

FROM "LOOSELY" TO "TIGHTLY" STRUCTURED SOCIAL ORGANIZATION: THE CHANGING ASPECTS OF COOPERATION AND VILLAGE COMMUNITY IN RURAL THAILAND

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I. INTRODUCTION

IN developing countries where levels of agricultural productivity are low, individual farming households form a variety of cooperative activities with neighboring households to ensure each other's sustenance and productivity. Along with these activities, there can also exist systems for compelling cooperative behavior from all of the inhabitants to ensure the overall sustenance and productivity of the people living together within a given territory. In this study I define such a territorial organization as a community.¹

However, the impact of the market economy has subjected these communities and cooperative activities to significant changes. As used here, "impact of the market economy" means essentially that each farming household as an economic unit increases the degree of its dependence on the buying and selling of commodities. The changes that come about because of this impact are commonly understood to mean that people cease their cooperative mutual relationships and take up relations transacted only via the market. Likewise it is understood that the community also gives up its cooperative functions, and the individual household economies within the village are placed into competition with each other in order to cope with the changes that have taken place in the economic environment. This same common understanding has prevailed regarding the impact of the market economy on the village communities in Thailand.

However, if one observes the changes that have taken place recently in Thai village communities and in cooperative activities, one will notice that the coming of the market economy has not simply been a unidirectional movement toward the breakdown of cooperative unity between people. For Thailand in particular, the most significant impact of the market economy has been the disappearance of the hitherto abundant unclaimed forestland and the commercialization of labor. These changes in the economic environment have removed the need for some types of cooperative activities that traditionally sustained the individual household economy. At the same time they have produced conditions necessitating new forms of cooperative activities. These changes have by no means negated the

¹ Weber defined a territorial organization as "an organization which imposes its order in principle on a territory" [27, p. 50], and I have followed this definition.

village community; rather they have bestowed upon it new functions for supporting the economic livelihoods and productivity of its members.

In analyzing the recent changes in the village community and in cooperative activities, one needs to keep in mind the difference between market transactions and cooperative transactions among individual household economies. In the former case, each time there is a transaction, both participants in the transaction try to maximize their profits; in the latter case however, the participants expect long-term benefits and are willing to accept unprofitable transactions in order to maintain social unity and communal relationships. In this situation there have to be mechanisms for maintaining social relationships and unity to ensure that over time the benefits of transactions are passed on to all participants.

Scholars have scrutinized traditional Thai society to see how the people have secured relationships with each other in order to ensure social unity. One answer has been the model proposed by Embree of a "loosely structured society." This model has elicited a great deal of debate among researchers studying Thai village society [3]. According to this "loose" model, there are three particular features which are fundamental in binding Thais to their fellow Thais. The first is that all relationships, even when groups are formed, are basically dyadic relationships (those connecting two individuals) [8, p. 20]. The second is that a good human relationship with a fellow villager is more important than formal social relationships in assuring a desired action from a villager [4, p. 1257]. The scope of such dyadic relationships cannot be clearly delineated; moreover, when good human relationships break down, people will sever the close ties which hitherto had permitted them to negotiate easily with one another when carrying out cooperative activities. From these aspects of dyadic relationships comes the third feature of the model which is that an organized group activity has no precise or continuous membership. In a society depended on dyadic relationships for ensuring social unity, a populated geographical unit cannot function as a community [8, pp. 6-13]. This is so because a good human relationship between two people is not something that is made and sustained by the village as a geographical unit.

However, a counterargument against this "loose" model has been that a Thai village community is not just an accumulation of dyadic relationships; there exists a collectively organized group. People's social and economic ties are fixed and possess sufficient strength to compel prescribed forms of behavior from fellow villagers [15, pp. 159, 169]. Moreover there exist collective activities at the village level, along with the villagers' sense of affinity with their village [13] [15, pp. 203-14].

The argument over the loosely structured model still goes on, but the pros and cons suggest to us three important dichotomies by which we can characterize the way Thais maintain social unity. One is whether this unity is organized through dyadic relationships or whether from the beginning it is organized as a group; the second is whether or not informal, good relationships take precedence over formal social relations; and the third is whether the membership of a social unity is loose and informally defined or whether it is clear and well defined. Using these three dichotomies, we can accurately lay out the differences and changes that take place in the principles that unite the villagers within their cooperative activities and

within the village community. By doing this we can then argue why the particular differences and changes have come about. To do this we will look first at the sort of economic and social environment that prescribed the unity that people formed within the traditional village community and cooperative activities. We will then look at the sorts of changes that have taken place in this environment which have brought about the particular features of the new village community with new forms of cooperative activities. This study will elucidate these points, focusing particularly on the role of the market economy as it has penetrated into the village community.

Using the above framework, Section II of this study will describe the characteristics of traditional cooperative activities in the Thai village. It will be seen that what was common to nearly all of these activities was that one villager had to depend on the willingness of another villager to volunteer in order to gain that individual's cooperation in an activity. This principle was true not only for cooperative activities based on dyadic relationships, but also for those collective activities organized at the village level. Historically this came about in an environment where land was abundant compared to population. Under such an environment, it was easier to secure enough cooperation through keeping good human relations with others rather than by controlling the actions of others through a variety of rules.

Given the volunteeristic character of traditional cooperative activities, what meaning did the village have as a social unit? In Section III of this paper, it will be argued that the traditional village was a territorial organization which relied upon the spiritual beliefs of the people to control the actions of its members; and this belief system provided psychological pressure which elicited people's voluntary cooperation for secular village level communal activities as well. This characteristic of the village as a territorial organization was far stronger in the Northeast and the North than it was in central Thailand.

Section IV discusses the transformation of the traditional cooperative activities dealt with in the previous two sections. With the rise of the market economy in the countryside, the village's productive resources became scarce. For this reason, people could no longer expect to receive from their fellow villagers the sorts of voluntary cooperation which they had traditionally relied upon. In such an environment, cooperative activities based on dyadic relationships changed to those organized collectively. In this new form of cooperative activities, the membership of the participants and beneficiaries is clear and well defined, and each member's actions are guided by regulations approved of collectively.

At the same time the impact of the market economy has also changed the village community itself. Particularly in the Northeast and in northern Thailand the village has come to possess the communal resources required for economic activities, and the village has taken on the responsibility of managing many of the newly organized cooperative activities that use these communal resources. Moreover, as will be argued in Section III, the villages in these two regions traditionally have had the function of eliciting the cooperative behavior of their members. This function has been transferred over to the new village level communal activities which has allowed the management of these new activities to take place smoothly.

In this way the village is being transformed into a territorial organization which has the essential economic function of directing the benefits from these communal activities toward improving the welfare of all the members of the village.

However, the villages in central Thailand generally no longer have the same traditional character that is still common to the villages in the North and Northeast. As a result they have found it difficult to turn the impact of the market economy toward strengthening the cohesion of the village. For this reason village level communal activities of the sort discussed in this study are not common in central Thailand. For southern Thailand I have not gathered a sufficient amount of data, and this region is not discussed in this study.

The arguments and conclusions set forth in this study have been drawn from the data which I gathered through my own research and from the literature which came to my attention. Reference is frequently made to the village of Ban Thon in Khon Kaen province of northeastern Thailand where I resided for one year in 1989 and carried out many of my field surveys.²

II. TRADITIONAL COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES IN THE THAI VILLAGE

This section deals with the traditional cooperative activities which can be commonly observed in the Thai village. Historically in Thailand the ratio of population to the area of exploitable land has been low, and until recently it was comparatively easy for people to find unclaimed forestland and to claim it as their own farmland.³ Under such conditions, it was labor and not land that was the scarcest and most important resource and which had to be obtained from others through cooperative action.

A. *Cooperation in Procuring Labor*

Family farms usually procure the labor they need from both inside and outside the farms. The internal labor force comes for the most part from the members of the families. This is the labor force that takes responsibility for the production that the farms yield. Labor procured from outside is generally used for specific work only, and this labor is not expected to be responsible for the products that are finally produced. Thai farming households have maintained their own traditional cooperative systems for handling these two ways of procuring labor.

1. *Cooperative farming between parents and children*

The purpose for cooperation between the households of parents and children is to make up for a shortage of internal labor within a family farm. This sort of

² Ban Thon village lies about twenty kilometers north of the city of Khon Kaen and is administratively under the Amphoe Muang (capital district), Tambon (subdistrict) Non Thon. It had 318 households as of March 1989. The village agricultural land includes irrigated fields as well as paddy land and fields (mainly for growing cassava) which depend on rainwater. The irrigated fields can grow rice and soybeans even during the dry season.

³ This unclaimed land was by law public domain; however the occupation of land that was cleared and planted was recognized by the law, and it was possible to take ownership of this land.

cooperation comes about as cooperative farming formed by the parents' household and the households of their children. The production of this cooperative farming is then distributed among the different households according to need and consumed. This type of cooperative farming can be commonly observed in the Northeast and northern Thailand (in the Northeast it is called *het nam kan*; in the North it is known as *via tuai kan*), but there are almost no reports of this type of cooperation in central Thailand.⁴

In northeastern Thailand it is common for a married couple to reside initially with the wife's parents. A cooperative farming relationship, in the most cases, comes about as soon as the daughter and her husband have set up their own branch household. This cooperation comes about because at this stage of the family cycle, it is very possible that there will be an insufficient supply of internal labor in either of these households. In the daughter's newly formed household there will initially be only herself and her husband who can supply labor as any children will be below working age, and the household's consumption will be comparatively higher than the amount of labor power it can provide. During this stage, should for some reason either the daughter or her husband find themselves unable to work, this would impede the agricultural productivity of this household. On the other hand the parents' household will have lost the labor previously supplied by the presence of the daughter and her husband when their branch household is established. If however a married daughter and her husband leave the parents' household only shortly before another daughter marries and brings her husband in, the new son-in-law can make up for the lost labor of the first son-in-law. This procedure for setting up branch households is in fact quite consciously followed because it is considered a virtue for a married daughter to continue living with her parents and to help with the farming and caring for her parents and siblings until another sister gets married and brings her husband into the family. Generally when the eldest daughter marries and sets up her branch family, the other children still in the parents' household have likely also grown up or are reaching adulthood and their labor is available for farm work; therefore this stage in the family cycle becomes the period of highest labor supply. For this reason labor in the parents' household is available for cooperative farming should a daughter's branch household suffer a shortage of labor that affects its sustenance and agricultural productivity. Therefore, whether or not such cooperative farming comes about will depend on the willingness of the parents to help their daughter's branch household.

However, if the above-mentioned pattern for branch households and marriages breaks down; if after a daughter and her husband set up a branch household, there is a gap before the next daughter's marriage and another son-in-law is brought in, there is the possibility that a shortage of labor will develop in the parents' household. By cooperating in such a situation, the daughter's branch household can make up

⁴ There are many reports of this type of cooperation in northeastern Thailand: see for example Mizuno [12, pp. 69-82, 95-99]. For northern Thailand, Seki [17] provides detailed reports; see also the descriptions in Anan [1, p. 127] and Turton [24, p. 226]. For central Thailand, Kemp [7, p. 108] and Kaufman [6, p. 29] touch on the subject to some extent; though this type of cooperation does exist there, it seems not common.

for the shortage of labor in the parents' household. However under the plentiful land situation that used to exist, it was possible for branch households themselves to open up new lands and acquire the farmland they needed. In such a situation the parents' household had only a limited ability to keep a daughter's branch household working together on the parents' own land. Consequently the realization of cooperative farming in this situation would have depended to a large degree on the willingness of the daughter to help her parents' household. When such shortages of labor occurred, whether in a parent or branch household, the spirit of mutual assistance between parents and children was the crucial factor for organizing this cooperative farming.

2. *Cooperative labor exchange*

Even if an individual farming household can secure enough labor from within the farm, temporary seasonal shortages in the supply of labor regularly occur in agriculture. In rice farming, transplanting, harvesting, and threshing require sizable amounts of labor for short periods of time. At such times the farm has to procure needed labor from outside. Before the development of the labor market in the villages, farming households procured the outside labor they needed through the cooperative exchange of labor.

Generally, this cooperative labor exchange can be classified into two categories depending on whether the amount of labor exchanged is equivalent or not [16, pp. 330–31]. One category, known by such names as *ao raeng* and *ao mu*, is quite strict in maintaining equality in the amount of labor reciprocated, and was common in northern and central Thailand. The other category is not very concerned with maintaining a balance in labor exchange. One example is *kho reang*, a form of cooperative labor that is used in areas of daily life such as when a villager builds or renovates his house; another is *long khaek* used in the Northeast in farm work. These two categories of labor exchange, even where an equal balance is strictly maintained, are not at all like labor exchanged through market transactions. This is because such labor exchange is limited to people in households with whom a villager maintains good human relationships and becomes possible only upon the willingness of a villager to volunteer his help. Thus for example if household A receives a request for labor from a neighboring household B, A will try to comply with B's request, even if A owes no labor to B, in order to maintain good human relations with its neighbors. However, these households that exchange labor do not form a fixed, clearly defined group. They only belong to a sphere of people who are held together by good human relationships.

B. *Mutual Assistance for Household Rituals*

Along with securing farm labor, the cooperation of other households in carrying out the major rituals in the life cycle of household members is also important for sustaining a household and its economic productivity. Such ceremonies requires sizable outlays of money, and most households cannot cover all of the costs on their own. Therefore other households will donate money, rice, and other daily necessities. Close friends and relatives will also offer their services for carrying

out the ceremonies. These are cooperative activities concerned with money and labor, but here again the extent of a person's contribution depends on his willingness to volunteer his help.

C. *Cooperative Activities Related to Natural Resources*

The daily lives of Thai villagers have long depended to a great extent on the surrounding natural resources. One of the most important of these is water. However the cooperative management of water for agriculture has been largely limited to northern Thailand. Because of the hilly landscape in the North, the paddy fields cannot retain water for long periods of time, and water must be continually drawn up from the rivers and streams and supplied to the fields [25, p. 80]. To obtain water for irrigation, the people of the North have traditionally set up cooperative organizations whose members use the water and cooperate in the building, repairing, and management of the irrigation facilities. Frequently the rights and duties of the members of these organizations have been codified and clearly stipulated, and the punishment of offenders strictly enforced.

Besides irrigation, another important water resource has been the ponds and swamplands near the villages which have been used for fishing and for watering cattle. Villagers have never traditionally excluded other villagers from using these swamplands, nor have they set down regulations for controlling their use. This is because the supply of swamplands as a natural resource has never been so scarce that they have had to be regulated. However villagers have worked collectively in the cleaning of ponds and the repairing of embankments. In Ban Thon village, for example, every year when the flood season came, the village headman called the villagers together, and they would push the accumulated weeds and silt out with the flood waters. But there was no system or any form of punishment for compelling participation in this collective activity, and it very much depended on the villagers volunteering their labor. When traditional village society was still intact, it probably was not too difficult to get villagers to cooperate voluntarily in this work because other than during the peak farming season, there was little work for villagers to do.

Along with water resources, the forests and woodlands that surrounded the villages provided important resources for sustaining the village households and their economic productivity. These woodlands provided natural foodstuffs and other daily necessities, and were a place where cattle could feed. Despite such importance however, it was not usual that villagers enforced regulations or systems of communal management to control the use of these lands.⁵ The people felt no need for such controls because until the rise of the market economy, the forests and their resources existed in abundance.

D. *Cooperative Activities for Protection*

Before the market economy penetrated into the countryside, cooperative activities for protecting the village (at least in regards to the Northeast) were largely limited

⁵ One exception, seen in northern Thailand, is the forests at the headwaters of streams; another is woodlands with special religious meaning, such as the dwelling site of a village's guardian spirit and the village burial forest.

to times when villagers' cattle were stolen or wandered astray [9, pp. 22-23, 192]. When such news was reported to the village headman, he would beat on the village's wooden gong and pass the news on to the villagers. Villagers would then take weapons and as a group go out in pursuit of the animal(s). But as with the cooperative cleaning of the village pond, there was no form of punishment or anything to compel participation in this cooperative activity.

E. Obligatory Voluntarism: The Principle Uniting a Traditional Cooperative Activity

The traditional cooperative activities set out above, when seen from the occasions they are organized, can be separated into two categories. One category is the cooperative activities organized on dyadic relationships. These include cooperative farming between parents and children, cooperative labor exchange, and cooperation at times of household rituals. The cooperative action in these activities comes about fundamentally because of the willingness of people to volunteer their help. This does not mean that people do not expect to be repaid or that there is no social pressure for this voluntarism (here meaning the willingness of people to volunteer their services). Nevertheless, people feel a sense of obligation that they must display an attitude of volunteering (*samak chai*) to help in order not to damage the dyadic relationships they have with fellow villagers. In the Northeast, for example, villagers state quite strongly that it is much more difficult to turn down requests for *long khaek* than requests for wage labor. This is because the cooperative labor exchange in *long khaek* is also the mutual exchange of a willingness to voluntarily help a fellow villager. Thus one could appropriately call this type of voluntarism "obligatory voluntarism."

The membership of most cooperative activities cannot have fixed limits, with the exception of cooperative farming between parents and children. For the most part however, the participants in cooperative activities are not clear or well defined. This is because the sphere of people having good dyadic relationships cannot easily be delineated, and this sphere continually changes. Also the participants in cooperative activities change according to the extent of cooperation needed and on the convenience and availability of the people asked.

The other category of traditional cooperative activities is those that are collectively organized from the start. Some examples are the organization of irrigation in northern Thailand as well as the cooperative cleaning of ponds and the cooperative tracking of stray cattle. However except for organized irrigation in the North, these cooperative activities also depend on people's obligatory voluntarism to secure cooperation. Why these village level activities could also elicit the obligatory voluntarism of the villagers will be examined in the next section.

To summarize, in traditional Thai rural communities, it was the principle of "obligatory voluntarism" that elicited people's cooperative action in most cooperative activities. This reliance on a form of voluntarism was possible because land and water, the material resources indispensable for sustenance and economic productivity, were obtainable through the individual efforts of each household. In other words, the abundance of these material resources very much limited the extent that their possession could be used as a weapon to compel cooperative

action from others. Therefore even were there to be collectively agreed upon regulations and punishments, these would not have had much meaning.

The only exception was the organized irrigation in northern Thailand where well-defined membership and collectively agreed on regulations existed. This cooperative activity came about because, unlike elsewhere, water for irrigation was an important and scarce material resource. This meant that a clearly defined membership of water users could be set, that the voluntary cooperation of the users could not be solely relied on for fair management and allocation of scarce water, and that regulations could carry real authority because offenders could be shut off from the use of water.

III. THE VILLAGE AS A SOCIAL UNIT

This section will discuss the traditional character and functions of the village community in Thailand. As already defined, a "community" is a territorial organization that maintains standards of behavior among all of the inhabitants within the territory in order to ensure their sustenance and economic productivity. Does the Thai village fit this definition of "community"? Even if a collection of houses forms a single recognizable geographical unit, one can question whether or not its members are bound together by the above-defined social relationships of "community." For example, the cooperative activities organized on dyadic relationships which were discussed in the previous section are not directly connected with the village as a social unity. This is because the village as a unity is not connected with the forming and maintaining of the good human relations in dyadic relationships. It is the same with traditional collectively organized cooperative activities. In northern Thailand the memberships of organizations involved in irrigation are not determined within the village framework. Likewise for such village level activities as pond cleaning and the tracking of stray cattle, there is no system within the village framework for compelling a villager's participation.

However, traditionally within the Thai village, the people have never seen their own existence and economic productivity as separated from the supernatural forces that are part of their sphere of religious beliefs. By analyzing the villager's traditional sphere of beliefs, it becomes possible to comprehend the village as a social unit in terms that fulfill the definition of "community."

A. *Animism and the Territory Occupied by the Village*

When Thailand was largely covered by unclaimed forestland, people who needed land could move out with their relatives and friends and find new land to settle on. They cut down the trees and opened up a plot of land large enough for their houses and for growing enough food to eat. Usually they clustered their houses together in the new village not only because they had to protect themselves from wild animals, but they also had to cooperate in protecting themselves from the evil spirits that they believed lived in the surrounding forests. They would do this by first setting up facilities for protecting the dwelling area of the village from evil spirits. Examples of such facilities were the village shrine (which enshrined the guardian spirit called *phii puu taa* in the Northeast and *phii sua ban* in the North)

and the village foundation pillar known by such names as *lak ban* and *chai ban*. Another such example in the Northeast was the placing of pillars or stones (known as *lak kan ban*, meaning "village protecting pillars") at the perimeter of the dwelling area of the village. These clearly marked out the area of the village that had to be protected from the evil spirits outside.

The reason these facilities were set up for the village as a unit was likely because it was believed that efforts by individual villagers or by each household were insufficient to protect against the evil spirits. Marx regarded the "community" as a prerequisite for taking possession of land, the most basic resource for people's sustenance and productivity during a stage of history when individual economic productivity is low [11, p. 10]. In Thailand however, where unclaimed land existed in abundance, there was no need for cooperation to take possession of land for production. Instead people had to cooperate in the demarcation of the land that had to be protected against the evil spirits; and back when villages existed like small islands in the middle of the forest, the need for supernatural powers to protect the village as a geographical unit was likely felt all the more strongly. Conversely, when the houses in a village are not clustered together and instead run together with the houses in the neighboring village, then there will likely no longer be the feeling that the village as a unit must guard against the evil spirits. This could be one reason why guardian shrines are not common in the villages of central Thailand.⁶

Once the territory protected by the village guardian spirit is fused with the villagers' collective consciousness, the residents of that territory also come to recognize standards of behavior that have to be maintained so that no one in the village will act in a way that could anger the guardian spirit; for should it cease protecting the village, all the villagers would suffer.

In the village of Ban Thon for example, if any villager breaks the laws of the guardian spirit (such as the taboo against slaughtering cattle within the residential areas of the village or bringing grass for thatching roofs into the village prior to a designated day), it is believed that the guardian spirit will allow the evil spirits to enter from outside, and the whole village can be afflicted by drought and sickness. When any transgression takes place, the villagers collectively punish the offender. An incident happened while I was living in the village during 1989. A villager cut down a tree on the small hill (*don puu taa*) where the guardian spirit dwelled. The villagers were afraid that this would incur the anger of the spirit, so a meeting of the village elders and committee members was called, and the offending villager was fined. In years when drought and disease are prevalent, the villagers as a community perform a ritual known as *siang khong* to discover the cause for their misfortune. If it is discovered that it is due to the intrusion of evil spirits into the village, they undertake rituals to drive these spirits from the village.

⁶ Besides this geographical reason, the differences in the beliefs about village guardian spirits are also affected by the cultural differences existing between the ethnic Siamese Thais living for the most part in central Thailand and the ethnic Lao Thais living in the North and Northeast.

Because the entire village as a unit is under the divine protection of the guardian spirit, all of the villagers living together within that same territory come to perceive that they all have a common fate. One villager's irreverent act is not just the problem of that one individual; it is the village's communal problem. For this reason the villagers have to clearly delineate the people who belong to their membership and who can expect the rights and perform the duties associated with their guardian spirit. Therefore when a new resident comes in through birth, marriage, or migration, a medium (*cham*), a villager with powers to communicate with the guardian spirit, informs the spirit of the new resident's name and asks that its divine protection be extended to the newcomer. Once this divine protection has been extended, it is believed that this protection continues even outside of the village.

B. *The Power of Buddhism in Protecting the Village*

The existence of a Buddhist temple in the village enhances the village's protection against evil spirits. As Tambiah has pointed out, in the villagers' system of beliefs, the reciprocal relationship with the Lord Buddha is not limited solely to one between the Buddha and the individual villager, it is also perceived as between the Buddha and the whole village [21, p. 54]. Thus the villagers not only believe that their village is protected as a single unit under its guardian spirit, but that the religious power of Buddhism also protects this unit.

In Ban Thon at the time of the New Year's celebrations in 1989, there was an incident when one of the village youths publicly criticized the abbot of the temple. Several days later the youth apologized to the abbot. However the villagers did not view the youth's irreverent behavior as just an individual matter but as a communal one affecting the whole village and endangering the village's divine protection under the Lord Buddha. To counter this ill fortune they held a ceremony during which the youth begged for the Buddha's forgiveness.

It is also believed that the power of Buddhism coupled to the villagers' animistic beliefs enhances the protective power over the village.⁷ An example is the ritual known as *thambun ban* which takes place before the *lak ban*, the foundation pillar possessing spiritual powers protecting the village. Buddhist monks take part in this ritual, chanting and pouring holy water on the pillar. At the end of the ceremony, the villagers bring in bowls made of banana leaves and containing offerings well liked by the evil spirits. As the monks chant, they sprinkle holy water on the offerings, then the villagers throw the bowls outside of the residential precincts of the village. The villagers believe the evil spirits will be well satisfied with the offerings and will not try to come into the village. This ritual points to the villagers' belief that the Buddhist monks add another element of supernatural power to the offerings that are thrown outside of the village. Another indication of the connection between the *lak ban* and Buddhism is that there are some villages which enshrine a statue of Buddha inside their foundation pillar.

⁷ Tambiah sees the *bunbangfai* (the rocket-shooting festival) as symbolically showing the transfer of Buddhism's religious power via the guardian spirit to the protection of the village as a whole [21, chap. 16].

The same sort of connection can be seen with the *lak kan ban*, the protective pillars at the perimeter of the village residential area. Buddhist monks preside at the installation of these pillars, chanting and performing other rituals such as affixing to the pillars metal plaques engraved with magic spells. This example again points to the villagers' belief that Buddhism strengthens the protective power of these pillars.

C. *The Village As a Basis for Cooperation*

The above features of village religious beliefs can be seen all over northern and northeastern Thailand. It is within this sphere of the villagers' beliefs that the villages in these two regions can be recognized as territorial organizations, and this gives the people of these villages a feeling of attachment and obligation to their own village. They see themselves as being protected because they are a member of the village, and this perception of the village as divinely protected by the gods instills the village with an authority over its members.

The basis of this authority lies in the villagers' religious beliefs, and it is essentially applicable to phenomena connected with these beliefs. It is not directly concerned with secular affairs. But because secular phenomena cannot be understood as separated from the villagers' sphere of beliefs, this authority can be applied to secular phenomena as well. There are numerous reports, for example, of uncooperative villagers being looked upon as incarnations of evil spirits (called *phii pob* in the Northeast, *phii ka* in the North), and they could suffer the collective torment and persecution of the other villagers [9, pp. 233-34] [20, pp. 115-18] [21, p. 333] [24, pp. 455-56]. Suthep reported that in the Northeast village where he was researching, the village leaders would "borrow" the voice of the village's guardian spirit and use it to elicit the cooperation of the villagers in secular activities [20, p. 114]. In Ban Thon on one occasion after a theft of money had taken place, the village held a *siang khong*, the ritual mentioned above for locating evil spirits in the village. Through this communal ritual the thief was discovered. This was a collective action where the supernatural power of *siang khong* that the villagers believed in was used to punish a villager who had disturbed the peace.

There is nothing systematic in these practices about what secular actions are tied to what religious phenomena and will lead to what punishments. But at the very least these popular beliefs have acted as a psychological pressure that controls the villager's selfish actions. Along with this psychological pressure there has also been the villager's feeling of attachment to his own village which brings out a spirit of wanting to work for the village. In this way the village has been a social unit that elicits a willingness in the people to contribute voluntarily to the unit.

As already noted however, most of the villages in central Thailand do not have a guardian spirit. In such villages there is no longer the religio-psychological sense of a group of people who clearly delineate themselves as a community having a common fate. As in other parts of the country, the villages in central Thailand also have their village temples, and the people can turn to the protection offered

by Buddhism; but the sense of being a geographical unit protected by a divine power is weak compared with that existing in the villages of the North and Northeast. Moreover, the houses in central Thai villages are not usually laid out in well-defined clusters, and the houses in one village frequently run together with those in adjacent villages. For this reason it is not at all unusual for the boundaries between villages to be vague. Under such circumstances there is little else that individual villagers can turn to other than the protective powers of Buddhism, and likely it is believed that this is enough. Thus villagers will pay visits to the temple closest to their homes even if it is in the neighboring village [6, p. 18] [18, p. 17]. For these reason the villages in central Thailand have come to differ markedly from those in the North and the Northeast, and many for a long time have not been clearly defined territorial organizations even within the villagers' sphere of traditional beliefs.

IV. THE TRANSFORMATION OF COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES AND THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY

As the market economy developed in the countryside, villagers were compelled to earn a monetary income, and they started to open up and cultivate more forestland than they needed for sustaining themselves. Enterprises began acquiring more land in the pursuit of commercial ventures. Unclaimed forestland began to disappear reducing the villagers' chances to acquire new farmland. This situation began to develop in the lower part of the Central Plains at the end of the nineteenth century and did not start to occur in the Northeast until the 1960s, the last region of the country to feel the impact of the market economy. A labor market arose within the villages, and people were able to find opportunities for employment not only in the towns but even in their own villages. This new economic environment brought about new forms of cooperation held together by principles that were different from those that underlay traditional cooperation.

A. *Changes in Dyadically Organized Cooperative Activities*

1. *Cooperative farming between parents and children*

Looking first at cooperative farming between the households of parents and children to overcome a shortage of internal labor within a family farm, the principle uniting these households changed under the influence of the new economic environment. In 1989, I surveyed all of the cooperative farming in Ban Thon (thirty-five cases) to examine the reasons for this cooperation. The most often cited reason (fourteen cases) was because of a shortage of labor in the parents' household. In most of these cases there had not been a successive supply of labor from sons-in-law following daughters' marriages thus making it easy for a shortage of labor to occur. This indicates that after daughters have married, they prefer to set up their own branch households without waiting until one of their sisters has married and brought another son-in-law into the parents' household. Moreover when there is an opportunity to work outside of the village, many young people find employment outside of the farming sector, and parents can no longer count on even the

labor of their own children. As a consequence parents feel compelled to rely on cooperative farming and do not allot land to a married daughter even after she has set up a branch household. The daughter's household likewise has to accept this cooperative farming, because under the conditions prevailing today it is difficult to obtain land other than through inheritance.

Besides the above cases of a labor shortage in the parents' household, there were three cases of cooperative farming because of a shortage of labor in a daughter's branch household. But in all three of these cases, this shortage had come about because the husband had taken up a job outside of the farming sector.⁸

Another problem that has come to worry many of the parent households is how to distribute land to their children now that it has become scarce. In four of the cooperative farming families, confrontations had arisen among the family members over the problem of land inheritance. As a result land could not be distributed to the children, and their branch households had to continue to carry on cooperative farming with the parents. With landownership itself now yielding substantial value, such problems over succession are becoming increasingly more numerous. But even without such problems, there are a growing number of parent households who do not have enough land to distribute to their children. One household owned only five rai (0.8 hectare) of land, and finding no good way to divide it up among the three daughters, they carried on with their cooperative farming. In another example, two families bought up additional land to be distributed to the children in the future, and the households of the children cooperated in repaying the loans.

All of these examples indicate that the shortage of labor and land brought on by the impact of the market economy were the principal causes for bringing about cooperative farming between parents and children. The parents' ownership of land came to be the force that drew the children's households into a cooperative relationship. To be sure, the desire among family relations to mutually assist each other has not disappeared,⁹ but in the present new economic environment, new principles have come into existence that support and hold together the traditional cooperative farming.

2. *New forms of cooperative labor exchange*

As the market economy expanded into the countryside bringing the opportunity and the need for farming household members to be employed, there was a reduction in the number of people volunteering to offer their labor, and the scale and

⁸ In a 1985 study of Ban Don Daeng village in Khon Kaen province which Mizuno had surveyed in 1964, it was reported that among the families engaging in cooperative farming, half did so because of a shortage of labor in either the parents' or children's households [10, pp. 325-32]. Most of this shortage had come about because the labor force within the households had flowed out to the urban centers or because married children did not live with the parents. This suggests that the situation in Ban Thon is not an exception.

⁹ Five cases of cooperative family farming were organized to provide a source of income because one of the participating households did not have sufficient land and/or harvests. In six of the total thirty-five cases, the reasons for engaging in cooperative farming were not clear.

frequency of such cooperative labor exchange decreased. In its place hired labor became more frequent. But the added expenditures for hiring labor put pressure on the farming household economy, and in response villagers organized new forms of cooperative labor exchange.

Taking Ban Thon as an example, around 1985, ten villagers formed a labor exchange group to save on the cost of hiring labor for transplanting rice. Each member of the group had paddy fields that differed in size, and the amount of labor exchanged was unequal, nevertheless they would cooperate together until the fields of all of the members had been transplanted. Then in 1987, six neighbors who got along very well together also formed a labor exchange group for transplanting rice; they likewise did so to save on the cost of hiring labor. According to their unwritten agreement, each household was to send two adult workers to a member's paddy to transplant rice, and like the first group, there was no strict equality in the amount of labor exchanged. By 1990 another three such groups had been formed for carrying on rice and soybean farming.

This new system for labor exchange can also be seen in other villages. One example is Ban Bua village in Sakon Nakhon province where in 1989 twenty villagers organized a labor exchange group. They collectively agreed about the days that they would work together and about other matters such as preparing the lunches for those days [22, pp. 54–55]. Another example is Ban Khiri Wong, a fruit farming village in the southern province of Nakhon Si Thammarat. There a labor exchange group was organized to handle the variety of jobs in the fruit orchards [14, pp. 46–47]. This group has quite a long history, more than ten years (as of 1989), and maintains an equitable exchange of labor among its members.

The new system of labor exchange illustrated above differs in several ways from the traditional system. One difference is that agreement on the exchange of labor is reached collectively; it is not a dyadic negotiation. This gives the new system of cooperation a clear, well-defined membership unlike traditional cooperation. Another difference is that the provision of labor no longer depends only on the willingness of people to voluntarily cooperate; under the new system it is also set according to rules agreed upon by the group. The expansion of employment opportunities in the village under the influence of the market economy and the weakening of traditional cooperative activities inevitably brings the need for rules to control people's self-interest. Seen in this light, it is not at all surprising to find in the village of Ban Khiri Wong, where market-oriented agriculture developed earlier and has advanced further than in the Northeast, a cooperative group that carefully measures and balances the amount of labor exchanged among its members.

3. *The formation of mutual financing groups*

Mutual financing groups are another new cooperative activity that has appeared in the village with the rise of the market economy. One of the most often seen is the funeral cooperative (*klum chapanakij sop*). When a member of one of these cooperatives holds a funeral in his household, the other members are expected to contribute a specified amount of money. The memberships of these cooperatives

are clear and well defined, and their rights and responsibilities are collectively decided. This is quite different from the traditional mutual assistance for such occasions which depends on the voluntary contributions of others. The formation of this new cooperative system was not only in response to the rising costs of funerals but also to the impact of the market economy in the countryside which has weakened the bonds between fellow villagers and thus lowered expectations of receiving sufficient voluntary assistance from others for such occasions. As such, these cooperatives are a comparatively recent development, becoming popular first in the North and spreading to other parts of the country only during the past thirty years. They began to appear in Ban Thon village in 1975.

Another new movement is the organizing of savings cooperatives. These have appeared in many villages since the mid-1970s, set up not only by villagers themselves but also promoted by the government and non-government organizations (NGOs). In these savings cooperatives, members are required to deposit a specific amount of money every month. The accumulated money can then be lent to members at interest rates lower than those from private moneylenders. Some cooperatives also engage in other activities to expand profits such as using their accumulated capital to purchase fertilizer distributed by the government and then reselling it with some additional margin. These profits are then returned to the members as dividends or used in other ways for their welfare such as subsidizing their medical expenses. The interest rates for loans, the repayment periods, the ways of distributing the profits, all such matters are carried out according to collectively agreed on regulations, and offenders are punished.

B. *New Cooperative Activities at the Village Level*

The development of the market economy in the countryside gives the village new functions in supporting the livelihoods and economic productivity of its members. These changes in the village's functions arise from the need to control the village's communal resources. These communal resources include firstly the natural resources that are incorporated into the village territory in response to the penetration of the market economy, and secondly the resources that are brought in by outside groups to solve the village's economic problems caused by the market economy.

1. *Cooperative management of natural resources*

The impact of the market economy greatly changed the state of the natural resources surrounding the villages. The amount of land people laid claim to rapidly expanded, and the unclaimed public domain forestland was reduced to a few remaining remnants. The land of these last remaining areas is generally poor and productivity low, but with the great scarcity of land today and the desire of people to own or occupy their own land as they once could do, it is easy to understand why they would want even some of this poor land. If someone wanting this public land is a person wielding power, and the other villagers' sense of unity is weak, that person can take over this land for his own private use. This happened in a village near Ban Thon. There the village headman had a tractor come in and

he opened up a section of the public domain swampland making it his own field. This headman was well known as a gangster (*nak leng*), and no one in the village felt brave enough to voice opposition to his action.

However when no one with exceptional power exists, and there are only the villagers with largely the same status, then approval for the use of public domain land can only come through collective agreement. In this way the "public" land around the village comes to be perceived as the village's "communal" land. When Ban Thon village was still covered by broad expanses of forests, people could claim this public domain forestland without incurring any criticism from other villagers. As a result of this process however, only a small piece of public land remained in the village and this came to be regarded as a communal land. It was used first for the village school (1952); then it was rented out to a member of the village Wives' Association for growing mulberry trees (1988). The money from this rent was put into the village's general fund.

In many villages a strong perception has developed that the swamplands are now the village's communal land. An example of this arose in Ban Thon in 1983 when a landless family began growing rice in one of the village swamplands known as Nong Khe. This swamp had become filled with accumulated mud and had turned into a neglected wasteland no longer good for fishing or any other use; so when this family began to open and farm the land, no one initially paid any attention. But after the land had been turned into a paddy field, some of the villagers began demanding that rent be paid to the village for use of the land. A village meeting was called and this demand was approved. What can be seen in this episode is that one neighbor's private gain from the use of public land stimulated other villagers' feelings of self-interest, and this feeling in turn strengthened the village's perception of public land being communal land.

Such confrontations in villagers' self-interest mutually restrain people from taking public land for private use; on the other hand there can be situations where leaving land open to public use as in the past can lead to the loss of its productivity. The largest swamp in the village of Ban Thon, called Nong Khi Ped, was in the same neglected state as Nong Khe swamp, no longer usable as a public facility for fishing, watering cattle, or other uses. The swamp had fallen into such a state because it had been twenty years since the villagers had last cleaned and repaired it. In villages like Ban Thon, where the market economy had penetrated, the village headmen could no longer rely on the voluntary participation of the villagers for organized cooperative activities. In 1988 the Ban Thon village headman had called the villagers together to clean out the swamp, but too few were willing to participate and the project fell through. Thereupon the village leadership made the villagers the following proposal. They would call for volunteers from the villagers and allow them exclusive use of the swamp for five years on condition that they keep it clean and repaired. This proposal was approved at a village meeting, and immediately thirty villagers came forward and formed a group to take up the proposal. In a surprisingly short time they got the swamp cleaned up; then they pooled their capital, purchased fish fry, and began a fish raising project. They took turns keeping watch over the swamp at night, and after the

fish had grown large enough, they sold fishing tickets allowing people to enter the swamp to fish. Part of the profits from this project were donated to the village temple, and the remainder was shared out amongst the group members. In this example of a new form of cooperative activity, the villagers were prohibited from fishing freely in the swamp for five years, but in return a clean and well-maintained swamp came back into existence. Like Ban Thon, many other villages have undertaken similar projects; most often these involve renting out village land. These group undertakings provide examples of the desire to pursue private gain being joined with the effective use of village communal land. At the same time there are also villages that compel all of their households to help manage the village pond and provide labor for fish raising; then the profits of the project are shared out to all of the households [19, pp. 71–72]. Such communal uses for public land have come about only during the last ten years or so.

2. *The management of communal facilities and funds*

In addition to the natural resources within the village, for about the past fifteen years, facilities and funds requiring the communal management of the village have also become available from sources outside of the village.¹⁰ By far the most common of the new facilities has been the rice bank and the village cooperative store (VCS); on the funding side, the most common has been the revolving fund used for acquiring water buffalo and sanitation facilities such as toilets and large earthen water pots (*aung yai*).

Rice banks are organizations for storing up the villagers' paddy which can be lent out to villagers who do not have enough rice to eat. In villages where the rice bank was begun as a village undertaking, the communal granary is built on village communal land, and all or part of the funds and materials needed for constructing the granary have been provided by outside groups. Responsibility for providing the bank's initial supply of paddy can be left to the members of the rice bank cooperative; it can be donated by outside groups or by the villagers themselves; or it can be purchased using the profits from other village undertakings. Borrowers repay the paddy at the next harvest time along with a fixed amount of interest. This interest is set at a lower rate than the high rates charged by private lenders; therefore the rice bank can help sustain those households who run short of rice, and it can help support their economic productivity. At the same time the repayment of paddy with interest means that the volume of paddy in the rice bank will gradually increase over the years. If after lending to villagers there is still a sufficient amount of paddy remaining in the rice bank, this can be sold and the profits distributed as dividends to the people who supplied the paddy; or it can be used in other village activities such as donating it to the VCS or to indigent families.

The village cooperative store is a small shop run cooperatively by the villagers

¹⁰ The rice bank project was possibly the first village development strategy in Thailand where resources requiring communal management were brought into the village from outside. The rice bank was started by a village teacher in 1973, and the government and NGOs began promoting it from the latter half of the 1970s [2, p. 205] [26, p. 1].

to supply their daily necessities at low prices. At the initial stage of the project, the village leadership gets villagers to invest in the VCS, and this money is used to purchase merchandise for the shop. There can be a variety of buildings and locations used for the VCS. In some villages it is simply located in an individual villager's house; in other villages the VCS, like the rice bank project, uses the communal resources of the village, and assistance from outside sources. Profits from the project can be returned to the investors as dividends; they can be returned to the village residents in the form of rebates based on the amount of patronage they give the VCS; or as with the rice bank, they can be put toward other village activities or put into the village's general fund.

The use of a revolving fund to help villagers acquire water buffalo for draft animals is known as the buffalo bank project. Financial assistance to the village is used to purchase female buffalo which are provided to villagers to be used, cared for, and bred. Normally over the next three years these buffalo have two calves each. After the three years the villagers return the mothers and one of the calves to the village, and these animals in turn are lent out to other villagers. Through this process the buffalo bank works to reduce the number of villagers without draft animals. When using revolving funds for making sanitation facilities such as toilets and *aung yai* earthen water pots, villagers who lack these facilities borrow from the revolving fund; then after finishing the facilities, they return the borrowed amount back to the fund. In this manner the fund works as a communal financial source for the village. There are now many villages that take the money gained from these communal facilities and funds and lend it to villagers at low interest rates for whatever purpose the villagers wish to use them.

3. *The new roles of the village*

The various new activities discussed above have given the village new roles as a territorial organization. Such new roles have been brought about because the village has become the owner and occupant of the resources supplied for communal activities. The communal land owned by the village is used as the site for the rice bank and for the VCS, or is used for productive activities, as in the case of farming or fish raising in the village swamp. The village also becomes the recipient of the funds and materials that come in from outside sources. Combined to the village's communal resources are such private resources as the paddy supplied to the rice bank and the initial capital investment for the VCS.

Who has ownership over the resources affects the characteristics of the management of communal activities. The first characteristic concerns the way that benefits arising from these activities are distributed. By the nature of the market economy, the providers of the resources have the right to determine this distribution. There can be three possible recipients. The first is the village itself as the provider of communal resources. The village normally distributes the profits it receives from communal activities in the following two ways. One is to put them toward other activities carried on by the village. An already mentioned example is the use of profits from the VCS to purchase paddy for the rice bank. Some villages apply the profits from their communal activities to their welfare programs

such as providing low-interest financing to the villagers. The village can use the profits in this manner because it is the common owner of the resources used in the village's various communal activities. The second way the village can use these profits is to transfer them to the village's general fund or ordinary budget. Traditionally it was not common for Thai villages to have anything like a fund or budget for secular village activities. But with the rapid growth in expenditures for secular activities that has come about in recent years, such budgets and funds have become a more common feature of village administration.¹¹ These monies are applied toward purchasing the variety of things needed by the village as a whole and for maintaining the village's infrastructure.

The second recipients of benefits are the users of the services arising from the activities. For example, the lower interest rate that the rice bank sets for lending paddy compared to that of the informal village financial market, or the cheaper prices for goods sold at the VCS, these benefits can be regarded as distributing part of the profits gained from these activities to the user in advance. The rebate to the people who use the VCS is an explicit form of this sort of benefit distribution. Villagers who have not provided any of their own resources to these communal activities can still share in the distribution of the benefits because they are members of the village organization that supplies the communal resources.

The third recipients are the people who have supplied their own private resources to the activities and can be regarded as "shareholders." Here it is important for the village to have a system of distributing a set dividend to its shareholders to act as an incentive to get as many villagers as possible to provide their private resources to communal activities.

In these ways the village becomes an organization functioning for the betterment of all the villagers by bringing together the private and communal resources within the village and applying them to its communal activities. Were the village not to intervene as the provider of the communal resources, there would be no system within the village for distributing the benefits from the above-discussed economic activities to any villagers other than the shareholders.¹²

The second characteristic of management is the institutionalization of the management process to bring about a fair distribution of benefits. In other words the dyadic human relationships of kinship and friendship should not distort the management process for distributing benefits. If the village is to achieve a formal group consensus, the same rights and duties must be applicable to everyone. This means that collectively agreed on rules have to take priority over dyadic relationships. This kind of institutionalization of the management process can come about because people have become more sensitive to their own private interests which

¹¹ In Ban Thon village in 1988, it was decided that a specific amount of money would be taken from that donated to the temple during its annual events and put into the village budget to be used for secular activities. Prior to that time almost all of the money donated to the temple had been used for temple-related affairs, and there was no village budget for secular activities.

¹² See [19] which verifies the connection between the ownership of resources in these new communal activities and the distribution of benefits.

makes it more difficult to allow only a certain number of villagers to unfairly benefit from the use of communal resources. Where people have invested their own private resources into the activities, these investors will be even stronger in their demands for the institutionalization of management. Otherwise the resources they have invested could disappear, and the expected returns on their investment left unrealized.

This institutionalization of the management of village resources requires regulations providing for the punishments of offenders, but these regulations are not backed by national law or authority, nor can the actions or behavior of the participants be directed through regulations and contracts in every detail. Therefore the success of these communal activities in achieving their objectives still depends largely on the voluntarism of the villagers to cooperate together. At this point the still continuing traditional functions of the village become applicable. As stated in the previous section, the village holds an informal authority over the people living within it, and through that authority the village can elicit from the villagers their voluntary services. This authority can likewise be used to further these new village level communal activities by securing the participation of the villagers and by controlling their dishonest actions.

The third characteristic of management determined by the ownership over resources can be seen in who takes on the task of staffing this management. By virtue of their investment, the villagers who provided their private resources or their representatives are among those who participate directly in the managerial decision-making. At the same time the village, as the provider of the communal resources, also appoints its representatives (usually the village committee members) to the management staff. These village appointees provide some institutionalized guarantee via the village's regular administrative machinery that the opinions of the non-shareholding villagers will also be reflected in the management. If for example there is an opportunity at the village meeting to discuss the rice bank's lending interest rate, village committee members involved in the bank's management can hear the views of borrowers who are not shareholders, and it is possible that this can favorably affect the interest rate for borrowers.

The participants and beneficiaries of the economic activities having the above ownership and management characteristic are limited to the villagers who live in the village where the activities take place. This is especially true in northern and northeastern Thailand. A village's rice bank normally will not lend to a person from another village even when he is prepared to pay the interest. A village's VCS will let people from outside the village buy goods at the store, but the rebate benefits to the users are limited to village residents. The reason for this is because people from outside the village are neither owners in the village's communal resources nor are they members within the sphere of the village's authority. Thus even in its secular activities the village has become a territorial organization that clearly delineates its members from those who are outside.

In the villages of central Thailand however, the village's traditional sense of cohesion has long been weak. The residential areas of the villages often run together, and people living in a number of different administrative villages will

frequently use the same temple, indicating that the unit of religio-psychological solidarity and the territorial unit possessing the administrative system for binding the former to secular activities no longer coincide. At the same time there are few natural resources that belong to only one village providing little or no basis for the communal ownership of such resources. When resources for communal activities come from outside into the administrative village where the psychological feeling of solidarity among the residents is weak, no relationships of trust and confidence are formed among the villagers for the management and application of these resources, and communal activities frequently end in failure. Under such conditions in central Thailand it is difficult to have village level communal activities for coping with the impact of the market economy.¹³

V. CONCLUSION

The impact of the market economy has been changing the system of cooperation in Thai village society. Under this impact the principles uniting villagers in their cooperative activities are changing in three ways. Firstly, people have found it more difficult to elicit other people's voluntary cooperation; therefore means other than simply "obligatory voluntarism" have become necessary for compelling cooperativistic actions from others. These new means have come to be such things as the collectively decided rules of new cooperative activities or the land that a child is expecting to inherit. Secondly, many of the traditional cooperative activities organized on dyadic relationships are being replaced by cooperative activities organized collectively. This is because it is no longer possible to secure enough cooperation relying only on dyadic negotiations. For this reason villagers have formed collectively organized cooperative activities as a new means for securing continuous and sufficient cooperation amongst themselves. Thus for example when other people's labor is needed in farm work, instead of relying on the traditional dyadic system of requesting help from others individually, villagers have begun relying on a system of labor exchange that is collectively organized from the start. Thirdly, for the collective agreement in these new cooperative activities to be effective in regulating participants, the force of this agreement and the membership of the organized activity must be clearly delineated and must remain intact for the specified period of time that the cooperative activity takes place. In a funeral cooperative, for example, who is to receive help for expenses or who is to provide the assistance is specified, and the members of the cooperative do not change depending on whose family or kinship group is having a funeral. This is very different from the traditional system which relies on the voluntary donations of relatives and acquaintances. The same can be said for the new cooperative

¹³ However in most of the cases in the central region where communal activities at the village level have been successful, the territory of the religio-psychological unit and the territory of the self-governing social unit largely coincide (such as Ban Huai Hin village in Chachoensao province [23, pp. 52-63]), or the temple is the religio-psychological center of the village, and its abbot takes a leadership role in the communal activities (such as Yokkrabat Temple in Samut Songkhram province [5]).

activities, such as the rice bank, that have been set up over the past ten to fifteen years, the membership possessing the rights and obligations connected with these activities is determined at the time such activities are organized.

Among these new cooperative activities can be seen many that are organized and managed by the village as a unit. The village has acquired this role as a result of the market economy's impact on village society which has transformed the village into the possessor of the communal resources concerned with economic activity which in turn has necessitated that these resources be managed collectively. For these collective activities to be successful, it is important to elicit the individual villager's willingness to volunteer his services to these activities, and the villages of the Northeast and northern Thailand still retain this traditional function. They do so because the villagers in these two regions still perceive themselves as belonging to the village community, a territorial organization that has been protected by its guardian spirit from the harm and misfortunes of the evil spirits.

Conversely, in the villages of central Thailand which have long been unclearly defined territorial organizations even in spiritual belief, it has become difficult to elicit the villagers' feelings of confidence and willingness to contribute. Even where village residents might feel a sense of solidarity centering on the temple, if this religio-psychological unit does not coincide with the self-governing administrative unit, there frequently is no system for mobilizing that solidarity toward secular activities of the administrative unit. Also because of the geographical characteristics of the villages in this region, it is difficult to have natural resources that belong only to one village. For these reasons, the villages in central Thailand offer only limited opportunities for organizing cooperative activities at the village level. As a result, the impact of the market economy on this part of the country has worked solely toward breaking down people's cooperative relationships, and villagers have to carry on individually in trying to sustain themselves and secure their economic productivity.

In this paper I have mainly limited myself to explaining the changes in the village community and its cooperative activities that have been brought about by changes in the objective conditions surrounding the village. For these new cooperative activities to be organized and for the village community to break loose from its dyadic traditions and assume its new collective role, the abilities and responsibilities of the village residents themselves are also important; for ultimately the operation and outcome of these cooperative activities must depend on the moral willingness of the individual villagers to respect collectively made agreements. However, all too frequently when these cooperative activities are introduced, this morality is insufficiently formed within the average villager. Therefore it is particularly important that leaders exist who are strict practitioners of such morality and who at the same time possess the authority and courage to strongly demand that same practice from the other villagers. In most of the villages where these cooperative activities have been successful, the abbots of the village temple have played an important role because they possess these qualities. Within the communal activities that come forth, however, the village leadership as well as the average villagers will develop their potential for managing and operating the

village's communal resources.¹⁴ This development will be another crucial impact brought into Thai rural society by the market economy.

¹⁴ An example of the formation of this new collective morality can be seen in a village in Roi Et province. Thorough debate among the residents and their complete understanding has become fundamental when organizing new cooperative activities, and offenses against the village's collective decisions are punished. There has been a clear impact of the market economy on this village, but this has worked to strengthen the cohesion of the village as a community [19].

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