

K'LA AND THE CATHOLICS OF CHIANG MAI

Village Development in the Northwest of Thailand

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It goes without saying that any Christian presence in Thailand, Catholic or Protestant, must in the nature of things be very small: infinitesimal when judged against the near-totality of the people's adherence to Buddhism, and the very strong minority of Hill Tribes' animism. In 1979 the population of Thailand was estimated at 45 million; in 1987 it was reckoned to be approximately 54 million with about 230,000 Catholics (0.04%)¹ In the northwest of Thailand, in that part known world-wide as "The Golden Triangle," Protestants are a strong minority, drawn in the main from the Church of Christ in Thailand and the American Baptist Mission, whose ministers, evangelists and lay-workers have been working in the region, which looks to the city of Chiang Mai as its metropolis, for one hundred and thirty years.²

Here the Protestants have established clinics, a hospital, the first private university in Thailand,³ and a prestigious school for boys known as The Prince's School; together with extremely impressive and highly organised socioeconomic programmes and strategies, most of which are financed from America.⁴

By contrast the Catholic Church is spread more thinly, has fewer resources without much outside support, and the cynical might perhaps be justified in seeing in this a case of "Johnny come lately."⁵

The Catholic diocese of Chiang Mai in fact covers eight provinces in northern Thailand: Maehongson, Fang, Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Phayao, Nan, Lampang and Lamphun, with a total population somewhere in the vicinity of five million, of whom in 1990 only 20,000 were Catholics (0.4%). Of this number Thai Catholics numbered 8,000 (40%) with approximately 12,000 members of various Hill Tribes (60%) making up the rest.⁶

The first organised Catholic presence here was the *Congregation Missions Etrangères de Paris* (the MEP Fathers) who came to the provinces of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Lamphun in 1931, to work amongst those Thai Catholics who came with British companies which built the railway from Bangkok to the North. This undertaking was a commercial one, in order to get teak. The MEP Fathers also wanted to work amongst the Karen Hill Tribes, seeing in these animist tribes a possible fruitful field of missionary endeavour, something which was not very promising amongst the Thai Buddhist population.⁷

In 1949/1950 another French Order, the Bettaram Fathers, who had previously been working in Southern China, were forced to leave under the new Communist government, and settled amongst the White Karen Hill Tribes, having their centre at Maehongson, staffing eight *tambon* (districts) each with approximately forty *ban* (villages).⁸ Again in 1972, priests of the Rome-based Pontifical Institute for Missions (known as the PIME Fathers) began to work amongst the Lahu Hill Tribes, with their base in the town of Lampang, southwest from Chiang Mai.⁹

The Spanish Order of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, called locally the Marina Sisters, have worked in the Chiang Mai diocese since 1965. Their work is mainly concerned with young girls of the Phayao Hill Tribe region, and it is from this region that many of them flee their poverty-stricken life, and head for the glitter and tinsel which is Bangkok at night. Many travel to the city voluntarily to look for work; equally as many are persuaded by various "employment" agents to go and look for work away from rural impoverishment. Few of these girls or young women have any marketable skills or education. They either end up in the

brothels of back-street Bangkok,¹⁰ or as "go-go" dancers in one of the many bars in the Patpong tourist area of the capital.¹¹ Agents from Japan and elsewhere are said to be on the look-out for girls from the country—those who have not acquired the surface sophistication of their more worldly-wise sisters—in order to persuade them to become "guest workers." The latter of course is a euphemism for prostitution.

Thus it is amongst these girls that the Spanish and Thai Marina Sisters work, giving them some training in personal hygiene, teaching them sewing and weaving skills so that instead of having to go to Bangkok for work, they are able to sell their products from the village, thus obviating a break in family relationships and community networks.¹²

Also in Chiang Mai city is the Thai Sisterhood of the Immaculate Conception; again these Sisters work with girls between the ages of thirteen and fifteen years, teaching them domestic science skills and personal hygiene. Most of these girls have graduated from the primary schools run by the Sisters.¹³

Economic Development

In every village in the Catholic area around Chiang Mai there is a rice bank, originally organised by the DISAC (Diocesan Social Action/Coordinator).¹⁴ This works on what Indonesian villagers would call *gotong royong*—a system of mutual cooperation and mutual support, in order, say, to break down the high rate of interest asked by the local entrepreneur on rice borrowed in a poor season.

If a family runs short of rice for whatever reason and must borrow ten sacks, the interest is often thirty sacks: 300% interest. An example will suffice to make this clear. During the middle eighties in the *ban* of Kum Pae, some kilometres up in the mountains from Chiang Mai, three prominent families had emerged as the rice brokers. Over a period of twenty years they exerted control of all the village affairs through extortionate interest on rice borrowed. If any family thwarted them, then that family was easily brought to heel by a refusal to lend them rice in a bad season, and by forbidding any other villager to help them. These petty strong-arm tactics might well be seen as pathetic out of context, but within a tight traditional society they were very real indeed.¹⁵ And it appears to be no exaggeration to say that their tactics were literally a matter of life or death, for no one would willingly antagonise these powerful families. Needless to say, with an interest rate ratio of 1:3 a great many people were held in thrall to these rural strongmen. The Catholic Church, through the intermediary of the DISAC, helped break this economic cartel, by forming the villagers into a rice-group or cooperative. Other villages from outside the area began to give rice to their indigent clan neighbours, and in turn received the same amount of rice back when harvest came.

Once more, it was *gotong royong* in action.¹⁶ Which does not mean to say that the local rice "mafia" took this threat to their domination of the *ban* quietly. There were many unreported nasty incidents: beatings, stabbings and knife wounds. But when the power of the families was broken

because there was now no need for people to borrow rice at exorbitant rates of interest, and the former rice-profits began to dry up, these families themselves now began to suffer poverty and hardship. Yet there appeared to be little animosity or antagonism from the former victims of their greed—even though the rice cooperative and the DISAC were accused by them of being Communists. Whenever the Church spoke out against exploitation or spoke in favour of social justice, this was seen as espousing Communism.¹⁷ Such threats were forgotten by the villagers who when they saw their former tormentors in need simply gave them rice without a second thought. Leaving aside Christian morality, it seems that they considered community well-being, ethnicity and solidarity to be of much more importance than any thought of revenge.

The formation of rice banks did not take place over night, but over a long period during the late seventies and eighties.¹⁸ It shows that with preparation, discussion amongst the elders and people of a *ban*, and the training of local leaders, improvements in a local economic situation can be undertaken. There remains of course a question: does it mean that the Church's ideas of economic development are the same as the peoples' view of their local world? Probably not, but even uneducated Hill Tribe villagers know when they are being exploited and that the usual Thai philosophical response to difficulties, "*mai pen rai*," meaning "Never mind; it doesn't matter," is inappropriate in such circumstances.

Yet such is the ingrained reaction to, if not authority, then local supremacy, that without some outside assistance—in this case the DISAC—those village people would probably not have found the determination to break out of the vicious circle of local oppression.

But most of those involved in socioeconomic strategies, government or Non-Government Organisations (NGO's), find it hard to always determine the peoples' perspective clearly. A "Yes" may really mean "No," and a "No" may mean the opposite. So how do the people to whom the organisation wishes to do good, to raise their economic sights, to change their ways of traditional agriculture handed down since time immemorial, change a negative thinking process to a time process where they are willing to try out new ways? Or as DISAC and Protestant missionaries have said, "How do you rewrite theology according to the peoples' viewpoint?"¹⁹ Especially when an animistic people start from a different perception of creation and nature from that of a Christian or even a Buddhist. Thus the whole strategy of development is sometimes a minefield of misconceptions which must be trodden with care if socioeconomic development is to be successfully transmitted to village and/or tribal society.

There is also the question underlying such development: what is progress? Can this concept be interpreted in the sense that Adam Smith defined progress in terms of scientific knowledge of the world by which all irrational elements which might and do interfere with the free process of trade would be overcome, so that then society would be improved and the greater good of the population achieved?²⁰

Yet the churches in northwest Thailand, like the churches in Indonesia, have learned, and as many interna-

tional aid agencies have failed to learn,²¹ that unless indigenuous values are seen as important and given the respect due to them, any talk of economic planning/progress becomes not the peoples' programme, but the organisation's programme. The people are by-passed—for the very best of intentions—and the particular development or aid package ultimately fails. Here lies the tragedy, for the seeds of failure have been planted deeply. Those to whom good would be done have had little say in their own destiny. Good is being done *to* them, and not *by* them for themselves.²²

The White Karens

In the DISAC area of Chiang Mai diocese, whilst the old feudal political structure has changed over the past 150 years to what is called democracy—however that is seen—the economic structure often remains much the same. Much of the land is owned by absentee landlords, many of them Chinese. There is still the same ratio: 30-40% are tenant farmers; 80% own between 1-5 *rai* (1 *rai* = 1/2 acre).²³ From a population of approximately five million in the North, 60,000 are subsistence farmers.²⁴ Fifteen percent of land owners have between 5-20 *rai* and only 5% have between 20-200 *rai*.²⁵

And whilst in 1960 Thailand began its national programme of modernisation and development, the North still maintained its own sense of identity with its extended family system and its rural poverty which relied on swidden farming and in certain areas the growing of opium.²⁶ The White or *Skaw* Karens call themselves *pga-gan-yaw* lit. human beings.²⁷ On the other hand, many Thais from the lowlands and the central plain refer to them rather contemptuously as *yang*, lit. savages, the backward ones, in much the same way as many Australians still refer to Aboriginal people in the same offhand manner as "the Blacks" or "Abos."

Yet the White Karens have a very clear conception of a Creator, as in fact do many of the more unsophisticated peoples the world over. Australian Aboriginals talk of the "Dream Time"—the time before all things were when the great snake brought Creation into existence.²⁸ The people of Mangarai on the west coast of the Indonesian island of Flores talk of *Mori Kereng* who strolls through the land he has created like a country squire, with his dogs and servants.²⁹ In West Timor there is *Uis Neno*, the creator of all things.³⁰ Because all these groups of peoples are close to nature they have a great and deep understanding and attachment to the earth, and creation is as close as the bond between a child and its mother.

In the mythology of the White Karen there is *itatu*, the Supreme Being, creator of earth, stars and mountains. There is also a plethora of lesser spirits who may be benign and beneficent if placated, but who might just as easily be antagonistic if offended, like the *Marapu* of the Island of Sumba in Indonesia.³¹ Thus the White Karens, in company with animists the world over, walk a very narrow line between contentment and fear.

The spirit of evil (Satan) is called *Mu Gau Li* and it is

this spirit which continually tries to harm *Ywa*, who are the seven children to whom God has given birth: black, brown, yellow, red, bronze, white, and golden brown.

Unless this spirituality with its constant fear of spirits is understood and taken into consideration by those concerned with bringing development into such an animist milieu, and at the same time trying to replace this fear with the conviction that "perfect love casts out fear," then any agricultural or economic strategies will not be deep nor ultimately successful. And this despite any amount of financial aid spent in irrigation works, the encouraging of diversification of crops and the hard work of agricultural and development experts from government or non-government agencies and organisations.

Whilst it appears to be true from a Christian viewpoint that full bellies may eventually lead to a consideration of other spiritual truths and concepts, the Catholic Church has perhaps come later to this philosophy.

Like many of the Protestant churches, especially the narrowly fundamentalist sects in the northwest of Thailand³² and the Dutch Calvinists of eastern Indonesia, the Catholic Church before the Second Vatican Council (commenced in 1962) was concerned, if not to condemn outright indigenous spirituality, then at least to denigrate it. "Superstition" had to be eradicated and replaced with traditional Catholic teaching and practice "wherein lies the truth."

Since Vatican II, the thrust under Pope Paul VI³³ (and especially under the present Pope John Paul II), has shifted its emphasis. Indigenous spirituality must be respected and used as a base on which the Christian Gospel can be built more securely. With this base, socioeconomic development will become stronger, for the people "to whom good would be done" may be able to see more clearly that the Church begins from where they are and is not a system of belief posed from above.

Socioeconomic development must also likewise come from the roots and flow along the branches of understanding rather being superimposed. The roots are the people: development strategies are the leaves which flourish for a time and may finally fall when the chill winds of misunderstanding and resentment at being patronised come, as they will and do, in due course.

In this area of the White Karens, water, as in most of the tribal regions, is scarce. And if the chemical formula for water is H₂O, it is also life, for nothing can exist without it. Not surprisingly, then, for the White Karens water is more than a formula: it has a spirit of its own. All things have their spirit: rice, water, buffalo, mountains. So for the tribespeople, animists or newly-converted Christians, money has no value in itself; another reason why rice banks seem to have become popular. Having said that, perhaps another problem for the Church to overcome is the belief that since *K'la*,³⁴ the spirit of the rice, is life-giving, how is it possible to sell life itself? But rice *can* be freely given—another reason for the success of the rice-banks.³⁵ This rice donation is called by the White Karens *boo ma bu*, lit. "married rice," since as a wife helps her husband, so this rice helps those in riceless villages.

Similarly the buffalo has a spirit, and it too relates to everything in the *ban*. The Western view sees the buffalo in terms of say, 5,000 Baht (A\$ 260), but the tribes see it as related to God and the other families, and to the ancestors.³⁶ When a buffalo dies, that loss is experienced by all the *ban*. When a buffalo is lost or stolen, everyone looks for it, because all are affected. How can one sell that which has a spiritual connotation? Thus with rice: if a neighbouring *ban* needs a buffalo, then they are given it by a group, another *ban* or even by DISAC. There is an economic stratum to this but it is an economic stratum unrelated to anything as crass as money and the theories of Adam Smith.

It is part of what is called *tarn tordis*, a tradition found in many animist Hill Tribes but especially amongst the White Karen. It is particularly to the fore during the period of local starvation and hardship experienced between the end of one harvest's food supplies and before the next harvest is ripe. People who have, give to those who have not. It might be thought that this neighbourly compassion or *gotong royong* has its roots in Christian compassion. Rather it comes from the tribes own spirituality and faith and generosity. So the Church therefore must acknowledge that traditional wisdom and those values which have already been *in situ* since creation. "The church is not the only one who has Kingdom values and who may give salvation." Thus the role of the church and of DISAC is to help these Hill Tribes to reproduce, to receive and to renew their roots which are expressed through daily living in the modern world. As Seri Phongphit has written, "Development is not a work, an activity or a project. It is a movement in which many who share similar ideals take part."³⁷

This is the reason why in the early days of DISAC's encouraging the swidden farmers to terrace the hillsides, to grow rice, and vegetables which have a higher profit margin than opium; to grow perhaps, red kidney beans, which return an excellent profit,³⁸ the Church's development workers found it difficult to interact with the local clans. They could find no immediate answer to why people were loathe to come to meetings to discuss the economic development of their *ban* and its land—why people reneged on loans. Was it a case of apathy, and dishonesty? Not unnaturally DISAC blamed the villagers who were their potential clients, rather than their own organisation.³⁹

The *ban* gradually became stagnant: there was no work, no money, no activity, no people willing to participate in any new development strategies. And then it became gradually clear: the *ban* had its own traditional remedies and was able to organise itself in its own limited and traditional way. If those who borrowed money became sick, they were exempt from the normal repayment rules. The *ban* realised that mutual aid was more important than repayment.

So the DISAC had to learn from these simple Hill Tribespeople and learn all over again that very valuable lesson which has to be learned by all those undertaking any kind of socioeconomic development: that a "bottom up" approach and not a "top down" approach is necessary. There has to be a balance in every part of *ban* activity; economic

factors alone cannot be allowed to dominated decision-making, for sharing means solidarity.

Now, talking the problem out together until a consensus is reached is imperative⁴⁰ and if the people approve of the proposed project they will work for it, whilst the DISAC gives the necessary funding. Where previously the relationship between DISAC and the people was a "project relationship," now it is a fraternal relationship: not a client-patron relationship, but a family one. Now DISAC gives financial help; people share with each other and villages set up rice groups, a mutual project between people and DISAC.

This simple programme of human development is just as important in its own way as any Australian-Thai government financed scheme⁴¹ with its millions of dollars and small army of economic experts. This observation is not particularly a criticism, simply a restatement that the goals are different. In the Catholic and Protestant development strategies the emphasis is on serving the whole person, so that the things of the spirit—and not necessarily a Christian spirituality—may be discussed and experiences shared as opposed to an emphasis on material development only.

Yet however development is seen it costs money to prepare courses, train village leaders and initiate pilot studies. DISAC receives financial aid from the Asia Partnership for Human Development, the economic arm of the Catholic Church based in Hong Kong.⁴² In turn their funds are derived from those Asian countries where there are Catholics, the money being raised through Lenten Campaigns and donations. DISAC's budget is one million Baht (A\$ 50,000) for three years. The German Catholic organisation Misereor⁴³ also gave 500,000 Baht (A\$ 25,000) for the periods 1988 and 1989. This latter sum has been used within the White Karen area to turn swidden into padi through terracing hillside projects. Water found higher up the mountain is brought down by natural gravity to the terraces—a source of wonderment to old farmers who are puzzled as to how water can flow *up* as well as *down*. This northwestern region of Thailand is very dry and there is never enough wet rice because the Wet Season is short, June-November. In the Dry Season, November/December-April/May, dry rice is planted. So as rule there are only two crops available in one year. And in bad seasons when the expected rains are late in coming or the volume is less than expected, only one crop of rice can be grown, with resultant local famine and hardship. Then it is that the rice banks come into play.

Relations with the Sangha in Chiang Mai Diocese

As in the Northeast of Thailand in the diocese of Ubon Ratchathani, relations appear to be excellent between Catholics and the local *wat* or Buddhist temple. DISAC works amongst the Phayao, who unlike other Hill Tribes are mainly

Buddhist rather than animist; but DISAC, monks and abbot of the *wat* often meet for friendly discussions. So much so that at the time of the *Songkran* or Spring Water Festival in 1989, the DISAC, Fr. Nipote, was invited to preach in the local *wat*, giving the normal Christian blessing to abbot, monks and congregation—something unheard of in this area before and unlikely to occur very often anywhere.⁴⁴

Like most Catholic priests in Thailand Fr. Nipote came from a Buddhist family, and in 1989, after having been DISAC of the diocese for fifteen years, he was given six months leave of absence, of which he spent four months in a small hermitage in a padi field (and loaned by the *Sangha*), in meditation.

In discussions with many Thai Catholics and Protestants it appears to the writer that many of them do not often see a great difference between Buddhism and Christianity. This may well be a perfunctory evaluation and perhaps one which many Thai Christians would reject. But in both religions there is an emphasis on love and compassion, and a desire to penetrate the spiritual mystery of life, whilst the Christian doctrine and concept of "salvation" appears not to be as important to many Thai Christians of a former Buddhist background. This of course is quite at odds, for example, with the case of Indonesian Christianity, where there is an apparent great gulf between the Church and the mosque, with little intercourse between Christians and Muslims.⁴⁵

It might be that the blurring of rigid boundary lines between Buddhism and Thai Catholicism/Christianity has allowed the Catholic Church, modest as it is, to have made small but significant advances in socioeconomic development strategies, whereas the Protestant churches in Thailand work almost entirely in the area of the Golden Triangle, where there is little if any Buddhist influence, and appear to have more success in "conversions."

Animism with its deep roots in the propitiation of spirits has little to offer except fear, so that Protestantism with its emphasis on a personal God and Saviour has much that is attractive to animist peoples. It cannot be denied that the American Baptist Mission and the Church of Christ in Thailand have undertaken remarkable developmental strategies: money and expertise from America have changed many areas in the mountains from swidden, with its soil degradation, into flourishing cultivated and profitable farming areas where the *ban* and its people have a new sense of purpose and direction.⁴⁶ In contrast, the Catholic Church, with fewer actual numbers and less available finance, has concentrated not so much on diversification of crops as a change in peoples' attitudes.⁴⁷ The rice banks are a good example of this emphasis. Where once a starving village of another clan or tribe might have remained an object of disinterest to a more fortunate community, now with rice banks and rice cooperatives there is more positive outlook.

There are objections, of course. It has been said that what some see as the blurring of the outlines between Buddhism and Christianity is detrimental to the "pure" Christian gospel: that the Church, because of Thai tolerance, not to say complacency, stands in some danger of preaching a "complacent" message.⁴⁸ Some urban Thai Catholics see their Church's

endeavours in the mountains as rather a waste of their priests' time and energy and a waste of their money.⁴⁹

It has also been said by a Protestant critic that the Catholic Church is not dynamic enough; that conversion must come before economic development and that any cooperation or apparent compromise with Buddhism is fraught with danger.⁵⁰ It has also been suggested that "*mai pen rai*—never mind" has been allowed to percolate through the Catholic Church, thereby vitiating its eternal message, although whether this is so probably depends on one's theological position.

PIME in Lampang

The large city of Lampang is about 80 km southeast from Chiang Mai, and here two Italian priests of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) have their headquarters. They are responsible for 46 villages and 700 Catholics drawn from the Karen, Akha, Muser and Yao Hill Tribes. Although opium was previously grown by the Yao there is now in the Lampang region no opium cultivated on a large scale.⁵¹ Within the area served by the PIME Fathers there are 60 elementary schools for boys and girls and a hostel for about 158 boys, who come to a village centre some 85 km from Lampang for schooling, drawn from scattered mountain communities.

As in other areas where the Christian churches are working the Hill Tribes appear to be looking for a substitute religion. Many, it would appear, are fed up with the demands of animism and traditional religion, yet do not want to become Buddhists. There is a general suspicion that the provincial government is impatient with the cultures of the Hill Tribes and their way of life. If Thailand is one nation, so the argument goes, then it should be seen to be one nation with one unifying culture.

The difficulty, of course, is that the Hill Tribes are not Thai by race and most of them are not Thai by religion, i.e. Buddhist.⁵² Hence the impatience of bureaucrats who would like to be able to slot everyone into a neat pigeonhole, and the consequent tension between the centre and the periphery.⁵³

Some 20 km from Lampang is a new village comprising Palap Yao people who whilst having lived in Thailand for about 15 years, originally crossed the border from Laos to escape warfare. In 1988/89 they were resettled on land bought by the Catholic Church. Of the 300 people here most though not all are Catholics, at least in name, this latter comment being given added point by the existence of a village *shaman*, who conducts the necessary rituals for the village. The most modern building amongst the small ramshackle houses is the church. It is newly built, modern, with lots of red painted walls and woodwork inside (for good luck). It is important for these tribespeople to have their church in their midst for such a presence will keep away the ghosts and spirits who might otherwise harm the community.⁵⁴ The land set aside for agriculture slopes down towards a lake or large pond caused by the run-off during the wet season, with the main crop being dry rice. Soon the villagers will have to begin to

terrace the land if they are to contain the soil and allow crops to be continued. The visiting priest has suggested to the village council that the land is being steadily degraded by the continual washing away of the soil but so far it appears that his advice has fallen on deaf ears, the reason being that the idea of terracing is "modern technology" and is thereby foreign to them, for swidden-culture runs deep and strong and even such a simple lesson as making terraces for growing rice takes a long time to learn. Nevertheless they have to be allowed to progress at their own pace to discover that with terraces, rice and corn can be grown in the same place every year.

The problems, then, of human development, or of socioeconomic development with a human face, are many. It is always a temptation for the "expert" to see the problem and to prescribe the remedy without ensuring that the local people understand or even want new agricultural practices, diversification of crops or new markets for their crops. Village horizons are always nearer than imagined, and perhaps the eleventh commandment for DISAC, or for anyone else involved in village development at whatever level is: Thou shalt be patient.

It is a directive which is too often disregarded,⁵⁵ the losers being the well-meaning "expert" and the indigenous people both. The Catholics of Chiang Mai, like their Protestant brethren, wish only to help those in need: animists, Buddhists, Muslims, without any strings attached. In this of course lies both their strength and their weakness.

NOTES

1. Cf. *Thailand in the 80s* (Office of the Prime Minister, Kingdom of Thailand, 1984), p. 262, and also discussions with Bishop Michael Bunluen Mansap, Catholic Bishop of Ubon Ratchathani, 1987.

2. Saad Chaiwan "A Study of Christian Mission in Thailand," *East Asian Journal of Theology* (Singapore), Vol. 2, April 1984, pp. 65-6.

3. This is Payap University, founded in 1974, from whose Research and Development Centre comes much of the information and technical expertise needed by the Church's economic planners.

4. Personal visits to Payap University, January 1988 and 1990, and discussions with the staff of the Research Centre.

5. In fact the position of the Catholic church in the northwest is similar to that of the Protestant churches in the Indonesian province of Nusa Tenggara Timur, where it is the Catholic church, through the Divine Word Missionaries (S.V.D) which has financial and educational expertise available through European channels.

6. Discussions with Fr. Paul O'Brien S.J., Seven Fountains, Chiang Mai, January 1990. This Jesuit compound houses a Minor Seminary and is also a venue for postulants to the Society.

7. The M.E.P. Fathers, whose main house is in Silom Road, Bangkok, also work in Ubon Ratchathani in the northeast of Thailand. As their numbers decrease through natural attrition or through resignations, they are replaced by Thai diocesan priests.

8. Discussions with Fr. Nipote Thienviharn in Chiang Mai, January 1990.

9. Discussions with Fr. Alessandro Bordignon, PIME, at Amphoe Muang, Lampang, January 1990.

10. For further information see Chandler, G., N. Sullivan and J. Branson, *Development and Displacement: Women in Southeast Asia* (Monash Papers on Southeast Asia No. 18 Centre of SEA Studies, Monash University, Australia, 1988), pp. 128-134. The authors state that "...Bangkok has some 500,000 girls in bars, coffee shops, brothels, night-clubs, massage saloons and sauna."

Discussions also with Sornchai Vichitparn in Chiang Mai, January 1990.

11. *Ibid.* However, these authors would appear to be more concerned that an "anti-vice" campaign always means the repressions of the prostitute and the imposition of a guilty conscience on both prostitute and client, "finally becoming nothing more than a power instrument of certain agencies under different labels." It seems certain that the work of the Marina Sisters would be scorned by these (apparently) feminist authors.

12. Discussions with Fr. Nipote as above.

13. *Ibid.*

14. A priest is trained in socioeconomic/human development techniques in order to bring the benefits of modern agriculture, e.g. diversification of crops, to the Hill tribes (or in other areas, to Thai villagers), yet allowing people to develop at their own pace. This is called the "bottom up" approach. The DISAC (Diocesan Social Action Coordinator) often has a team or a cadre system working with him.

15. The local *ratu adat* (custodian of traditional laws and customs) in villages in the islands of Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia, also wield inordinate power amongst their *suku* or clan, concerning the distribution of communal land. See Webb, R.A.F. Paul, "Adat & Christianity in Nusa Tenggara Timur: Reaction & Counteraction," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture & Society* (San Carlos University, Cebu), Vol. 14 (1986), pp. 339-65 *passim*.
16. Information obtained from Fr. Nipote as above.
17. The same accusation was levelled at the Church in the diocese of Ubon Ratchathani, northeast Thailand, during the seventies, by wealthy Thai Catholics. See Webb, R.A.F. Paul, "Church and Temple," *Journal of the Siam Society* Vol. 78.1, 1990. "When I feed the poor, I am called a saint. When I ask why the poor are hungry, I am called a Communist" (Dom Helder Camara, Retd. Bishop of Recife, Brazil), cited in Judd, L. C., *In Perspective: Trends in Rural Development and Programs in Thailand, 1947-1987* (Research Report Series No. 41, Payap University Center for Research & Development (Chiang Mai, 1989), pp. 111-61.
18. Fr. Nipote has been the DISAC for the Chiang Mai Diocese for the Chiang Mai Diocese for over fifteen years. Within the Indonesian Catholic Church his position is taken by a *Delegatus Socialis* (Delsos) - Social Delegate; but the work is the same: that of initiating new agricultural and economic developments in the villages and/or coordinating already existing socioeconomic improvements and by cooperating with government agencies.
19. Discussions with Pastor David Wells, Theological Faculty, Payap University, Chiang Mai, January 1989.
20. Cf., amongst others, Barber, W.J., *A History of Economic Thought* (Penguin Books, London [1967] 1987 edn.), pp. 25 ff.
21. See Webb, R.A.F. Paul, "Old Lamps for New: Recent Developments in Nusa Tenggara Timur. *Sojourn - Social Issues in Southeast Asia* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore), Vol. 4. No. 2, August 1989, pp. 213-18 *passim*.
22. Discussions also with Dick Mann and staff at the Thai-Norwegian Church Development Aid Project office, Chiang Mai, January 1989, and the General Secretary, Church of Christ in Thailand, Bangkok, January 1989.
23. Compare this amount of land held (by White Karens) with land in villages of Central Java where the personal holdings are more often measured in metre strips. Visit to *desa* Mojopuro, C. Java, in 1987 and January 1990, and discussions with Bapak Karno, who laughed uproariously when asked how many *hectares* of wet rice fields he possessed.
24. The following information, unless specified, is taken from Nipote Thienviharn, "Documents of CCTD [Catholic Church Thai Development] Experiences for CCFD [Catholic Church Forward Development Programme] 1989," pp. 1-18 *passim*.
25. Again a comparison with overcrowded Central Java is unavoidable. Absentee landowners, of whom some are businessmen from Jakarta with political influence, often own hundreds of hectares, using share farmers and tenant farmers to work their land at a large profit. Discussions with farmers in the Wonogiri area of Central Java; names suppressed. For further information on Thai family land holdings see Hart, G., A. Turton & B. White, *Agrarian Transformations: Local Processes and the State in Southeast Asia* (University of California, Berkeley, 1989), pp. 58-61 ff.
26. See Judd, L. C. *In Perspective, op. cit.*, p. 195 ff. See also Pauker, G., F. Golay & C. Enloe, *Diversity & Development in Southeast Asia: The Coming Decade* (Project/Council on Foreign Relations, McGraw-Hill, 1977), pp. 168-9.
27. See *The Hill Tribes of Thailand*, Technical Service Club Tribal Research Institute, Chiang Mai, 1986, pp. 7-9. This is a common nomenclature for animistic tribes throughout the world. Aboriginal tribes in the north of Australia refer to themselves as "The People." Cf. Webb, R.A.F. Paul, *Brothers in the Sun* (Rigby, Adelaide, Australia, 1978). Cf. also Meggitt, M.J., *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri People of Central Australia* (Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1984 edn).
28. Bali-Hindus speak, of course, of the god Vishnu who dances Creation into being.
29. Verhujen, J., "The Monotheism of the Manggarai" in Boburg (ed.), *The Word in the World, 1971* (S.V.D. Rome, 1971) pp. 163-6.
30. Webb, *Palms and the Cross, op. cit.*, p. 77. See also Cunningham, C.E., *Soba: An Atoni Village in West Timor*, in Koentjaraningrat (ed.), *Villages in Indonesia* (2nd. edn., Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1974), p. 65.
31. See Webb, R.A.F. *Palms and the Cross, op. cit.*, pp. 47-50. Also Van Dijk, W., "Het Begrip Marapoe in West-Soemba" in *Die Macedonier* (1939), pp. 497-516.
32. Such as the North Thailand Christian Mission at Tambon Wat Ket Amphoe Muang, Chiang Mai, and others.
33. See Abbott, W., *Documents of Vatican Two* (Chapman, London, 1966).
34. In Java and Bali the spirit of the rice is known as *Dewi Sri*. Cf. Van Akkeren, P., *Sri and Christ* (London, Lutterworth Press, 1970).
35. When this writer met Fr. Nipote he had just come in from a three-week patrol of some of the villages where he had been supervising the collecting of rice from thirty *ban*--458 sacks--to help one or two other villages where rice was in short supply.
36. Again as a comparison, the farmers of Central Java and in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur in Indonesia see the buffalo not only as a work animal but also as a "savings bank," selling a buffalo to pay for a child's education or to provide a clan feast. See Webb, R.A.F. Paul, *Palms and the Cross, op. cit.*, p. 65.
37. Seri Phongphit, *Religion in a Changing Society: Buddhism, reform & the role*

- of monks in community development in Thailand. (Arena Press, Hong Kong 1988) p. 180.
38. Discussions with Dick Mann as above.
39. See Vichitparn & Prapahan Thienviharn in Nipote Thienviharn, *Documents on CCTD Experiences, op. cit.*, pp. 119-126 *passim*.
40. In Indonesian (Javanese) society this process is called *musjarawah* and *mufakat* (discussion leading to consensus). See Webb, *Palms and the Cross, op. cit.*, Ch. 12, p. 163 ff.
41. See Judd, *In Perspective, op. cit.*, pp. IX-200, 207-8. Thai-Australian Highland Programs; Thai-Australian Land Development Project; Thai-Australia-World Bank Land Development Project and others.
42. Discussions with Bishop Michael Bunluean Mansap at Ubon Ratchathani, July 1987.
43. Misereor is the German Catholic Bishops Conference Overseas Aid Fund, which distributes funds (generously) throughout the Third World areas, especially to projects undertaken by Catholic agencies in Southeast Asia. See Webb, *Palms & the Cross, op. cit.*, pp. 166-8.
44. Discussions with Fr. Nipote as above.
45. See Webb, R.A.F. Paul, "The People of the Book: Christians and Muslims in Indonesia" in *Indonesia Circle* (School of Oriental & African Studies, London University), No. 35 Nov. 1984, pp. 56-69.
46. Discussions with Revd. Boonratna Boayan, General Secretary of the Church of Christ in Thailand, Bangkok, January 1989, and with Revd. David Wells, Payap Theological Faculty, as above. Personal visit to a Hill Tribe village in January 1989 where fields of cabbages, beans and citrus crops have displaced the opium poppy.
47. Discussions with Bishop Michael as above and Fr. Peter Paisan Jaidee, Rector of Epiphany Seminary, Ubon Ratchathani, January 1988.
48. Discussions with Fr. O'Brien, Fr. Nipote, and Dick Mann as above.
49. Discussions with Fr. Peter Paisan and Fr. Nipote as above.
50. See Chaiwan, S. "A Study of Christian Mission in Thailand," *op. cit.*, pp. 62-6 *passim*.
51. Discussions with Fr. Alessandro Bordignon, PIME, in Lampang, January 1990.
52. There is something of a comparison here with the Aboriginal peoples of Australia, most of whom are not Christian except in name, and who, within their own communities, do not necessarily subscribe to white Australians' aspirations or European cultural mores.
53. It is said that the government would like to keep a few Hill Tribespeople around, dressed in their distinctive traditional clothes just for the tourists.
54. Tongue-in-cheek discussions with Fr. Sandro as above. Personal visit to this village, January 1990.