4.3	5.9	7.0	8.8	11.3	4.4
Threshers	0.5	1.1	2.5	2.7	3.3	3.4	5.9	1.9
Windmills and water wheels	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.9	1.2	1.5	1.3	0.6
Reporting no specified equipment	90.7	86.7	79.3	71.7	65.7	55.4	31.3	79.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source : Thailand, Statistical Yearbook 1970-1971, op. cit., p. 183.

Associated with agriculture, there are other productivities, such as livestock-raising, fishery, forestry and mining. However, these require a special separate analysis.

Agricultural organizations

Land settlement cooperatives were first introduced by the Government in 1938 to help farmers with too little or no land to settle on cultivated areas set aside for this purpose. Land hire-purchase and tenant cooperatives were organized among tenants to enable them to purchase land on an instalment plan or to rent land at more reasonable rates. Land development cooperatives were formed mainly to use water supplies collectively and to help farmers adopt modern practices, such as fertilizers, and crop rotation. The 1970-71 Development Plan calls for strengthening and extension of all these cooperatives. There were 11,000 credit cooperatives in 1970.⁶³ The Government on its part has established the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, including Irrigation Department, Land Department, Department of Land Development, to promote agricultural development. Technical know-how in agriculture is disseminated by training children of agriculturists at several vocational and agricultural schools in the country and at the concerned faculties of the national universities, namely, Kasetsart (Agriculture) University, Chulalongkorn University (Veterinary Faculty), Khonkaen University

(Agriculture Faculty), and at the Prince Songklanakharin University (Agriculture Faculty). Unfortunately, these institutions continue to operate under traditional objectives, namely, to train students for government service.

About two-thirds of all Thai farmers and nearly all the landless tenants in the Central Plain are burdened with debts. Moneylenders, village shopkeepers, crop buyers, landlords and other commercial groups account for almost half the farm credit provided, and relatives and friends for most of the rest. The major formal institution advancing farm credit the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives. It was established in 1966 by the government as a semi-government enterprise when it replaced the Bank for Cooperatives. It provides supervised credit directly to the farmers, and to the agricultural cooperatives for re-lending to the farmers. At the beginning of 1970 the Bank had a total of 640 million Baht in outstanding loans. Some 200,000 farmers have obtained loans from the Bank and some 155,000 from the local cooperatives.⁶⁴

5. The Structure of Commercial and industrial enterprises

As shown in Table 6.3, the column for "rest of economy" refers to labour force (17.7%), organized on the basis of

commercial and industrial activities. Since the Bowring Treaty (1855) the economic activities in the fields of commerce and industry have been increasingly transferred from the state-monopolized and the government-managed enterprises to the private sectors, in pursuit of laissez-faire principle.

As a result of the treaty, money economy and marketing pattern had been systematically introduced and developed as an essential part of Thai economic life. Apart from the production of main crop (rice) the villagers and householders have turned to the production of cash crops.

With the development of exchange economy, important new economic functions had to be performed, such as, purchasing the farmer's produce from him, transporting it to the seaports, selling it to foreign buyers, and then buying other goods to take back to the farmers. These middleman functions have all along been performed to a large extent, by the non-Thais, especially the Chinese who, of course, had already began to operate as early since the 1850s or even before that.⁶⁴ The Western merchants do participate in these activities especially at the wholesale level but the Chinese are by far the most numerous. The Thai lack interest and skills in such activities because such activities appear to them as the source of risks, economic insecurity and low social status. However, such trends seem to be changing gradually with the passage of time.

The economic division of labour is ethnic because the Thais dominate the primary agricultural and government service occupations while the ethnic Chinese are allowed and even encouraged to fill positions in the commercial, financial, wage labour and eventually industrial occupations, although there have always been exceptions. In effect, the Chinese are middlemen between the foreigner who dominates the export market and the Thai farmer who, supervised and serviced by the Thai bureaucracy, produces the surplus for the market. In this way the ethnic Chinese have been given a free hand to develop the internal economy and during the last century they have come to dominate it.⁶⁵ However in recent time in the commercial and industrial activities the Thai political elites are being courted by the non-Thai economic elites with a view to collaboration in management and/or partnership. Tables 6.7A, 6.7B and 6.7C indicate the number of industrial and business establishments by legal organization, by nationality and by employment, respectively.

Apart from these economic institutions are the financial or banking organizations (see Table 6.8) which include both foreign and domestic banks, all of which are operated under the cooperation and control (either direct or indirect) of the national monetary institution - the Bank of Thailand.

Table 6.7A : Distribution of Business Enterprises by Form of Legal Organization,
Thailand, 1966.

	Municipal areas			Non-municipal areas		Whole kingdom
	Bangkok	Dhomburi	other	Total		
Individual proprietors	35,850	9,299	62,601	107,750	174,994	282,744
Partnership	3,371	277	1,003	4,601	545	5,146
Limited Company	1,320	39	532	1,891	75	1,966
Other	150	10	121	281	350	631
Total	40,691	9,575	64,257	114,523	175,964	290,487

Source : Thailand, Statistical Yearbook 1970-1971, op. cit., p. 269.

Table 6.7B : Distribution of Business Enterprises by Nationality, Thailand, 1966..

	Municipal areas			Non-municipal areas		Whole kingdom
	Bangkok	Dhomburi	others	Total		
Thai	23,942	7,295	46,056	77,293	156,835	234,128
Chinese	15,917	2,167	16,315	34,399	17,174	51,573
Indian	151	11	270	432	127	559
Japanese	49	1	8	58	-	58
American and European	108	-	19	127	-	127
Others and unknown	524	101	1,589	2,214	1,828	4,042
Total	40,691	9,575	64,257	114,523	175,964	290,487

Source : Thailand, Statistical Yearbook 1970-1971, op. cit., p. 270.

Table 6.7C : Distribution of Business Enterprises by Sizes of Employment, Thailand, 1966.

	Municipal areas			Non-municipal areas		Whole kingdom
	Bangkok	Dhomburi	others	Total		
1 person	9,723	2,615	18,807	31,145	36,561	67,706
2 - 4 persons	22,726	5,981	39,162	67,869	124,600	192,469
5 - 9 persons	5,791	753	5,059	11,603	13,424	25,027
10-19 persons	1,617	182	938	2,737	1,316	4,053
20-49 persons	626	38	255	919	19	938
50-99 persons	135	4	28	167	29	196
100 persons and over	73	2	8	83	15	98
Total	40,691	9,575	64,257	114,523	175,964	290,487

Source : Thailand, Statistical yearbook 1970-1971, op. cit., p. 269.

Table 6.8 : Thailand : Number of Commercial Banks and Branches
in Thailand, 1950-1969.

Year	Number of banks			Percentage deposit share of foreign banks	Number of bank branches		
	Domestic	Foreign	Total		Bangkok- Dhomburi	other	Total
1950	15	10	25	27.2	30	32	62
1952	15	11	26	24.4	31	55	86
1953	15	11	26	23.1	32	59	91
1954	15	11	26	19.8	36	64	100
1955	15	11	26	22.3	42	73	115
1956	15	11	26	24.3	53	93	146
1957	16	11	27	25.5	64	122	186
1958	16	11	27	21.7	87	187	274
1959	16	11	27	19.4	102	206	308
1960	16	11	27	19.0	113	239	352
1961	16	11	27	17.5	124	275	399
1962	16	12	28	15.4	134	291	425
1963	16	12	28	14.7	145	302	447
1964	16	13	29	13.8	153	305	458
1965	17	13	30	12.9	161	313	474
1966	16	13	29	11.4	169	325	494
1967	16	13	29	11.0	182	353	535
1968	16	13	29	10.1	197	371	568
1969	16	13	29	9.9	214	390	604

Source : Paul B. Trescott : Thailand's Monetary Experience :
The Economics of Stability
(New York : Praeger Publishers,
1971), p. 49.

All these economic enterprises (commerce, industry and banking) can be further analysed under the two broad headings - state or public and private enterprises. The former are capitalized by the public funds and operated by the governmental corporations attached to different ministries.

As regards the private enterprises, they are for the most part owned and controlled by the non-Thais or the Thai-born foreigners who are clever enough to organize their interests in collaboration with the bureaucratic polity who help protect their interests. These intermediaries siphon off a part of the surplus that normally flows from farmers to the state to be disposed as patrimonial service and prebends. Individual businessmen would be permitted by the influential officials to carry on their activities provided they contribute financially to the private income of their protectors and patrons in the government. This has resulted in the creation of pariah entrepreneurship, in other words, can become a necessary condition for making careers in the government service lucrative, despite the apparent meagerness of official salary. The pariah entrepreneurship helps to perpetuate the attractiveness of the government careers as prestigious, powerful and lucrative. However, such corrupting collaboration obstructs the emergence of institutions which are necessary for the growth of the economy.⁶⁶

The ethic Chinese business community has survived only by continually buying protection from the Thai elite who can offer them greater security from police interrogation, extortion or arrest. From an earlier stage of informal and relatively unstructured symbiosis between Chinese merchants and Siamese officials, there has emerged, since the fifties of nineteenth century, a complex superstructure of new cooperations in which Thai officials and Chinese businessmen collaborate. The process began when the Chinese invited politicians to serve on their boards of directors.⁶⁷

The Thai social system allows and implicitly expects the bureaucratic elite to engage-directly or indirectly- in private business. A Thai civil servant's official position can help such business in many ways, ranging from mere prestige, through general knowledge of government policies, inside knowledge of particular decisions, to diversion of contracts and monopolies.⁶⁸ Customs men and revenue officials are likely to overlook irregularities and grant requests for special privileges to companies in which they - or the superiors - own stock or serve as directors.⁶⁹ In view of such latent as also manifest functions these Thai-Chinese economic collaborations have by now become more or less established.

6. The Structure of Services : The Bureaucrats

The services here refer to the employment created by the governmental or semi-governmental agencies, and private firms. They include civil and military services, communications, legal and medical services, and entertainment. Both the civil and the military services operated by the government, are more attractive to the job-seekers than other because of the established social values attached to such services and thereby remain indices of social status, security and power centre of the society. Table 6.9 broadly illustrates the employment based on the civil service⁷⁰ organized by the government or semi-government agencies. Table 6.10 indicates the salary scales for civil services based on the Civil Service Act of 1959. This was replaced by another CS Act of 1975 and the scales were accordingly upgraded, viz., initial Baht 750 to highest Baht 13,905. These scales were for normal entry. There was also a degree entry, wherein the scales were as follows : B. A. 4 years, Baht 900; B.A. 5 years, Baht 1100; B.A. 6 years, Baht 1400; M.A. Baht 1400; M.A. foreign, Baht 1750-1900; and Ph. D. Baht 2350. The judicial and the military services had their separate grades and hence not listed here.

Table 6.9 : Civilian Employment by Type and Ministry, in Thailand, 1965-1969.

Type and Ministry ⁺	P e r s o n n e l E m p l o y e d				
	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
Office of the Prime Minister	8,479	10,180	11,626	13,106	14,444
Ministry of Interior	74,233	76,843	81,567	90,478	92,523
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	640	529	618	664	663
Ministry of Finance	10,128	10,450	10,914	11,617	12,027
Ministry of Agriculture	6,599	7,864	9,096	11,021	11,951
Ministry of Communications	7,089	7,343	9,652	10,497	11,313
Ministry of Economic Affairs*	746	807	957	1,130	1,170
Ministry of Industry	416	446	521	600	694
Ministry of Education	128,264	235,779	31,988	31,152	36,522
Ministry of Justice	2,119	2,088	2,079	1,604	1,647
Ministry of Public Health	13,650	15,529	17,664	16,614	20,757
Ministry of National Development	8,652	10,124	11,463	12,122	12,307
Sub-total	261,215	278,837	189,102	201,518	216,847
Independent Agencies					
Royal Accounts	692	720	783	206	323
Parliament and others	108	115	114	608	606
Total	800	835	897	904	929
Grand Total	262,615	279,672	189,999	202,422	217,776

Notes : + excludes the Ministry of Defence

* The Ministries of Economic Affairs and National Development were later on reorganized and renamed as shown in Chart 4 (Chapter V).

Thailand,
Source : Statistical Yearbook, 1970-1971 Bangkok : National Statistical Office, the Office of Prime Minister, 1972), no. 29, p. 453.

Table 6.10 : Salary Scales of Civil Service under Civil Service Act 1959
(revised in 1975) Thailand.

Grade	Clerks etc.			Execu- tives			Section heads district officers			Division heads			Special Directors-General Under-Secretaries		
	Class			Class			Class			Class			Class		
	3	2	1	Spe.	2	1	3	2	1	2	1	3	2	1	
Initial Salary (Baht per month)	450	550	650	750	750	1,000	1,200	1,500	2,200	2,650	3,600	4,300	5,700	7,650	
Annual increment (Baht)	25	25	25	50	50	50	100	150	150	150	200	300	500	350	
Highest Salary (Baht per month)	525	625	725	900	900	1,200	1,500	2,050	2,650	3,200	4,300	5,200	7,200	8,000	

Source : Adapted from T.H. Silcock, ed., Thailand : Social and Economic Studies in Development (Canberra : Australian National University Press, 1967), p. 265.

7. The Economics of Merit-making

It is obvious that the Thai Buddhist Order is excluded from the economic activities as discussed above and their existence heavily depends on the donation in cash and in kind offered by the lay community. However merit-making can not be expressed, nor equated in modern economic terms, because the donations are one's own discretion, be they in cash or in kind or labour. They are neither structured, nor are they rationalized. Their outputs are in the form of arts, architecture, literature and education, which are essential to nation-building. These have together served to shape a sense of identification of Thainess leading to social integration and solidarity. These in turn have strengthened political, economic and other secular activities.

The development of arts, architecture and styles are by and large based on the religious activities and expressions. They are found within the confines of monasteries. Those found in the palatial edifices are either directly or indirectly the contributions of those who owned a great deal to monastic life or got influenced by it. The Thai Buddhist temples, the symbolic expressions of arts, architecture and a basic way of Thai life are attractive to the outsiders who visit Thailand and want to see her Buddhist temples. In this connection one informant comments that Thailand earns an income annually exceeding Baht 100 millions on the basis of tourist industry,

though none of such income is directly spent on the temples for their maintenance and improvement.

In addition, the literature and education carried out by the monastic institutions and by persons influenced by them are beyond the calculation in monetary terms. Most, if not all, the pre-nineteenth century literature is the contribution of those who were more or less inspired by the concept of merit. Such a contribution is now on the decline. The educational contribution by the Buddhist Order to the nation's prosperity and learning has been commendable in the past and to some extent at present.

The Buddhist Order in Thailand has become a channel through which social mobility has been made in the past as well as at present. Through this channel the common men especially the farmers are recruited into the state bureaucracy on the basis of their achievement in education provided by the religious institutions. To be included in the bureaucracy it means, above all, political power, and the possession of the power is the source of riches.

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