



CHURCH AND TEMPLE: SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTHEAST THAILAND

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Prologue

In his letter written from Siam, South China, on 13 November 1552, shortly before his death, the Apostle of the East, the Jesuit Francis Xavier, said, "If I cannot get to Canton directly this year, I shall go to Siam."¹ Like China, Siam was seen as a land of mystery, unspoiled, heathen and therefore ripe for Christian conversion. Between 1511, the date of the first visit of the Portuguese to Siam, and 1662, it has been reckoned that approximately two thousand foreign Christians, mostly Portuguese, were residing in the Siamese capital of Ayutthaya.² To minister to these and in the hope of converting Siamese to Catholicism, there were also four Jesuits, two Dominicans, two Franciscans, and three secular priests.³

On August 22, 1662, the first missionaries of the newly established *Missions Etrangères de Paris* (The Paris Foreign Mission Society) arrived in Ayutthaya.⁴ These were Bishop Pierre Lambert de la Motte and two French priests who had planned originally to go to China and Cochin China (South Vietnam) but because of current persecutions of Christian missionaries had decided to remain in Siam.⁵ Seven years later, in 1669, the new mission was made into an Apostolic Vicariate.⁶ The *Missions Etrangères de Paris* (M.E.P.) arrived during the reign of one of the great kings of what may be called "Old Siam"—that

is to say before the establishment of the Chakri dynasty.⁷ King Narai the Great was for those days a monarch with an enlightened foreign policy, if tolerance and friendliness towards European embassies, traders and missionaries may be called a "policy."⁸ Yet he was well aware of the potential menace of the V.O.C. (The Dutch East India Company), which had also been allowed to enter the kingdom and to set up a trading post. The British East India Company was also represented by a factory at Mergui on the "kite tail" of Siam.⁹

Possibly as an antidote to these brusque and voracious traders and possibly because the French missionaries posed little economic threat, King Narai, through his Chief Minister, the Greek-born adventurer, Constantine Phaulkon,¹⁰ sent an embassy in 1684 to the court of Louis XIV of France accompanied by a French priest. This embassy was entrusted with the duty of inviting France to send an ambassador in return to Siam with the hope that a treaty of friendship would be concluded between the two countries.¹¹ The next year, 1685, saw de Chaumont arriving in Ayutthaya, bringing with him in his suite six Jesuits, en route for China.¹²

During this period, Catholic communities began work in the countryside around the capital and as far away as Lopburi and Bangkok, in which latter city the church of the Immaculate

Conception was built in the suburb of Samsen, in 1674.¹³ In such a strongly Buddhist country King Narai had little fears of wholesale conversions to Christianity, and indeed there were only about six hundred Thai Catholics. At the same time there were Catholics of other nationalities, Portuguese, Annamites (from the region of the Imperial capital, Hué, in Vietnam), and Japanese, although there are no records as to the exact numbers of these converts.¹⁴

But in 1688 a palace revolution occurred on the death of King Narai and the former indulgence given to the French was swept away.¹⁵ Almost all the Christian communities were suppressed. Perhaps the only encouraging mark was that refugee Catholics from Annam who had fled to Siam to escape persecution were allowed to settle in Chanthaburi in 1701.¹⁶

With the beginning of the present Chakri dynasty in 1782 the climate for Catholic—and later for Protestant—missions became more favourable.¹⁷ It is recorded that in 1785 there were 413 Catholics of mixed Siamese-Portuguese blood in Thonburi, and 379 Catholics of mixed Cambodian-Portuguese origins in Bangkok together with 580 Catholic Annamites.¹⁸ It is obvious from the above figures that conversions came slowly and that they appear to have come not from the indigenous Siamese but rather from the Eurasian quarter of the population.¹⁹ Thus the M.E.P. con-

tinued to grow slowly. What has been called the "evangelisation" of the Northeast of Siam began in 1881 under the auspices of the M.E.P.²⁰ This zone became in the twentieth century the Catholic dioceses of Ubon Ratchathani, Thare and Udon Thani.²¹

Yet the greatest work of consolidation was probably undertaken by the famous Bishop Pallegoix between the years 1841 and 1861. He compiled a two volume Thai-Latin-French-English dictionary and, perhaps more importantly, struck up a friendship with a young Siamese prince-monk who began to take lessons in Latin from the bishop.²² This prince-monk was later to become the great King Mongkut, Rama IV, from whom and from his successors the Catholic Church was to receive friendship and tolerance.

It is significant that when the Bishop died in 1861, Rama IV ordered a royal palanquin to be used for his funeral, ordered all the flags in the capital, Bangkok, to be flown at half mast, and poured holy water over the coffin which was being taken for burial by river. Not content with this signal favour, the king lighted candles and joss sticks, said prayers for his erstwhile friend and gave a substantial sum of money to be distributed to the mourners.²³

Under the king who has been called the founder of modern Thailand, Chulalongkorn, Rama V,²⁴ the first modern Catholic school was begun in Bangkok by the M.E.P. in 1885 and subsequently passed to the care of the Brothers of St. Gabriel, a Teaching Order, when they arrived from France in 1901.²⁵

As in other missionary areas throughout the world and particularly in Southeast Asia, the Christian churches have seen as one of their first priorities the founding of schools and the care of the poor: two very necessary adjuncts to the preaching of the Christian gospel and without which the evangelical message might well be vitiated.²⁶

Therefore the thrust of this article will be the socio-economic developments undertaken by the Catholic

Church in the Northeast of Thailand by indigenous clergy (as well as members of the M.E.P.), with the financial aid of overseas donors, bearing in mind that throughout the whole of Thailand the numbers of Catholics are probably no more than 230,000 (0.4%) from a nationwide population of something over 57 million.²⁷ As in Thailand, so in the nearby Republic of Indonesia with its overwhelming population of 169 million, most of whom would call themselves Muslims of some kind, the Catholic church and the various Protestant Churches see themselves now as neither "conversion machines" nor their clergy as "sacrament coolies."²⁸ Rather the churches see their vocation in terms of ministering to the "whole" person—body, soul and spirit—through education, the lifting up of economic sights and rural values so as to provide a climate in which the things of the spirit and the values of Christianity may be discussed.²⁹

Socio-economic development: Ubon Ratchathani (1)

Many of the difficulties associated with rural development in Thailand are similar to those experienced in Indonesia, in particular the eastern islands of the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur.³⁰ *Adat*, traditional laws and customs of a clan or tribe or village community, govern how people view the world, using this perception to strengthen group solidarity so as to be in harmony with the forces of nature as well as those unseen spiritual forces which need so often to be placated.³¹ The practitioners and the keepers of *adat* hold an honoured place within the community: a place of honour and a place of power. It is these *adat* chiefs who often influence the village or local community into accepting or rejecting new agricultural programmes, more advanced house-building projects or indeed any programme whereby the economic sights of the people may be lifted in order to give them a better chance to live happier and more fruitful lives. Where some village keepers of traditional law see these new ways as a

threat to their own importance they will either denigrate them or dissuade their people from co-operating.³² Where they have their peoples' best interests at heart, then they use their not inconsiderable influence in a positive way.

In the diocese of Ubon, in the northeast of the country, verging on the border of Laos, the Diocesan Social Action Centre was established in 1973.³³ Before that date, any funds for socio-economic village developments came from individual donors, rich Thais or perhaps friends of the individual parish priest.³⁴ There was always a feeling that such help, necessarily imposed "from above," was paternalistic. Under the new Social Action Committee, village people have a role to play in any discussions concerning projects which, after all, will have a bearing on the way they live.³⁵

There is a priest, designated *Disac*,³⁶ in each of the ten Catholic dioceses in Thailand, who is the co-ordinator of rural development projects. In Ubon the emphasis seems to be on asking village people the question, Why are you poor?—and getting them to find the answers. In the beginning, when the Church as a whole began to plan its development strategy, many of the rising middle class amongst the Thai Catholics and those who were rich saw, or thought they saw, *Disac* and his committee as a Communist front. When this development agency began to talk about social injustice these comfortable Thai Catholics saw a Marxist interpretation.³⁷ It has taken a considerable while for such suspicions to be set at rest.

Perhaps they believed that because they are such a tiny minority and Ubon only two hundred kilometres from the Laos border, where Vietnamese influence is strong, any policies which might bring the spotlight of notoriety on them, as well as possible awkward questions from the authorities, were to be denigrated. Or perhaps underneath their Catholicism, the somewhat fatalistic Buddhist philosophy that each person is responsible for his own life in this regeneration, coloured their objections.³⁸

Whatever the reason, the fears of the Catholic lay elite seem to have been put to rest. And they appear to support the action of *Disac* in establishing rice and buffalo banks³⁹ and in building access roads where necessary from small hamlets to the larger centres in order to open up new markets and to improve local communications.

Perhaps fifteen years ago development in the Thai Church was not properly understood, even though the Indonesian Church particularly in the province of N.T.T. had organised its socio-economic development strategy efficiently and successfully under the Flores-Timor Plan for over twenty years.⁴⁰ In Ubon in these early days there were the usual mistakes when well-meaning Church "innovators" told the village people what they ought to do in a given situation rather than asking them what they believed they saw as their first priority in upgrading economic life in their community.

Not surprisingly this "haughty" approach created tensions within Catholic and Buddhist villages (as it had created similar tensions in the villages in Flores in the early sixties)⁴² together with in-fighting and recriminations instead of the desired end: co-operation. All this meant that the Social Action Board of the Catholic Church had to review their methods, coming to the conclusion that development did not necessarily mean consumerism nor material development—rather, the development of the whole person.

The Bishops Institute for Social Action (BISA), which draws upon Catholic bishops from Pakistan in the west to Japan in the east, has put the emphasis on religio-cultural values. From simply being a concern for socio-economic development, emphasis is now placed on the religious and cultural values of people—that is to say, on those values which are important to them as members of a community, village, district, province and even nation. Interwoven in this is a determination to educate people to their cultural/religious responsibilities. In a strongly Buddhist country like Thailand evangelical values must be dominant, with the Church

promoting a moral economy, moral political values at the base level, so that the foundation of society, and a society ready for socio-economic development, must rest firmly on religio-cultural values.⁴³

As a concrete example of what might otherwise be considered specious rhetoric, when a rice bank was formed, the people and the church had to approach this development together. Teams were sent to villages to investigate projects, not to criticise but to evaluate, to help and to give judgements when asked for.⁴⁴

Ubon Ratchathani (2)

The diocese of Ubon covers six provinces in Thailand: Ubon, Yasothon, Sisaket, Surin, Roi Et and Mahasarakham. These provinces are all in the northeast and always seem to be drought-affected. The great drought of 1930 affected most of the above provinces and is still talked about as one of the great disasters of modern time by the rural inhabitants of the areas.⁴⁵ Between 1976 and 1977 these provinces experienced another severe drought during which the Overseas Aid Agency of the German Bishops' Conference, *Misereor*,⁴⁶ granted relief funds from a special anti-drought fund. These funds were distributed by *Disac* in the form of rice, fertiliser and medical supplies.

Donor organisations

Disac receives money from *Misereor*, and in turn makes loans available to villages, Catholic or Buddhist. People are asked the obvious questions: what they need, how long the loan is to be for, and how many years will be needed for the loan to be repaid. And indeed, in what month of each year they will send the repayments of the loan. When these agreements are kept then *Disac* believes that there is evident a cultural-religious development of responsibility.⁴⁷ If, however, there are floods, rust in the growing rice, drought or some other natural disaster, or even an economic disaster because of faulty

planning, then these loans are written off.⁴⁸

The provincial and district governments are not always helpful. As in many other countries (for example, Indonesia), by the time money from the province or the central government has seeped down to *tambon*, district and *ban* (village) level, so much has often been siphoned off that there is little left for *ban* projects.⁴⁹ The local Buddhist temple hierarchies usually are not interested in economic development. Since Buddhism urges a detachment from worldliness,⁵⁰ any involvement in socio-economic development means that it must retract one of its basic tenets, a move which understandably the temple is not willing to do. On the other hand, when it promotes the building of walls around the temple complex and even the building of the temple itself, this is seen in an entirely different light.⁵¹ Thus practical economies and practical details of socio-economic development must be left to that group which sincerely desires to assist people to live happier and more fulfilling lives. And here in Northeast Thailand, this group is the tiny group of Catholics.

Whilst individual Buddhist monks occasionally mobilise their people to improve their material status, when another organisation steps in to assist, the local *sanggha* or temple never blocks these moves.⁵² It would appear then that the Catholic Church in the northeast of Thailand at least, under the cloak of socio-economic development, takes much more of the Gandhian approach than does the Catholic Church in Indonesia.⁵³ The Thai church encourages village women to begin weaving their own garments, using good Thai cotton, on traditional hand looms. Cotton already dyed is bought commercially through *Disac* and given to the weavers, who are in turn guaranteed by *Disac* fifty baht per day (about A\$2.50 or US\$2)—a sum they could never earn under ordinary circumstances.⁵⁴ It is true that the finished product—sarongs, shirts, blouses—of 100% cotton are much dearer than those items bought in the market and made from artificial fibres. but it is said that the advantage of a cotton garment is that it lasts longer and is

cooler to wear because it soaks up the perspiration.

The underlying conviction here is that in any form of what is called Human Development, culture must play a large role. As *Disac* sees it, modern technology has destroyed many of the people's traditional values, their habits of moderate consumption and their village style of self-help. Before the advent of textile factories, women in the *ban* knew how to weave and during the time between planting rice and harvesting it, they made clothes for their families. But with modern technology, home-made clothes, ropes, ploughshares, and paddy husking tools have all but disappeared from rural communities.⁵⁵ The only remaining thing in rural life which intensifies rural life is the struggle for money.

So the argument goes, and whilst much of it is true, perhaps it is too late, or almost too late, to promote hand-crafted products when even the Thai peasant economy is now a cash economy in most areas. And with a cash economy, consumerism begins to trot, then canter and, as in the West, finally to gallop.⁵⁶ Bright new colours in sarongs, skirts, blouses are eye-catching; and if the garments do not last as long as handmade ones, with cash to buy new ones, the question might be legitimately asked: why go to all the trouble to make one's own?

Perhaps the real answers are that with the hand weaving of products the old skills instead of being lost may be taught to the new generation of village girls, thus giving them a greater sense of continuity with their own past as well as providing an interest and a small source of income to those village grandmothers and mothers who might otherwise believe their useful productive lives to be over.

The First Three Year Plan—1983-1985

The main aims of *Disac* in this first Three Year Plan were to assist the *ban* people to institute rice and buffalo banks, small dam projects to help in the growing of vegetables which might then

be sold in local markets, the provision of good drinking water supplies, and the raising of money so that the community—*tambon* and *ban*—could have access to the rural electrification scheme of the provincial government.

The Second Stage: 1986-1987

Under the *Disac* planned development strategy this period was given over more specifically to loans to small urban traders with weekly stalls in the market; to loans for small business projects such as the provision of lavatories and washrooms in the market place.

Between 1983 and 1987 the infrastructures for many small development projects were in place and loans were given to individual subsistence farmers to enable them to buy fertilisers for their new quick-growing rice and for various irrigation projects in villages.⁵⁷ Loans made to housewives or to vendors in the daily markets are made by *Disac* in order to keep them out of the hands of loan-sharks who charge an exorbitant rate of interest, thus binding the people into the cycle of poverty even more strongly.⁵⁸ The loans made by *Disac* using Australian currency as an example would be about five cents per day on a loan of A\$5—thirty-five cents per week or interest at 5%.

Early in 1988 *Disac* organised a group of housewives in a rural slum near Ubon into a Credit Union. Each member placed 3 1/3% of the loan received back into the Credit Union every month. After four years it is estimated that the capital can be subtracted and the group continue to operate then with its own common fund. In this way, with tiny interest repayments the members can begin to save for school fees, to lease another parcel of *ban* land so as to increase their rice production. The thrust then is to make rural dwellers more economically self-sufficient and to raise the estimation of their own worth.⁵⁹

The proposed budget of *Disac* for the period 1988-1990 in the diocese of Ubon has been estimated at

B3,285,874 (A\$164,293), with the Church's component being B250,000 (A\$12,500). The majority of the proposed budget requirements will be drawn from *Misereor* to the tune of B3,035,874 (A\$151,793). These sums of money are extremely modest in Australian terms yet with them *Disac* hopes to be able to provide a financial base from which to continue with its up-grading of *ban* resources and developments. For rice and fertiliser banks and the raising of cows and calves (later to be sold as fat cattle) B650,000 (A\$32,500) has been estimated; water resources, upgrading of hygiene facilities and tapping into the rural electrification scheme will cost another B400,000 (A\$20,000). Under the Mother & Child Care Programme, and the Community Health Programme, both of which are organised by two Sisters of the indigenous Order, Servants of Mary, the costs will amount to B273,000 (A\$13,650). Under the Education portfolio *Disac* has budgeted for the five diocesan primary schools something in the region of B500,000 (A\$25,000).⁶⁰

All of which does not mean that there have been no negative results coming from *ban* socio-economic developments.

Whilst the socio-economic development of Buddhist and Catholic villagers might have been increased, in many cases the new sense of prosperity engendered has caused, not surprisingly, enmity between neighbours and between the successful and the *ban* or village leader. Thus a conflict of interests has in some cases brought about disharmony within the community, thereby, it would appear, contributing to situational regression rather than economic progression.⁶¹

The idea of Social Action with a cultural/religious emphasis goes back to the Documents of Vatican Two and even before.⁶² With these in mind the Asian Bishops Conference in its statements has said that:

Most of Asia is made up of a multitude of poor: poor not in human qualities and values, but in being denied access to material goods and resources which they need to cre-

ate a truly human life for them. They are deprived because they live under oppression, i.e. social, economic and political structures which have injustices built into them...Our task is to bring about social justice in our societies, i.e. to seek changes and the transformation of social structures.⁶³

The Bishops Institute for Social Action (BISA) has also said that culture, religion and society are interdependent, interacting and mutually transforming. "In our Asian continent, culture and religion are integrated. Religion is a dynamic element in our culture."⁶⁴ Therefore it would seem that the above form a cultural-religious system which interacts with the socio-economic political system of society, able to permeate every sphere and facet of human life. If this is so, then it also follows that cultural-religious values are the essential coefficient factors of the economy, of politics as well as of society in any and all human-development activities.

Ubon Ratchathani (3)

It has been stated earlier that the Catholic population is small. Because of this, the Buddhist *sangha* has no difficulty in accepting what is still called The Catholic Mission. There is no undercurrent of latent or nascent hostility as there is often, for example, from Muslims towards Catholics and Protestants in Indonesia,⁶⁵ or perhaps more obviously, in Malaysia. Neither is there the veiled hostility which is becoming more evident towards the Catholic Church from the government of Singapore. Buddhists appear to recognise Catholics and Protestants as men and women of goodwill and are content.

As in Indonesia, and in other Asian countries, the Catholic Church in Thailand has some very prestigious schools which are open to all.⁶⁶ In Central Bangkok the Assumption School, which is staffed by the St. Gabriel Brothers, is expensive, prestigious, occupying part of a whole city block. In Ubon there are two Catholic schools, Ave Maria, staffed by the Sisters of the Religious Order, The Servants of Mary, and the

Assumption School, again staffed and run by the St. Gabriel Brothers. The diocese of Ubon has only five parish primary schools, in glaring contrast to the thousands of Catholic (and Protestant) primary schools (*Sekolah Dasar*) in Indonesia.⁶⁷ There were once seven Catholic primary schools, but since the diocese could not staff them they were forced to close two. These schools are all situated in villages; the provincial government will not now give permission for any more to be opened, their reason being, perhaps, that it is better for the State to have the education of village children at such a fundamental level, even though these *ban* are Catholic.⁶⁸ Or perhaps it is a case of some deep down anti-Catholic feeling coming to light within the provincial administration.

On the other hand, there are good relations with the *sangha*. Some Thai Catholic priests make their annual retreat with Buddhist monks in a monastery near Ubon, living as one of the temple family whilst they are there, yet keeping to their own private devotions, although if they wish to join the monks in worship or meditation there is no bar to them doing so.⁶⁹ Occasionally a Buddhist monk will give a series of meditations to a gathering of Catholic priests. Thus on the surface at least there would seem to be complete equanimity.

If "Thailand" means the Land of the Free, no less is freedom of religion guaranteed, although it is worthwhile repeating that because of the small Catholic community in Thailand, Buddhists have no fear of being "converted." Education, socio-economic development is therefore in reality for all Thais/Buddhists. Certainly these activities serve people "made in the image of God" and serve the "whole" person.

Yet as in Indonesia and in other areas of Southeast Asia, where the Christian presence is, if not exactly tenuous, then the religion of a minority, it is the schools which carry any hopes which the Catholic community many have for the future.

At the time of the author's discussions with Bishop Michael of Ubon in 1988, there was one government

minister who was a Catholic, together with three or four senior Army officers.⁷⁰ Many prominent bureaucrats, government officials and members of the armed forces have been educated in the prestigious Catholic schools, so that although they remain Buddhists, it may be expected that they will continue to have a warm feeling for, and perhaps, if need be, a protective arm around their almae matres.⁷¹

The costs of socio-economic development, running Minor and Major seminaries and various missionary tasks, are, as in many parts of Indonesia, met by *Misereor*.⁷²

The question therefor must be asked: what is the *raison d'être* for such an "expensive" Catholic presence in Thailand—for the considerable amount of finance as well as the highly qualified expertise made available to mostly non-Christians? Converts are few, and the Catholic and Christian churches do not have the astringent of persecution to give them impassioned zeal for evangelisation. Is all this simply for the sake of conversions? If this was the answer, after three hundred years of a Catholic presence in Thailand with few Catholics apparent, the programme has obviously failed. Is the continuing Catholic presence in Thailand simply to show another way of living, of allowing people to address the important crossroads in their lives?

Perhaps this is part of the answer, although once again, the actual numbers suggest clearly that few Thais have accepted such a *lex credendi, lex vivendi*. "Making merit" is of much greater importance than the Christian cardinal virtue of "loving God and your neighbour."⁷³ And here perhaps is the real reason for the presence of Catholic (and Protestant) in Thailand, and for the spending of large sums of money in socio-economic development and education: in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, to help the Thai rural sector to live a less austere life, to assist in increasing economic prosperity. And, perhaps as a bonus, to help in creating a suitable climate in which the claims of Christianity and the things of the spirit may be broached and discussed.

ENDNOTES

1. *Brief History of the Catholic Church in Thailand*. No author, date; p.l. See also Hutchinson, E.W. *Adventurers in Siam in the Seventeenth Century* (The Royal Asiatic Society, London 1940. 2nd edn. D.D. books, Bangkok 1985) p. 42 ff.

2. Syamananda, Rong. *A History of Thailand* (Chulalongkorn University 1986) p. 43. The leader of the Portuguese exploratory fleet was Alfonso d'Albuquerque, who defeated the Sultan of Malacca and occupied the port in 1551. Yet because the Siamese king claimed some suzerainty rights over Malacca, d'Albuquerque sent an embassy under Duarte Fernandez to the Siamese king, where he was well received "because he showed no superiority towards the Siamese."

3. Hutchinson, *op. cit.* p. 43. See also Syamananda *op. cit.* p. 64. See also Chaiwan, S. "A Study of Christian Missions in Thailand," *East Asian Journal of Theology* Vol. 2, April 1984 p. 63-64.

4. The *Société des Missions Etrangères de Paris* was founded in 1660 because some French clergy and laity were eager to share in foreign mission-work formerly reserved for the Religious Orders, especially the Jesuits who had been expelled from Japan early in the seventeenth century. See Boxer, C.R. *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650* (University of Berkeley Press 1951).

Louis XIV approved the M.E.P. in 1663. In 1963 there was a total world membership of 880 with the M.E.P. serving in eleven dioceses around the world, with twenty-one indigenous Bishop members. See also Goyan G. *Les Prêtres des Missions Etrangères* Paris 1932.

5. Hutchinson, *op. cit.* p. 44 ff. The Provençal priest M. Cotollendi was consecrated Vicar-Apostolic by a direct Papal mandate for work in Tonkin.

6. Bishop Lambert de la Motte was given one of the obsolete titles of an ancient see in Asia Minor—Beritus—long swept away by the Muslim advance. This was in order to prevent friction between France and Portugal. The French clergy eventually built a

brick seminary and a church in the capital, Ayutthaya, to which the king sent some children. See also Chaiwan, *op. cit.* p. 70.

7. The Chakri dynasty was founded by King Ramathibodi—Rama I—in 1782 (formerly the brilliant general Chao Phraya Chakri), after the mad former king, Taksin, had been put to death. See Syamananda *op. cit.* pp. 99-100. The present occupant of the throne is Rama IX.

8. Narai the Great was born in 1632 of the Prasathong dynasty and attained the throne in 1656 after having rid himself of his elder brother and uncle. His capital, Ayutthaya, was well known as a centre for foreign trade and relations with the new European entrepreneurs.

9. A Dutch ship first made a landfall at Pattani in south Siam, building a small trading post there in 1601. In 1604 the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*—the Dutch East Indies Company—came to Ayutthaya. See also Syamananda, *op. cit.* p. 63. For the involvement of the British East India Company see amongst others Collis, M. *Siamese White* (Faber & Faber, London 1936; this edn. by D.D. books, Bangkok, 1986).

10. See Hutchinson, *op. cit.* p. 56 ff. Phaulkon's rise to be a high Siamese noble and the chief adviser of the king was spectacular. but with the death of King Narai the Great, Phaulkon's enemies took the opportunity of killing him, thus ridding the Court of what they saw as a dangerous European entrepreneurial presence and influence.

11. *Ibid.* p. 51 ff.

12. *Ibid.* See also Syamananda, *op. cit.* p. 78-79. Basche, J. *Thailand: Land of the Free* (Taplinger Publishing Co. New York, 1981) pp. 239-240. King Narai signed a treaty with France which gave the latter, amongst other advantages, the monopoly of tin on Phuket Island.

13. *A Brief History of the Church in Thailand*, *op. cit.* pp. 11.

14. *Ibid.* See also Syamananda, *op. cit.* pp. 73-78; Hutchinson, *op. cit.* pp. 76-77 ff.

15. Chaiwan, *op. cit.* p. 64.

16. Syamananda, *op. cit.* *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Thailand* *op. cit.* p. 12.

17. *Op. cit.* p. 75 ff.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Chaiwan, *op. cit.* p. 65.

20. *Ibid.* Cf *A Brief History of the Church in Thailand*, p. 12.

21. Chaiwan, *ibid.* Also discussions with Bishop Michael Bunlueh Mansap, Bishop of Ubon Ratchathani, in Ubon, June 1988.

22. Syamananda, *op. cit.* p. 119 ff. Cf. M.L. Manich Jumsai, *A Popular History of Thailand* (Chalermnit, Bangkok n.d.) pp. 480-483. Cf. also Thompson, P.A. *Siam: An Account of the Country and the People* (publ. USA 1910; this edn. White Orchid Press, Bangkok, 1987) p. 57, "In the reign of King Mongkut Siam may be said to have passed from the middle ages to modern times..."

23. Syamananda, *op. cit.*

24. Thompson, *op. cit.* p. 58. Chaiwan, *op. cit.* p. 66.

25. The full title of this Teaching Order is *Institutum Fratrum Instructionis Christianae a Sancto Gabriele* or The Brothers of Christian Instruction of St Gabriel. The Order was founded in the Vendée Arrondissement in France in 1821 and was known until 1853 as the Brothers of the Holy Ghost.

26. The Protestant churches began work in Thailand in 1828, about two hundred and fifty years after the first Catholic mission had been established. The first Protestant missionaries, Gutzlaff and Tomlin, belonged to the London Missionary Society. Both the Catholic and Protestant missions were constrained by the Edict of Religious Toleration brought into being in 1730 by King Tai Sara. This edict stated that no Christian literature was allowed to be translated into the Thai or Pali languages; the Christian faith was not allowed to be taught to the Thai, Mon or Lao peoples; no one was allowed to convert these peoples to Catholicism; and the Thai religion

was not to be criticised. Cf. also Chaiwan, *op. cit.*

27. Discussions with Bishop Michael Bun-luen Mansap as above.

28. Cf Webb, R.A.F. Paul, *Palms and the Cross: Socio-economic Development in Nusa Tenggara Timur* (James Cook University of North Queensland, Australia, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies Monograph No 15, 1986) Ch. 12. p. 174. Thirty years ago on the island of Flores, N.T.T., Indonesia, which is overwhelmingly Catholic, the measure of evangelisation was counted in the numbers of baptisms, confessions and acts of Communion per month. If this made the clergy into "sacrament coolies," now with the emphasis on socio-economic development, as many priests (and ministers) call themselves ruefully "development coolies."

29. Discussions with Dr. I Wayan Mastra, Synod Chairman of the *Gereja Protestant Kristen Bali* (Bali Protestant Christian Church) in Denpasar, Bali, 1980; with Msgr. Donatus Djagom S.V.D. Archbishop of Ende, Flores, in Ende, 1981; with Fr. Valentine, Ubon Ratchathani, June 1988.

30. Cf. Webb, *op. cit.* See also Webb, R.A.F. Paul, "Adat and Christianity in Nusa Tenggara Timur: Reaction and Counteraction" (*Philippine Quarterly of Culture & Society*, San Carlos University, Cebu, Philippines, Vol. 14 No. 3, 1986) pp. 339-365. See also Phya Anuman Rajadhon, *Some Traditions of the Thai* (Thai Inter-Religious Commissions for Development & Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation, Bangkok 1987) and Seri Phongphit, *Religion in a Changing Society: Buddhism Reform and the Role of Monks in Community Development in Thailand* (Arena Press, Hong Kong, 1988).

31. Webb, *Adat and Christianity op. cit.*

32. Discussions with a Field Officer of the Forum for Integrated Agricultural Management at Ubon Ratchathani, June/July 1988.

33. Discussions with Fr. Valentine as above.

34. Behind this help was undoubtedly the philosophy of "making merit" within a Catholic ambience, in much the same way as rich Thai Catholics still continue in 1988 to provide assistance for a priest, over and above that which is strictly necessary for their sustenance.

35. Whilst this appears to be the obvious approach, many socio-economic programmes have collapsed through deliberate community non-co-operation because they felt that they were being pushed into actions they did not fully understand or were afraid of. See Webb, *Palms and the Cross, op. cit.*

36. Discussions with Bishop Michael and Fr. Valentine as above. *Disac* stands for Diocesan Social Action: the priest in charge of socio-economic development in a diocese is known by this acronym, in the same way as in the Indonesian Catholic Church, the priest (or layman) responsible for development is called *Delsos*—*Delagatus Socialis*, the Social Delegate. Cf. Webb, *Palms and the Cross op. cit.* p. 168.

37. Discussions with Fr. Valentine as above and a French *M.E.P.* priest in Ubon, July 1988.

38. Basch *op. cit.* pp. 55 & 187 ff.

39. Villagers who need a buffalo for ploughing take one from a "buffalo pool;" a percentage of the rice crop is returned with the animal. Rice, usually for seed, is also distributed in this way, with a percentage of the harvest being returned to the donor: *Disac* or the *ban* or village.

40. The Flores-Timor Plan in the Indonesian province of Nusa Tenggara Timur was established in 1957 under the guidance of the Bishop of Larantuka, E. Flores, Msgr. Thijssen, with the assistance of *Misereor* (the Overseas Aid Department of the German Bishops Conference), various German political parties and the Federal German government. See Webb *op. cit.* p. 143 ff. Also Lemenczik, K., "Der Kirchliche Beitrag zur Ökonomischen in N.T.T." *Verbum* (Rome) 16, (1975) p. 330.

41. Webb *op. cit.* pp. 167-173. Thijssen, J. "Missie en Maatschappelijke op Flores," *De Katholieke Missien* (1957) p. 38.

42. Peters, J. "Pastoral and Development Work: A Field of Tension?" *Pastoralia* (Lederalero, Flores) 4, (1971) pp. 60-61.

43. For further information on this point see Kindleberger, C. & Herrick, B., *Economic Development* (2nd. edn. Tokyo 1977) and Schumacher, E. *Small is Beautiful* (London 1973).

44. Cf. Webb *op. cit.* See also Setz, P. "Aid as an Instability Factor" *Impact—Asia Magazine for Human Development* (Hong Kong) Vols. 8 & 9 (1973).

45. Discussions with Bishop Michael and Fr. Peter Paisan as above.

46. *Misereor* (see note 40) receives much of its finance from the unique Church tax prevalent in Germany.

47. The Flores-Timor Plan in N.T.T., Indonesia, works in a slightly different mode. Rather than giving money (except through credit union loans), development schemes are paid for by *Misereor*, whilst the practical work/details are done by the village people and the *Delsos*.

48. Discussions with Fr. Valentine.

49. This is not a unique situation: similar occurrences take place in Indonesia with money from overseas aid agencies, and even in Australia, where Federal government grants appear to be dissipated when moving through the system in any particular State.

50. See Seri Phongphit, *op. cit.* p. 150 ff.

51. Discussions with Fr. Valentine as above. See also Seri Phongphit *op. cit.* p. 33 where the author does in fact discuss the involvement of Buddhist monks in community and rural development during the late sixties, although it is admitted that this is unusual.

52. Seri Phongphit, *ibid.* See p. 102 ff. for an account of a village monk actively engaging in socio-economic development with his people.

53. See Brown, J. *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy* (O.U.P. New York 1985) pp. 206-207 ff.

54. In the islands of Flores and Timor, Indonesia, village women continue to weave their own *kain ikat* (traditional cloth/patterns) for their own use, but they are now increasing production, still using the traditional loom, using modern dyes and sending the finished *ikat* to Jakarta to be sold in the large tourist hotels. Visit to a rural "factory," Ende, Flores 1982.

55. The contrast between the Thai farmers in the Ubon region and the *petani*, farmers of, say, Upper North Timor, in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia, is strong. In the latter case it is very difficult for either officials of the Provincial Agriculture Extension Service or for the Catholic Church's *Delsos* to persuade the Timorese to use modern methods and modern tools. Subsistence

farming is still the norm, and whilst in most of Java, say, a cash economy is certainly *in situ*, in the islands of N.T.T. the idea of a cash economy is slow to take root in the villages. Personal visits to villages in Flores, Sumba and Timor between 1979 & 1988.

56. Discussions with Fr. Valentine and an official of F.I.A.M. as above.

57. One of the difficulties experienced by development officials in N.T.T. is that *adat* and *ratu adat* (those practitioners and keepers of traditional customs and law) often block modern agricultural development through fear for their own positions in the village hierarchy. When the *tuan tanah*, "Lord of the Land," disapproves of pesticides, irrigation works, the planting of new crops, it is a brave farmer who persists in the face of this disapproval. See Webb, R.A.F. Paul, "Adat and Christianity," *op. cit.*

58. There are strong similarities to this "poverty - money lending" syndrome in all parts of Asia. Even in the Western nations, "hire-purchase" agreements tie people into a similar cycle.

59. Discussions with Bishop Michael as above; also with Pater B.J. Baack S.V.D., formerly *Delsos* of the Archdiocese of Ende, Flores, N.T.T., Pater A. van Lieshout S.V.D. *Delsos*, Diocese of Atambua, Timor and Pater W. Lang, C.S.S.R. *Delsos*, Diocese of Weetebula, Sumba Barat N.T.T., all between 1980-1988.

60. These figures are from the official budget of *Disac* sent to *Misereor*, kindly given by Fr. Valentine.

61. Such regressions appear to be unknown in the villages of N.T.T., mainly because the *adat* hierarchy is still so strong. It is in this area of traditional customs and law that the differences between Buddhism—even a

nominal adherence—and animism with a Catholic/Protestant veneer can be most clearly seen.

62. See the encyclical of Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931; John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra* and that of Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio*, 1967. All cited in W. Abbot (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican Two* (trans. Gallagher), London 1966.

63. Abbot, *ibid.* pp. 45, 408-410.

64. The Bishops Institute for Social Action had its first meeting in 1975, as a project of the Office for Human Development, in turn an agency of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference, and is based in Manila. Its theological underpinnings can be traced to *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. At the same time BISA also owes its genesis to those broad currents in the Church found in e.g. *Progressio Populorum* and *Octogesima Archveniens* as well as the deliberations of the Synod of Bishops in Rome in 1971. (Correspondence with Fr. M. Kelly S. J., Asian Bureau, Melbourne, Australia.)

65. See Webb, R.A.F. Paul, "The People of the Book: Christians and Muslims in Indonesia," *Indonesia Circle (School of Oriental & African Studies, London University)* No. 35, Nov. 1984, pp. 56-69; also Webb R.A.F. Paul, "The View from Australia: Christians and Muslims in Contemporary Indonesia" *Asia Journal of Theology (Singapore)*, vol. 2 No. 2, October 1968.

66. Personal visits to these schools in Ubon Ratchathani July 1968.

67. It is through education, of course, that the Indonesian churches are able to influence society—Muslim, Hindu, and animist. The most prestigious and (comparatively) expensive schools in Indonesia are Catholic and

Protestant. The reason is that the churches train their own teachers, who by and large are better trained than those who come out of State Teachers Training institutions. See Webb, *Palms and the Cross* *op. cit.* pp. 186-89 *passim*; Cooley, F. (ed.) *Benih Yang Tumbuh XI: Gereja Masehi Timor* Dewan Gereja-gereja Indonesia, Jakarta 1976 *passim*.

68. Discussions with Bishop Michael as above.

69. Discussions with Fr. Peter Paisan as above, who has often taken advantage of such periods of meditation in a temple not far from his Minor Seminary in Ubon.

70. Discussions with Bishop Michael as above.

71. For similar hopes of the Catholics in Indonesia see Webb, R.A.F. Paul, *Indonesian Christians and their Political Parties* (James Cook University SEAsian Monograph 2, 1978); also R.A.F. Paul Webb, "Christian Interviews in Indonesia," *Kabar Seberang*, James Cook University, No. 5/6, 1979, pp. 200-232.

72. See Webb, *op. cit.*, *Palms and the Cross* pp. 166-168, 171-173, 202.

73. A visit to a hospitable and charming rich Thai Catholic household in Bangkok where a room is always kept for a priest from Ubon diocese, where relatives of the priest are given employment in the house as family servants. The house is awash with statues, crucifixes, pious medals; the expensive cars had at least four St. Christopher medals on the dashboard in 1988. And in the corner of the courtyard stands a large "spirit house" with marigolds and burning incense sticks as a votive offering to the spirits of the place. It would seem that like their Indonesian cousins, Thai Catholics are also inclined to hedge their bets.