DEVELOPMENT AND DIFFERENTIATION IN RURAL THAILAND: A CASE STUDY FROM THE CENTRAL REGION

by

Stephen Holland

Thesis Presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford

Keble College

Trinity 1990

ABSTRACT

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This thesis is a contribution to the study of rural development and social change. The economy, polity and society of rural Thailand has undergone enormous transformations in the past century and a half. These centre on the penetration of rural communities by structures of state and capital. An important aspect of this is the emergence of 'differentiation' (or 'stratification'): i.e., the development of disparities between the economic status and circumstances of households in the same locality. This thesis reports data pertaining to intra-village differentiation which were collected during an anthropological study of a rural community in Central Thailand.

Rural differentiation in Thailand is considered from a number of related perspectives. Macro-level, historical transformations of the Thai countryside are discussed, and an interpretive model of the consequent stratification discernible in the village study site is presented. Ongoing processes of differentiation, which focus on the monopolisation of local resources by rural elites in the context of the developing village, are delineated. Data pertaining to informants' economic related decisions and behaviours reveal that different strata of villagers hold dissimilar 'economic attitudes': rich villagers' economic decision-making accords with Western notions of economic 'rationality', whilst poor villagers tended to be both non-accumulatory and apparently reckless in the economic arena. Middle ranking villagers tended toward economic quiescence. This phenomenon is explained by a reconstruction of some elements of poor villagers' underlying system of values of beliefs.

The consequences of intra-village differentiation for social identities and relations are discussed by reference to the 'class hypothesis': i.e., that the continued experience of increasing differentiation gives rise to class identities and, hence, class based social relations. Data suggest that, whilst stratification informs social identities and interactions to some extent, at present this is over-ridden by other, noneconomic factors.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. R.H. Barnes at the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Oxford, and Dr. Andrew Turton at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies), London University, for their supervision of this project.

This research training was funded by an ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) Competition Award; I am very grateful for the opportunity this financial support afforded me.

A number of academics and students have commented helpfully on parts of this thesis. I would like to thank Martin Parker, Dr. Phillip Hirsch, Andrew Russell and Dr. Tamarah Kohn, Jay Boswell and Vikki Bullard. An unanticipated aspect of this research training has been a very pleasurable and fruitful collaboration with Daniel Arghiros. I have found his input helpful, elucidatory and supportive.

I would also like to thank Pat and Arthur Holland for their help with printing and binding the thesis.

My main language training was provided by the Thai language department at SOAS. I am grateful for the tuition given by aacaan Manas and Dr. David Smythe. A particular debt is due to Dr. Smythe, who gave me one-to-one tuition for an hour a week throughout the summer of 1988. This made a substantial difference to my fieldwork. Also, I would like to thank moo Bundit for his weekly Thai language 'class'.

A number of people in Thailand facilitated my fieldwork. My main debt is to staff and students at Silapakorn University, Nakhon Pathom. Thanks are due to Uthong Prasasvinitchai, who put me in touch with Silapakorn. My reception at the university was a salutary introduction to Thai hospitality. We were given free, indefinite use of a campus flat, and treated with a warmth and kindness that constituted something of a culture shock. I am especially indebted to aacaan Songyot and Cum, who were a source of advice, support and friendship throughout the fieldwork. Two of their students, Lek and Pakdii, are also to be thanked for their practical help and moral support.

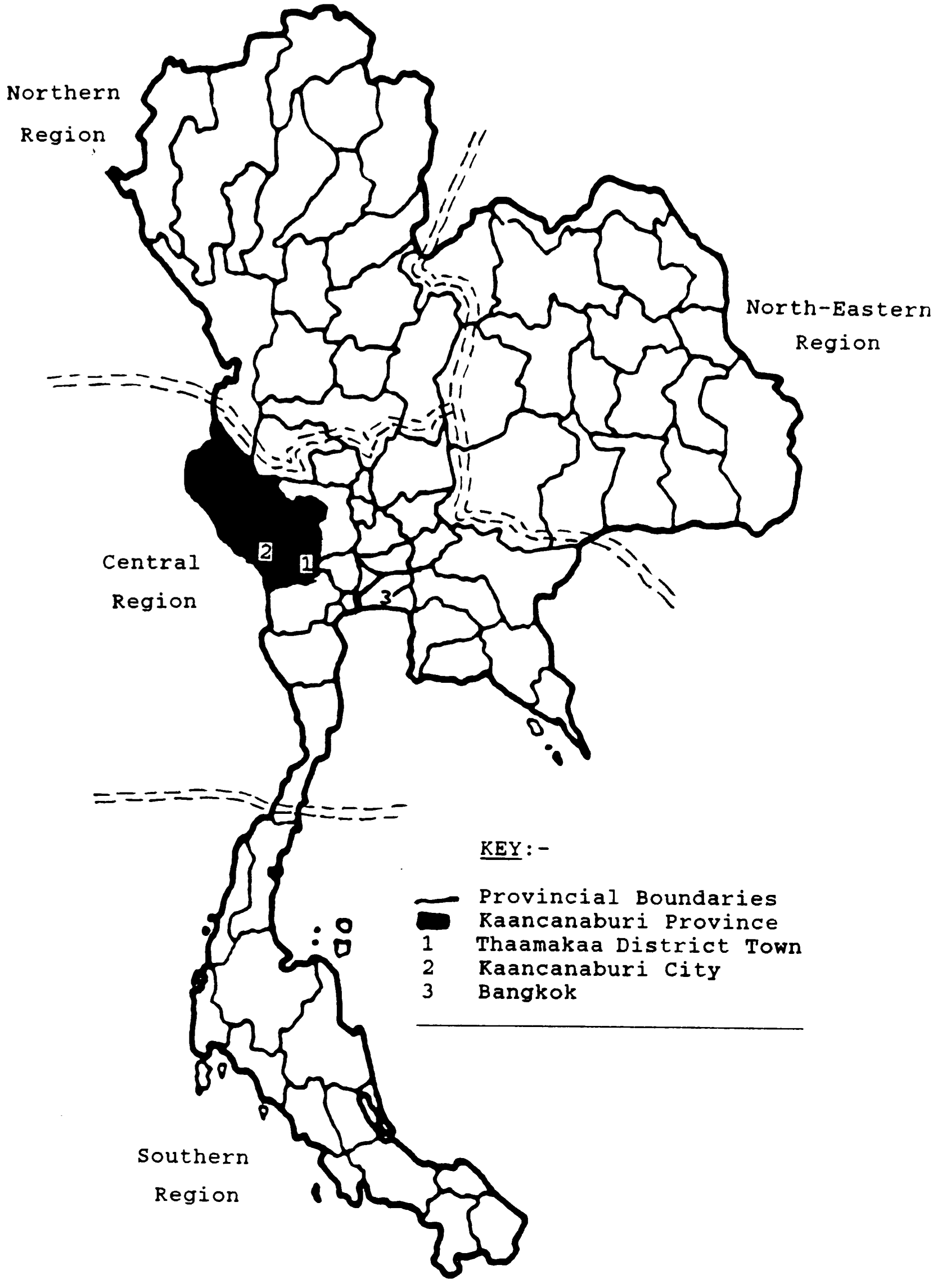
Thaamakaa's District Officer responded generously in welcoming two foreign guests to his area. He helped provide me with a suitable study site, and visited regularly throughout the fieldwork. Others of his staff were also very helpful: for example, khun Nitinay took a personal interest in our welfare, and District Office staff compiled a dossier on local development problems for me.

It would be impossible to cite the innumerable examples of kindness and hospitality from Saentor. Now that the memory of the everyday stresses and strains of data collection has dulled, I am left with a sense of astonishment at the way the village behaved toward us. I am sure that anyone who knows rural Thailand well will recognise this. There is a culture of hospitality to strangers, an immediate warmth and openness toward foreign

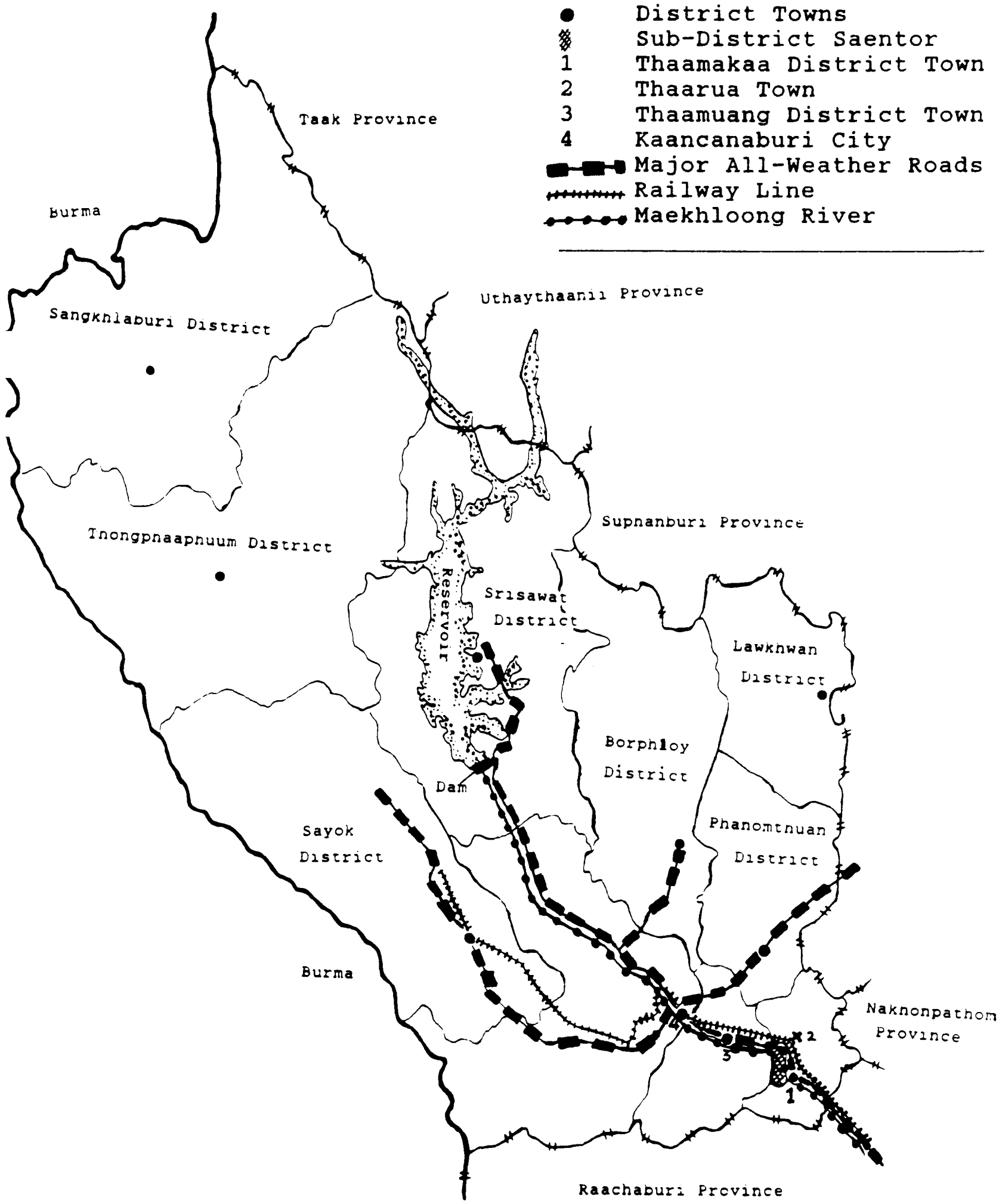
'guests', and a helpfulness and concern for their welfare, which is quite unparalleled in my experience. I would like to thank Saentor for providing us with one of the most stimulating and worthwhile experiences we could possibly enjoy.

This is not an appropriate place to try to express my gratitude to my partner, Dr. Rachel Williams. She has been a source of tremendous encouragement, moral support, and ideas and inspiration throughout the three years. I am especially grateful for her enormous contribution to the fieldwork - both in terms of moral support and data collection - and for commenting on drafts of chapters. She has had a lasting input which has greatly influenced the direction and content of this work.

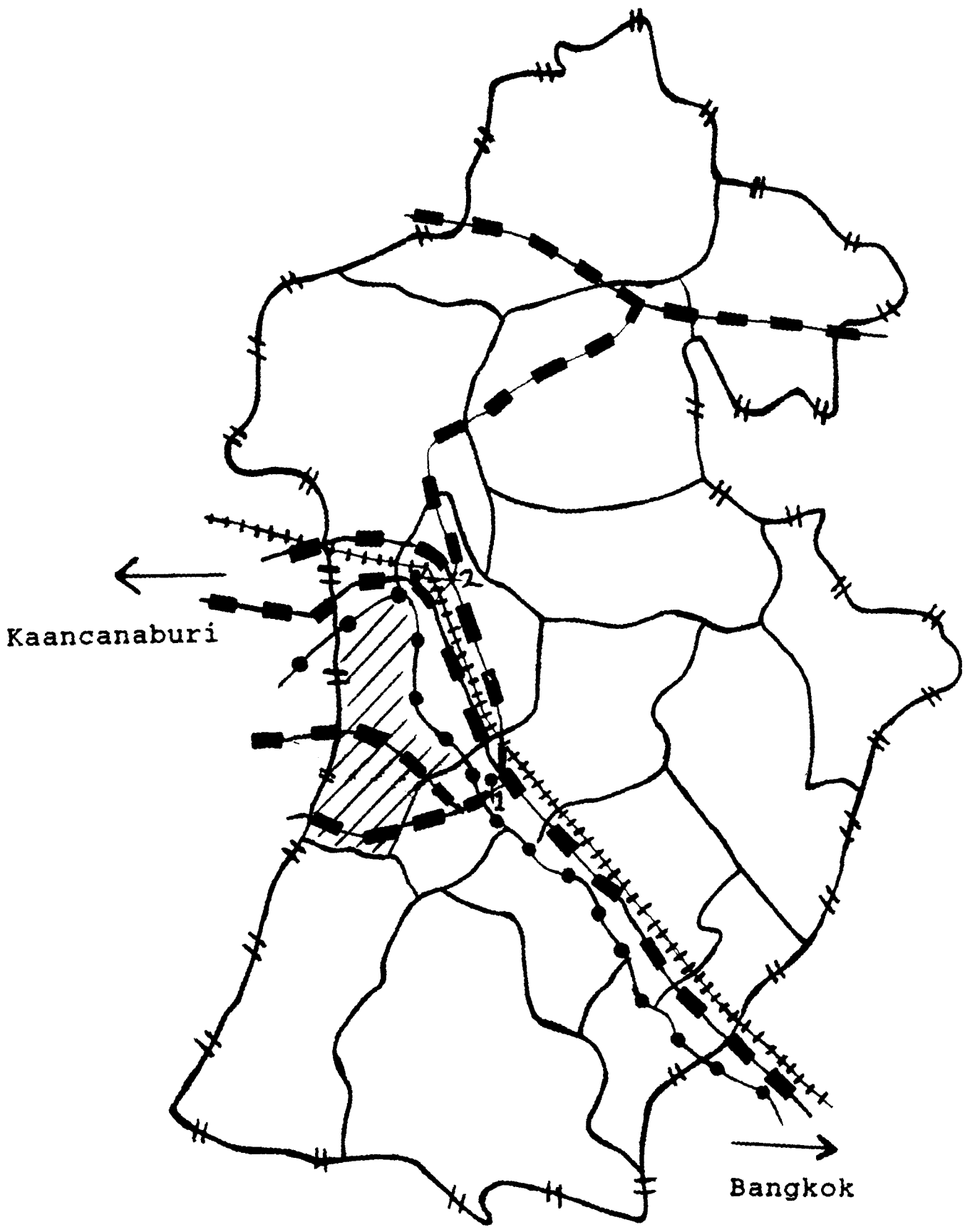
MAP ONE: THAILAND



MAP TWO: KAANCANABURI PROVINCE



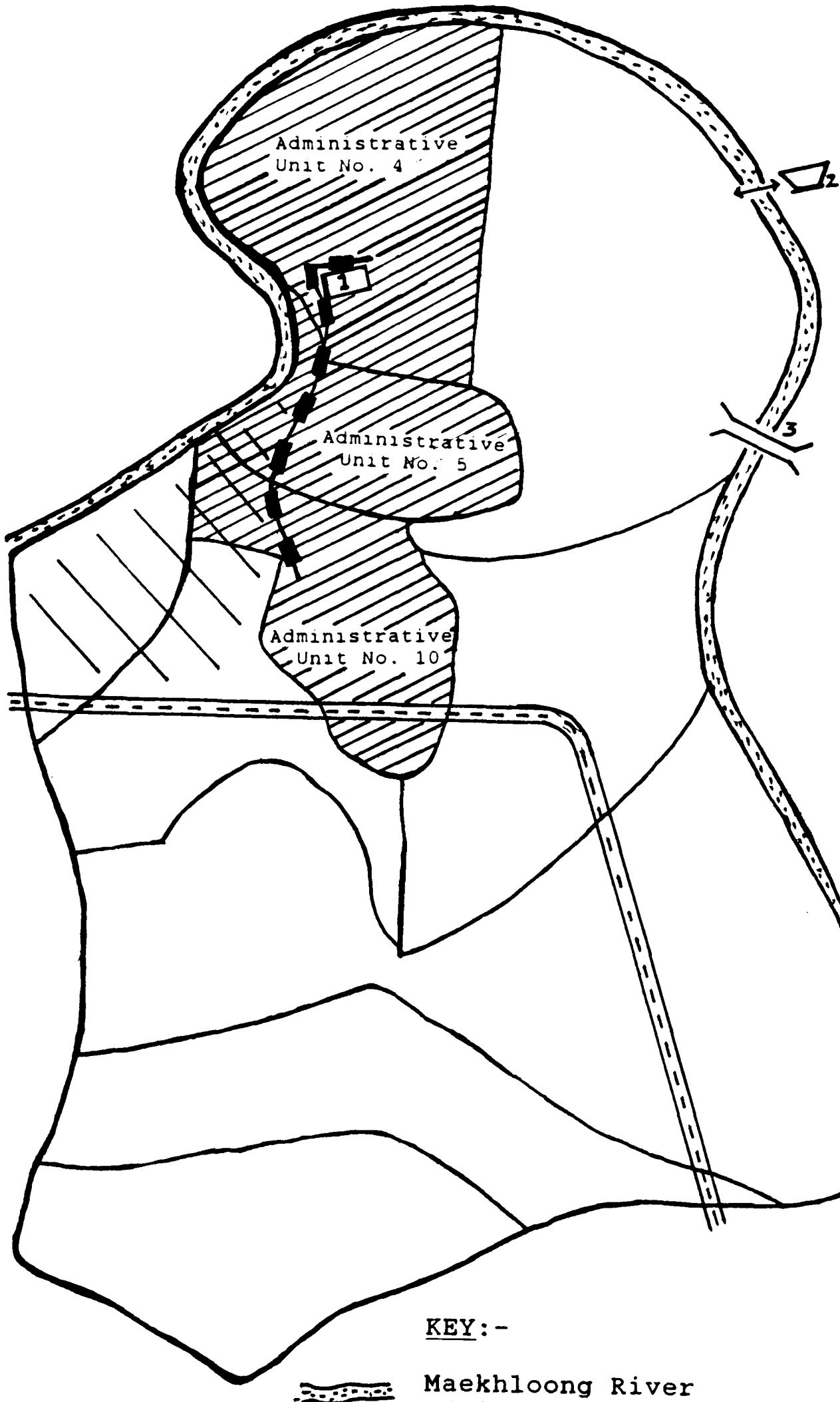
MAP THREE: THAAMAKAA DISTRICT



KEY:-

- Sub-District Boundaries
- Sub-District Saentor
- 1 Thaamakaa District Town
- 2 Thaarua Town
- Maekhloong River
- All-Weather Roads
- Railway Line

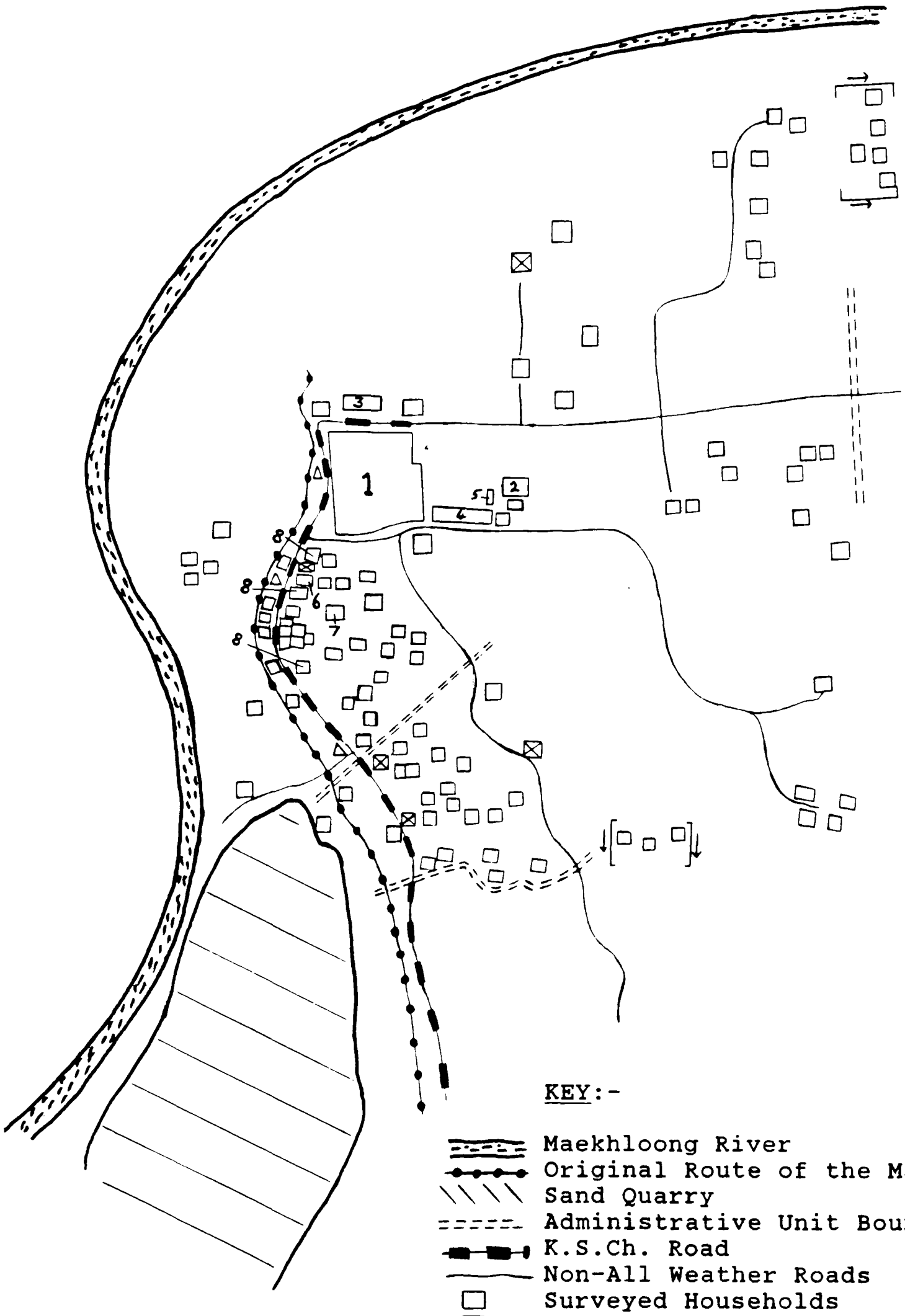
MAP FOUR: SUB-DISTRICT SAENTOR



KEY:-

- Maekhloong River
- Administrative Unit Boundaries
- Village Saentor
- Sand Quarry
- All-Weather Road
- K.S.Ch. Road
- 1 Saentor Temple
- 2 Saentor-Thaarua Ferry
- 3 Proposed Site of the Saentor-Thaarua Bridge

MAP FIVE: THE SURVEY AREA (ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS NOS. 4 AND 5)



KEY:-

- Maekhloong River
- Original Route of the Maekhloong
- Sand Quarry
- Administrative Unit Boundaries
- K.S.Ch. Road
- Non-All Weather Roads
- □ Surveyed Households
- ⊠ Houses Not Surveyed
- △ saalaa (shaded meeting huts)
- 1 Temple
- 2 Crematorium
- 3 Medical Centre
- 4 School
- 5 Library
- 6 Proposed Public Telephone
- 7 Author's Rented House
- 8 Village Stores/Noodle Shops

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a contribution to the study of rural development and social change. The society, economy and polity of rural Thailand have undergone radical transformations (albeit in an uneven, inconsistent way) during the last century and a half. This has been the source of a good deal of interest, notably in the context of the more radical and questioning assessments of development theory and practice which typify some post-war development thinking. One of the themes which has emerged concerns the phenomenon of stratification or differentiation in developing rural Thai economies. This thesis explores this phenomenon by reference to the case study of a single Central Thai community.

The theme pursued in this thesis is well-established in the literature, and the terminology surrounding it is relatively unequivocal. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, it may be useful to begin with some brief comments concerning key terminology. 'Stratification' and 'differentiation' will be used interchangeably in this thesis. These terms refer to wealth differentials and inequalities within the same community; they are defined by reference to the emergence of economic based status differentials within a single locality. In short,

'stratification' and 'differentiation' refer to the fact that some economic agents have gained, whilst others have lost out, from Thailand's rural development.

'Rural development' is a more contentious notion. In this thesis, 'development' refers to the transformations affecting rural Thai communities which are discussed more fully in the following chapter (sections 2.1-2.3). These transformations centre on the integration of rural communities into wider structures of state and capital - a process which is said to have been initiated by the development of free trade between Thailand and the West in the middle of the nineteenth century, and which has been continued by official development planning during the post-war period.

A major dissatisfaction with rural development in Thailand - which has been expressed by academics, non-government organisations and by some recent official Thai development discourse - concerns disparities in the felt benefits of change. Given a wide perspective on the whole of Thai society, inequalities can be seen to abound: between urban and rural sectors, along lines of ethnicity, and between regions. The aim of this thesis is to examine the development of inequality, and the inequalities inherent in development, by taking a micro-level perspective on one particular rural Thai community.

The phenomenon of stratification is explored in this thesis by reference to data collected during a year-long period of intensive anthropological fieldwork (1988-1989).

The aim of the thesis is to present a case study of the effect of Thailand's rural development in terms of the emergence of stratified rural economies. Given this, a study site which has undergone a good deal of the transformations which typify rural development in Thailand was chosen. Thailand is roughly divided into four regions: Central, North, North-East and South (see map 1). It is generally assumed that the Central Region has experienced the most radical transformations (Fallon 1983:112-134). I went to Thailand, therefore, with the intention of finding a study site in the Central Region. The field site was 'village' Saentor, in sub-district Saentor, Thaamakaa District, Kaancanaburi Province of Thailand (see maps 1-5). The fieldwork was preceded by one year of library research and succeeded by one year of data analysis.

The study site was selected with the invaluable help of staff and students at Silapakorn University, Nakhon Pathom. Through them, I contacted Thaamakaa's District Office with a description of the kind of community in which I was interested. The District Office introduced me to a variety of possible field sites. Saentor was most appropriate on a number of grounds. It had clearly undergone a good deal of development typical of the Central Region. There were considerable infrastructural development programmes in the area: notably, an unfinished concrete road, electricity, and a proposed bridge to a nearby market town. Agricultural production was specialised and market orientated. Saentor housed a number

of institutions in which I had an interest, including a primary school, medical centre, and various klum (groups or associations). Other important institutions at the supra-local level, such as the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative and secondary schools, clearly affected the community. One of the most powerful of local officeholders, the kamnan (the elected representative of the sub-district), lived there. In describing Saentor, officials said that it had undergone a good deal of transformation due to "development" and that the community was relatively heterogeneous in terms of occupations, wealth, and life-styles. Most of the houses were clustered together, which I felt would be convenient for studying social interactions and relations (see map 5).

This background information concerning the selection of my study site is not intended to suggest that this thesis focuses exclusively on the Central Region of Thailand. There are important variations in the scale, speed and nature of the transformations of rural communities throughout the Thai countryside. It is increasingly inappropriate to exaggerate the similarities within, and differences between, regions - which is not to deny that a region-specific focus can be important in certain contexts (notably, with regard development planning). Saentor is not representative of the Central Region, so much as one instance of a type of rural locality which can now be found throughout Thailand: a long-established, ethnically homogeneous community which is

favourably situated near to centres of economic and political influence and, hence, well integrated into a wider market economy and much affected by structures of state bureaucracy.

1.1 Defining the Study Site: Villages, "Functional Villages" and Administrative Units

The delineation of the "functional village" (Amyot 1976) is a well-established difficulty with regard to study sites in the Central Region of Thailand. In the past, houses were strewn out along the sides of rivers and tributaries which flooded annually to create good conditions for wet rice agriculture. Arbitrary divisions which were imposed by the bureaucracy for administrative purposes often do not coincide with the different communities established in the minds of rural people. Different criteria by which villages are distinguished - such as temple affiliation, kinship patterns, and village school attendance - cross-cut one another. Consequently, it is notoriously difficult to isolate out discrete communities (Phillips 1965:18). This feature has been given recent prominence in literature advocating the 'deconstruction' of Thai villages (Breman 1980; Kemp 1988), which is reviewed in chapter two, section 2.2 below.

The situation in my study site was typically confusing. Sub-district Saentor consisted of ten official administrative units (muubaan or muu), numbered 1-10.

These were serviced by three temples and four village primary schools. Three of these administrative units (nos. 4, 5 and 10) were co-extensive with what was known locally as muubaan wat Saentor (village Saentor: see map 4). This latter was the study site, and 'the village' and 'Saentor' will be used in this thesis to refer to this; where necessary, 'administrative unit' will be used in the thesis to distinguish the village from the arbitrary divisions imposed by officialdom for administrative purposes. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, in a sense, this says both too much and too little. On the one hand, the most intensive work was done with informants from administrative units nos. 4 and 5. For example, these were the households which I surveyed (see section 1.4 below), and most of my closest informants were from these. On the other hand, there was frequent, and often important, contact with people from all parts of the sub-district, and even further afield such as the District Office and nearby towns (see maps four and five).

A number of factors suggest that administrative units nos. 4, 5 and 10 comprised a distinct community to some extent. As mentioned, they were joined by the local name muubaan wat Saentor. Likewise, they were linked by various joint activities. For example, they entered village development competitions jointly. There was one klum mae baan (housewives' group) and one klum yuwa (youths' group) for administrative units nos. 4, 5 and 10. From the point of view of the local bureaucracy, they were perceived as a

unit: for example, medical centre assistants from administrative units nos. 4, 5 and 10 were given extra training prior to the rest of the sub-district.

There were just over two hundred households in Saentor. Over half of these were in administrative unit no. 10, whilst nos. 4 and 5 together contained one hundred households. However, even here the situation was confusing. An administrative unit contained some houses belonging to other administrative units (an administrative unit no. 10 house would pop-up in the middle of no. 5, for example), because the household had fallen out with their village headperson and demanded to be under someone else's jurisdiction, or due to an attempt to equalise the number of households belonging to each administrative unit.

1.2 Description of the Study Site

The brief description of Saentor contained in this section is not any kind of exhaustive sketch or holistic ethnography. Rather, it is intended to contextualise the data reported in the thesis; it is supplemented by the descriptive passages which occur in the main body of the text and by the brief review of ethnographic literature presented in the following section.

Transport and Communications

As compared to other rural areas of Thailand, there is good and improving transport and communications both within

the sub-district and between the village and urban centres. Traditionally, transport was by boat: along the various rivers and larger tributaries during the dry season, and all over the area after particularly heavy flooding. Where boats were not used, villagers walked. About fifteen years prior to the fieldwork, an irrigation dam was constructed to regulate the level of the Maekhloong river (see map 2). The cessation of annual flooding has changed the character of the sub-district in many ways. Notably, transport for the most part is now facilitated by non-all-weather roads using a variety of vehicles (bicycles, motor cycles and pick-up trucks). Although these are well-established, they fall into various degrees of disarray during the rains.

The two urban areas which are most important to the villagers are Thaarua, the local market town, and the district town, Thaamakaa (see maps 2 and 3). Communications to both are being improved. Villagers get to Thaarua by following a non-all-weather road for about two kilometres to the Maekhloong river, which they cross on a privately run ferry. A major development initiative in the area is a proposed bridge to Thaarua (see map 4). This will affect communications between the village and urban centres considerably, since at present the only access to Thaarua in a vehicle bigger than a motor cycle is via Thaamakaa. Thaamakaa is situated about seven kilometres from the study site. There is a concrete road just outside the village which runs to Thaamakaa. There is one strip of all-weather concrete road in the heart of the village,

which is the only one of its kind in the sub-district (although there was talk during the fieldwork year of starting a similar project in another of the sub-district's administrative units). This road is extended each year as part of K.S.Ch. (Kaan Saang Ngaan Chonabod: rural employment creation scheme). It will link up to the road to Thaamakaa (see maps 3, 4 and 5).

The main west bound highway from Bangkok to Kaancanaburi (the provincial city) runs through Thaarua and Thaamakaa. The District Office in Thaamakaa is approximately seventy kilometres west of Bangkok and thirty kilometres east of Kaancanaburi city. The Bangkok to Kaancanaburi railway stops at Thaarua and there is frequent public transport along the highway. Motor cycle taxis can be hired from the towns into the village, but there are no public transport facilities out of the village. Postal deliveries are made into and out of the village from the post office in Thaarua (see maps 2 and 3).

Ethnicity

There was almost no ethnic or linguistic diversity in Saentor. Informants were almost exclusively Central Thai in terms of ethnicity and language. Other distinct ethnic groups in the province (e.g., Laotian and Mon villagers, and the Karen) were not represented in the study site to any significant extent. The prevalence of Chinese-Thais (i.e., immigrants born in China and their descendants) is a well documented feature of Thai society (Skinner 1957).

Whilst a number of Saentorians were of Chinese descent, this did not disrupt the ethnic and linguistic homogeneity of the village. They were all second or third generation Thai speakers and were not easily distinguishable from the rest of the village population. There was no Chinese language spoken in the village, nor any sect adhering exclusively to Chinese religions. Villagers themselves were aware of who was of Chinese descent, but they said that descendants of Chinese immigrants had become fully assimilated by marriage with indigenous Central Thais.

On the other hand, there was a notable degree of migration into and out of the village. A large proportion of households had members who moved out of the village either temporarily or permanently for a variety of reasons (e.g., to work, to join the army, or to get married); and it was not uncommon for households to include members who were not 'born and bred' Saentorians.

The Domestic Unit

The typical domestic unit in the village consisted of nuclear families in physically discrete dwellings. However, there were some variations on this standard household composition (Netting, Wilk, and Arnould 1984). For one thing, almost invariably, the youngest sibling (usually female but not infrequently male) was expected to stay at their natal home to look after their parents, irrespective of whether they married. This offspring typically inherited more of their parents' wealth than did

their siblings. It was not uncommon for one household to raise another household's child, whether or not the two households were closely related. In a small number of cases, two households occupied the same domestic space.

In fact, there was a noticeable 'looseness' in the village regarding the implementation of kinship rules and norms in general (Embree 1950). For example, the villagers would explain that equal inheritance was the tradition, but that in reality parents gave as much of their wealth as they liked to whoever they liked. This dissonance between custom and practice was noted in the context of marital residence rules, bridewealth, marriage ceremonies and registration, and incest prohibitions.

Politics and Administration

The political system affecting the village will be discussed in detail in chapter three. Here, it is sufficient to note that the system of administration affecting Saentor is typical for rural Thailand, running from province to district to sub-district to village. Nine of the sub-district's ten administrative units were administered by an elected village headperson and their two assistants; the exception was administrative unit no. 4, where the kamnan (elected representative of the sub-district) doubled as the village headperson. Incidentally, throughout the thesis, 'the village headperson' will be used to refer to the village headperson of administrative unit no. 5; where some other headperson is in question,

this will be stated in the text. The kamnan had four assistants. The sub-district council (saphaa tambon) consisted of representatives of the village and of the District Office, plus other notable interested parties (such as the village school headmaster as secretary, the nurse at the medical centre, members of the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative management committee, and local craftsmen). The council met irregularly, approximately once every two or three months, in the village. Its primary responsibility was to administer development budgets pertaining to the sub-district.

Government officials at Thaamakaa's District Office were responsible for various fields of administration, such as community development, education, and land tax and registration. The district's police station was situated next to the District Office. During the fieldwork, a renewed effort to establish village committees was undertaken by the District Office. A number of other committees were formed in the village to administer various institutions, including the temple, the school and the newspaper reading centre. There were a few village meetings during the fieldwork, the most important of which rejected the proposal to incorporate Saentor into the Thaarua municipality (thaesabaan).

In a number of ways, village Saentor enjoyed preferential treatment over the rest of the sub-district. It harboured the sub-district's medical centre, and one of the four village primary schools in the sub-district was

located in the village. A proposed public telephone system was to be established there. The only K.S.Ch. road in the sub-district ran through Saentor (see map 5). In part, this is due to the fact that the kamnan lived in the village.

Village Religion

Villagers' religious beliefs consisted of a combination of Theravada Buddhism and animism. All the villagers would describe themselves as Buddhist, and there was an overt pride in their religion. There was a widespread understanding of the doctrine of merit. Most men had spent some time as a monk in the temple, typically at around the age of twenty-one and during the three months 'rains retreat'; ngaan buad (the ordination ceremony for men) was evidently pre-eminent amongst the various village ceremonies.

It became clear during the fieldwork that the community of monks in the village temple had no institutionalised secular role in the village. This is noteworthy in the light of recent research into 'political monks' in rural Thailand, especially their role in the field of non-government development work and the civil unrest of the 1970s (Somboon 1982, 1984). When I requested an interview with the abbot - who was normally very approachable and amenable - explaining that I wanted to ask a few questions about the village and especially about village development, he declined saying: "it's nothing to

do with me - go and see the kamnan and village headperson". Answers by informants to questions about the secular role of the monks were remarkably consistent. People always confirmed that the monks "may tong yung muubaan" (don't have to be bothered with the village). In fact, it was the villagers who were responsible for the monks: this included feeding the monks and giving them presents during ceremonies. Occasionally, informants were quietly indignant about this. Monks and ex-monks confirmed that their responsibilities did not extend beyond thong nangsur (rote learning texts), suad (chanting at ceremonies), and duulae boriwaen wat (looking after the area around the temple).

The temple and both personal and regular religious ceremonies and festivals were the main focus of village social life. The temple was always well attended on wan phra (the Buddhist sabbath), attracting devotees from outside the village as well as Saentorians. The numerous festivals and ceremonies (ngaan) staged during the fieldwork were usually a source of much interest and excitement and combined fun and 'partying' with merit-making. Often, ngaan were supplemented by the organisers with a hired film or likae (traditional Thai theatre). The other main social centres in the village were the raan kwitio (noodle stores), saalaa (shaded meeting huts) and various gambling pursuits (especially card games, cock-fighting and boxing on television).

The ritual life of the village was dictated primarily

by the need to make merit. Funerals, ordination ceremonies, remembrance days, and so on, invariably had merit-making as their focus. Even non-Buddhist rituals always involved merit-making. For example, there were strong beliefs concerning people who were pen caw (spirit mediums: i.e., villagers who were intermittently possessed by the spirits of dead people). Predictably, one of the most important of the responses to being diagnosed as pen caw was to increase one's merit-making activities. Borrowed ritual elements also had merit-making incorporated into them. For example, it was becoming popular to celebrate birthdays. However, whenever I asked someone why they were celebrating that day, or what the point of the celebrations were, they would reply: "tham bun" (making merit). Similarly, marriage was one festival which did not have merit-making as its obvious focus (compared, for example, to funerals and remembrance days which were organised specifically to make merit for the deceased): hence, marriages were the least important or prestigious of the village festivals.

Villagers' Buddhist beliefs were intertwined with strong spirit beliefs. Almost all the villagers constructed spirit houses outside their homes for the spirit owner of the site, and shrines inside for the spirits of dead ancestors of the household. Diagnosis and cure of mysterious ailments usually involved reference to the activities of phii (ghosts or spirits of the dead). Some farmers made contracts with spirit owners of their

land and crops to ensure a good harvest. The villagers were terrified of phii, which could return in various guises to haunt them.

Village Economy and Agricultural Production

The village maintained a monetised, market economy. Villagers' income came mainly from the sale of their farm produce, agriculture related cottage industries and off-farm activities (e.g., sinking wells for farmers or hiring out rice threshers), waged labouring, and from wages as a 'professional' of some description.

With regard to waged labour, an important feature of the village study site is the large number of nearby sugar factories. These processed raw sugar-cane for approximately three months during the sugar-cane season (around late December to late March). Some villagers were employed permanently as guards, mechanics, and so on, at the sugar factories (and in other areas of agribusiness, such as baby corn canning factories). However, of greater significance are the large numbers of villagers (male and female) who were employed full-time for the duration of the sugar-cane season, for 3,500-4,000 baat per month. Villagers were also employed at factories which were not connected to agriculture, including factories producing chopsticks and paper mills. A sizeable number of households had at least one member who was a 'professional', including teachers (inside and outside the village), policemen and bank clerks.

The main cash crops in the area were sugar-cane, baby corn, other vegetables (e.g., egg plants, asparagus) and fruit, and rice. The important feature here is the huge shift in crop choice from sugar-cane to baby corn around two years prior to the fieldwork. Sugar-cane was unpopular because it was capital intensive, income was only received once a year, and the price fell to be so low that farmers were in constant debt. Baby corn was perceived to have numerous advantages: good returns can be obtained from small plots using household and reciprocated labour; and since the crop cycle is only around forty-five days, growers can expect as many as five harvests a year. The price for baby corn was good, and insecticides are not necessary for its production. However, during the fieldwork, the price for baby corn fell by around one-sixth due to over-production. And there were perceived disadvantages to baby corn. For one thing, it needed far more attention than many other crops. During harvesting, ripe pods must be collected every day or they grow too big to sell, and fields had to be ploughed in between each sowing. Sugar-cane was preferred by those farmers with relatively large tracts of land (over 10 ray) and sufficient investment capital, who did not manage their own land anyway. These could benefit from the fact that sugar-cane needs little attention (once planted, it requires nothing other than harvesting for the next three years), and can grow on poor land.

One feature of the village related to sugar-cane

production is that migrant labour was imported into Saentor during the harvest. Saentor's sugar-cane was harvested annually, between December and March. Sugar-cane quota heads, who mediate between growers and the factories to facilitate the marketing of the crop, arrange for labourers to come into the village for the duration of the harvest to cut the cane. Usually, migrant labourers are almost exclusively Laotians and North-Easterners. However, this feature of the village was of less interest and importance than might at first appear. With the demise of sugar-cane and its replacement by baby corn prior to the fieldwork year, there were relatively few farmers who persisted with the crop. For example, only 16 of the 100 households in administrative units nos. 4 and 5 grew sugar-cane. Hence there was not much demand for migrant labour, and the quota heads did not feel it was worth importing large amounts of labour during the fieldwork year. Indeed, they seemed to rely more on indigenous labour, and some growers were 'caught out' as the season progressed and they had difficulty harvesting their cane. The system of importing labourers to cut sugar-cane had very little impact on the community.

Vegetables other than baby corn were unpopular in the village because they required insecticides and the price for these crops fluctuated. Most farmers did not have the capital required to establish an orchard; nevertheless, this was seen as very desirable because, once established, an orchard is not labour or capital intensive, a number of

fruits can be picked all year round, and the price for fruit is generally good and predictable. Rice could not be grown in the vicinity of the village because most of the soil in the area was too sandy to retain the water necessary for wet rice cultivation. Villagers' rice fields were three or four kilometres outside of the village, on the other side of the sub-district's all-weather road (see map 4). Since these were serviced by the district irrigation system (supplied by the irrigation dam upstream of the Maekhloong river), there were two harvests of rice per year.

Agricultural tasks were completed with a combination of household, waged and reciprocated labour. Wages for agricultural labourers were 40 baat per day. Apart from agricultural labouring, waged labourers had other opportunities to earn money in the village, including construction work (building, repairing, painting houses, and so on) and development related jobs (e.g., extending the K.S.Ch. road). Reciprocal labour (aw raeng) was more prevalent than I would have anticipated, given the numerous references in relevant literature to its demise. As far back as 1955, for example, de Young commentated that:

> The change from a barter to a money economy has destroyed some old customs and practices, particularly the cooperative work group which has largely disappeared in the delta and which in other areas is no longer used to plant and harvest secondary crops (de Young 1955:163).

In fact, there was a good deal of reciprocated labour in Saentor, notably to plant and harvest baby corn, and to harvest rice and sugar-cane; not infrequently, a landowner

would complete an agricultural task using a combination of household, waged and reciprocated labour. Nevertheless, reference will be made in the following chapters to the fact that reciprocal labour exchange has changed in character. Typically, it was characteristic of only certain strata of villagers: the very wealthiest villagers did not use reciprocated labour at all, and landless households were precluded from labour exchange groups. Also, reciprocal labour groups tended to be formed by closely related kinsfolk.

Baby corn, sugar-cane, fruit and vegetables, and rice, were the only agricultural produce of significance in the village. Unlike other Central Plains villages, there was very little animal husbandry, or fish-farms or commercial production of chickens and other livestock. H o w e v e r , whilst the vast majority of cultivatable land was given over to the specialised production of these cash crops, there was a notable amount of subsistence production. Many households consumed a proportion of their produce (especially rice, fruit and vegetables). Also, there was a good deal of production specifically for household consumption: for example, crabs, shrimps, fish, and such like were caught in the river; 'kitchen gardens' and small vegetable patches were established around houses; and most households raised livestock such as chickens and ducks on a small scale.

Agricultural land was of even quality, but not price. The most important distinction is between land in the

'floodplain', or old river bed, and land in the rest of the area. Over a number of decades, the river shifted from its original course to its position during the fieldwork year, by natural means (the sharp curve was gradually flattened out by erosion). Map 5 shows the route of the Maekhloong during the fieldwork year, and its original route. The 'floodplain' is the land between the two. Originally, villagers utilised this land by cultivating quick growing crops (mainly vegetables) which could be harvested before the river flooded during the rains. However, the advent of the dam, which for fifteen years or so has prevented flooding, means that land is available for cultivation in the 'floodplain' throughout the year.

Land in the 'floodplain' is government owned and farmers have no official tenure (i.e., they do not have bay thii din: land registration documents). This means that the land in the 'floodplain' is less desirable than land elsewhere. There are two main disadvantages to not being able to register the land. Firstly, the government could, theoretically, reclaim it. Secondly, it often cannot be used as collateral on loans, since large loans usually require a land registration document as surety. These disadvantages are not offset by the fact that farmers do not pay the land tax on this land: the tax is not a great burden in any case. Because of these disadvantages, the value of land in the 'floodplain' was lower during the fieldwork year than elsewhere in the village. Nevertheless, it is of good quality: too sandy for rice,

but good for fruit and vegetables. Despite innumerable enquiries, I could find no evidence of ownership disputes between villagers regarding this land. Everyone agreed that households simply used various plots of land until their 'ownership' of it became established. There were neither disputes nor feuds. Officially, sale and purchase of this land is illegal, though this is not enforced and nowadays all the land is used, bought and sold as if it could be registered officially.

Apart from the broad distinction between the 'floodplain' and the rest, the value of land has started to vary considerably depending on whether it is situated close to 'development' or 'progress'. Land prices ranged from around 30,000 Baat per ray, to around 80,000 baat per ray. For example, land near a road (all-weather or non-all-weather), an irrigation canal, or the proposed Saentor-Thaarua bridge, fetches considerably more than more remote fields. Informants were very aware of the increasingly disparate value of land in the village.

An important and related feature of the study site was the sand quarry (boo saay). As noted, the land made available by the shift in the river's course is very sandy. This makes the soil suitable for use in construction work. For fifteen years or so prior to the fieldwork, a local businessman had been buying up plots of land to excavate and transport the soil, twenty-four hours a day, for sale to construction firms (see maps four and five).

There were no topographical features which affected

agricultural production. In common with most of Thailand's Central Region, the fieldsite was unrelentingly flat and topographically homogeneous. Climate was also typical for the Central Plains. There were three seasons: the cold season from November to March, the hot season from April to June and the rainy season from July to October. Water for agricultural production was not a problem in Saentor. Apart from the irrigation system which serviced the rice fields, water was pumped from below ground using either petrol-run pumps or electric pumps.

Development Institutions

Perhaps the single most important development initiative affecting the study village was the introduction of electricity around ten years prior to the fieldwork. This was hugely popular. Only a handful of households did not have electricity, usually because they were situated in more remote parts of the village and could not afford the cost of erecting posts to carry the wires. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the villagers enjoyed the convenient lighting (usually one or two fluorescent lights in the house), television sets, stereos, rice cookers, electric fans, and so on, which electricity afforded. Apart from the ubiquitous television sets, other forms of mass media available to the villagers include radios and newspapers which were taken by the local noodle stores for general use. There were five village stores in Saentor, most of which sold snacks, mainly noodles (see map 5).

Saentor harboured the only sub-district medical centre (see map 5). Around twenty years prior to the fieldwork, a wealthy villager donated some land for the construction of a medical centre, in return for a scholarship for his daughter to study nursing in Bangkok. When the medical centre was built, she returned to run it. The centre has been substantially enlarged since then by a combination of public and private funding; during the fieldwork year, there were four staff members. The other principal sources of health care were the hospitals (both private and government-run) in Thaamakaa and Thaarua, along with a myriad of small, private, town based clinics and dispensaries.

Alongside these medical institutions were well-established forms of traditional medicine. A handful of moo klaang baan (traditional local healers), mostly elderly men, were still active in the village. Spirit mediums (khon song or people who were pen caw) were considered to be skilled in diagnosing mysterious (especially chronic) illnesses. Villagers maintained strong beliefs in the activities of ghosts (phii) and spirits (caw) when considering the causes of illness. Frequently, tham bun (merit-making) was the response to an ailment. There were regular night sessions at the temple during which patients would be diagnosed and treated by khon song and monks skilled in traditional medical practices. In fact, part of the temple had been given over to patients who lived there in order to receive regular treatment. Staff at the medical centre were not

perturbed by the competition they faced from traditional curative practices. They commented that the two styles of medicine are compatible and mutually supportive of one another.

The traditional role of the temple as the only source of education in the village (i.e., religious education, plus basic literacy and numeracy) has been usurped by secular institutions (excepting the religious education village males received during their time in the monkhood). The stages of the development of the secular education system is paralleled by the educational attainment of generations of villagers. Typically, the oldest generation of Saentorians had had no formal schooling, whilst the middle aged villagers had completed four years of free, compulsory primary school education at the village school; today's younger generation completed at least six years there. The important feature of the latter-day village education system is its diversity. A variety of different kinds of institutions at different levels were attended (primary, secondary and tertiary level education; vocational and non-vocational institutions; and state-run versus private establishments). Hence, there was a good deal of variation in terms of educational attainment: from young villagers with degrees from Bangkok universities to illiteracy amongst some of the older villagers.

Even from this brief introductory sketch, it will be clear that Saentor was a relatively prosperous Thai village

in a number of ways. Due largely to its favourable geographical position - notably, its proximity to the local district and market towns - it had received a number of infrastructural development inputs such as electricity, the K.S.Ch. road and the proposed Saentor-Thaarua bridge. Health and educational facilities were relatively good, and the village had no major agricultural problems such as water shortage or a poor climate. Saentorians did not suffer the malnutrition and dearth which characterise less fortunate village communities in Thailand. Relative to the conditions suffered in other parts of the country, Saentorians lived comfortably.

1.3 Review of Ethnographic Literature

The aim of this thesis is not to offer a detailed holistic ethnography of the study village. Hence, it may be useful to supplement the sketch of Saentor drawn in the previous section with a brief review of the ethnographic literature which describes rural Thai society, emphasising some of the classic monographs.

Until 1948 there were very few systematic studies of rural Thailand. Available source material consisted of writings by travellers, Western bureaucrats, and government officials. Two important exceptions are Zimmerman (1931) and Andrews (1935), who attempted detailed economic analyses for rural Thailand. In 1948, the Cornell Thailand Project began, as part of Cornell University's Programme of

Comparative Studies of Social Change. The aim of the project was to reveal the changing behaviour of rural Thais, not by any large-scale survey but by the intensive study of a single village by a large number of researchers over a long period of time. The village selected was Bang Chan, thirty-one kilometres North-East of Bangkok in the heart of the Bangkok rice delta. Villagers were found to be Theravada Buddhists engaged in wet-rice agriculture, who were increasingly influenced by Bangkok (Sharp et al. 1953; Sharp 1967; Sharp and Hanks 1978).

Thai ethnography was dominated by the Cornell Project for thirty years. Huge amounts of published and unpublished material were produced in various forms by a generation of scholars. The more important published ethnographic material which emerged includes work by Goldsen and Ralis (1957), Hanks (1963), Phillips (1965), Hauck (1956), Kamol (1955), and Textor (1973). Whilst the ethnography of rural Thailand was dominated by the Cornell Project, the theoretical basis for the analysis of Thai society and culture was given by Embree's 'loose structure' paradigm: i.e., the claim that Thai culture sanctions considerable variations in individual behaviour, as compared to other cultures where behaviour conforms closely to formal social norms and patterns (Embree 1950). Embree's theory more or less explicitly informed the Cornell Project and the literature it produced.

Of equal significance are the village studies which emerged to place the Bang Chan material in a wider context.

For example, de Young (1955) and Kaufman (1960) offered comparative descriptive ethnographies of other Thai villages as a foil to the Bang Chan data. The former attempts a synoptic account of daily activities in Thailand's villages, a broad brush stroke of village and social organisation, a typical Thai villager's life history, patterns of agriculture and economics, religious beliefs and practices, and recent changes to (and a prognosis of) village life. The latter gives field data from a single, intensively studied village located close to Bang Chan which, whilst holistic in nature, reveal a particular interest in village religion. Other key ethnographic references include: Piker (1964), Mizuno (1971), Tambiah (1970), Moerman (1968), and Amyot (1976).

The Bang Chan material was supplemented by other classic studies which are not primarily ethnographic. These include work on Thailand's wider economy and economic history and development (e.g., Ingram 1971), its political history and development (e.g., Riggs 1966), and its ethnic minorities (e.g., Skinner 1957). Finally, a wider theoretical context to the Ban Chan material eventually emerged from critiques of the 'loose structure' theory. Evers (1969) contains a number of theoretical papers for and against 'loose structure'. Potter (1976) argues that the paradigm is incompatible with field data, and includes a systematic re-working of data contained in some of the classic ethnographies (cf. Turton 1978b). Hanks (1975) offers a theoretical perspective on Thai society and

culture which was intended to reorientate the study of Thai society.

1.4 Research Methodology

Field data were collected from Saentor using a variety of techniques. The most important of these is participant-observation: during the months spent in the village, I attempted to integrate myself into the community in such a way that, through observations, informal conversations, and interactions with informants, relevant data could be collected. Having completed one year of language training prior to the fieldwork, and given the improvement in my Thai during the fieldwork year, I felt confident in conducting the research in Thai. No interpreters or research assistants were employed.

Participant-observation was supplemented by more specific interactions which were not intended to be - and, hopefully, were not perceived by informants to be - formal methods of data collection. For example, I taught English for a term at the village primary school and at a private secondary school in Thaarua, and visited a number of other educational institutions (notably, other village primary schools and Thaamakaa secondary school). I paid a number of visits to other important local institutions, including sugar factories, the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative, baby corn canning factories, the medical centre, and the District Office. All such occasions afforded the

opportunity to collect general data and data specifically relevant to the institutions in question.

The most important of the formal methods of data collection employed during the fieldwork involved the surveys, the questions on which are recorded in appendix one. All the households in administrative units nos. 4 and 5 were surveyed, except for anomalous cases such as Bangkok based investors who had bought land in Saentor, and households who owned a house elsewhere and were not obviously a part of the community (see map 5). A total of 100 households were surveyed: survey 1 was conducted in 60 households, followed by survey 2 which was conducted in 40 households. The interviews were carried out during a period of approximately two months. It was felt necessary to leave the surveying to the second half of the fieldwork, since then informal data collected during the first six months could inform the survey questions and structure.

I did not dictate to the surveyed households which member(s) should respond to the questions. I did not, for example, only interview men or household members over a certain age. It was hoped that, by not specifying who I wanted to question, I would be invited to interview whoever the household itself perceived as their head. After a few 'trial runs', I was satisfied that this was the case.

The main aim of the surveys was to collect quantitative data to supplement the more qualitative, impressionistic data collected by participant-observation. However, the qualitative/quantitative distinction was not

always so clear-cut. Survey 1 is more extensive than survey 2 (see appendix one) because this first set of interviews were seen as opportunities to elicit data on informants' attitudes and opinions. Connectedly, the survey based interviews were not always as different to 'ordinary' conversations as one might expect. Particularly in the case of survey 1, I tried to keep the interviews as informal as possible, and this was helped by undertaking survey 1 with households which I knew best. Consequently, on a number of occasions these 'interviews' evolved into dialogues which were not dissimilar to everyday conversations, and the subject matter discussed was wider than that dictated by the survey questions.

Nevertheless, the interview situation was inevitably always somewhat unusual: for example, I always jotted down respondents' answers to questions. Hence, I am keen to not report any of the more qualitative data which emerged in the context of the surveys unless these responses were supplemented by participant-observation. The survey data are intended to play only a subsidiary, supplementing role.

Finally, a series of formal interviews were conducted during the fieldwork. The interview questions are recorded in appendix two. These were conducted with six leading personalities in the fieldwork site: Thaamakaa's District Officer and a Community Development Officer; the kamnan (representative of sub-district Saentor) and the village headperson; and the medical centre nurse and the village primary school's deputy headmaster. The respondents'

comments were recorded on tape. The main aim of the interviews was to elicit the views of local officeholders on issues pertinent to this thesis. I acquired a number of written documents from Thaamakaa's District Office which also proved interesting in this respect, notably a booklet on local development problems which the District Office kindly compiled for me.

It should be noted that I was accompanied throughout the fieldwork by my partner, who assisted me in my data collection (throughout the thesis, therefore, there are occasional references to 'we' and 'our' and so on, as opposed to singular pronouns). This was an important aspect of the project. Data were contributed by two researchers. As a woman, my partner gained access to female informants in a way which would have been difficult for me. Certainly, my integration into the village community was greatly enhanced by the fact that I lived in the village as part of a couple.

1.5 Synopsis of the Thesis

This thesis explores the causes and the effects of stratification by reference to a developing rural Thai community. The bulk of the thesis (chapters two to six) addresses the causes of intra-village differentiation. Chapter seven considers the effect of stratification on village social relations.

The causes of stratification explored operate on three

'levels', which could be termed the macro-level, the local level and the individual level. Chapter two focuses on the macro-level: sweeping historical transformations, changes and developments pertaining to rural Thailand, which create the conditions for the emergence of stratified rural economies. The resultant differentiation in Saentor is characterised in the second half of chapter two. Chapters three and four present data from an intensive village study, to reveal ongoing processes at the local level which exacerbate stratification within a single community. Thirdly, chapters five and six focus at the level of individuals' behaviours and decision-making patterns, to explore systems of beliefs and values which are themselves stratifying features of the village.

Another way of expressing the connection between the data presented in chapters two to six, is to say that they explore constraints on villagers' pursuit of economic security and well-being. Historical transformations affecting Saentor have left a sizeable proportion of the village worse off than in the past (chapter two). Ongoing processes exacerbate their predicament by lessening what grip they have on local resources (chapters three and four). At the 'internal' level, a system of values and beliefs constrains their response to their worsening predicament (chapters five and six).

Chapter two reviews an account, which is reported with a notable degree of consistency in relevant literature, of the origins of stratification. This concerns the

transformation of relatively self-sufficient, self-autonomous and egalitarian village communities by the penetration of state and capital (Douglass 1984; Witayakorn 1983). The role in this of rural development during the post-war period is considered. However, this account is at odds with the concern to 'deconstruct' the Thai village found in some recent literature (Breman 1980; Kemp 1988). Data from Saentor are presented in the context of reviews of these two bodies of literature. During a review of the 'Russian debate' and other theoretical literature, the focus shifts from origins to characterisations of the differentiated peasantry. A number of interpretive models of stratified Thai villages, which have been presented in relevant literature, are reviewed. Whilst these would seem to present something of a broad front, they are followed by a consideration of the problems encountered in trying to capture and report stratification. Notably, the problem of defining basic economic units of analysis and criteria for the categorisation of these is addressed. An interpretive model of the stratification discernible in Saentor is then presented. Case studies of the strata and sub-strata of economic units are cited.

Chapters three and four form something of a unit, which pursues the theme of the causes of differentiation, focusing on local, ongoing processes. The notion of 'popular participation' provides a theoretical framework for the discussion (Pearse and Stiefel 1979). Processes of participation in and exclusion from access to resources are

reported. Chapter three presents data pertaining specifically to participation in local political resources and decision-making power. Firstly, it is argued that the system of rural administration fails to effect the political participation of villagers. A crucial irony is reported: 'participation by representation' is a contradiction in terms, because the represented perceive of their representatives as something unique and distinct from themselves. Also, the tenets of participation are incompatible with the prevailing political culture. However, referring back to the stratification reported in chapter two, it is shown that there exists a sub-stratum of rich villagers who enjoy a considerable degree of political knowledge and power, but that this is not straightforwardly grounded in differential access to local political office. A case study is reported to elucidate this sub-stratum. The effect of this concentration of political resources is illustrated by reference to village development related decision-making.

Chapter four turns to participation in and exclusion from control over local resources necessary for production and reproduction. A number of case studies are reported to show that the village poor are increasingly restricted in their access to these local resources. Rural development in Saentor is promoting the concentration of landownership. Investment capital in the form of institutionalised credit is unavailable to the landless; and of those households which do gain access to institutionalised credit, only the

village's economic elite can appropriate this as investment capital. Co-operative institutions are ineffectual: they either fail to facilitate the participation of the poor, or actively exacerbate differentiation. Accumulation and surplus extraction by the wealthy are facilitated by the concentration of marketing resources. Educational opportunities are monopolised by elite villagers in a number of subtle and unsubtle ways. Data presented in chapters three and four are brought together by a consideration of the articulation of rich villagers' political, productive and reproductive resources, and reference is made to the integrative nature of rich villagers' strategy of accumulation (Turton 1989).

Data presented up to this point in the thesis endorse the well-established assumption in relevant literature that the transformation of the Thai countryside has increased the vulnerability of a proportion of the peasantry, and that this, coupled with ongoing local processes, causes "increasing economic vulnerability among farmers already close to the margins of economic survival" (Bruneau 1984:356). In other words, a proportion of villagers are in a precarious positions vis-a-vis local resources.

The next move in the thesis is motivated by a number of research ideas which emerged from a reading of the relevant literature. Firstly, I was concerned to explore the suggestion that:

> An intervening variable mediating the relationship between low position and lack of upward mobility is a system of beliefs and values within the lower classes which in turn reduces the very voluntary actions which would ameliorate

their low position (Hyman 1970:186).

It is arguable, for example, that low aspirations is both a feature and a cause of working class status in Britain. Could something similar be claimed for Saentorians?

Also, it struck me that village level analyses assume that informants are homogeneous in terms of their general attitudes in the economic arena. They assume that village economic agents are comparable in terms of their patterns of economic related attitudes, behaviours and decisions. So, for example, analyses of the way credit systems exacerbate stratification assume that all strata of borrowers mean the same kind of thing by 'credit', 'capital', 'money' and so on, and make the same kinds of decisions concerning these. But the assumption that a rapid and continuing transformation of the village economy creates economic agents which operate in the same way, is somewhat counter-intuitive. Certainly, it is brought into question by a good deal of economic anthropology, notably that contributed by 'substantivists' (Polanyi 1957: Prattis 1973). Why should there be an evenly spread 'capitalist culture' in the community? The point seems important - not least because development initiatives usually assume that beneficiaries will respond to new economic opportunities in like ways.

Finally, a good deal of work has been focused on the responses by the rural poor to their predicament. Frequently, researchers cite 'survival strategies' which are undertaken by villagers who are increasingly excluded

from access to local resources. These typically include out-migration, establishing cottage industries, cash borrowing and so on (Scott 1976; Douglass 1984:103-151; Hirsch 1987:264-279). Again, these make implicit assumptions about villagers' economic related attitudes. They assume that economic agents respond in 'rational' (i.e., maximal) ways to their situation. They beg the question of economic agents' 'style' of decision-making. In this sense, therefore, data presented in chapters five and six are intended to pursue the theme of vulnerable villagers' survival strategies, by elucidating some of the more subtle constraints on their response to their predicament.

Chapter five begins by attempting to reconstruct villagers' perceptions of the stratification of their own community (Black 1972; Parkin 1972). This is juxtaposed with a description of patterns of economic related attitudes, behaviours and decisions typical of villagers. The important finding is a clear disparity between the attitudes, decisions and behaviours typical of rich versus poor economic agents. Rich villagers were 'rational': i.e., they came close to the stereotype of 'rational economic man (or person)', in that they pursued strategies of personal accumulation by aiming to maximise their incomes from minimum outgoings. By contrast, the poor did not undertake strategies of economic betterment. Furthermore, it is shown that poor villagers were economically reckless: i.e., they persisted in dearth-

threatening behaviours. This was acknowledged by informants in a variety of contexts. The data presented in chapter five are explicitly distanced from attempts to present a derogatory 'poverty culture' for poor groups.

Chapter six attempts to explain the non-accumulatory and reckless economic decision-making characteristic of poor villagers, by reference to pertinent elements in their system of values and beliefs. The most obvious of these is a demotivating perception of their restricted access to resources. Alongside this are three other factors which clearly relate to relevant literature: the economic decision-making typical of Saentor's poorest villagers is partly grounded in their attempt to maximise something other than financial returns on assets (Firth 1967), partly due to their prioritising dearth-avoidance over profit-maximisation (Scott 1976), and partly a form of indirect retaliation against those they see as their antagonists, the village rich (Scott 1985). Explanations of the patterns of poor villagers' economic behaviours are pursued by attempts to reconstruct their perception of their environment: do the poor believe their environment to be essentially benign and not threatening, and, if so, on what grounds? It is then argued that the belief set poor people construct regarding economic status and mobility is, by contrast to that of the wealthy, essentially fatalistic. Finally, the point is made that wealth status categories were moral and not only economic. Poor villagers behaved in response to the moral pressure to comply with their own

stereotype of the 'poor/good' person.

Stratification is essentially an economic phenomenon. It refers to the emergence of an economic based status system, wealth based status differentials of the kind that could not exist in the pre-capitalist village community. An important premise to this thesis is that the effect at the social level of this economic feature cannot be assumed, but should be considered as an independent issue. Hence, the theme of chapter seven is the consequences of stratification on village social relations: to what extent are social identities and relations informed by the differentials in the economic circumstances and status of households in the community (Turton 1976)? Although I have flirted with the concept of 'class' in chapter seven, I am keen that the analysis should not be restricted by an extended theoretical debate concerning class. The 'class hypothesis' (section 7.1) can be restated simply in terms of the claim on social identities made by villagers' relative economic status, and the extent to which this informs their interactive styles, attitudes and behaviours.

Contradictory data are reported in the context of case studies of social relations between the rich and the poor, and social relations between the poor. This suggests that stratification makes a claim of some weight on village social identities, and informs social relations to some extent, but that this is only one, relatively weak factor amongst others which often override it. However, data concerning the transformation of traditional status systems

(based on, for example, age, gender, and patronage) by the continued intensification of intra-village wealth based status differentials, suggest that the economic factor is increasingly important in this regard.

The second half of this thesis is motivated in part by a frustration I feel toward the relevant literature. It seems to me that there is relatively little material on rural development in Thailand which adopts an 'anthropological approach'. Many of the relevant references seem to belong in the category of 'development theory' (e.g., Douglass 1984; Hirsch 1987). Others form part of a 'political economy' school (e.g., Anan 1984; Witayakorn 1983). Some references deal with particular development issues (e.g., Lightfoot and Fox 1983; Watson 1980). Although some of the classic ethnographies reveal an interest in 'change and development' (e.g., de Young 1955:147-201; Kaufman 1960:210-217), this is usually somewhat tangential to their main concerns. Hence, there does not seem to be much of an anthropology of development for rural Thailand in the relevant literature. Whilst I appreciate that there are notable exceptions to this (e.g., Turton 1976; Scott 1985) - and that the plurality of perspectives taken on the situation in the Thai countryside is in itself commendable - I am concerned to present data pertinent to development in rural Thailand which reflect a recognisably anthropological approach. Chapters two, three and four of this thesis contain elements of the political economy approach, and elements of development theory; and

they address some specific development issues. Chapters five, six and seven, by focusing more on qualitative appraisals of individuals' behaviours and interactions and the system of value and beliefs which underlie this, aim to adopt perspectives which are grounded in traditional anthropological concerns.

1.6 Foreign Words and Phrases

Occasionally, foreign words and phrases appear in the text. This thesis is not intended as specifically a contribution to linguistic anthropology or the study of the Thai language. Hence, only a few Thai words and phrases are cited; and those which do appear in the text will certainly be very familiar to a Thai speaker. I have, therefore, felt justified in not presenting a complex or holistic system of transliteration. Foreign words and phrases are transcribed 'free-style' (though consistently): I have simply represented the Thai sounds in English. However, it should be noted that in my language training I was much influenced by the transliteration systems devised by Manas and Smythe (1984) and by Haas (1964), and this explains some of the idiosyncrasies in the way I have transcribed the Thai. In the case of this thesis, the reader does not have to understand the Thai words and phrases cited in order to understand the arguments - though I hope that for Thai speakers, the Thai words and phrases used will enhance the clarity of some of the points made. None of this

should be taken to imply disinterest in the role of language in both data collection and at the theoretical level.

Usually, Thai words and phrases are defined when they appear in the text. However, a few Thai words and phrases occur so frequently that they are not always defined after their first appearance. These are:

ray: The standard measure for size of landholding in Thailand (1 ray = 1600 square metres; 2.53 ray = 1 acre).

baat: The Thai unit of currency (during the fieldwork year, 42 baat = £1).

kamnan: The elected representative of sub-district Saentor.

len shae: A credit 'game' played by groups of villagers (see chapter four, section 4.2).

K.S.Ch.: Kaan Saang Ngaan Chonabod: rural employment creation scheme.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT AND DELINEATION OF STRATIFICATION

The aim of this chapter is two-fold. Firstly, accounts of the origins or causes of stratification, in terms of the historical transformations affecting the economic, political and social framework of rural Thai communities, are reviewed. These centre on the penetration of the pre-capitalist community by structures of state and capital. The role of post-war development planning in Thailand is discussed: 'development' in this context refers to state-led programmes aimed primarily at the modernisation of the economic sector. The review of this literature is related to recent attempts to 'deconstruct' the Thai village; and data on the recent history of Saentor are introduced.

Secondly, during a review of theoretical literature pertaining to the nature of the stratification of rural economies, the focus shifts to characterisations of the stratification reported from rural Thailand. The stratification discernible in Saentor is then described: case studies are used to present an interpretive model of the community which distinguishes a number of strata and sub-strata of households on the basis of a cluster of interrelated characteristics.

2.1 The Historical Origins of Stratification

Any attempt to review accounts of the origins of latter-day intra-village differentiation in rural Thailand has to address a tension in the relevant literature. On the one hand, there is the well-established argument that the traditional, pre-capitalist, 'corporate' village was transformed by the penetration of state and capital consequent on the incorporation of the Thai economy into the world capitalist system. As one proponent of this view puts it:

> everyone seems to agree that (the) Thai socio-economic formation has been transformed remarkably since (the) 1850s as a result of Western capitalist penetration (Witayakorn 1983:29).

On the other hand, this line of argument has been called into question by recent attempts to 'deconstruct' the Thai (indeed, South-East Asian) 'village': analyses which focus on the transformation of discrete 'corporate' village communities by the penetration of state and capital are questionable, since such communities did not exist in the first place (Breman 1988; Kemp 1988). In this and the following section, these two apparently contradictory body of literature will be reviewed in more detail.

The argument that the historical origins of stratification are grounded in the penetration of pre-capitalist rural communities by structures of state and capital, has as its starting-point the traditional, 'corporate' village community. The pre-1850 'corporate'

village is said to have been characterised by a high degree of economic independence, political self-autonomy, and homogeneity or egalitarianism, relative to the typical latter-day Thai rural community. A non-monetised subsistence economy prevailed. Production was directed toward local consumption and based on usufruct rights to land; it was socially managed through redistributive exchange relations (notably, during religious ceremonies and the merit-making activities of the wealthy) and reciprocal exchange relations (both symmetric, e.g. labour exchange groups; and asymmetric, e.g. patron-client relations). These were underpinned by a culturally sanctioned emphasis on social harmony and co-operation. The pre-1850 peasant household, village and region were relatively self-sufficient. Intra-village barter and (to an even lesser extent) inter-village barter did exist; but, in the absence of markets for their produce, for the most part producers supplied their own consumption needs (Douglass 1984; Nidhi 1988; Elliott 1978).

The corporate village was related to wider territorial formations through, for example, corvee labour, the village headperson, and religious institutions relating to the Sangha (community of Buddhist monks). It was also incorporated into the two-tier Sakdinaa system of royal patronage (Akin 1979; Anan 1984:chapter 2; Turton 1980; Elliott 1978:21-23). However, exploitation of the village by these was restricted. The pre-capitalist village was largely autonomous of supra-village structures (Douglass

1984:34-38).

The peasantry remained relatively homogeneous or egalitarian, at least in economic terms. Systems of reciprocity and redistribution kept wealth inequalities in check and provided "a minimum subsistence insurance for villagers" (Scott 1976:5). Without a market for village produce, opportunities for accumulation, concentration of the means of production, and so on, did not arise. The traditional pre-capitalist village was not stratified, as this term is used in this thesis. This is not to deny that,

> this ideal did not produce an egalitarian utopia. Social strife, tensions and material inequalities existed (Douglass 1984:33).

Despite the fact that all villagers shared equal status under the Sakdinaa system, traditional social hierarchies based on, for example, age, gender, and ritual rank, created the experience of unequal relations in the village community (Douglass 1984; Scott 1976, 1985; Ingram 1971).

The origins of the present-day stratification of rural Thai communities are said to be based on the transformation of the corporate village initiated by Thailand's exposure to free trade with the West. This took the form of trade treaties with Western powers, beginning with the Bowring Treaty with Britain in 1855, which was followed by similar treaties with other major European powers to the end of that century. The consequence of these was the integration of the Thai economy into the world capitalist system, or the penetration of capital into the rural Thai economy:

"Thailand was opened up to capitalist exploitation and concurrently an attack was made upon the indigenous social structure" (Elliott 1978:23).

The creation of an export market for Thailand's primary agricultural produce transformed rural economies. The resultant specialisation of production caused a decline in self-reliance. The emergence of an exchange value for land, labour and resources, caused stratification of the village community, tenancy and landlessness, decline in exchange systems of a reciprocal and redistributive nature, and the emergence of waged labour. Population increases caused the loss of slack resources, breakdown of the ecological bases of self-reliance, and a downward pressure on wages. Centralisation of political power and the increased power of supra-village political institutions in village economic decision-making caused a reduction in villagers' control of their own economy. An increased number of market towns, and linkages between the rural and urban sectors, caused the erosion of pre-capitalist systems of production, the emergence of 'core-periphery' structures in the national economy, and uneven urban versus rural development.

Such changes are said to have emerged in a partial and uneven way in rural Thailand. Many commentators have pointed out regional variations in the scale, speed, and nature of the transformations of rural economies (see, e.g., Bruneau (1984) and Anan (1984) on Northern Thailand, and Douglass (1984) and Witayakorn (1983) on the Central

Plains). It is generally assumed that the Central Plains villages underwent the most consistent and radical transformations (Fallon 1983:112-134).

In economic terms, commoditisation, specialisation, production for the market, monetisation, and the replacement of pre-capitalist systems of reciprocity and redistribution with capitalist systems of exchange, are crucial. These economic changes were paralleled and facilitated by the emergence of a centralised system of bureaucratic governance to replace the two-tier Sakdinaa class system: i.e., by the increased penetration of the state into the village. The resultant transformation of the social formation involves the emergence of economically stratified village societies out of erstwhile relatively homogeneous economies (Zimmerman 1931; Andrews 1935; Ingram 1971; Johnston 1975; Turton, Fast, and Caldwell 1978; Ananya 1984).

This theme, found in much of the relevant literature, is continued by reference to post-war Thai economic history, Thailand's 'development decades'. It is argued that this is characterised by the continuation of the transformation of the corporate village described above. The trade treaties (1855-1899) were reviewed in 1926. After the Peoples' Party's bloodless coup of 1932, Thailand experimented with 'economic nationalism'. This consisted of two strands: the restriction of Chinese power over the economy (Skinner 1957), and the creation of state-owned enterprises. The consensus is that resultant policies did

not break the pattern of change initiated in 1855, in part because they were never implemented free from bureaucratic corruption (Douglass 1984; Anderson 1970; Elliott 1978:27-34). And, by the 1950s, a number of factors were persuading the Thai administration away from economic nationalism and back toward international economic integration. These include the Korean war commodities boom and American involvement with Thailand. During the 'Sarit years' (1957-1973), this 'shift' was official (Thak 1979).

Some writers have suggested that the capitalization of the rural Thai economy has continued into the last three development decades with increasing rapidity (Turton 1976; Witayakorn 1983). Since 1961, Thailand has formulated official five-year development plans. These have been devised by the National Economic Development Board (NEDB), which became the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) around the time of the third plan (1972-1976). These five-year development plans have been called, "the most detailed expression of the official Thai view of development and of the strategies to be followed in its achievement" (Demaine 1986:96). It is suggested that the content of these show that the pattern of development as increased capital and state penetration of the rural economy has continued at least until the start of the 1980s (Demaine 1986; Uthong 1986; Meer 1981; Chayan 1984).

It has been said that the World Bank development strategy contained in the NEDB's first two plans (1961-1971), which implicitly assumed the 'trickle-down' effect

and aimed at infrastructural and private sector industrial development, "meant a return to policies traditional at least from the time of the Bowring Treaty in 1855 up to the coup of 1932" (Demaine 1986:97). A contemporaneous concern was with national security: development was mobilised as a counter-insurgency measure. From a nationwide perspective, the economic impact of many of the infrastructural developments was limited. Their effect was felt most strongly in the more accessible rural areas such as Thaamakaa in the Central Region. Specific policies aimed at the redistribution of benefits of economic growth were limited; and, with more reliable national income statistics available during the late 1960s, the failure of even those there were became increasingly apparent.

The third plan (1972-1976) contained prima facie changes in policy. The introduction of 'Social' into the NEDB's title was paralleled by a shift in budget allocation away from the economic infrastructure and toward the provision of better education and health facilities. However, in effect this was not a new point of departure. The 'hidden agenda' was both to develop human alongside other kinds of resources in order to increase the national productive capacity, and to counter insurgency by penetrating 'sensitive areas' (e.g., by building schools and hospitals). The development ideology of the first three plans was grounded in the assumption that the benefits of wealth creation, economic growth created by the activities of private producers, would be felt by all

sectors of society.

The real break in development ideology is in plan no. 4, but more fully expressed in nos. 5 and 6 (1976-1991). The basis for this is an increasingly clear recognition of the disparate effects of national development, involving the concentration of the benefits of economic growth and the neglect of certain social groups and geographical areas. The core of recent Thai development discourse seems to be the recognition that despite uneven, but generally satisfactory, economic growth rates, disparities throughout the country of the felt benefits of this healthy economy have reached critical proportions. It is increasingly appreciated that there has been too much emphasis on overall national economic growth as opposed to income distribution within the nation, with the expectation of benefits automatically trickling-down to rural areas. However, the extent to which this has filtered through to effect development thinking and planning in specific localities is questionable (Uthong 1986; Poonsiri et al. 1986).

2.2 The Corporate Thai Village: Empirical Reality or Ideological Construct?

The well-established account of the historical origins of stratification reviewed in the previous section has been brought into question by recent attempts at a 'deconstruction' of the South-East Asian 'village'. Breman

(1980) demonstrated that the supposed archetypal Javanese village - the closed corporate community - does not have a long history, but is a direct response to Dutch colonialism. Specifically, he wanted to show that although there were villages on Java in the sense of there being clusters of households, the village as a landholding, territory-controlling, formal administrative entity did not exist. Breman (1988) supported this argument with further evidence, such as the pre-colonial tributary system which extracted surplus from groups of clients and not villages: the diversity of Asian villages suggests that they are specific responses to local environmental, population, social, cultural, economic and political conditions. The immutable 'village' is a model 'constructed' by the colonial state.

This theme was continued by reference to Thailand. Kemp (1988) focuses on the fact that the social organisation of agrarian settlements in much of South-East Asia repeatedly fails to accord with established characterisations of the corporate peasant community. He thereby attacks the assumption that the village is the basic unit of organisation: for example, the first community studies on Thailand were problematic because researchers found it difficult to distinguish clear-cut communal units. He suggests that it is, therefore, a mistake to assume that the central problem in the analysis of rural Thai society is the disintegration of the 'peasant village' - the discrete corporate community - in the face

of capitalist penetration. Kemp relates his theme specifically to the issue of the articulation of peasants and cities:

> the peasant village <u>has</u> to be seen in the context of its articulation with a wider society which is not merely an aspect of organisation but at the very core of its existence (kemp 1989:10).

Importantly, he reviews evidence to the conclusion - which echoes Breman (1988) - that the Thai peasant village community "is an ideological construct rather than an empirical reality" (Kemp 1989:6). The corporate village is an "alien image" (ibid.:13), inappropriately imposed onto the South-East Asian context, which itself actively influences social realities such as the pattern of articulation of the village with a wider social universe. Specifically, this ideology can be seen as:

> a means of imposing control involving as it does both the expectation or demand that villages respond in a particular way to administrative dictate and the moral justification for them to do so (Kemp 1989:16).

Clearly, the deconstruction of the South-East Asian village advocated by Breman and Kemp brings into question at least some aspects of the account of the historical transformation of the rural Thai community reviewed in the previous section (it also, by implication, brings into question the recent stress in some Thai development discourse on self-reliance and the return to a fast-fading 'community culture': see Seri 1986; Vichit 1987). Some attempt should be made to reconcile these two bodies of literature - or, at least, to retain the important insights contained in them. The important thing is that neither the

account of the transformation of the corporate village reviewed in the previous section, nor the deconstruction of the Thai village reported in this section, should be exaggerated. Each perspective can be qualified by the other, and both contribute to an understanding of the origins of latter-day rural social formations.

The importance of transformations consequent on the integration of the Thai rural economy into a world capitalist system should not be understated. Kemp himself acknowledges that: "the post-Bowring impact of the industrialized world economy and capitalist penetration was very quickly felt in the heartland of Siam" (Kemp 1989:14). It is not disputed that the Thai rural communities of the Central Region were radically transformed by the opening up of Thailand to free trade with the West in the latter half of the nineteenth century; what is in dispute is the precise nature of those rural communities. Perhaps, then, Turton strikes a suitably conciliatory note:

> It would certainly be a mistake to exaggerate local or village autonomy and cohesion in earlier times or to establish some kind of immemorial baseline..... However, it can be shown that at least in the nineteenth century and often well into the twentieth there existed a degree of local independence, self-reliance (to use a term dear to certain development planners), co-operation, and relative egalitarianism within local communities, which present marked and increasingly stark contrasts with current realities (Turton 1989:89).

2.3 The Recent History of Saentor

The compromise advocated in the foregoing is supported by

field data from Saentor. No data were available on the origins of village Saentor because villagers could not remember the early history of their community, and there were neither written accounts nor oral traditions which record it. However, there was a remarkable unanimity concerning the recent history of the village (i.e., the village within living memory). Villagers remembered a primarily non-monetised, subsistence economy and its transformation. In the past, the very few households in the area produced almost all of what they consumed. A household would clear a part of the ample forest, using family and reciprocal labour, for rain-fed rice production. There was no shortage of available land. There was no market for land. Draught animals were kept by all households. Farmers did not need to purchase inputs: they took seed from their own crops, and used only natural fertilizers, insecticides, and so on. Other foodstuffs were caught in the river, or grown, or caught in the forest. Villagers drank and bathed at the river. Nowadays, they look back on that time and jokingly call themselves khon paa (wild, forest people). There was only very limited trade and monetisation. Occasionally, a boat would arrive with items the villagers could not produce themselves, such as salt. There was a small market in Thaarua which sold agricultural implements and a few other goods. Nowadays, villagers laugh about how households could survive from one year to the next on less than a baat. Luxury items (fish sauce, whisky, guns, etc.) were

produced by the villagers themselves.

Apparent economic independence was mirrored by a degree of political self-autonomy. The District Office was a small wooden hut in Thaamakaa. There was little communication between there and the village. The villagers found little cause to go there, and the police and other government officials had no business in the village. There was no infrastructure (roads, bridges, etc.), nor other local facilities such as the village school and medical centre.

Today's village operates a primarily capitalist, monetised, commoditised economy. All cultivatable land is owned. There is a very active market for land. Almost all of what a household consumes is bought with cash, either from the market in Thaarua or local village stores, or from traders who come into the village. Almost all production is specialised and market orientated. Villagers find the idea that the wealthy help out their poorer neighbours laughable. Some subsistence style production persists: fish, crabs, shrimps, and such like, are caught in the river; chickens and ducks are raised around the house, and there are numerous 'kitchen gardens'. However, the fact that much of the land in the area is inappropriate for wet rice cultivation (the village staple) is in itself an impediment to subsistence production.

Transformations of the village economy are paralleled and facilitated by those of the local political system. Nowadays, every household has cause to interact either

directly or indirectly with the District Office (e.g., to register births and marriages, to pay taxes, to register vehicles and land, and to apply for a gambling licence). Supra-village administrative structures penetrate the village in institutionalised ways (through, e.g., the school, the medical centre, and the sub-district council meetings), and in ad hoc ways, such as when the police wander in to keep an eye on a big festival. Some villagers are government officials, including teachers and policemen. Some villagers have friends who are government officials (e.g., policemen were regular players at the village headperson's gambling sessions).

These data would seem to concord with the account of the historical transformation of the rural sector reviewed in section 2.1 above. Likewise, data from Saentor seem to support the contention that the development process of recent decades accelerates the transformation of the village by increased state and capital penetration. An effort was made to reconstruct what 'development' (kaan phadthanaa) means in official discourse. I spent a good deal of time in conversation with local developers. The District Officer and the Community Development Officer kindly visited us throughout the fieldwork, and I attended a number of meetings and other less formal functions at the District Office. District Office staff supplied me with considerable amounts of written material pertaining to development in Thaamakaa District. I was able to spend a lot of time with the village headperson and the kamnan,

since they both lived within a hundred yards of the house I rented. I was also in contact with other local bureaucratic figures, such as the medical centre staff and staff at the village primary school. Especially important in this context are the taped interviews I did with a number of leading administrative personnel (see appendix two).

The data which emerged from these contexts produce a strikingly clear picture. Local developers, both at the district and village levels, had a very conventional understanding of 'development'. They stated that the main aim of 'development' is to facilitate the integration of village communities into a wider market economy. Typically, developers cited communications and infrastructure as the principal development problems in the area. Roads, bridges, the irrigation system, and such like, were mentioned most frequently. Explicitly, it was stated that these were important because of the need to facilitate the movement of produce to markets. Similarly, marketing problems, such as crop-choice, over-production, and prices for produce, were often cited. There was a concern to improve marketing facilities. Increased production for sale was also a priority, including the need for credit facilities and a good agricultural infrastructure (e.g., better fertilizers). Thailand should follow the lead of America and Western Europe, and encourage big business and industrial development in an area like Thaamakaa. Where the population can no longer

participate as producers in the new economic opportunities, phadthanaa aachiip (the development of professions such as tailoring, mechanics, hairdressing and so on) will take over. People will be encouraged to produce something which will enable them to make a living. Jobs in industry should be created to soak up the underemployed landless villagers.

There were other, lesser themes in the official discourse. For example, there was frequent reference to phadthanaa tua eang (personal development), which hinted at modernisation and improving ones personal qualities. Also, phadthanaa chumchon (community development) stressed the need to make the villages tidy and neat (riab rooy). Occasional reference was made to social or welfare programmes, such as the medical centres and schools. However, the principal theme was clearly that development is about facilitating the integration of the village economy into wider structures of state and capital.

This official development discourse is reflected in the kinds of development initiatives typical of the area. 'Development', in practice, was understood to consist primarily of state-led projects aimed explicitly at incorporating the village economy into supra-village economic systems. The following were some of the main development initiatives understood by informants (villagers and officeholders) to constitute kaan phadthanaa muubaan (village development):

The Saentor-Thaarua bridge: By the end of the fieldwork, work had begun on a bridge from sub-district

Saentor to the market town of Thaarua over the Maekhloong river. Prior to the bridge, a private ferry was the only way of crossing the river, and the alternative route was a drive of over ten kilometres, via Thaamakaa (see maps three and four).

The K.S.Ch. road: A concrete road through Saentor was extended each year (begun five years prior to the fieldwork) as part of Kaan Saang Ngaan Chonabod (K.S.Ch.: rural employment development scheme). Eventually, this would link up to the all-weather road to Thaamakaa (see maps four and five).

Public telephone: By the end of the fieldwork, work was almost complete on the installation of a public telephone. It was to be placed in the house of a prominent villager and could be used by anybody for incoming and outgoing calls (see map five).

School loudspeaker: The village primary school had a village loudspeaker system which played the Thai national anthem every day and which could be used for general announcements.

Irrigated canal water: The damming of the Maekhloong meant that all rice fields owned by villagers were irrigated by a system of canals. Hence, there were two harvests of rice per year.

Village development competition: Two years prior to the fieldwork, Saentor entered and won a village development competition. Various decaying development slogans were still pinned to trees, and the main point of

the competition was to make the village riab rooy (neat and tidy, 'together') by building fences, cleaning up, and establishing 'kitchen gardens'.

Electricity: Almost all village households had electricity - the exceptions were remote houses out of the body of the village - which had been introduced around ten years before the fieldwork. This was a hugely popular initiative. Informants made frequent reference to the greater convenience electricity afforded. Notably, it meant that television sets could be used, and that the village was less frightening and dangerous at night.

Vocational training: A sewing class was held under the house of the village headperson of administrative unit no. 10 for two months during the fieldwork year. This was attended by teenage girls who had completed the six years at the village primary school, but had not studied on. There was a small entrance fee and students brought their own materials, but the District Office helped supply machines, teaching staff, desks, etc. This was by way of a trial run and may be repeated. Before the sewing class, there had been a weaving class run in the same place and along similar lines. Just after I left the field, classes were to be established to teach hairdressing and cutting. Graduates were expected to use the skills they acquired to get paid jobs; failing this, such skills were felt to be of use in the home, and able to reduce household expenditure.

The principal theme in all official development in the study site was the further integration of the village into

wider structures of state and market. This was the main element in official development discourse. As is clear from the case studies of specific projects outlined above, development initiatives required and facilitated bureaucratic penetration of the village and village institutions, and were useful primarily in terms of integrating the village into a wider market economy.

On the other hand, referring back to the review of literature which aims at a deconstruction of the Thai village (previous section), none of what has been reported so far in this section requires that we exaggerate the 'corporate-ness' of traditional Saentor. A number of data, which are compatible with those presented so far in this section, do not support an exaggerated or stereotypical view of historical Saentor as a corporate community. Difficulties surrounding the delineation of the 'functional village' were acknowledged at the outset (chapter one, section 1.1). Although the point was made there that administrative units nos. 4, 5, and 10 were linked by various joint activities and the same name, it is nevertheless difficult to delineate a discrete village; and data are presented in a later chapter to show that a number of factors (administrative, physical and ideological) continually break down a Saentor/other distinction (chapter five, section 5.1). More importantly, informants described how, in the past, sub-district Saentor consisted of no more than a handful of houses strewn out along the side of the Maekhloong river, which were separated by large distances

and inhospitable jungle.

It is reported in chapter seven below that informants expressed an ideological emphasis on the village as an homogeneous, seamless, corporate whole. However, the point is made there that this did not consistently inform behaviour and interactions: I was struck by the fact that villagers did not usually act in a communal, corporate, good-for-all way (section 7.4). Nevertheless, informants explicitly denied that the villagers helped one another out more in the past than they do today. There was no sense of the loss of a corporate culture, a harking back to a better world when the village was united and everyone helped one another out. For example, when I asked people how the village in the past would have responded to a neighbour in difficulties (e.g., a household whose crops failed), they gave the clear impression that such a household could not have expected handouts or unequivocal assistance from the other villagers.

The notion that the latter-day stratification of Saentor can be traced to the post-1855 integration of the Thai rural economy into the world capitalist economy does not preclude a debate as to the nature of the pre-capitalist community which was thereby transformed.

2.4 Peasant Differentiation, the 'Russian Debate' and Recent Theoretical Perspectives

Having considered the literature pertaining to the

emergence of stratification in an historical sense, this and the following section review literature pertaining to the nature of the differentiation consequent on the integration of traditional village economies into wider structures of state and capital.

Lenin (1982) argued that as capitalism spreads into rural areas, it separates rural producers into disparate socio-economic classes. Firstly, less than one-fifth of the rural population will emerge as an agrarian bourgeoisie or a class of capitalist farmers, either from former landlords or from amongst the rich peasants. Secondly, agricultural labourers will emerge; these will comprise over half of the rural population, and they might or might not retain small allotments of land for their own use. The essential characteristic of both these strata is their participation in the commoditised, monetised economy. Finally, there is the 'middle peasantry': more or less self-sufficient household producers who use mainly their own family labour, and are little involved in selling their own labour power. The capitalization of the rural economy makes the existence of this latter group increasingly precarious. Lenin's suggestions were based on an analysis of statistical evidence pertaining to the rural economy of turn-of-the-century Russia. In this tradition, a number of attempts have been made to develop models on the basis of which 'classes' of peasants can be identified (Utsa 1988; Venkatesh et al. 1987).

Lenin's analysis was challenged by the persistence of

the distinctive peasant economy: small producers not separated from their means of production, who retain a degree of control over their land and farm labour. Kautsky, aiming to demonstrate that capitalism succeeds more or less along the lines indicated by Marx, observed that Western agriculture in the late nineteenth century was developing in a way which allowed the persistence of the so-called 'middle peasants' (Banaji 1976; Ennew, Hirst, and Tribe 1977). Often writers argue that peasants survive primarily because they are able to produce goods more cheaply than are capitalist producers (Djurfeldt 1982; Williams 1982). Williams (1982) accepts that persistent inequalities emerge in peasant societies, and concedes the possibility of a secular process of differentiation, but maintains that peasants (household producers maintaining a degree of control over land and labour) survive.

Most famously, the populist Chayanov reinterpreted Lenin's data on socio-economic disparities in terms of processes of 'cyclical mobility'. The peasantry is homogeneous in being composed of comparable household farm units, but cyclical processes bring about what differentiation there is. In other words, at different stages in their life cycles, peasant households are subject to varying labour-dependent ratios and have access to different amounts of land. There is no long-term trend of increasing polarisation of classes (Chayanov 1966; cf. Harriss 1982).

White (1989) argues that the debate about the

differentiated peasantry is valueless if it is grounded in the quest for a single, unifying model of agrarian differentiation. The variety of forms of differentiation undercuts the notion of a single model or theory which encapsulates the process of agrarian differentiation in the context of global capitalism's development:

> There is no universal or all-purpose 'agrarian question' awaiting investigation, nor is there any universal form of 'agrarian differentiation' (White 1989:17).

Useful analyses assume that specific examples of change and development occur in contexts of specific character, and these interact with general "tendencies" (ibid.:19). Otherwise, research will consist of showing how specific situations of change do or do not accord with some classic model of differentiation. This is not to deny the value of exploring the relevance of such models to specific situations.

Harriss (1982) suggests an equally sensible view of the debate:

> for analytic and for practical purposes both perspectives have a great deal to offer. It would be foolish to ignore the implications of tendencies toward differentiation amongst rural producers.....Equally, to ignore the persistence of peasant producers, and not to seek out the reasons for it would be damaging to any serious study of agrarian problems (Ibid.:26).

Indeed, it has been pointed out that Lenin's and Chayanov's models are in fact not entirely incompatible (White 1989:19; Hirsch 1987:234).

Conciliatory though these views are, they do raise the question of quite what research into 'agrarian

differentiation' is to consist of, if our aim is not the construction of a single explanatory model. White (1989), echoing a theme found in work by Wolf (1966), Deere and de Janvry (1979), and Ghose (1983), suggests that differentiation "is not about whether some peasants become richer than others but about the changing kinds of relations between them" (White 1989:20). Differentiation neither consists in, nor even necessarily involves, increasing income inequalities, because its essence is the process of change in the ways in which different groups gain access to the products of their own or others' labour. The focus for the investigation of such changing relationships is the mechanisms of transfer or extraction of surplus generated. Given this, the more obvious indicators of rural differentiation (size of landholdings, farm size distribution, etc.) may well prove redundant.

White argues for a multifarious approach to the study of agrarian differentiation. This involves the distinction between the process of differentiation (which concerns shifts in patterns of control over means of production and the accompanying social division of labour) and various aspects of that process. These latter include the causes of differentiation, which are usually sought in the penetration and expansion of a commodity economy, the mechanisms of differentiation, external forces and historico-political contexts, the constraints to differentiation, and the symptoms or indicators of differentiation (White 1989:25-26).

2.5 Characterisations of the Latter-Day Thai Peasantry

This section continues the review of literature pertaining to the nature of the stratification of rural economies, focusing on accounts of the stratification of specific rural Thai communities.

Turton (1976) defines five "socio-economic classes" of households discernible in his Northern Thai study site. Landlords own agricultural land but do not work it themselves and rely chiefly on land rent. Rich peasants own all or most of their land, possibly renting out/in some. They own better and more instruments of production, can accumulate liquid capital, and - above all - rely chiefly on hired labour to work their land. Middle peasants may own, own plus rent, or rent their land. They own a fair number of instruments of production, but may also have to hire some. They rely on domestic plus co-operative exchange labour: they are the principal beneficiaries of, and depend on, the latter. Production is subsistence, and not market, orientated. They may receive some income from wage labour which they do not depend on. Poor peasants are those for whom the tenant relationship is the most marked. They may own some land which is insufficient for subsistence, and a few instruments of production, but they are obliged to sell some of their labour and/or get into chronic debt. Agricultural labourers own no land, possess no or few instruments of

production and rely principally on the sale of their labour power (ibid.:277-278).

Turton correlates each of these strata to five "economic categories", and presents characteristics relating to each of these, such as use of labour in rice production, ordination, office-holding, and literacy (ibid.:294-295).

Potter (1976) argues against the 'loose structure' paradigm for rural Thai society outlined by Embree (1950). He presents data from a Northern Thai village, and a re-working of previously published anthropological field data, as evidence for an eleven point structure to Thai village society. One of these eleven is the classification of village households according to "socio-economic status", which is based primarily on the relationship to the means of production, namely land (Potter 1976:51-80). Landlords own enough land to be supported by land rent and associated activities such as rice mills, lending money and growing fruit. Rich peasants own more land than the average and are considerably better off than the average village family, but they do work in the fields (they may rent out some of their land) and have less property than the landlords. Middle peasants own sufficient land to achieve self-sufficiency, and support themselves from land alone. Poor peasants have to hire themselves out because they do not own and rent sufficient land to support themselves. Landless labourers neither own nor rent land. They work for landowners in the village or employers outside

(ibid.:58-60).

Like Turton (though for different reasons) Potter correlates a variety of characteristics to his "socio-economic categories". Unlike Turton, he presents case studies for each category, including the anomalous case of a village headperson. He re-works anthropological data contained in other references to conclude:

> class stratification based on differential ownership of land is a universally present structural feature of all Thai villages (ibid.:188).

Douglass (1984) pursues the same theme for the Central Region. He suggests that, "five strata or classes can be identified within the agrarian economy of the Central Plains" (ibid.:69). Landlords are owners of relatively large tracts of land which are rented out. Commercial farmers differ to landlords in that they still live locally and undertake at least managerial tasks related to production. Middle peasants own or are able to rent enough land to meet household consumption needs without dependency on the market or the sale of their labour power. Marginal peasants own or rent land insufficient to meet annual household running costs. They survive by household production plus rural waged work. Landless labourers neither own nor rent land. They rely solely on waged work (ibid.:68-76).

Douglass is concerned to elucidate the causes of growing imbalances between agrarian "classes", including the dissolution of reciprocal and redistributive institutions, processes of spatial polarisation and changed

uses of state power, land concentration and alienation, and the transformation of patron-client relations into class relations.

Anan (1989:121) defines "socioeconomic class" for his Northern Thai study site in both structural terms and in terms of peasant consciousness. He points out that in this century, emphasis has shifted from property relations to labour relations. He distinguishes the following: landless labourers live in rural communities, own no agricultural land, and rely exclusively on agricultural and other waged labour and some income from petty trade. Poor peasants maintain themselves from household production but also rely on renting land and waged work. Middle peasants maintain themselves by working their own land themselves, but for stability may have to rent some or all of their land without necessarily or regularly working for wages. Rich peasants own superior means of production. They accumulate capital and appropriate surplus through investment in production, renting out land, and hiring other peasants to work for them. Capitalist farmers invest heavily in both farm and off-farm enterprises (ibid.).

2.6 Problems Encountered in the Portrayal of Stratification

Despite the commonalities in the references cited in the previous section (cf. Siwarak 1985; Bruneau 1984), these writers do not always understate the difficulties

surrounding the task of characterising stratification. For one thing:

> It becomes increasingly inappropriate to generalise in speaking of the household as a unit. On the one hand the situation of the young, and younger adults, and in different ways the richest and poorest among them, may tend to undermine the unity of the household. On the other hand women from households of different status are linked <u>as women</u> (Turton 1976:280).

The point introduces the problem of what comprises a community's basic economic unit. What are the economic agents whose economic status and circumstances are to be assessed, compared one to another, and which are available for categorisation? The question should be put in the context of the now well-established debate in anthropology concerning the notion of 'household' and the role of naive assumptions in definitions of the domestic unit (Netting, Wilk, and Arnould 1984; Thorne 1982; White 1989:22).

Perhaps a minimal definition of a basic economic unit is: (1) mutual economic responsibility (each unit's members will have a claim on the assets, incomes, economic decisions, and so on, of all the others - a claim which does not extend beyond that unit's boundaries), and (2) shared economic status.

The categorisations cited in the previous section seem to assume that the household is the basic economic unit. For the most part, villagers in Saentor did too, if 'household' is taken to refer to members of physically discrete dwellings. Saentorians assumed a mutual economic responsibility between household members which did not extend beyond the household. Only household members

consistently pooled resources: for example, when a temporary sugar factory employee gave a percentage of their wage to the household head for household use. Either implicitly or explicitly, the economic status of any individual was shared by their household's members. For example, villagers repeatedly described the scenario of a person marrying into or out of money, suggesting that their status is determined by that of the new household they establish. Underpinning this perception by the villagers of the household as the basic economic unit, is the notion of yaek kan (to separate). Informants' understanding and utilisation of this term was remarkably consistent. On the one hand, yaek kan laew (to have separated) meant that the household in question had separated out to become a discrete economic unit; whilst yang may day yaek (haven't yet separated) meant it was part of a larger economic unit.

However, whilst this model was fairly consistently assumed by the villagers - and will, therefore, form the basis of the model of Saentor's economic stratification presented in the following section - it requires qualification. Occasionally, members of a 'household' disagreed as to whether they comprised one household or two, and were unclear themselves as to the composition of their domestic unit. Also, participant-observation revealed that it was sometimes appropriate to take either the individual or the family as the basic economic unit, as compared to households.

Occasionally, it was appropriate to talk of intra-

household economic units. Sometimes, for example, an informant would not know their spouse's income, or any details about a sizeable loan their spouse had organised with a lending institution. Informants might refer to a household and say, "it isn't rich - but the youngest son is, he's a policeman". Certain individuals repeatedly described themselves as poor, when it was clear (both to myself, other villagers, and other members of that informant's household) that their household could not be so described. Occasionally, one household's member would hire another.

There was also evidence for supra-household economic units. Occasionally, an offspring would marry and establish a 'household' very close to the parents. Typically, this would have very strong economic ties with their natal household. For example, they would work the latter's land, and stand to inherit it. There would be some pooling of resources (e.g., communal meals, shared electricity bills, interest-free loans). Other villagers would perceive of these 'two' households' economic status as linked - so, for example, informants would comment that the offshoot 'household' was not really poor because the original household was well off. There was other corroboratory data, including culturally sanctioned claims to interest-free loans between close relatives which cross-cut household lines, and the phenomenon of households receiving more or less regular cash inflows from children who had clearly established distinct households.

How appropriate the 'household = basic economic unit' formula is, depends largely on the structure and circumstances of households in question. One of my neighbouring households, for example, consisted of six adult wage earners (a mother and five of her children) and two small children. Such a situation lends itself to the emergence of more independent intra-household economic units. With six wage earners and only eight mouths to feed, each adult felt obliged to pool only a small percentage of their income for communal household use. They could keep the rest for personal use. As young adults, they had no difficulty in finding ways of spending personal income. As young <u>single</u> adults, they enjoyed the opportunity to express independence through undirected economic activity. The structure and circumstances of certain other households likewise lent themselves to alternative understandings of the basic economic unit.

Tension, a struggle for supremacy between competing models of economic units, existed. Two brothers lied (independently) about their savings to their siblings, because the latter would have exercised a claim on those savings based on a 'household = economic unit' model. On another occasion, a young woman was admonished by her siblings for the way she used her income. Her 'right' to do as she liked with her money was in tension with their 'right' to be party to any decisions.

A similar tension existed between models of economic units drawn along household and supra-household lines. The

example was mentioned above of an offspring's 'household' being established near the original, natal household. Other informants typically perceived of these as constituting one household. However, if household members themselves were asked, they would almost invariably claim that these were two independent households. When surveying the village, for example, members would usually insist there were two discrete households to be surveyed. Another example mentioned above is the claim to interest-free loans between close relatives and across household lines. One of the commonest criticisms of certain wealthier villagers by the poor was that their phii noong (siblings and cousins, colloquially: close relatives), would ask them for financial help and not be given any. This criticism is based on a 'family = basic economic unit' model.

Some of the difficulties with pinning down economic units are grounded in the fact that the villagers wilfully slid from one definition of the economic unit to another. When an informant wanted to criticise the rich, they would adopt the family-wide interpretation of economic responsibility and scold them for not recognising the 'legitimate' claims of close relatives to financial assistance. When they wanted to stake a claim on fellow household members' assets, they would invoke the 'household = economic unit' model. When it was expedient, individuals would become, or at least try to become, discrete economic unit in and of themselves (e.g., when a man wanted to use large amounts of 'his' money to gamble).

Problems surrounding the classification of households are compounded by problems with the classification of households. Decisions have to be made on the criteria for economic categorisation. It is tempting to adhere to the tradition that "socioeconomic classes are defined by their relation to the means of production" (Potter 1976:175; cf. Bruneau 1984:348); and that in rural Thailand, land is "at least perceived as the basic factor of production" (Hirsch 1987:58-59). However, as Douglass hints, surely there are a number of factors to be taken into account:

> The diffuse distribution of power of traditional village society has given way to concentration in the hands of those who are able to accumulate land or other scarce factors of production (Douglass 1984:77. Emphasis added).

What Douglass hints at, White (1989:19) makes explicit. He criticises the tendency to present statistics on landholding as if these indicate rural class distinctions. A large number of anomalous households' socio-economic status is not coincident with their ownership of land (e.g., young couples waiting to inherit land). This is precisely the problem Potter at least acknowledged:

> Some of the village families - sons and daughters of landowners who help their parents farm and who eat from their granary, and aged widows and others - are difficult to classify in this scheme. There are about twelve village families who work full-time in non-agricultural occupations. Thus the terms are approximate only, and all the village families do not fit neatly into my categories (Potter 1976:59).

As far as Saentor is concerned, categorisations of households based on landholdings would have been worse than useless. Survey based data reveal that land was an

unequally distributed resource in Saentor:

Landholdings (ray)	Landholders (households)
0	20
less than 5	28
5 - 10	26
11 - 20	15
more than 20	11

Nevertheless, other data clearly show that households' economic status and the size of their landholdings were by no means always correlated. Of the 100 households in the survey area, 37 had at least one member with a permanent job (or a pension or insurance scheme from a permanent job). The significance of this with regard to household economic status is indicated by the fact that, of these 37 households, 19 owned land but the income from permanent job(s) exceeded the income from farming their land. Plus, 30 surveyed households had at least one member who undertook 'irregular work' (i.e., substantial irregular work which did not include agricultural labouring or working the season in the sugar factories). This work often afforded a considerable income: for example, the income from village stores, from a male householder's capacity as a craftsman, and from ambitious entrepreneurial undertakings such as a transport business. In a number of cases, the income from irregular work such as this exceeded on-farm income. Of the 100 surveyed households, 18 had a member who worked the season in the sugar factory, and substantially more had at least one member who rap caang (take ad hoc agricultural labouring jobs) around the

village. Clearly, it would be unwise to take size of landholdings or income from land as an accurate index of Saentorians' economic status.

Other problems emerge. Different households own incomparable assets: large landholdings and money in the bank versus large amounts of investment capital, for example. Even wealth of the same kind is not necessarily comparable. For example, the quality and value of land can vary within a village, and different farmers can achieve different returns on land of the same amount and quality.

Taking a diachronistic perspective compounds such problems. There was 'cyclical' mobility in Saentor: the relative status of a household changed in a variety of regular and predictable ways through time. Seasonal agricultural cycles were more or less important depending the household's main crop. For example, baby corn was preferred largely because it afforded a small income around four times a year, whereas the sugar-cane growers struggled all year toward one big harvest. The most important cyclical element as far as labourers were concerned was the sugar-cane season when the factories opened for three or four months and their income rose from 40 baat per day to around 3,500 per month. Apart from 'cyclical' mobility, other factors changed households' economic circumstances. There were a number of cases of what could be called 'natural' mobility. Some households were awaiting inheritance of which they were assured. Others could expect a decline in economic status if, for example, they

have a large number of offspring and traditions of equal inheritance are followed. There were a number of other instances of 'natural' mobility. For example, it was not uncommon for a household head to die or leave the family, leaving one parent to raise a number of children. The amount of labour at a household's disposal could drop quickly as offspring leave to marry. When the offspring of a large household grow old enough to leave school, work and bring money into the household, their household's income will dramatically increase. And compounding these problems is 'economic' mobility: some households were in a state of economic assent or decline because of their economic ambitions, the way they handled money and so on. Some village households were at various stages in various processes of change in their economic fortunes.

Other examples of deceptive economic status existed in the field site. One Saentor household appeared to have nothing but did not <u>seem</u> poor. After much investigation, it transpired that they had recently 'sold up' in anticipation of retiring by the sea where they had bought a new house. Similarly, elderly villagers were often 'poor' in only a very special sense: they had given everything away to their offspring, but retained independence.

Certain incomes and outgoings are difficult to quantify. To some extent, for example, there was a taboo on the amount households in the study village spent on hospital fees. Incomes from cottage industries (e.g.,

picking, slicing and drying fruits for sale as beverages) and ad hoc labour (e.g., looking after parked vehicles during the Thaarua temple festival) were often substantial but not quantified. Likewise, illegal acquisitions (theft, prostitution, hosting gambling sessions and the like) were not ascertainable. Frequently, and understandably, informants lied about their incomes and assets.

The difficulties raised so far should be put in the context of more general problems surrounding analyses of stratified rural Thai communities. For one thing, the process of differentiation in rural Thailand is incomplete, with a majority of rural producers maintaining some control of land; and class consciousness has not arisen at the pace of changing production relations (Hirsch 1987:58-59; Anan 1989). Both 'class formation' and 'class consciousness' are in an "inchoate and fluid state" (Turton 1989:75; see chapter seven below). The problem at a different level is how to infer the structure of the rural social formation from specific case studies. Arghiros (1990) is currently doing fieldwork in a study site in the same region as Saentor, where inter-village and not intra-village differentiations appear paramount. He reports one village (or, at least, administrative unit) in which a vast majority of villagers are landless labourers in the local brick industry, whilst adjacent 'villages' in the same sub-district are apparently economically stratified to a much higher degree and are therefore more akin to Saentor (Hirsch 1987:236ff.; Mehl 1985). Evers (1973) and Elliott

(1978) represent two attempts to characterise the social class formation discernible at a much wider level. As Bruneau puts it:

> the single-village nature of most research is hardly favourable to a study of social classes which must take account of major social phenomena at regional and national levels (Bruneau 1984:343).

Bruneau also raises the problem that single-village studies are not conducive to taking the historical perspective, since they "provide an image of a community only <u>at a given time</u>" (ibid.).

2.7 <u>The Stratification of Saentor</u>

This section describes the economic stratification discernible in Saentor, with reference to the difficulties concerning economic categorisation raised in the foregoing. Firstly, for the purposes of this thesis, the basic economic unit in the study site will be taken to be the household. The task at hand is an analysis of disparate economic circumstances and status, and there are sufficient grounds for taking the household as the unit of analysis. The villagers assumed shared economic status between household members, and behaved accordingly, with a notable degree of consistency. The debate laid out above regarding the household as the basic economic unit will serve to qualify this model.

Secondly, households' economic circumstances will be determined by reference to a number of interconnected

factors. Witayakorn (1983:127ff.) argues that in Central Thailand at least two "classes" have emerged: big, wealthy landowners and the landless or near landless. In between are a number of different strata (e.g., middle peasants and small peasants). He apparently considers size of landholdings as the criterion for economic status. However, he goes on to argue that land is not the sole measure of rural "class" differentiation (ibid.:131). Capital, natural and social conditions of the means of production, production methods and levels of technology, surplus, and so on, could all be important. However, since available data for Central Thailand show a general correlation between size of landholdings and other possible criteria for status, "it can be safely argued that we can analyse social class differentiation in the agrarian sector by basing (it) on the distribution of landholdings" (ibid.:131).

Witayakorn's argument can take us one of two ways. We could assume that landholding statistics are viable indicators of economic status after all, because they correlate to other factors. For reasons outlined in the discussion concerning problems surrounding the categorisation of village economic agents (previous section), this would seem like a step in the wrong direction. More constructively, we can stress the notion of a cluster of correlated characteristics pertaining to households which, taken simultaneously, are a far more accurate indicator of economic status than any one taken

singularly.

This multi-dimensional approach is assumed (either explicitly or implicitly) in most of the best work done on Thailand's rural differentiation. Hirsch (1987:58) points out that landholdings and access to capital, two possible indicators of economic status, must be correlated since "access to formal credit depends to some extent on collateral in land" (cf. Lightfoot and Fox 1983). Deere and de Janvry (1979) suggest that, "the highly unequal pattern of access to land is also reflected in the unequal distribution of other resources" (ibid.:604). Turton (1976), in his definition of "socio-economic" categories, prioritises access to land. However, he invariably goes on to include instruments of production, labour patterns, surplus production and relationship to the market, as interrelated factors. Potter (1976:51) begins his chapter on "social stratification" with the sub-section entitled, "The Importance of Land Ownership" - but goes on to give case studies of members of different strata which include reference to credit relations, political office, non-farm income, quality of house and furniture, luxury items, etc. Siwarak (1985) refers explicitly to the need to take into account more than one factor of production, and stresses labour relations as the principal indicator of 'socio-economic class'.

Data were collected on indices of economic stratification in Saentor by participant-observation and by the surveys (see appendix one). The cluster of

characteristics relevant to determining households' economic status and circumstances include: income (from land and non-farm); production related assets (land, including its quality and value, and instruments of production); labour patterns (household, reciprocal and hired); household assets (vehicles and luxury consumer items); capital (especially credit); accumulation and appropriation of surplus; educational attainment.

A case study approach to reporting the economic stratification revealed by these characteristics and other biographical data, will be adopted here. This avoids the need for rigidly defined categories. It allows a number of interrelated factors to be mentioned. It facilitates the more qualitative approach endorsed here. Also, it can imply that households will fit only more or less easily into the categories suggested - not all households are paradigmatic (Hirsch 1987:241-262; Potter 1976:58-80; Halcrow ULG Ltd. et al. 1981:127-152).

There were three broad categories of households in Saentor: (a) rich, (b) middle ranking and (c) poor households. There were sub-categories within each of these. Two kinds of rich households were discernible, (a)i and (a)ii; two case studies of each of these are reported below. There were two kinds of middle ranking households, (b)i and (b)ii; one case study for each of these are reported. Finally, a case study for each of three sub-categories of poor households, namely, (c)i, (c)ii and (c)iii, are given. '<u>Ray</u>' refers to the standard measure

for size of landholdings in Thailand (1 ray = 1600 square metres; 2.53 ray = 1 acre). 'Profit' as used below refers to the cash income from an enterprise minus the cash outgoings for that enterprise. 'Thang' refers to a measure for amounts of rice (literally, bucketfuls: approximately 20 litres capacity or 10 kgs.).

(a) Rich Households

(a)i There were two kinds of rich households in the study site. Two case studies of the first kind are presented here. The first case study is that of a couple (a thirty-six year old man and thirty-four year old woman), their daughter (aged fourteen) and son (aged three); plus five live-in workers/servants:

Landholdings: This household owned 12 ray of orchards in Saentor; and 50 ray of rubber plantations and 20 ray of rice outside of Saentor, in the woman's original home.

Land rentals: They rented in 3 ray from the village headperson at an annual rent fee of 400 baat per ray. It may seem odd that one of the wealthiest of village households rented in 3 ray of land. In fact, this was a typically shrewd move. The land was prime Saentor land and situated adjacent to this household's orchard. It was known that the owner was in dire financial straits. Predictably, this household put in an offer for the land during the fieldwork. They made it clear in conversations that they anticipated an offer being accepted in the near future. Likewise, it may seem surprising that this

household did not rent out land. This was because live-in workers from the North-East were preferred. The owner did not trust Saentorians, and said that they were "lazy" compared to live-in workers. He explained that he had calculated that he could make more from the land using live-in workers than he would by renting the land out.

Purchase/sale of land: Around ten years prior to the fieldwork, they bought the 12 ray of Saentor land from a non-relative for a total of 180,000 baat. They bought the 50 ray of rubber plantation over a period of five years from the woman's brother. Ten years before the fieldwork, they sold 25 ray for a total of 75,000 baat, and used the money "to invest".

Quality/value of land owned: The 12 ray of Saentor land was of very good quality and in a good location. The sale price was around 70,000 baat/ray.

Income from landholdings: They could not quantify the income from their land. Part of their rice crop was used for household consumption. The rubber trees had just been planted. They could not assess income from the fruit, because the harvest and the price for the crops are very irregular.

Instruments of farm production: This household owned a private electric water pump for the orchard.

Farm labour patterns: The five live-in workers/servants from the North-East work the 12 ray of orchards, for a wage of 1,000 baat per month each plus board and lodge. This household explained that they do not

hire village labourers because they are "lazy and untrustworthy". Also, they 'hired' over twenty members of the woman's family to work the rice fields, and payed them with a percentage of the harvest. Their rubber plantation required little labour input. They were not at all involved in aw raeng (reciprocal labour).

Non-farm income: They had established a transport business consisting of four ten-wheel trucks. These were used to, for example, shift sand from quarries to Bangkok and sugar-cane from the countryside to the factories. Income from this varied around 7,000 baat/day.

Access to credit: During the fieldwork year, they borrowed 200,000 baat from a commercial bank "to invest", at an annual interest rate of 15%. Their land was the surety on the loan. This household was a creditor to other villagers.

The household outlined here was somewhat unusual in that the male household head was one of only a handful of villagers who had lived and worked abroad, in his case for around seven years in various Middle Eastern countries. He had returned to Thailand with capital acquired during that time, and with the intention of investing in farm and non-farm projects. He was not originally from the village, but knew Saentor from his days as a 'truck boy', a youngster who cleans, loads, drives, and so on, a ten-wheel truck.

This household's financial superiority was expressed by their household assets. They had built a modern style home for 300,000 baat five years ago, and a garage for

40,000 baat three years ago, in both cases using private monies. They owned a pick-up truck, two motor cycles and a bicycle. Their two televisions sets, 60,000 baat stereo unit, video, camera, refrigerator and gas cooker were all bought new and with cash. They owned an antique grandfather clock. They had a private electric motor for the household water supply. Typically of rich households, they invested in fee-paying education. The daughter of this household was at a secondary school in Bangkok, where she was expected to go on to tertiary level education. The parents planned that their daughter would be a doctor, and their son a policeman.

A second household of similar economic status consisted of ten people: a thirty-eight year old woman (the household's head), her father, daughter, nephew, and her partner; plus five live-in workers/servants:

Landholdings: They owned 24 ray of land. The household head's partner expected to inherit a considerable amount of land in his original home, which was outside of the village.

Land rentals: They neither rented in nor rented out land.

Purchase/sale of land: The female head of the household had not inherited land, because she was given the opportunity to study on instead. Hence, all their land was purchased. Notably, over the five years prior to the fieldwork, they bought 20 ray of land for around 440,000 baat. Most of this was purchased from non-relatives. This

household had never sold land.

Quality/value of land owned: They explicitly bought the land to resell once the price had risen. It was not intended to be farmed. Hence, it was valuable Saentor land, worth around 60,000 baat per ray.

Income from landholdings: None: it was controlled solely by her brother, who kept all the profits, during the period of waiting for its price to rise.

Instruments of farm production: This is not relevant, because this household did not farm their land themselves.

Farm labour patterns: The land was managed by her brother.

Non-farm income: The female head of the household was a teacher at Thaamakaa secondary school. Her monthly income was 5,500 baat per month. She had established two quail's eggs 'factories', or battery farms. She raised quails to sell once they were fully grown, and sold their eggs. Profits from this enterprise were around 25,000 baat per month. Her partner had recently returned from working in Saudi Arabia. Due to ill health, he had not yet invested the considerable amount of capital he had brought back from there.

Access to credit: A main credit source was a secondary schools' credit association, of which the female household head was a member. She commented that it is cheap and convenient to borrow from there. Typically, she was 60,000 baat in debt, at an annual interest rate of 15%. She said she borrows "to invest", and does not experience

repayment problems there. Commercial banks were another important credit source. Firstly, the bank extended overdraft facilities: she could go overdrawn at the bank, at no charge. Secondly, this household borrowed 60,000 baat from the bank as a loan, to invest in land. The land they already owned provided the surety on this loan. The annual interest rate was 15%. She commented that she had no problems paying off the overdraft or paying back the loan. She borrowed 40,000 baat from another rich villager. She complained that the interest rate of 24% was very expensive. However, her own household was a creditor in the village, using exactly the same system: i.e., they lent very large amounts to other rich villagers at an interest rate of 24% per annum.

Both these (a)i type households explained how there is "nothing left over" as far as household income is concerned in the sense that, "anything left over is used to finance future investment. Money is kept circulating". Occasional cash flow problems were dealt with by withdrawing money from the bank. Both households had members who had acquired capital by working abroad. In this latter case, the household head's partner had recently returned from Saudi Arabia. Again, in this latter household there was heavy investment in education. The daughter of this household had attended a private kindergarten outside of the province, and attended a private primary school in a third province during the fieldwork year. With regard the latter, school fees alone were 18,000 baat per year.

As was the case in the first of these two case studies, this latter household's luxury and consumer items expressed their high financial status: 300,000 baat were spent on house improvements, and they owned a pick-up truck, 12,000 baat worth of stereo equipment, a colour television set, a refrigerator, three gas cookers, a video, two cameras and a vacuum cleaner. All these were bought new and with cash. This was one of the very few village households which had an oven, which was worth 27,000 baat.

(a)ii The following are two case studies of a second sub-stratum of households discernible within the category of Saentor's rich households. The first example of this second sub-stratum of rich households in the village, consisted of an elderly couple (both over seventy years old); and their forty year old son and his wife and three children:

Landholdings: They owned 28 ray of rice, 3 ray of orchard, and a further 10 ray of orchard in the 'floodplain' or old river bed.

Land rentals: This household rented out all 28 ray of rice to a non-relative. The rent price was paid in rice (700 thang per year), some of which they ate and some of which they sold. They did not rent in land.

Purchase/sale of land: This household had been very active in the land market. Originally, they inherited around 30 ray of land. Two years prior to the fieldwork, they bought 9 ray of land from a non-relative for a total

of around 144,000 baat. They seized 2 ray of land from a debtor after a loan repayment default the same year. Other villagers cited a number of other examples of land seizure from debtors by this household, which members of this household did not themselves mention. The temple, from villagers' donations, bought 2.5 ray from them seven years ago, for a total of 125,000 baat. Although they had sold land in the old river bed, this was so long ago that they could not recall any details.

Quality/value of land owned: Their land was of average quality and value. The average current sale price was around 30,000 baat/ray.

Income from landholdings: The 10 ray of orchard was newly planted, and so income from this could not be ascertained. Produce from the other 3 ray of orchard was used mainly for household consumption; any fruit left over was marketed by a mae khaa (market woman or female merchant). Also, they received the rent charge (700 thang of rice per year) for the rice fields.

Instruments of farm production: In the 10 ray of orchard, they installed a petrol-run water pump and an irrigation system consisting of a complex network of permanent water pipes. They used the household's domestic water supply, an electric water pump, for the 3 ray of orchard.

Farm labour patterns: All land not rented out was worked solely by household members. They undertook no reciprocal labour exchange. It may seem curious that this

household was not a big employer of village labour. They explained that they invested in an orchard precisely because it requires one big initial investment of capital, followed by consistent returns with little future investment. Notably, little labour input is required.

Non-farm income: The forty year old son was a temporary employee at a sugar factory where his income was around 3,500 baat a month for the season. The consensus in the village was that it was not necessary for him to sell his labour in this way. His income from the factory was very much 'spending money' and it was not pooled for household use. For example, he gambled excessively during the sugar-cane season. Also, he did an absurdly easy job at the factory.

Access to credit: This household did not borrow from anywhere (although they did len shae), despite the fact that they deposited money in their accounts at commercial banks and at the Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Co-operatives. They were well-known creditors in the village, being infamous for their high rates of interest. This was the only household in the study site whose head admitted to seizing land from a loan repayment defaulter.

Some of this household's considerable income was used to finance investments. For example, establishing their 10 ray of orchard was a major enterprise. They did a deal with the owner of the sand quarry, whereby he bought the soil on their plot, which he dug to a certain level. However, they retained ownership of the land, and once the

soil had been excavated they replaced it with cheaper topsoil to a level lower than the original. Then they installed the irrigation system and planted the fruit trees. They made a considerable amount from the sale of the soil. Also, they set up a village store/noodle shop, owned and run by their daughter's household. However, despite these projects, they commented that they preferred to deposit extra cash in the bank and get interest on the account. They never lacked enough to live on. They had a traditional style house which had been extensively improved, including a whole ground floor 'extension'. Their motor cycle, colour television, 20,000 baat stereo unit and gas cooker were all bought new and with cash. They had a private electric water pump for household supply (and for the smaller orchard) which they rented out to neighbours. People said that the electricity bill for this electric motor was wholly covered by the fee which they charged the renters. Effectively, therefore, this household paid nothing toward the running costs of the motor.

Again, this household spent considerable sums on their children's education, including secondary level schooling inside and outside of the province. They benefitted from the system whereby fees at government-run schools and hospitals were waived for government officers' immediate family. The forty year old son of the household was one of two phuuchuay kamnan (sub-district representative's assistant), and hence the very considerable educational

fees for his children were waived. Villagers were quick to point out this household's more questionable money-making activities. For example, it was said repeatedly that they could live off the 'fee' they charged players in the illegal card games they ran. They also sold medicines (notably headache pills to which some of the villagers were addicted), despite being asked by the medical centre to stop. The household's daughter-in-law was from a wealthy landowning family outside of the village.

A second case consisted of nine members: an elderly couple and three of their children, the two eldest of which (a forty year old daughter and thirty-seven year old son) were married, each with a child of their own:

Landholdings: They owned 29 ray of rice fields.

Land rentals: All 29 ray of rice were rented out to people outside the village. The annual rent price was 30 thang of rice per ray.

Purchase/sale of land: Again, this household had been very active in the market for land. Only 3 ray of the household's 29 ray were inherited. Over the years, they had bought around 90 ray at various times, places and prices, and had sold about 50 ray for various reasons.

Quality/value of land owned: Since all their land was rice fields, the question of the quality of their land is not really applicable. Like all the rice fields in the area, they were flat, well irrigated and fertile. They quoted a current land price of 30,000 baat per ray.

Income from landholdings: Their only direct farm

income was the rent price on their rice fields.

Instruments of farm production: Since all the land was worked by renters, this is not applicable.

Farm labour patterns: All their land was worked by tenants.

Non-farm income: This household had considerable non-farm income. The forty year old woman was the medical centre nurse. Around nineteen years prior to the fieldwork, the head of this household struck a deal with the Thaamakaa District Office. He would supply one or two ray of land on which a medical centre could be built, along with funds, in return for which his daughter would receive a scholarship to study in Bangkok. On completion of her studies and the medical centre (which was subsequently improved and expanded), she returned to staff the centre. During the fieldwork year, her salary was 6,800-7,200 baat per month. Her husband was also a government official, who worked in a neighbouring province for around 8,000 baat per month. The third - unmarried - son of the household was a temporary employee at a local sugar factory. His wage was around 3,500 baat per month for the season. However, as in the previous case study, it clearly was not necessary for him to work at the factory. The story in the village was that he took the jobs to assuage his parents, who were increasingly concerned by his 'playboy' life-style. In between seasons, he did not look for other work. Toward the end of the fieldwork, it was rumoured that he would go into the police. His father had agreed to pay a 40,000

baat 'entrance fee'.

Access to credit: This household's principal credit sources were institutionalised. The male head of the household used to be a Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative committee member, and had been in debt at the co-operative for the past twenty or thirty years. During the fieldwork year, he and two of his sons were members. Their debts there totalled around 130,000 baat. The funds were used to finance agricultural investments. For example, the household head had recently organised a loan of 40,000 baat from the co-operative for one of his sons who had moved to Thaarua, to enable him to establish a chicken farm and fish pond on some of his land. Four household members had accounts at commercial banks, but they had not borrowed money from there. This household was a major village creditor. They regularly lent large sums of cash to other rich villagers at an annual interest rate of 24%. During the fieldwork year, they had taken land registration documents from at least five debtors with whom they had entered into land mortgage arrangements.

This household invested considerable sums in their offsprings' education. Three of the elderly household head's children finished the six secondary school grades, and two continued on to tertiary level outside of the province. Of the household's youngest generation, one granddaughter was at Thaamakaa secondary school, whilst the other was at a private primary school in Thaamakaa. Again, the economic status of this household was reflected in

their luxury consumer items. They owned a pick-up truck and a motor cycle, two colour television sets and a 4,200 baat stereo unit, two refrigerators and two gas cookers, and a camera. All these were purchased new and with cash. They, too, had an oven. Their only financial difficulty was with the odd 'cash flow' problem, which was dealt with by intra-household borrowing. They accumulated a net surplus which they said they preferred to save in the bank.

It is notable that none of these rich village households owned enormous quantities of land, compared to, for example, the thousands of ray of sugar-cane plantations in upstate Kaancanaburi Province. Typically, even Saentor's wealthiest villagers did not own more than around 40 ray, and it was not uncommon for the richest of the economic elite to own fewer ray than the second stratum of rich villagers. This was because of the diversity of economic opportunities available to the wealthy, including investments made both on and off the farm.

Clearly, land rentals are important to both of the (a)ii type households cited here. The former household rented out 28 ray of rice, and the latter 29 ray, to renters outside of the village to whom they were not closely related. Of the 100 households surveyed, 24 rented out land (i.e., gave over the use of their land for a rent fee). Of these, 14 rented out 10 ray or over. However, as will come clear in the next case study, renting land out meant different things in different situations. Typically of rich households, both of the (a)ii type households cited

here rented out considerable amounts of land to people with whom they were not closely related for a high rent fee.

It is important to clarify the differences between the two kinds of rich households - (a)i and (a)ii - outlined here. Firstly, there was an important difference in terms of the scale and context of their investments. The first kind of household cited above, (a)i, could contemplate relatively huge investments inside and outside of the village. Apart from the quail's eggs 'factories' and the transport business mentioned, these include other small agribusinesses, investment in the province's leisure and tourist industry (e.g., rafts on the Maekhloong river as restaurants and 'guest houses'), raising and selling a particularly expensive breed of dogs, 'hot' videos and a taxi company in the Middle East, rearing fighting cocks, buying and selling stereos, an illicit whisky business, packing and exporting dried foodstuffs to the Middle East, and so on. The (a)ii type rich households' investments seemed tame by comparison. They invested less, and mainly inside the village, in new orchards, fish ponds, noodle stores, chicken farms, money-lending, and such like (cf. Anan 1984:409, 1989:121).

Apart from the scale and context of their respective investments, (a)i and (a)ii type households differed in terms of their relationship with the rest of the village. The former type of household were socially and culturally 'distant'. They spent a good deal of time outside of the village, often on business. Their dress, manner, style of

house, and so on, were often different to their more traditional neighbours, reflecting a conscious attempt to imitate 'sophisticated' Bangkok and Western styles. They preferred to employ labour and borrow money from outside the village. They rarely attended the kind of traditional ceremonies and village 'occasions' which were important to the rest of the village, such as merit-making on the Buddhist sabbath, funerals, and ordination ceremonies. In fact, these elites often appeared to be embarrassed by the village and to find it distasteful. Frequently, they apologised to me for the village. Informants would say of some of these elites that they did not really like the village and the other villagers. They were more akin to the town based, high status professionals and entrepreneurs whose work brought them into the village, such as the headmaster and teachers at the school, the owner of the local sand quarry, the staff at the medical centre, and the sewing group's teacher. By contrast, the second kind of economically elite villagers cited above - (a)ii - adopted a life-style (including such things as their appearance, much more contact with the rest of the village, and the way they spent their leisure time) which was far more recognisably Saentorian.

Connectedly, the latter kind of rich household, (a)ii, were more obviously extractors of village surplus. As can be seen from the case studies, surplus was extracted from the rest of the village in various forms, including the rent price on land, retail prices, middlepersons' fees,

interest on loans, rent on agricultural inputs, and rent on household utilities such as water pumps. The former type of elite household was not so closely involved with the rest of the village and not, therefore, involved in direct and indirect surplus extraction to the same extent.

(b) Middle Ranking Households

In classificatory systems pertaining to rural Thai communities, 'middle peasants' are often defined in terms of non-involvement in the market, or subsistence rather than commodity production, and self-sufficiency (see section 2.5 above). There were no households in Saentor which could be described in this way. All households were firmly entrenched in market orientated production, in part because rice, the Thai staple, could not be grown in large parts of the area. However, the point remains that one of the distinctive characteristics of middle ranking households is reduced dependency on the market, because they consumed a proportion of what they produced. Certainly, Saentor's middle ranking households were relatively uninvolved in the market for labour.

(b)i The following is a case study of a richer type of middle ranking household, which consisted of a thirty year old woman, plus her older sister, mother, and twenty-eight year old nephew, and the latter's wife and child - and two other related children:

Landholdings: They owned 33 ray, 20 ray of which were

rice fields.

Land rentals: They rented out 15 ray of rice fields at a total of 30,000 baat per four years to a relative. A further 3 ray of land were rented out at a total of 5,000 baat per four years to a relative. They also 'rented out' another 7 ray of land to a sibling for neither a rent fee nor a proportion of their profits. They did not rent in land.

Purchase/sale of land: This household inherited all their land. Although they had never bought land, they had been forced to sell 3 ray of inherited land to the sand quarry, three years prior to the fieldwork.

Quality/value of land owned: The land was of good quality and average value.

Income from landholdings: They received the rent prices quoted above for the 15 ray of rice fields which they rented out. They made 20,000 baat per year from the 5 ray of rice they farm themselves. Also, they made around 40,000 baat per year from baby corn.

Instruments of farm production: They rented in a sibling's water supply for the baby corn, and used the irrigation canal for the rice.

Farm labour patterns: The thirty year old woman was responsible for the baby corn and her nephew's wife did the rice. Apart from household labour, they occasionally hired village labour; but their heavy involvement in reciprocal labour exchange groups was more important than this.

Non-farm income: The nephew received 2,500 baat per

month as a permanent employee at a local factory. This increased to 5,000 baat per month during the season. The older sister received 6,000 baat per month as pension/insurance from her deceased husband's firm.

Access to credit: This household was not much involved in credit relations. They had a small debt of 3,000 baat at the school. Also, they regularly borrowed small amounts from their baby corn middleperson, who deducted the loan plus interest from their profits. Occasionally, they pawned goods and bought items on hire-purchase. They did not lend to other villagers.

Typically of middle ranking households, they neither earned enough to put in the bank nor regularly lacked enough to live on, though there were occasional 'cash flow' problems and hence some small debts. However, this household is a prime example of one of the differences between rich and middle ranking households: they tended to spend a good deal of money left over from household expenditure on luxury items. For example, recent to the fieldwork year, this household spent 9,000 baat on household improvements and bought a motor cycle, bicycle, and two television sets. They acquired a 1,500 baat stereo as a gift from a relative and bought a gas cooker and refrigerator on hire-purchase. During the fieldwork, they bought a video on instalments.

The coincidence of economic ownership and economic behaviour is crucial. The important thing about both kinds of rich households cited above - (a)i and (a)ii - is their

inclination and ability to undertake entrepreneurial activity. All rich households were accumulators. The difference between the rich and the (b)i type household cited here was not to be found in what they own and earn. A well-off middle ranking household may have assets and wealth at least comparable to some rich villagers. Rather, the important difference is how they chose to use the surplus they made. Take the case of the middle ranking household described here. They did not maximise their opportunities to extract surplus. For example, they 'rented' land out to relatives at little or no rent charge. By contrast, rich villagers' land tenure arrangements were usually more obviously contractual: they rented out to non-relatives at a fixed rent. The middle-ranking household cited here did not undertake ambitious entrepreneurial investments. A possible exception to this in the present case is investment in education, since the twenty-eight year old man had completed six years at Thaamakaa secondary school and spent some time at a university in Bangkok. However, here again there was a discernible difference between this middle ranking household and the rich households. This man had not completed the course at Ramkhamhaeng University, saying that he preferred to come home and work locally. No other adult household member had received any education other than free, compulsory primary schooling.

This middle ranking household was also representative in that their land was inherited. Unlike rich households,

which were active in the market for land, middle ranking and poor landowners (see (c)i type households, below) tended to rely on inherited land which they neither sold (unless forced to) nor supplemented with land purchases. Extra household income was syphoned off to purchase luxury items (notably, in this case, the video and house repairs). And this household was prepared to incur avoidable extra expenses. For example, they had raised, at considerable personal expense, four children of relatives who were in some kind of financial or domestic difficulties. This theme of economic behaviours will be addressed again, in chapters five and six below.

(b)ii The following is the case of a second type of middle ranking household, which consisted of a thirty-nine year old woman, her thirty-eight year old husband and their two children. This second type of middle ranking household differed to the former in that, whereas the way the former administered resources is crucial, this second type of middle ranking household controlled perceptibly fewer resources in the first place:

Landholdings: They owned 5 ray of rice and 2 ray of baby corn. The latter officially belonged to the man's parents and is awaited as inheritance.

Land rentals: They neither rented in nor rented out land.

Purchase/sale of land: They inherited all their land, and had never bought or sold land.

Quality/value of land owned: Their land was of average quality and sale price.

Income from landholdings: They made approximately 20,000 baat from rice a year. Also, they got 9,000 baat per year from the baby corn.

Instruments of farm production: They used a private petrol run water pump for the baby corn and the irrigation canal for the rice.

Farm labour patterns: Their land was worked almost exclusively by a combination of household labour and reciprocal labour exchanged with other farmers. However, they occasionally hired people at 40 baat per day to help sow baby corn.

Non-farm income: They had no non-farm income. The husband had been a local builder/craftsman, but since an accident whilst working on repairs to the temple he had been unable to undertake heavy physical work.

Access to credit: They had no debts and did not lend money.

This household's income did not much exceed expenditure. Occasionally, they lacked enough to live on, in which case they borrowed a little from relatives at no interest. Because of the position of their house, it did not have electricity and so many household luxury items (e.g., a television set) could not be used. Nevertheless, they spent 7,000 baat of private money to build their home, and owned a motor cycle. They bought a new gas cooker on hire-purchase. They installed a private petrol-run water

supply for both household use and the baby corn. Their son left the village primary school during the fieldwork and started at Thaamakaa secondary school. He did not have a scholarship, and his parents paid the termly fees and all other expenses.

(c) Poor Households

Just as distinctions have been made between types of rich households, and between types of middle ranking households, so it is important to distinguish between types of poor households. Some poor households had to sell their labour and retained some access to land (owned and/or rented), whilst the income of other poor households came solely from waged labour. Although it may be useful to distinguish between poor households according to their access to land, this is not to say that households' economic status are taken to be determined by their relationship to land. The point has been made in the previous section that household economic status and landownership are not correlated. This should be reiterated here. For example, there were a number of landless households which were middle ranking in their economic status because one or more of their number had well paid permanent or irregular jobs.

(c)i An example of the first type of poor households (i.e., those which had retained ownership of some land) had five members: a woman and her two grown daughters, one of

whom was married with a small baby:

Landholdings: They owned 3 ray of inherited rice fields.

Land rentals: They rented in 1+ ray of land at 700 baat per year, on which they grew baby corn.

Purchase/sale of land: Their rice fields were inherited, and this household had never bought land. They were forced to sell 1+ ray of land to the sand quarry four or five years prior to the fieldwork for 40,000 baat. Their plot became useless when the land around it was dug.

Quality/value of land owned: Their land is not in a good position. They estimated its value at only 10,000 baat/ray.

Income from landholdings: They made 8,000 baat/year from baby corn, and around 150 thang of rice per year. However, they complained that the rice is diseased and they do not really work the rice fields properly, partly because they are so far away.

Instruments of farm production: For the rice, they used the irrigation canal. They rented water from a wealthier neighbour because they did not own a private water supply for their baby corn.

Farm labour patterns: Essentially, they worked the land themselves. They undertook aw raeng (reciprocal labour exchange) to plant baby corn and harvest rice. Only very occasionally did they hire a neighbour to weed for the day.

Non-farm income: The unmarried daughter rented a

wealthy villager's house for 100 baat per year. There, she made and sold various snacks, and had a small hairdressing salon. From this she could gross 60 baat/day. However, the income was very uneven and there were big overheads (including the cost of shampoo, setting lotion, and so on).

Access to credit: This household had been in debt at the temple for years. During the fieldwork, they borrowed 1,000 baat for general household use, and gave over their land registration document as surety. They pawned items at shops in Thaarua, including jewellery; however, they commented that nowadays they prefer to simply sell things when they lack money, rather than pawn them. Most of their household luxury items, such as clothes and their electric fan, were bought on hire-purchase. They also borrowed regularly from their baby corn middleperson and from friends and relatives, but at no interest. The unmarried daughter of this household was heavily involved in len shae. She ran one of the games in the village.

This household's low economic status was expressed by their low educational attainment and lack of household luxury items. All household members received only free compulsory education at the village primary school. There was no fee-paying education, and the immediate ambition for the baby was that she would go to the village primary school. The house - a rickety old wooden Thai style building - was inherited, and their total expenditure on it was less than 1,000 baat. They did not have a pick-up truck or a motor cycle, only a bicycle. They did not own

a television set, radio or stereo; they had no refrigerator, video or camera. They did, however, buy a new gas cooker with cash. Since they had no private water supply, they rented from wealthier neighbours. The unmarried daughter ran one len shae group and played in two others. She claimed that once payments for these had been made, there was no money left over in the household. Apart from pawning items, they were occasionally forced to sell things to make ends meet. Otherwise, they borrowed (at no interest) from friends, relatives and their baby corn middleperson.

All of the households described so far owned land. The quality of land in Saentor was fairly even and not, for the most part, a good index of household economic status. However, disparities in the value of land owned were starting to emerge as clear indicators of owners' status, because gross intra-village land price differentials had developed recent to the time of the fieldwork. During the fieldwork, an increasing awareness of new differentials in land value was emerging. Land near 'progress' (i.e., infrastructural developments such as the K.S.Ch. road and the proposed Saentor-Thaarua bridge) was increasing in value more quickly than more remote land. And, as outlined in chapter one (section 1.2), there was a well-established distinction in terms of land prices between the 'floodplain' (i.e., land between the original, and the present, routes of the Maekhloong river: see map 5) and the rest of the village, because land in the 'floodplain' could

not be registered. Hence, the richest of Saentor's wealthy households - (a)i above - were beginning to accumulate specific types of increasingly valuable land, and outside investors bought plots which were best situated to take advantage of rapid land price increases (see chapter four, section 4.1). However, this process was still in its infancy, and it was not yet the case that household economic status was fully correlated to the value of land held. For example, a number of non-wealthy households has as yet kept a hold on inherited or purchased land which happened to be well situated.

(c)ii A number of poor households retained some control of land in the form of tenancy agreements alone. One such consisted of a mother, father and their seven year old child:

Landholdings: They owned no land.

Land rentals: They rented in 2 ray of land from a non-relative at 800 baat per year.

Purchase/sale of land: They had never bought or sold land.

Quality/value of land owned: They did not own the land which they worked.

Income from landholdings: They made 10,000 baat per year from the baby corn they grew on their rented land.

Instruments of farm production: They owned a private petrol pump.

Farm labour patterns: Their land was worked by a

combination of household labour and reciprocated labour only.

Non-farm income: The woman was a temporary employer at a local sugar factory where she earned around 3,000 baat per month during the season. Both parents took labouring jobs in the village, from which they typically earned around 1,000 baat/month. Both took on other ad hoc work. For example, during the fieldwork the woman bought clothes from Thaarua to sell to villagers on instalments. She could make about 400 baat per month from this. However the scheme folded when buyers failed to keep up repayments. She also took on irregular piece-work assembling displays of artificial flowers.

Access to credit: They often pawned goods and bought items on hire-purchase. During the fieldwork year, they were forced to borrow cash from rich neighbours at interest for the first time. They were charged 36% annual interest because they had no collateral with which to back the loan.

Late in the fieldwork, this particular household lost the land they were renting, reflecting the precariousness of poor households' land tenure situation. Apparently, another renter was prepared to pay more in rent fee. They rarely had any money left over from household expenditure and frequently borrowed to make ends meet. During the fieldwork, they lived in a one room bamboo shack. The house cost around 1,000 baat to build. They owned a motor cycle and a bicycle. They had no television set or stereo or refrigerator. They bought a gas cooker on hire-purchase

and owned a 1,000 baat radio. The mother of this household was embittered by the fact that she had been forced out of secondary level education due to her parents' poverty, and was determined that her son would get every chance to gain a good education. However, during the fieldwork year, he attended the village primary school, and his parents were concerned about the costs of post-primary schooling.

All of the households described so far had access to land in some form. Data reveal only a very general correlation between economic status and control of instruments of farm production (electric water pumps, tractors, and so on). Farmers did not require very many instruments of production; and there was a big gap between those which most farmers of any economic status could afford (e.g., water pumps) and those which were very expensive and best hired (e.g., tractors). Also, whether or not a household owned certain instruments of production often depended on factors other than households' economic status. For example, a farmer would not buy their own water pump if their sibling had one on land adjacent to theirs. As Bruneau puts it, "agricultural tools used are equally means of production, but they are less unequally distributed than land" (Bruneau 1984:348).

(c)iii The following is an example of the final type of poor household, landless labourers. It consisted of a couple aged twenty-five and twenty-three, and their three year old son:

Landholdings: They owned no land.

Land rentals: They did not rent in land.

Purchase/sale of land: They had never bought or sold land.

Quality/value of land owned: They did not own land.

Income from landholdings: None.

Instruments of farm production: None.

Farm labour patterns: Not applicable.

Non-farm income: The woman washed clothes and cleaned at the medical centre for 550 baat per month. The man was a temporary employee at a sugar factory, from which he received 3,500-4,000 baat a month during the season. They both took labouring jobs in the village, for which they were paid 40 baat per day. Intermittently, they went to Bangkok to take on labouring work there.

Access to credit: Their principal credit source was rich neighbours. The only institutionalised credit available to them was from the school and the temple. They regularly pawned goods and bought items on hire-purchase. They had sold a number of household items to make ends meet. They had severe debt repayment problems.

Although they sometimes had a little money left over after household expenses, more frequently this household could not make ends meet. Hence, they were permanently in debt to wealthier villagers who charged very high rates of interest. At the start of the fieldwork, they lived in a space under a relative's house, cordoned off with bamboo. Later, they built a small breeze-block house for 8,200

baat. Almost all this money was loaned from neighbours and severe repayment difficulties ensued. They owned a bicycle, a second hand black-and-white television set and a 1,000 baat stereo, and a gas cooker bought on hire-purchase. They rented another villager's water supply. The problems this household would experience with regard their child's education were foreshadowed by the fact that they had great difficulty in raising the 200 baat contribution requested by the village kindergarten when their son was old enough to go there.

It is not the case that all of the households in the village study site can be placed unambiguously in one of the economic categories suggested. The boundaries between categories cannot be quantified. Certainly, even those village households whose economic status was ascertainable formed a continuum, a 'flow' from the poorest to the richest. This point has important implications for the style of this thesis. Notably, if the economic categories cited are not quantified, the kind of objective, quantitative data which can be reported is restricted. For example, one cannot report, say, the percentage of poor households with a member who has borrowed from rich neighbours, because the number of poor households in the village has not been quantified in the first place. Inevitably, the style of the thesis becomes more impressionistic, subjective and qualitative.

No attempt will be made to hierarchize the cluster of characteristics or dimensions of status suggested, in terms

of their relative importance in determining households' economic status. The precise relationships between characteristics (e.g., the issue of whether, and which, dimensions imply, entail, etc., others) will not be pursued. There is nothing exhaustive about the list of characteristics focused on here. Hopefully, this approach captures the spirit of Hirsch's point:

> whilst the strict categorisation of the rural population into rigidly defined socio-economic groups is to be avoided.....more fluid but no less pronounced divisions are all important (Hirsch 1987:60).

It is important to clarify the use of various terms and phrases in the remainder of this thesis, as defined by the interpretive model of the village presented here. 'Rich households', 'rich villagers', 'the rich', 'economically elite villagers', 'the wealthy', and such like, refer to members of the category of rich households (i.e., (a) type households) described above. 'Middle ranking households/villagers' refers to the (b) type households described in this section. 'Poor people', 'the poor' and such like, refer to category (c) households. Where reference is made to sub-strata of village households (such as (a)i, (b)ii and the like), this will be stated explicitly in the text.

The interpretive model of the village presented here can be summarised as follows. In terms of <u>property relations</u>, all rich households own considerable means and instruments of production. However, certain of the very rich - i.e., (a)i type households - both own more of these

and those they own are both agriculture and non-agriculture based. Other rich households - (a)ii - own fewer and only agriculture based means and instruments of production. Middle ranking households own and rent sufficient means and instruments of production to survive without necessarily selling their labour - though it was common for the wealthier of the middle ranking households to have one or more members who had well paid, full-time and permanent employment. All of the poor own too few of the means and instruments of production to survive from these alone.

Turning to labour relations, the richest of the rich are big employers both inside and outside of the village and do not manage their own land. They often prefer to employ labour from outside of the village. The second category of wealthy households - i.e., (a)ii - also employ village labour, and rent out some or all of their land, but they might work some of their own, too. With regard to middle ranking households, the shift is away from employing village labour, and toward household and reciprocal labour. For the most part, middle ranking households are not required to sell their labour. All poor households survive by selling their labour - but those with access to land (owned and/or rented) are not dependent solely on this.

Finally, regarding surplus, the wealthiest of Saentorians both produce a considerable surplus and gain access to the product of the labour of others in the form of land rent, and in their capacities as money-lenders, retailers, employers of local labour, baby corn

middlepersons, owners of instruments of production such as tractors, and so on. However, whilst the richest of the economic elite reinvest liquid capital both on and off the farm, their less wealthy counterparts - i.e., (a)ii type households - save or spend a considerable proportion of the surplus they make, and invest the remainder in relatively modest on-farm activities. The income earned by middle ranking villagers which is surplus to household requirement is syphoned off either as modest savings or on household luxury items - usually the latter. It is not considered to be investment capital. Poorer villagers' incomes do not usually exceed, and in many cases fail to meet, household requirements.

2.8 The Remembered Village

This chapter has considered the historical transformations which created the conditions for differentiation in rural Thai economies. The effect of these have been reported by an interpretive model of a stratified Thai village. A related issue emerges in the light of this account of the origins and character of stratification in Saentor. Clearly, some households had benefitted from the transformations affecting their community, whilst others had lost out. One would, therefore, expect some disparities in the way today's village was felt by informants to compare to Saentor as it had been in the 'old days'.

During conversations in which the latter-day village was compared by informants to the way it had been in the past (i.e., within their living memory), it became clear that whilst the same facts were being remembered and compared, each informant was "a historian with an axe to grind" (Scott 1985:178). The two themes which persistently recurred during the villagers' recollections were that there was an abundance of food available in the village in the past, and that nowadays the village had "progressed" (caroen) and "developed" (phadthanaa) considerably.

With regard the former, reference was made to the fact that though fruit trees and vegetable patches and so on were owned in the past, there was a certain casualness regarding produce from these because of the very underdeveloped markets. They were to be eaten, not sold. People could ask the owner for fruit, vegetables, etc., and expect to be given some. Whilst this was a persistent theme in villagers' discourse, it does not amount to a description of a pre-capitalist corporate culture: for example, informants made it clear that it was mainly close kin who shared their produce around, and not villagers in general (see section 2.2 above). Nowadays, such sources of free food have all but dried up. Cash cropping and specialisation have meant that landowners tend to plant large amounts of one or a few crops. Since these are obviously destined for well developed markets, it would be inappropriate to request them as handouts. Unowned free food also used to be available, for example fish and other

fresh water food in the river and wild animals and fruit trees in the forest. The cultivation of all land in the vicinity of the village meant the demise of the forest as a food source. Repeatedly, villagers pointed out that because of the irrigation dam, the Maekhloong river is considerably smaller and does not flood annually: hence, there was no longer a reliable source of free fish and other river produce.

When informants claimed that the village had progressed considerably since the 'old days', they had in mind certain specific development related institutions and facilities. Notably, these include the village primary school and towns' secondary schools, medical facilities (the village medical centre, towns' hospitals, etc.), and better transport and communications (roads, bridges, vehicles, and so on).

The important differential is that whilst all informants mentioned both these factors, poor and middle ranking households emphasised the former whilst wealthier households stressed the latter. Poorer villagers clearly stated that life was better in the old days than now because of the availability of food sources. Nowadays one needs to find money to buy food, which - along with other cash outlays such as school fees, electricity bills, and agricultural inputs - is invariably expensive. Richer informants claimed that life is better now than in the old days because, despite the demise of sources of free food, there is greater convenience and comfort due the 'progress'

the village has made.

There were occasional exceptions to this pattern, but these were explicable in terms of the idiosyncratic circumstances of the households in question. For example, some poor households had been even poorer in the past than they were in the fieldwork year, usually because one of the parents had died or left the home, leaving the other adult responsible for a large number of offspring who were too young to work. These children having grown up and found work, the quality of life for their household had improved considerably. Such a household may well be ambivalent about the past because, whilst it is poor now, it was even poorer then. Similarly, some households did more subsistence style production than others. For example, one poor household consisted of an elderly, childless couple. They lived very similarly to the way the majority of the villagers had lived in the past: vegetable plot, and crabs, shrimps, etc., from the nearby river; fruit trees around the house; and so on. Their ambivalence toward the past was due to the fact that very little had changed for them.

A number of other topics were discussed with the villagers in the context of comparisons between the present and the past. These included: are people kinder now than before? is life more fun now? during which period was life more dangerous in the village? Responses to these were much less clear cut. Though some people said one thing and others said another, there was no apparent rich/poor differential between responses.

The transformation of Saentor the villagers remembered was essentially the same. The difference lies in the emphasis as to when life was the best - now or the old days. As Scott (1985) suggests:

> The point of such histories is not to produce a balanced or neutral assessment.....but rather to advance a claim, to levy praise and blame, and to justify or condemn the existing state of affairs (ibid.:178).

The point is also relevant to one side of the debate about what 'development' should consist of, namely, the call for a return to self-reliance or independence on the part of peasant producers in the face of increasing dependency on the market and the penetration of state and capital (Vichit 1987; Seri 1986). Quite apart from the issue of whether rural Thai communities ever were genuinely self-reliant, corporate communities (see section 2.2 above), the call for a return to self-reliance is likely to founder if only half a community <u>wants</u> to be self-reliant.

2.9 <u>Concluding Remarks</u>

In this chapter, the macro-level, historical origins of intra-village differentiation have been considered. The effect of these has been described by an interpretive model of the stratification in the study village. In the following two chapters, the same theme will be pursued by reference to ongoing processes whereby elite villagers monopolise local resources.

CHAPTER THREE

PARTICIPATION, EXCLUSION AND STRATIFICATION

Literature reviewed in the previous chapter suggests that in one sense, or on one level of analysis, differentiation is a consequence of the kind of development which rural Thailand has undergone. This involves the penetration of the rural community by state and capital, or the integration of the 'village' into wider state and capitalist structures, which has transformed the political, economic and social rural formation (section 2.1). This literature was juxtaposed by the recent concern to deconstruct the Thai village (section 2.2), and data pertaining to Saentor's transformation were presented in this context (section 2.3). The same theme is pursued in this and the following chapter, but a different level of analysis is brought into focus. Ongoing local processes are increasing the concentration of control over local resources in very direct ways. A number of case studies will be presented to show the increased concentration of productive and reproductive power in the hands of the wealthy, in the context of the developing village.

The notion of 'popular participation' is a useful framework for the data presented in this and the following chapter. There has been a good deal of interest in 'popular participation' in the context of development

theory and practice (Oakley and Marsden 1984; Midgley 1986; Shingi, Patel, and Wadwalkar 1984). One theme amongst the many which have emerged, interprets 'popular participation' in terms of access to and control over resources, where 'resources' includes both regulative and decision-making institutions, and (relatedly) local resources necessary for production and reproduction (Pearse and Stiefel 1979). This interpretation of popular participation has been utilised in recent analyses of the development situation in rural Thailand (Turton 1987; Hirsch 1987). In this and the following chapter, the theme of Saentor's ongoing stratification will be pursued with reference to popular participation.

This chapter considers villagers' participation in access to and control over local resources in the form of regulative institutions and decision-making power. It will be argued that villagers' involvement in the decisions which affect their community is not facilitated by the system of local administration pertinent to Saentor, despite the prevalence of participatory decision-making institutions and an ideological stress in official discourse on the value of participation (section 3.1). However, this is somewhat misleading. On closer analysis, it transpires that there was a politically knowledgeable and locally influential sub-stratum of villagers who were politically active in Saentor. These were rich villagers. The bases of their political power are explored (section 3.2). Finally, the implications of this situation in terms

of decisions affecting the village are elucidated, with reference to village development related decisions (section 3.3).

3.1 Participation and the Decision-Making Process: Rhetoric and Reality

Saentor had an apparently exemplary system of villager-participation in the local decision-making process, in terms of participatory political institutions and political ideology. The decision-making process affecting the village could be envisaged as a chain from the village to the central government, which consists of four main links: village or local level representative institutions, the urban based, district level bureaucracy, the provincial level bureaucracy, and central government. This is intended to create a two-way channel of communication, 'up' from the village to the state and 'down' from the state to the village.

Village level institutions include each village's elected representatives: the village headperson and his two assistants, and the kamnan and his four assistants. (It should be noted at the outset that it was culturally, though not legally, unacceptable for a female villager of any economic status to hold most of the political offices referred to in this chapter.) The sub-district council (saphaa tambon) consisted of these village representatives, plus district level officials (most commonly, a Community

Development Officer) and other local notables (such as experts from the District Office, village based craftsmen, medical centre staff, and the village school headmaster as secretary). Alongside these was a system of village committees. Each village was represented by nine village committee members (kamakaan muubaan) plus the village headperson (or kamnan where the kamnan doubled as the headperson). Also, village meetings were called on an ad hoc basis to discuss and vote on local issues as they emerged. There also existed a variety of klum (groups or associations), including the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative, the housewives' groups, and the farmers' group; these gave members some opportunity to contribute to decisions taken at the supra-local level.

The apparent aim of all such institutions is villager-participation in decision-making. Villagers' felt needs, suggestions, evaluation of decisions taken, and so on, could be expressed through village committee members, by contacting village representatives (e.g., their village headperson), and during village meetings. Village representatives then communicate these to the district level bureaucracy, notably during meetings of the sub-district council. The district level bureaucracy would, in turn, communicate with central government via provincial level officialdom.

Alongside this system of interconnected representative institutions was an element in official discourse which explicitly prioritised the need for villager-participation

in decisions. This emerged very clearly in the taped interviews with local officeholders (see appendix two). The District Officer, Community Development Officer, kamnan and village headperson all stressed the importance of villagers' participation in local decision-making. They explained how they need the villagers to say what their problems are, otherwise decisions may not be relevant to the villagers' real needs. Since the villagers are best placed to suggest solutions to their problems, they must be involved in devising plans and projects. Villagers' involvement in decision-making is now Thailand's principal development policy. The government imposes no limits on the extent of villagers' participation in development planning. Respondents to the interviews described the chain of communication from village to central government (mentioning the sub-district council, village committees, and so on), and the role of the District Office in articulating villagers and the state. By means of this system, villagers advise the government on what the real problems in the countryside are, and how to solve them.

This ideological stress in official discourse on villager-involvement in decision-making, including officials' very consistent descriptions of the system by which this is effected, emerged in less formal contexts than the taped interviews. I got to know the kamnan well during the fieldwork, partly because he lived only a hundred yards or so from the house I rented. I was struck by his repeated insistence on the need to ruamkan, chuaykan

and khaw mii suan ruam (to join together, help out together, participate), when we discussed the villagers' roles in local development. He stressed the need to involve the villagers, to work together in defining and solving problems. He extolled at length the virtues of co-operative and participatory institutions (e.g., the village committees, and aw raeng: reciprocal labour exchange). He frequently stressed the need to involve villagers in decisions, to discuss issues with them and to listen to their needs and canvass their opinions.

This same theme emerged in official discourse in a different context. Meetings of various official bodies were imbued with reference to villager-participation in decision-making. For example, the theme of participation was prominent in meetings of the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative, including speeches by government officials on the need to involve members, via their fifteen-member management committee, in decisions on the co-operative's policies. During the fieldwork year, village school staff began a campaign to increase parents' involvement in decision-making affecting the school. This included the first ever staff-parents meeting. During the sub-district council meetings I attended, the Chair (kamnan and the Community Development Officer) would extol the virtues of discussing together and sharing ideas, explaining why it is good to have an open debate on the issues at hand.

There existed a well-established system of interconnected participatory institutions in the study

site, alongside an ideological stress in official discourse on the notion of 'participation' which emerged in a variety of contexts. However, despite this, there was practically no participation in this sense whatsoever in Saentor. This can be illustrated by two case studies, which were undertaken to evaluate the extent to which Saentor's system of representative institutions in fact succeeded in facilitating villagers' participation in the decision-making process. The first of these focuses on one of the participatory institutions referred to above, the sub-district council (saphaa tambon).

Ideally, the sub-district council is a participatory decision-making institution which articulates the village with district level authorities. It has been described as the "cornerstone" of the Thai government's participation policy (Turton 1987:84). Respondents to the taped interviews clearly saw the council as the most important of the participatory political institutions affecting the village. As noted, the council consisted of elected village representatives (the village headpersons and the kamnan, or their assistants when necessary), district level bureaucrats (including, usually, a Community Development Officer) and various 'experts' (e.g., the village primary school headmaster as secretary, the medical centre staff, local craftsmen). Its main concern was village development, including decisions on how to appropriate state development budgets. It met irregularly, about once every two months, in the village primary school.

I attempted to ascertain whether villagers' access to decision-making power really was facilitated by the sub-district council, both during informal conversations and by the questions in section J of survey 1 (namely: "What do you know of the council, especially who are its members and what is its purpose? When did the council last meet? At its last meeting, what was discussed and decided? Have you ever attended a council meeting; if so, how many times and in what capacity?" - see appendix one). Results were striking. On the one hand, the vast majority of informants could answer none of the questions in section J of survey 1 or the same questions introduced into informal conversations. They knew nothing at all of the council, its purpose, where and when it met, its members, its recent meetings. Villagers recognised the Community Development Officer who chaired council meetings, but they did not know who he was, his capacity, or why he frequented the village. By contrast, villagers who were themselves members (village headpersons, the kamnan, and their assistants; and local members such as the medical centre nurse) answered all the relevant questions fluently. Interestingly, villagers who had been council members and had retired - e.g., the ex-headmaster of the village school who had served as the secretary for years prior to retirement - knew no more than the 'ordinary' villagers about recent meetings. Once their direct involvement as members was over, ex-members knew nothing of the council's affairs. Also, it was noticeable that close kin of active members knew no more than the

majority of villagers about the council. In part, this was a gender issue: council affairs would not have been considered relevant for wives and daughters, for example. However, the gender issue aside, a good example of the communication gap between council members and those they are supposed to represent, is that not even very close kin of members knew anything about the council.

A second case study concerns a particular decision affecting the village which was undertaken by local officeholders during the fieldwork year. The kamnan was adamant that the village needed a newspaper reading centre. To secure this, he attended a five day course in the North to learn how to build and utilise a newspaper reading centre in the village. He encountered a major problem. The money available (which was raised from outside the village by local politicians and the District Office) fell short of the budget necessary for the enterprise. He devoted much time and energy to raising the difference in a spirit of great enthusiasm and conviction.

Villagers' knowledge of this enterprise was ascertained during general conversations and in question H(iii) on survey 1 (namely: "How much do you know about the proposed newspaper reading centre and from what source? Were you consulted about the proposed centre - if so, in what way? Is the centre a good idea?" - see appendix one). Again, there were striking results. The vast majority of informants knew nothing of the kamnan's plans, training course, budget difficulties, and so on. By contrast,

village representatives gave full and informed answers.

These two case studies suggest that the long-established system of representative institutions, which is supported by an ideological stress in official discourse on the merits of participation, fails in its aim of involving villagers in the decisions which affect their community. This is supported by other data. Many of the representative institutions established in the village were, in practice, inadequate for the task. For example, village meetings were called only very infrequently. Those which were called during the fieldwork year were inadequately announced and poorly attended. Many villagers simply knew nothing about them. It was difficult to get reliable data on meetings which had taken place just prior to the fieldwork (e.g., the meeting about the public telephone project). Some informants would say there had been one, others that there had not; there were disparities in informants' versions of where the meeting took place, what was decided, and so on. Likewise, village committees were being re-established by the District Office in the light of past failings. In village Saentor, not a single meeting of the village committee had taken place in the five years since it was formed (although, interestingly, the kamnan denied that this was the case). I had to work hard to find out who Saentor's village committee members were, because nobody seemed to know. The various klum based in the village (farmers' group, housewives' group, youths' group, and so on) had either folded or were

effectively 'shelved'; and data will be presented in the next chapter to show that the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative did not enhance members' decision-making power (chapter four, section 4.3). Likewise, it was by no means clear that individual village representatives facilitated villager-participation in decisions. For example, it was obvious from living in the community that the kamnan lived in a world from which the bulk of the village was quite excluded. He was rarely to be found in Saentor, and frequently attended official meetings and functions at the District Office and elsewhere. He did not 'hang out' in the village. His family and neighbours rarely knew where he was or what he was doing at any one time. The kamnan's life was something of a mystery to the rest of the village. Some villagers claimed never to have spoken to him. His brother, who lived next door, claimed to have no relationship at all with the kamnan because "he is never around".

The question emerges as to how there could be such a gap between the rhetoric of participation and the reality of exclusion. How can it be that a long-established system of participatory political institutions, supported by an official pro-participation discourse, fails to effect villager-participation in decisions?

Participation is supposed to be facilitated in the first place by villagers who are elected to representative offices. In conversations about recent programmes and projects, how villages would request development inputs

which their village lacked, budget allocations, and so on, informants typically commented that, "the District Office needn't contact me - that is what the village headperson and kamnan are there for". With regard to villagers themselves contacting the district officials, informants would say, "it's not necessary - that is the headperson's and the kamnan's job". People commented that the villagers could not communicate with officialdom because, "they haven't the right - only the headperson and the kamnan have that right". Of decisions affecting their village, informants said, "it's the responsibility of the kamnan and village headperson". In fact, the villagers' very familiarity with the system of representation itself contributed to its failure to facilitate participation. All the villagers knew full well that the main responsibility of village headpersons, kamnans, and so on, is to liaise with the District Office: hence, the villagers themselves have neither the right nor the need to be involved with this. The raison d'etre of the representatives is to take care of it all for the villagers, who are, therefore, "may kiaw" (not involved, irrelevant).

In other words, there is an irony crucial to the failure of Thailand's supposedly participatory system of rural administration. Villagers' participation in decision-making is facilitated in the first place by interconnected representative institutions. But from the villagers' perspective, these institutions become something

distinct and unique in themselves, part of a composite bloc, 'officialdom', which is crucially divorced from the people they exist to represent. And from the perspective of the officials, the existence of villagers who are representatives allows agents of the state bureaucracy to believe that a measure of participation has been achieved, because at least some villagers are involved in some decisions at least to some extent. The paradox is that more participation (representative institutions) means less participation (involvement in decisions). 'Participation by representation' becomes a contradiction in terms.

This explains a striking contradiction which arose in the data. On the one hand, the villagers were well aware of at least the most rudimentary aspects of the participatory administration system affecting them (though not of its more detailed aspects, e.g. the sub-district council). They knew that participation in village decision-making meant canvassing their representatives, such as the village headperson and the kamnan, who would, in turn, somehow contact the district level bureaucracy. The responses to questions H(vi) and H(vii) on survey 1 (namely: "How would you go about requesting things the village lacks? Have you ever requested anything in that way?" - see appendix one) confirm this: most respondents answered these questions with, "talk to the headperson and kamnan". During informal conversations, villagers frequently explained that the way to participate in decisions affecting Saentor is to contact the village

headperson and the kamnan. However, on the other hand, almost nobody had put this knowledge into practice and actually contacted village representatives. 'Ordinary' villagers would say, "may mii sid phuut" (we don't have the right to speak) or, "we can't raise our hands in meetings". This concords with the view that participation was hindered more than helped by the system of representative institutions designed to effect it. Villagers felt that there would have been something inappropriate about trespassing the domain of 'officialdom', which was the prerogative of local level representatives and supra-local bureaucrats.

However, this argument should not be taken to suggest that villagers' representatives themselves enjoyed a degree of political 'clout'. Villagers involved with representative institutions (such as the sub-district council members, the kamnan, and the village headpersons) were involved in decision-making and to the exclusion of the rest of the village. However, they did not thereby enjoy political power. Their role did not go beyond that of recipients of district level missives. They did not undertake forceful interventions on behalf of an oblivious electorate. For example, it was clear from observing sub-district council meetings and from other background information (such as the minutes of previous council meetings and conversations with members) that the council's real purpose was to facilitate 'top down' development. It was a channel of communication from the district level

bureaucracy to the village, and not vice-versa. More often than not, the 'decisions' made by village representatives at a council meeting were overturned at the district level. The point of most meetings was the announcement of decisions already taken at district level. Council members did not set the agenda. Votes were almost always unanimous because they simply rubber-stamped district officials' suggestions.

Individual villagers' representatives were not powerful figures in their own right. The two most common criticisms of the kamnan that I heard were that he was never around, and that "he is soft" and "has no real power". Villagers were clearly aware of the fact that he was not a strong political figure. This was not something peculiar to the kamnan. Nobody expected the village headperson to canvass officials or argue a case or question decisions. He only saw officials (in their official capacity) when he had to, for example at the sub-district council meetings or when the District Officer visited his village. All villagers' representatives were very deferential to district officials. Clearly, one of the reasons villagers were not involved in decision-making is that their involvement is supposed to be facilitated by representatives who are not (and who are seen not to be) very powerful. This undermines confidence in the value of canvassing representatives.

A second explanation of the gap between the rhetoric of participation and the reality of exclusion, concerns the

persistence of a traditional political culture which is essentially counter-participatory. In published research on Thailand's system of local administration, there has been a good deal of interest in a Thai political culture which promotes authoritarianism and paternalism on the part of the bureaucracy and subservience and apathy on the part of the populace (Thinapan 1981; Pharani 1970:118ff.; Horrigan 1962). Repeatedly, this has been traced back to the seven centuries of absolutist monarchy which preceded the 1932 'bloodless coup' by the People's Party, the tenets of which are said to have persisted in the modern bureaucratic tradition (Thak 1979; Riggs 1966; Thinapan 1975). Consequently, there is a lack of accountability of latter-day officials (Neher 1970). Bureaucratic corruption has emerged as Thailand's biggest 'open secret' (Thinapan 1977). Political 'modernisation', in the sense of political participation, has been stunted (Shirk 1970). Non-traditional institutions aimed at increasing political participation are doomed to failure (Chakrit and Hagensick 1973; Ryan 1962).

Data from Saentor endorse this focus in the literature. The pro-participation ideology discernible in official discourse is dissonant with other elements of the political culture. Take the case of the kamnan. The point has been made that I was struck by his frequent references to participation and other related ideas: 'chuaykan', 'ruamkan', and 'kaan suan ruam' (helping one another out, joining together, participating) were favourite phrases.

As noted above, he extolled the virtues of co-operative institutions and participatory institutions (e.g., the village committees and aw raeng: reciprocal labour exchange). He repeatedly stressed the need to involve the villagers in development and development related decision-making, and to inform them of issues, listen to their needs, canvass their views, and so on. However, underlying this rhetoric was a very different kamnan. As the fieldwork progressed, attitudes emerged which directly contradict the participation jargon. He said that the villagers were ngor (stupid, foolish) and lacked the knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute usefully to decisions. It is not worth asking villagers what they want, soliciting their views, and so on, because they are stupid and apathetic and lack relevant knowledge. For example, he complained that the villagers are choey choey ('so-so', apathetic) about the newspaper reading centre, when it was clearly useful and important. The villagers are merely farmers. All they know about and are interested in is their farming and their work, and so their input into decisions is not appropriate. Villagers certainly recognised these of the kamnan's attitudes. Throughout the fieldwork, the kamnan was never known to canvass the villagers on any issue. They frequently complained that he was never around. Some people said that they had never spoken to him. A number of villagers, in the context of answering my survey questions, complained that the kamnan had never undertaken any kind of survey or

solicited their opinions.

This contradiction between the rhetoric of popular participation and a quite contradictory underlying attitude was not atypical of officialdom. One of its most ironic expressions was at the annual general meeting of the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative. On an occasion infused with the principles of participation (the virtues of which were commended during speeches), the inspector of co-operatives for Kaancanaburi Province, during a private conversation, explained to me the main obstacle to members' involvement in decision-making. Because they are "just farmers and uneducated", members do not really understand the issues involved, the contents of the annual general report, and the workings of the co-operative. He included the elected, fifteen-person management committee in this. What they needed was educated managers (government officials) to "point the way". Communication between officials and members <u>is</u> important, but only because of the need to inform members of decisions taken.

This contradiction between officials' apparent regard for the tenets of participation and an underlying non-participatory attitude emerged in a number of other formal situations. Repeatedly, I found myself in meetings which were ostensibly participatory but in reality something quite different. For example, during the sub-district council meetings I attended, members were repeatedly invited to speak, to discuss the issues, to offer their opinions, amidst comments from the Chair about the

importance of involving everyone. Yet the members had no control over the meetings' agendas, almost invariably the suggestions made by the Chair were passed unanimously, and the council's decisions were overturned by the District Office. At the district meeting to re-establish village committees, government officials lectured at length on the merits of involving villagers in development. However, input from the floor was not invited throughout the meeting. The explicit point of a meeting at the village school was to improve dialogue between parents and the school. In the event, the afternoon consisted of school staff talking at the audience through the ubiquitous microphone about 'participation', the one question asked from the floor was dismissed, and the meeting ended with staff and school committee members staying behind for a discussion, to the exclusion of parents who wandered away. In all such cases, there was a gap between the explicit espousal of the ideals of participation and an underlying attitude belied by the 'style' of the occasion.

Modern development thinking has crystallised in official discourse in the form of pro-participation rhetoric, but remains incompatible with other elements in the prevailing political culture. This contradiction informs the workings of the system of local administration. For example, the supposedly participatory selection of villagers' representatives was, in reality, non-participatory. The kamnan revealed that, usually, officers such as the village headperson were not elected. He

described how, in the event of a vacancy for a village headperson and more than one candidate for the job, he would simply nominate the 'best' candidate. The kamnan was happy with the system and seemed pleased by the power it afforded him. He said it avoided the hassle, tedium and rivalries of elections. This was also a feature of the villagers' other important representative institutions. For example, the village committee members were simply chosen by the kamnan. Important vacancies which did go to a vote were usually decided by who could bribe the most voters. In the case of the village headperson, who was unsuited to the job in a number of ways, it was said that he beat his one rival candidate simply because, "mii phii noong ye" (he had lots of relatives). Predictably, there was very little interest in the selection of representatives on the part of the villagers. It was difficult to get data on the recent election of the village headperson because people could not really remember it and the information they gave was contradictory. All these data suggest that even the most ostensibly representative of village institutions were, in their very selection procedure, not taken seriously as such.

Conversely, village officials themselves did not, for the most part, take their positions qua representative institutions seriously. The pecuniary and other advantages of local office are discussed in the next section. Most representatives were in office for personal gain (including direct and indirect financial gain, status and prestige,

contacts, and so on) and not out of a sense of the importance of villager representation. This does not contradict the argument made out in the next section that local offices incurred losses too, and that therefore certain rich and powerful villagers avoided them. For example, the village headperson could hold famously long and expensive card games under the protection of his office. One of the two sarawat kamnan (sub-district council representative's chief assistants) had left the village prior to the fieldwork. His only regular contact with Saentor was to attend the monthly meeting at the District Office in Thaamakaa to pick up his pay cheque. The response by villagers to the situation where one of their main elected representatives lived in a different province, was no more than a few bemused comments toward the end of the fieldwork. There was no general outcry, and the assumption was that the situation would probably stay as it was. Arguably, this would not have been the case if the office in question was genuinely perceived - by the representative and the represented - to exist in order to facilitate villagers' participation in decision-making. On another occasion, phuuchuay kamnan (kamnan's assistant) asked for help in completing the three-yearly survey of the village - he said it was yung (bothersome) and "khii kiad tham" (I'm too lazy to do it). It was due in the next day, so he took relevant bits from my survey (appendix one) and made the rest up.

3.2 Participation, Political Power and Stratification

The previous section explored the extent to which villagers' participation in the decisions affecting their community is facilitated by their local system of administration. On the one hand, there was a well-established system of local participation in the decision-making process, and an ideological emphasis on participation in official discourse. However, field data suggest that, despite this, the bulk of the villagers were quite dissociated from decisions pertinent to Saentor. One of the reasons for this is a fundamental contradiction in the notion of 'participation by representation'. Villagers are excluded from the decision-making process in part because their involvement is facilitated in the first place by a system of representative institutions. From the villagers' perspective, these institutions become something unique and distinct which 'take care' of the whole business of administration, decisions and local politics in a way which renders their own involvement both unnecessary and inappropriate. However, local representatives themselves have no voice in local decisions: they are ear-pieces and not mouth-pieces, which receive missives from the district level bureaucracy, and do not contribute forcefully to decision-making. A second, underlying factor is the persistence of elements of a traditional political culture which is at odds with the tenets of participation.

In this section, the data presented above will be

related to the phenomenon of stratification discussed in the previous chapter. Saentor's administrative system fails to effect villagers' participation in the decision-making process; villagers lack a voice in the local political arena. However, there was an important exception to this. There existed a sub-stratum of rich villagers (mainly male, but some women too) who tended to eschew local political office but who nevertheless enjoyed an unusual degree of political knowledge and influence.

The political knowledge and local influence members of this sub-stratum commanded is revealed by the case studies, cited in the previous section, of the sub-district council and the newspaper reading centre. With regard the sub-district council, it emerged from informal conversations and from responses to the questions on section J of survey 1 (see appendix one) that many economically elite villagers who were not elected officeholders had been invited to attend council meetings in the past in some official capacity. They could answer questions about the council system in general. For example, they could cite its members and describe its function. Although it is true that they had scant knowledge of recent meetings which they had not attended, their knowledge of the council was far greater than that held by the bulk of the village. Likewise, with regard the newspaper reading centre, those villagers directly involved in the kamnan's plans knew about the endeavour. These tended to be economically elite villagers, including landowners who had been asked for some

land on which to situate the centre, and rich villagers who had been approached for help with raising the necessary funds. Although in some cases their knowledge extended only as far as their peripheral involvement in the scheme, certain of the rich villagers who were not involved directly had at least some knowledge of the kamnan's plans. Relatedly, it was not uncommon for informants to say explicitly of representative institutions - especially the sub-district council and village meetings - that they were only for khon yay (literally, big people). This included both officials and the sub-stratum of politically powerful, rich non-officeholders under discussion here.

Coupled to this unusually extensive political knowledge was a notable degree of political influence. Referring back to conversational evidence and responses to questions H(vi) and H(vii) survey 1 (see appendix one), it transpired that members of this sub-stratum had in the past canvassed officials. They had, for example, contacted the kamnan to request specific projects or to complain about the lack of certain facilities in the village. In a number of cases, they had even gone over the heads of the village based officials and contacted the District Office directly. Similarly, they were involved in, and unusually knowledgeable about, the village meetings which took place during the fieldwork year. It was not uncommon for informants to say of members of this sub-stratum of rich villagers that they were more powerful than, say, the kamnan; and these elites made such claims for themselves.

This concords with the point made in the previous section that the villagers who held representative office were not in themselves very powerful.

In characterising this sub-stratum, it is important to emphasise that they tended to eschew local representative office for fairly straightforward reasons. The relevant literature contains community studies which report that local political institutions tend to be dominated by economically elite villagers (Turton 1976:295; Potter 1976:52). Connectedly, it is often suggested that political office is translatable into personal economic gain:

> a headman derives considerable economic advantage (e.g., as a landowner, trader, moneylender, and irrigation contractor) from the prestige and potential sanctions inherent in his office, from his access to information and to the potential support of the bureaucracy (Turton 1976:283).

With regard the more important of Saentor's (supposedly) elected representatives - the kamnan and his four assistants, the village headpersons and each of their two assistants - there did appear to be a coincidence of economic status and political position, and straightforward ways in which officials could translate their office into personal economic gain. No really poor villager occupied any of these positions. Since all these officeholders enjoyed the status of khaaraadchakaan (government officials) they received a monthly salary from the District Office. Fees for themselves and close relatives were waived at government-run secondary schools and hospitals.

The case of the kamnan reveals some of the non-

institutionalised opportunities for economic gain afforded to different extent by the various local political offices. He allegedly took bribes from the villagers, for example to register their land or a new house at the District Office quicker rather than slower. He was given expensive 'presents' by villagers on his birthday, at new year, and so on (including a brand new motor bike). He allegedly pocketed the prize money won in a recent village development competition; this money was supposed to be used to further development efforts in the village, and had apparently been earmarked to build incinerators for refuse, but had subsequently 'disappeared'. It was claimed that he took a percentage of all the development budgets for which he had some direct responsibility, including five per cent of the K.S.Ch. budget for the annual extension of Saentor's K.S.Ch. road. Since he was responsible for land registration in the area, he allegedly stole his brother's inheritance by simply registering it in his own name. And, of course, he stood to make the kind of contacts which could be of use to him, notably powerful district level officials.

It would appear, then, that local political officeholders tended to be drawn from amongst economically elite male villagers, and that these positions afforded opportunities for economic gain. The point was made in the previous section that local representatives were interested in being officeholders more because of such opportunities for personal economic gain than out of a concern that the

villagers enjoy genuine representation. However, the situation was less straightforward than might at first appear. For one thing, whatever the opportunities for economic gain presented by political offices, they entailed considerable economic losses as well. Take the case of the village headperson. Like the kamnan, he made money in institutionalised ways (monthly wage, free school fees, etc.) and non-institutionalised ways (e.g., by making good contacts and receiving 'presents'). On the other hand, his office cost him considerable sums, too. For example, he bore the cost of frequently entertaining the District Officer and other notables when they went into his village, and of having to be seen to attend any important functions in the village (either private or personal), where he was expected to lead the way with donations. In fact, a major source of interest in the village was the economic decline of the village headperson. Despite his office, he was con long (getting poor). Notably, he had recently been forced to sell his most valuable asset, his inherited rice fields, due to debt.

Extra expenses were not the only problem for officeholders. Take the case of the kamnan. He began as an assistant village headperson at the age of seventeen, and spent the following forty years moving through the ranks of all the local political offices. Despite considerable landholdings (25 ray) and household labour (eight adult children still at home), he was repeatedly described, by himself and others, as poor. It was

explicitly stated that the kamnan was poor because, by devoting himself to political office, he was unable to spend the time and energy required to capitalize on his assets.

Local political office was a source of economic loss both in terms of extra expenses due to extra responsibilities and a high profile, and in terms of the required deviation of time and energy away from more direct forms of economic accumulation. Corroboratory evidence is given by the fact that elite villagers tended to shy away from office. Whilst none of Saentor's officeholders were very poor, it was not the case that there was a wholly consistent coincidence of economic status and officeholding. Many of the wealthy villagers claimed to have been offered important political positions which they had declined. Individuals repeatedly said that they would never stand for any kind of office because it was yung yaak (bothersome, troublesome). For example, one would have the drudgery of the three-yearly village census and survey. Some officials gave up their office after a short time. The village headperson had only one rival candidate for his job. There was a high turnover of official personnel.

In Saentor, there was a sub-stratum of rich villagers who in most cases did not hold - and in some cases actually avoided - the major local political offices, but who nevertheless enjoyed a notable degree of political knowledge and local influence. The question arises as to the bases of such villagers' power. To elucidate the

mechanisms whereby the elite achieve control of political resources, the case study of a single rich villager is reported here. For the sake of anonymity, the villager described in the following will be referred to as 'Haan'.

Haan was one of the wealthiest villagers. On the interpretive model of the village suggested in the previous chapter (section 2.7), his household was a member of the second sub-stratum of rich households, namely, (a)ii. Haan made no bones about the fact that he had declined the opportunity to become kamnan in sub-district Saentor, for many of the reasons mentioned above. The implication was that it was not necessary. Nevertheless, he had an unusual degree of political knowledge and influence, compared to his poorer neighbours. He gave full and knowledgeable answers to questions about the sub-district council (on which he had apparently sat as an occasional 'specialist' member) and the newspaper reading centre, the Saentor-Thaarua bridge and public telephone projects, village committees and the K.S.Ch. road - indeed, on almost any topic of village wide significance, Haan was always a vociferous and accurate source. Sometimes, if an informant was at a loss to answer my questions on some village issue, they would advise me to "go and see hua naa muubaan (a village leader) - like khun Haan". He was amongst those referred to as khon yay ('big people').

Apart from his extensive political knowledge and information, Haan was, relatively speaking, very influential. He had specifically requested things of the

kamnan and village headperson. For example, he had canvassed the idea of the public telephone, and was pleased it was to be installed. It was once explained to me that, in the event of my having a brush with the law, my best bet would be to solicit the help of khun Haan. He was more likely to get me off than the kamnan. Certainly, Haan thought of himself as very powerful, often boasting, for example, that he knew everyone in Thaamakaa and that all the police were his friends.

What were the bases of Haan's political knowledge and influence, given that he held none of the major local official positions and had, in fact, declined the most important of them? For one thing, Haan utilised a variety of lesser 'positions' in the village which, whilst they were not in themselves of a directly political nature or of direct political value, nevertheless served certain of his purposes. These positions include the committees administering the affairs of the village temple, the school and the newspaper reading centre, and the newly re-established village committee. Haan was amongst a handful of wealthy men who sat on all of these. The vast majority of the villagers were not involved in these institutions. Elite women were not so prominent in them as were elite men. Although they involved no direct financial gain (e.g., they were unwaged), these positions served a variety of other purposes. They helped to maintain a high profile in the village as a hua naa muubaan (village leader) or khon yay ('big person'). Members could keep up to date

with useful information about other villagers (e.g., debtors at the school or temple). Generally, they helped members like Haan to keep a finger on the pulse of the village. They were also useful for making and maintaining contacts, both in the village and 'above' it (the village committee was organised at the District Office, for example). And none of these positions were as demanding of time and energy as the representative political office Haan declined. The monopolisation of these positions is itself a barrier to increased political participation. What decision-making power they afford is concentrated in the hands of few rich men like Haan and not spread around the village.

Haan supplemented his village level positions with a variety of supra-village ones. He was one of only fifteen members of the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative's management committee. Prior to the fieldwork, he had been head of a sugar-cane quota, mediating between one of the local sugar-cane processing factories and the growers. In response to the big shift in crop choice from sugar-cane to baby corn, he became a middleman for baby corn growers (see chapter four, section 4.4); in a typical week, he could make a profit of 2,400 baat from this. He was the head of a Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Co-operatives (BAAC) 'joint liability' group (i.e., group of borrowers who in part guarantee one another's loans). All these positions were crucial to Haan. On the one hand, they were opportunities to extend his field of contacts beyond the

village. All such positions brought him into contact with important supra-village personalities and structures, especially district level officials and commercial and entrepreneurial figures. Secondly, they presented opportunities for more or less direct forms of accumulation, including marketing information, cheap inputs and credits, and 'hand outs' of various kinds. They maintained his links 'downwards' to the ordinary farmers (the sugar-cane and baby corn growers, the BAAC debtors, the co-operative's members, and so on) who he came into contact with in an unequal way.

Generally, contacts were crucial to Haan. Concerning his role as a baby corn middleperson, he explained how he could only do the job - and only he could do it - because of the contacts he had both amongst the farmers and in the town based factories. Apart from the various 'positions' he chose to occupy, he made and kept contacts in a variety of ways. More often than not, he was seen around the village with a particular plain clothes policeman who the villagers referred to as a 'secret policeman'. They were constant companions, and Haan claimed repeatedly to know every one of the district police officers. He also claimed to know "everyone at the District Office". 'Ordinary' villagers were clearly intimidated and frightened by the police and very humble in the presence of district level officials. There were certain institutionalised meeting places for people like Haan to meet their district level contacts. For example, there were certain restaurants

outside the village which Haan went to most days and which were full of uniformed government officials and policemen, bankers, business people and so on. The expensive card games in the village were especially useful. Haan was a regular player at the village headperson's sessions, along with other notables such as bank officials, policemen, village officeholders, and local entrepreneurs. He maintained very close links with the headperson, who was known to be the favourite of the District Officer. On his not infrequent visits into the village, the District Officer would make a bee-line for the headperson, who in turn would entertain him. Haan almost invariably turned up at some point during such evenings. On one such occasion, the District Officer solicited local information to help him buy land in the village. Haan was the most vociferous informant, explaining who had land where, who was in debt (and therefore likely to sell), relative prices, and so on. One of the most common of the comments villagers made about Haan was, "he knows everyone".

It is often suggested in relevant literature that local political offices are dominated by wealthy, entrepreneurial villagers, who use these for personal economic gain. However, data from Saentor support this characterisation only to some extent. Control over decision-making power and regulative institutions is restricted to wealthy villagers, but not in the crude sense that there was an unambiguous correlation between economic status and political officeholding. Rich villagers were

ambivalent toward local political offices because these were not always easily translated into personal economic gain - indeed, they often entailed personal economic loss. In this section, politically knowledgeable and locally influential elites in Saentor have been characterised.

3.3 Political Participation and the Development Process

Two points have emerged from data presented in the foregoing. Firstly, villagers' involvement in decisions affecting their community is not effected by the interconnected representative institutions which comprise the local administrative system. This is so despite an ideological stress on participation in official discourse (section 3.1). However, secondly, there does exist a sub-stratum of economically elite villagers who monopolise local political knowledge and power; this group is not straightforwardly coextensive with local political officeholders (section 3.2).

The present section elucidates the effect of this monopolisation of political resources on the content of decisions affecting Saentor. In this regard, it is pertinent to take village development related decisions as case studies. For one thing, probably the main decision-making forum in today's village is 'village development'. It is no coincidence, for example, that the two case studies of skewed political knowledge and influence reported above - namely, the sub-district council and the

kamnan's newspaper reading centre - are related to village development. Secondly, whilst the present theme is being considered with specific reference to the phenomenon of stratification in Saentor, villager-participation is an important development issue in itself. One aspect of the radical changes in development thinking which have taken place over recent decades is the demand for a shift in focus from macro-level perspectives on whole economies to the micro-level analysis of the development process in specific localities. This latter involves a stress on the role of potential beneficiaries in the development process affecting them. The call for 'bottom-up' development involves the demand for input by 'target groups' when delineating problems, devising solutions, and implementing, maintaining and evaluating programmes. On one level, the debate in this chapter is intended to endorse this approach in the context of rural development in Thailand, by considering the extent to which villagers have a voice in the decision-making process affecting their community. Given this, it is pertinent to illustrate the effects of the concentration of political resources described in the foregoing, by reference to ongoing development planning in Saentor (Uphoff 1988; Huizer 1983; Midgley 1986).

The exclusion of non-elite villagers from their regulative institutions means that they feel dissociated from the village development process in general. This was confirmed by participant-observation and by responses to survey 1. For example, over half the respondents to survey

1 intimated that they did not know about, or were not interested in, development in their village. These were the poor and most middle ranking villagers. Many of them answered questions H(i) and H(ii) of survey 1 (namely: "What has the village received to help it develop? What is the best or most useful thing the village has received to help it develop?" - see appendix one) with "nothing". Others, after much deliberation, mentioned the K.S.Ch. road or the Saentor-Thaarua bridge, but insisted, "may hen mii aray" (I can't see we have anything) or, "may day aray loey" (we've never got anything). Some such cases were especially striking. For example, those villagers who used the government provided hand pumps for all their domestic water did not mention them in answer to these questions; and rice growers did not mention the irrigation system. These responses to the survey mirrored more informal comments.

There was an over-riding sense that village development was something that happens to the village. So, for example, if I struck up a conversation about some project (about which the informant usually knew little or nothing), comments would be made like: "if the amphoe ('District Office') decides we'll get such-and-such, then we have to have it". Toward the end of the fieldwork, (yet another) new saalaa (shaded meeting hut) was built in the village by a local politician. There was no prior consultation with, or even informing of, the village. The saalaa simply appeared. This was not unusual. About two

years prior to the fieldwork, district workers arrived in the village to examine possible sites for the public telephone. Between then and the arrival of the telephone, villagers were quite in the dark as to what would happen. They gradually forgot the whole business. Then, out of the blue, two years later, district workers returned to Saentor to fell coconut trees and erect a transmitter for the telephone. Likewise, villagers never knew what was happening with regard the Saentor-Thaarua bridge project. The whole thing was 'in the air' throughout the fieldwork year, but there were conflicting rumours about when and where - even, if - the bridge was to be built. One day, with no prior warning, work suddenly started. The village was a passive recipient of developers' largesse in a way which left it with no say in the process.

An important feature of villagers' involvement in development emerged from the taped interviews with local officials (see appendix two). As reported in section 3.1 above, official discourse revealed a very strong emphasis on the need for participation. However, when this theme was pursued in the interviews (notably, by questions 1C(i)-(iv): see appendix two), it emerged that the examples of participation in development which respondents gave only required participation in terms of villagers contributing resources (labour, money, materials, etc.) and not in terms of villagers' involvement in <u>decision-making</u>. So, for example, respondents would extol the virtues of <u>ruam kan nay kaan phadthanaa</u> (joining together in development), then

illustrate this with examples such as Saentor's K.S.Ch. road or the Saentor-Thaarua bridge. But in such instances of 'participation', the villagers were not involved in decisions or project planning, only in contributing labour, money and other resources. By implication, and despite their explicit statements, developers thought of participation in terms of villagers contributing what resources they had to offer, rather than in terms of genuinely sharing decision-making power. For example, a feature of the village development competition often cited by villagers was that they had had to find the time and the materials to build fences, put up signs, clean up the village, and so on. They were not involved in decisions such as whether to enter the competition or discussions as to whether competitions are a good idea. Likewise, villagers worked on the K.S.Ch. road, but they did not decide whether this was the best way to use K.S.Ch. funds. Of course, this was a feature of village development which was of particular concern to the poorer villagers because they had fewer resources such as cash and materials to spare.

Given the data presented in this chapter, it is predictable that projects implemented in the name of village development failed to address the villagers' felt needs. Just prior to the fieldwork, the District Office gave the village headperson money to install a natural gas cooking system run on cow dung. The idea was that other villagers would follow suit. Not surprisingly, no-one did.

It was an inappropriate project for a number of reasons. The initial cost of installing the system was high (around 7,000 baat). There were hardly any cows around Saentor, so even if the dung were free it was tedious to have to find a source and transport it. Household energy was not a problem in the village. The vast majority of households had taw gaes (gas cookers), which were known to be better, cleaner and more reliable than the headperson's system; and those households who used charcoal burners were quite happy with them. Finally, natural gas cookers need a big pit in which to put the cow dung. Most households simply did not have the space.

Similarly, it seemed clear that Saentor did not need a newspaper reading centre. The only argument for it was that the present centre, which was in the library outside the school (see map five), was inconvenient: the library closed when the school did, and it was situated outside the centre of the village. However, as informants pointed out, the village noodle stores took daily newspapers for their customers and anyone else who wanted to read them. Even if an actual centre was necessary, there was a plethora of decaying saalaa (shaded meeting huts) around the village which would have been ideal. Nobody mentioned newspaper reading centres in response to question H(v) of survey 1 (namely: "What does the village lack which you would most like it to have?" - see appendix one). In the end, the kamnan's newspaper reading centre was established during a period when I was out of the village. An indication of how

unnecessary and irrelevant it was to the villagers is that, on my return to the field site, informants did not mention the completed centre in the context of innumerable questions such as, "what has been happening in the village whilst I was away?".

The corollary to lack of - or unequal - participation in decision-making is ill-advised and unwanted initiatives. Another feature of the newspaper reading centre highlights an important aspect of non-participatory development. Clearly, the centres were something of a fad. Saentor's kamnan was joined by around fifty others on the training course in the North which I mentioned earlier. He gave a number of examples of exemplary centres which had sprung up in neighbouring sub-districts. I noticed new centres on visits to villages outside of Saentor. The corollary to non-participatory development is a 'thick-grained' approach which prioritises bureaucratic convenience over local needs and situations by implementing the same programmes in diverse localities. The newspaper reading centre was only one of many examples of this.

Conversely, the majority of villagers did not get what they knew they did want, namely, naam prapaa (tap water for domestic use). During conversations and in response to question H(v) of survey 1 (namely: "What does the village lack which you would most like it to have?" - see appendix one), the poorer villagers stated clearly that their most important need was for better supplies of private water. Poor villagers were especially resentful because they were

forced to rent water from their richer neighbours, and because rich villagers squashed an attempt to implement a communal tap water scheme a few years prior to the fieldwork by withdrawing their support (see chapter seven, section 7.2). During the taped interviews with local officeholders (see appendix two), it emerged that developers were aware of this need. However, there were no plans made to meet it, despite the quite considerable development activity in the area. The villagers did not feel they could push for a tap-water system, and had to simply wait and hope that officials would get round to it.

However, turning to the sub-stratum of economically elite and politically active villagers discussed in the previous section, it transpired that they tended to contribute more fully and accurately to conversations regarding village development and gave fuller responses to questions H(i) and H(ii) on survey 1 (see appendix one). They gave fuller and more opinionated responses to questions about what the village lacked and what they would like it to receive. As mentioned in the previous section, it was not uncommon for members of this sub-stratum to canvass officials (at both the local and the district level) on development related issues. This expressed their greater degree of political influence. On some occasions, elite villagers felt they could take matters into their own hands. For example, the first strip of all-weather road in Saentor, which was extended to become the K.S.Ch. road, was built by a rich, non-officeholding villager. Hence, not

only were there examples of irrelevant and unnecessary village development projects, but also in some cases development initiatives benefitted richer villagers more than the poor.

One of the clearest instances of this was the public telephone. Only those 'capitalist farmers' with business interests outside of the village were unequivocally in favour of this, and only they stood to gain from it. Some villagers commented spontaneously that only the rich would be able to use the telephone because it would be so expensive. This reflects the position of elites like Haan in the decision-making process. Their greater degree of political influence filters through in the form of development projects of benefit only (or mainly) to themselves.

3.4 Concluding Remarks

Data presented in this and the following chapter pertain to ongoing local processes of differentiation. In this chapter, villagers' participation in power over political resources has been considered. The main conclusions are that the participation of the bulk of the village in decisions affecting their community is not facilitated by its supposedly participatory system of representative institutions; however, there was evidence of a concentration of political knowledge and resources into the hands of relatively few, rich villagers who enjoyed a

considerable amount of political and knowledge and local influence. This has been shown to inform the content of decisions affecting the village.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARTICIPATION, PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION

The previous chapter examined the monopolisation of political resources in Saentor, and the effects of this in the context of village development. The second strand to the definition of 'participation' given at the start of the previous chapter concerns access to and control over the local resources necessary for production and reproduction. This chapter continues the theme of unequal participation, focusing on local processes which increase the grip rich villagers have on productive and reproductive resources, and the exclusion of the majority of villagers from access to these.

4.1 Access to Land

The point was stressed in chapter two that, although land is an unevenly distributed resource, there is not a straightforward correlation between landownership and household economic status in Saentor (section 2.6). This is not to deny that land is still at least one of the important productive resources available to the villagers. The development process in Saentor causes the increased exclusion for the majority of villagers, namely the poor and some of the middle ranking households, from access to

and control over land.

Land prices in the village are rising at an inordinate rate due to village development (Anan 1989). Infrastructural developments, such as the Saentor-Thaarua bridge, the K.S.Ch. road, electricity, and the public telephone, make the village increasingly convenient. The area is seen to be 'desirable', notably in terms of better access to markets, good communications, and improved transport facilities. Hence, the price of land in the area rises. By the time of the fieldwork, land prices were so high that the poorest stratum of villagers found the idea that they could buy land laughable.

On one level, the effect of this is increased land concentration within the village community. The trend is for rich villagers to buy up land from their poorer, often indebted neighbours. A recent phenomenon is that of rich villagers expressly buying land which they do not intend to farm, and which they will resell at a later date for a profit. Equally important is the related phenomenon of outside investors capitalizing on the development based land price increases. The District Officer anticipated the land price rise consequent on the Saentor-Thaarua bridge project. Allegedly, he bought land around the proposed site before the project was common knowledge. He began a search for other well situated plots during the fieldwork, enlisting the help of the village headperson and various local notables.

Around the time of the fieldwork, most of the land

which changed hands was bought by rich Bangkok investors who len thii din (speculate in land). According to contacts in Bangkok and elsewhere, this is part of a nationwide phenomenon. In Saentor, Bangkok based investors typically bought sizeable plots (15-25 ray) from one wealthy landowner or a group of owners whose plots were adjacent to one another. The buyers were not primarily interested in the agricultural produce they could obtain from working the land. Rather, like the District Officer and many of the rich villagers, they bought land purely as an investment. They would either resell it at a profit later, or build a factory or a leisure resort on the plot. Like the District Officer, at least one of these speculators was said to have bought land because he knew about the proposed Saentor-Thaarua bridge before the news became public. Certainly, this process whereby landownership passes out of the village and into the hands of Thailand's elite looks set to continue. During the fieldwork, a land buying agent pursued their brief to find 3 ray for an investor who intended to build a leisure resort. There was even an international element to this process. Japanese investors one day arrived in the village to consider the suitability of a large plot by the river as a site for a factory.

Usually, when outside investors required labour to mind their house or their land, they imported workers from Bangkok rather than hire villagers. This is an important element in the process. The phenomenon of outside

investors importing live-in labour to manage their land parallels the preference amongst the richest villagers to hire live-in workers/servants rather than village labourers or tenants (see chapter two, section 2.7). In this way, the poor are being excluded from access to village land on two counts: firstly, by the process whereby the price of land rises beyond their reach; and secondly because, once they have lost ownership of land, they are excluded from tenancy agreements and wages from working it.

Interestingly, data on villagers' attitudes to, and perceptions of, development programmes reveal an ambivalence which reflects the contradictions in the development process discussed here. On the one hand, responses to the latter part of question C(ix) on survey 1 (namely: "Has the value of land changed recently? If so, why and by how much? Will the value of land change in the foreseeable future? If so, why?" - see appendix one) confirmed observational and more spontaneous conversational data: poor villagers were well aware of the fact that development (kaan phadthanaa or khwaam caroen) causes land price increases, that this process would continue into the foreseeable future, and that because of it, they could never afford to become landowners. What villagers meant by 'development' in this context, were the infrastructural development projects which increased the 'desirability' of the area, such as the K.S.Ch. road, the Saentor-Thaarua bridge, and electricity. A number of respondents specifically mentioned that development was making the area

desirable to Bangkok based investors, which was causing land price increases. This was often linked to the population increase in the area.

On the other hand, whenever villagers were asked about a specific development initiative (e.g., the Saentor-Thaarua bridge), both during informal conversations and in response to relevant survey questions (e.g., question H(iv) on survey 1, namely: "Is the bridge a good idea? Will all the villagers get equal benefit from it?" - see appendix one), they were invariably very positive and explicitly claimed that everyone would enjoy <u>equal</u> benefit from the project in question. The villagers' attitude was clearly one of ambivalence. Similarly, during conversations in which they explained why the telephone, school loudspeaker, newspaper reading centre, or whatever, were not very good ideas or not as good as, for example, tap water, they almost invariably introduced some phrase like, "still, it's good though" or, "I'm glad we got it".

The investment of outside capital in Saentor's land is both a cause and an effect of land price increases consequent on the development of the area. The resultant exclusion of poorer villagers from control of land as a local resource was further exacerbated by one of the predictable consequences of the style of development undertaken in Thailand, namely, personal enterprises which monopolise increasingly scarce local resources. A local entrepreneur, who also owned the Kaancanaburi-Raachaburi bus line and herds of cattle, had established <u>boo saay</u> (a

sand quarry) in the village around ten years prior to the fieldwork. He bought up plots of land around the quarry in the 'floodplain' or old river bed, and excavated the sandy soil for sale in the construction business outside of the village. He used his own transport company plus some contracted trucks to shift the sand. It was a hugely lucrative, twenty-four hour a day operation, from which he could make 30-40,000 baat per day. Once a piece of land had been bought for excavation, it could never again be used for agricultural purposes. Sand could be dug down to a level of one hundred metres (see maps four and five).

The quarry clearly exacerbated disparities in the degree of participation in control of local resources enjoyed by villagers, both directly by buying up farmers' land, and indirectly by increasing the scarcity of available land and thereby pushing up land prices. The survey data reveal the extent of this: of the 100 households surveyed, 28 households sold a total of 127 ray to boo saay, at an average sale price of approximately 30,000 baat per ray. Importantly, it was clear from the survey data that the sand quarry owner bought up small plots of land. Of the 28 surveyed households who had sold land to the quarry, 13 had sold plots of only 2 ray or less, 10 households had sold 3-5 ray, and only 5 households had sold over 5 ray. Typically, the sand quarry owner bought small plots from small-scale farmers, thereby precipitating landlessness or near-landlessness.

Finally, the 'squeeze' on land was exacerbated by the

process of village development in the most direct way possible. Infrastructural developments usually require land. A number of farmers mentioned that they had lost land to facilitate development projects. For example, farmers lost rice fields in which irrigation canals were dug, and plots for the telephone's signal receiver. The main importance of this is not the effect on the landowners themselves: for the most part, they were wealthy enough to stand the loss and they were in a position to benefit from the project in question. Rather, the point is that village development was utilising a considerable amount of land, thereby increasing the scarcity of an increasingly valuable resource and exacerbating the land price rises which exclude poorer villagers from control of productive resources.

4.2 Investment Capital and Credit

Credit can be a local productive resource in the form of investment capital. This section pursues the observation made in a previous chapter that credit is unevenly distributed amongst villagers (chapter two, section 2.7). The following is a summary of major credit sources in Saentor:

Institutionalised Credit (IC) Sources

Commercial banks: A number of commercial banks were within reach for the villagers, and a substantial number of

households had a bank book. Annual interest on loans was around 12-15%. The loans required surety (usually a land registration document).

Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Co-operatives (BAAC): Loans could be secured from BAAC either individually, or as part of a 'joint liability group' (i.e., a group of borrowers which is in part jointly liable for the repayment of the whole loan). Both long and short term loans were available: interest was around 12% per annum for the former and 8% for the latter. BAAC required that the loan be spent on agricultural production and inspected the use of the money.

The Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative: The co-operative was closely linked to BAAC. Apart from members' subscription fees and the interest they payed on loans (around 12.5% per annum), the co-operative's assets were loaned from BAAC. Membership of the co-operative was restricted to those with agricultural assets (land and/or livestock) and tenant farmers, and landless borrowers who could persuade two landowners to guarantee a loan. The co-operative was known to be more sympathetic toward defaulters than was BAAC, though the policy at both institutions was to charge punitive interest rates followed by collateral seizure in the event of defaults on repayments.

The housewives' group: The group had been started when a local political figure donated 10,000 baat. Members could borrow small amounts for up to four months at an

interest rate of 2% each month. There were no official limits on the amounts loaned, but funds were low and a typical loan was between 500-1,000 baat. There were no restrictions on how loans could be used.

The temple and the school: The systems at these institutions were very similar. Small amounts (usually 500-2,000 baat) were borrowed at low interest. Although land was officially required as collateral, there was a very loose system of guarantors, and a very sympathetic attitude adopted toward repayment difficulties. In the main, loans were taken for household use (see chapter five, section 5.1).

Places of work: Money could be borrowed from the sugar factories, for example, by permanent employees and by temporary employees during the season. Repayments were deducted from the borrowers' wages. Similarly, elite villagers who were government officials often joined credit associations at, for example, secondary schools or the District Office.

Non-Institutionalised Credit (NIC) Sources

Friends and relatives: Whilst interest was charged on some loans between friends and relatives, others were free of charge. There was an inordinate amount of inter-household borrowing along these lines. Frequently, the same household was both lender and borrower, and involved with a large number of other households. Collateral was

sometimes required. The most common response to question G(ii) on the surveys (notably: "How do you respond to a shortfall between household income and living costs?" - see appendix one), was: "borrow from friends and family". It should be noted that there was a also a considerable amount of intra-household borrowing, for example between siblings or parents and their children. Again, these sometimes required collateral and interest, and other times did not. A number of borrowers were experiencing repayment difficulties on loans such as these.

Pawning items: Pawning items (often gold jewellery) in the local towns was frequently cited as a source of credit. By handing over the item, a loan is secured at an interest rate of around 3% per month; in the event of default on repayments, the item is sold by the shop.

Buying food on 'tick': Food could be taken from the village stores and paid for later. Whether interest was charged depended on the discretion of the store owner.

Rich neighbours: A large number of poorer villagers entered into very acrimonious credit relations with rich neighbours. Sometimes, the wealthy refused to lend. Those that did lend charged very high interest rates. Usually, they demanded collateral (jewellery, television sets, stereos, etc.), making such arrangement very similar to that of pawning goods.

Merchants and middlepersons: Loans could be secured by farmers who grew baby corn from their village agent or middleperson. This mirrored the previous system of

borrowing from the sugar-cane quota head.

Mortgaging land: The system of land mortgages was a variation on the theme of loans from the wealthy to the poor. The lender would hand over their land registration document to a rich neighbour. In the event of repayment defaults, the lender could seize the borrower's land. This was more institutionalised than the informal loans of money between the rich and the poor mentioned above: if a problem with the arrangement arose, either party could sue the other at the District Office, which would act as arbitrator.

Buying items 'ngen phoon': Ngen phoon (buying on instalments, or hire-purchase) was another variation on the theme of the poor borrowing from the rich - and a very common way for the poor to buy items they could not afford. A rich villager would agree to buy an item for a client who would repay them the cost of the item plus an agreed amount of interest in regular instalments. In the event of repayment defaults, the buyer seized the item.

Len shae: Important to all the villagers was a credit 'game' called len shae, popular throughout Thailand. Each member contributes a fixed amount to a pool of money at a specified time, which is then borrowed by the member who, in competition with other members who want to borrow, is prepared to pay the highest interest that round. Having borrowed, a member pays that amount of interest each subsequent round. Hence, the 'winners' are the members who borrow at lower rather than higher interest, later rather

than earlier in the game. Some players thought the game was fun and exciting (especially trying to judge when to borrow and at what interest); others pointed out that the whole game frequently collapses because players could not contribute to the pool, and could not keep up repayments on loans. These latter explicitly said that IC sources (e.g., commercial banks) were preferable because they were more secure and the interest was fixed.

It was clear that poorer Saentorians were excluded from sources of institutionalised credit (IC). Reference is frequently made in the relevant literature to the fact that large-scale farmers enjoy access to IC, from which small-scale farmers are excluded. Various explanations of this have been suggested. For example, small farmers lack the collateral to back loan requests. They are excluded from BAAC 'joint liability' groups because they are perceived by other members to be 'bad risks'. Lending institutions prefer to keep administrative costs down by lending large amounts to a small number of reliable debtors. Large amounts of IC used to fund investments tend to end up in the hands of the wealthiest farmers, whilst the poorer villagers are restricted to small amounts of NIC for general household use (Webster 1986; Lightfoot and Fox 1983; Prateep 1978; Hirsch 1987:184ff.).

IC sources in Saentor consisted of commercial banks, BAAC, the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative; and places of work (e.g., the sugar factories), the housewives' group, the village temple and village primary school. Of these,

the latter four sources are not relevant here. Only a few, elite villagers borrowed from places of work (e.g., teachers who were in their schools' credit associations); 'ordinary' villagers were excluded from credit at, say, the sugar factories, because of the very high interest rates. The housewives' group, and the village temple and school, did not extend investment capital. Rather, they were institutionalised sources of NIC. They loaned small amounts (up to 2,000 baat) to households which could not make ends meet, for general household use (see chapter five, section 5.1). In the case of the temple, loans were expressly perceived as a way of making merit and not as capital in any sense. Frequently, people borrowed in order to make merit in the form of the interest on the loans. This is one of the reasons why the repayment record at the temple was so good. As is clear from the list of credit sources recorded above, other NIC sources did not extend loans which could be considered investment capital (with the possible exception of len shae - see below).

The system of loans at the commercial banks, BAAC and the co-operative almost wholly excluded the landless households and tenant farmers. They did not have the collateral necessary to borrow from these institutions, and they could not get landowners to guarantee loans for them. Villagers in general repeatedly referred to the fact that this category of landless households and tenant farmers were unable to borrow from these institutions. In a number of cases, the landless and tenant farmers did not know what

BAAC and the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative were. Most of them had no contact with commercial banks, and the few who had bank accounts usually had nothing deposited in them. In those few cases where the economic status of a household had risen dramatically, the household in question usually switched from borrowing from NIC sources to borrowing IC, in parallel with its rise in economic status.

Some poor villagers retained control of some land (see chapter two, section 2.7). A few of these borrowed from commercial banks, BAAC and the co-operative, alongside middle ranking and rich villagers. Given this, it might appear that, with the exception of landless households and tenant farmers, IC was distributed evenly throughout the community. However, it was clear that different strata of recipients of IC perceived of the loans differently. For the most part, poor and middle ranking recipients of IC saw loans as extra income, expendable cash which could supplement their farm and non-farm income. These were spent on, for example, house construction, medical fees, luxury items such as motor cycles and stereos, and general day-to-day household use. They tended not to borrow to fund specific investment projects. Part of the reason for this is that, in the years prior to the emergence of baby corn as a major village crop, many of these farmers grew sugar-cane. Because of the low price for sugar-cane, and in order to survive from one harvest to the next, these households were permanently in debt to commercial banks, BAAC, the sugar factory or the sugar-cane quota head, and

the co-operative. Usually, such debts were very old, and each year the borrower would pay off the interest but not the original loan. Prolonged debts such as these established IC as disposable income rather than investment capital in the minds of borrowers (Fremery 1983; Demaine 1976).

By contrast, Saentor's elite, rich villagers borrowed IC which they clearly perceived of, and disposed of, as investment capital. Most rich villagers borrowed a specific and substantial amount to finance specific investment projects: to buy land, to buy agricultural equipment (e.g., a tractor or water pump), to establish a fish-farm, and so on. The debts did not 'drag on' as they did for middle ranking and poorer borrowers. Also, some of these elite borrowers had access to IC sources peculiar to the wealthy, including the credit associations which elite professional villagers could join (e.g., at schools and the District Office), and the overdraft facilities at commercial banks.

Len shae is a good example of the contrast under consideration. The vast majority of villagers played len shae, but it meant different things to different strata of villagers. For poor and middle ranking villagers, it involved relatively small amounts of money which were used as extra income. Elite villagers contributed thousands of baat each round, and borrowed when they had some substantial investment project in mind.

One of the factors which contributed to this

difference between the elite borrowers and the rest in terms of the way IC is perceived, is what is referred to in the literature as the 'credit in a vacuum' problem. Lending farmers money without concern for other interconnected factors such as marketing, inputs, and agricultural education, will not promote the efficient utilisation of the capital loaned. An integrated and co-ordinated approach is required (Prateep 1978; Bangkok Bank 1978). In Saentor, it was only the wealthiest farmers who commanded the range of resources which made loans as investment capital feasible and worthwhile, including marketing knowledge and contacts, control over labour power, and instruments of production. Whilst middle ranking and some landowning poor households secured loans from IC sources, they lacked the whole range of assets necessary to capitalize on these.

To summarize, participation in the productive power afforded by credit was enjoyed only by the village elite. Loans from only certain institutions were potentially credit qua investment capital: notably, those from commercial banks, BAAC and the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative. On the one hand, the poorest villagers, which usually included landless households and tenant farmers, were excluded from these. On the other, there was an important distinction to be made within that category of households which did receive loans from these institutions. Elite, rich villagers borrowed investment capital, specific and substantial sums to finance planned investment

projects. Middle ranking and poor recipients borrowed to supplement their day-to-day income (cf. Lightfoot and Fox 1983).

4.3 Participation, Production and Co-operatives

Co-operative organisations are a well-established feature of the Central Thai countryside. Introduced in 1916, they are one of Thailand's major development institutions. Potentially, co-operatives are participatory development institutions. The collective nature of co-operatives could increase farmers' bargaining power, including their input into the local decision-making process. They also make available a number of local productive resources: notably, credit, and marketing and agricultural inputs. To what extent do co-operatives succeed in promoting participation?

Saentor's most important co-operative institution was the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative discussed in the previous section. As suggested there, its main function was as a credit co-operative, and it was one of the three main sources of institutionalised credit in the study site. It was a substantial, well-organised institution administered by three government officials and a team of secretaries and clerks. Administration by members was facilitated by a management committee of fifteen elected members, and by thirty-eight elected representatives each of whom had two assistants. There were around 1,200 members throughout the district. The co-operative was

intended to be multi-functional. Apart from loans, it supplied agricultural inputs to members (seed, fertilizer and insecticides) at lower than the market price. It ran its own sugar-cane quota, the advantage of which was that no percentage of the profits from the sugar factory was kept by a quota head, and all profits were returned to the farmers. Rice growers could market their rice through the co-operative, again thereby cutting out the merchant middleperson and maximising the growers' profits. Groups of members could communally own instruments of production. Finally, members could informally help one another out on an ad hoc basis. For example, a member with a ten-wheel truck might shift another member's harvested sugar-cane. The criterion for membership was owning or renting land, or raising animals.

Apart from the co-operative, there were a number of klum (groups or associations). The sub-district's klum kaan kasaed (farmers' group) was administered by a government official and an elected committee of five members. According to the official, there were around 225 members. Members' estimates were lower. Its function was two-fold. Firstly, it was a source of agricultural education: meetings were arranged during which the members were lectured on agricultural techniques, and the district's agricultural extension officer was available to give advice to members. Secondly, members could buy cheap inputs (seed, fertilizer and insecticides) from the klum.

Two related associations were the klum mae baan

(housewives' group) and the klum yuwa (youths' group). Both were specific to village Saentor. The former consisted of the government officer, an elected committee of five members, and a membership of over thirty. The housewives' group as a credit source was described in the previous section. Apart from loans, it had a broad brief, including welcoming visitors to the village, hosting festivals, keeping the village tidy, and arranging ad hoc educational lectures for members. The youths' group was for unmarried villagers aged between ten and twenty-five, and had a membership of over twenty. Village level administrators included the kamnan, village headpersons and an elected committee of three members. Its function was primarily educational: lectures were organised on agriculture, sex education, occupational skills (mechanics, hairdressing, cooking, etc.). People said it was mainly for the children of poorer households who had not had the chance to study on in formal education.

Finally, there was the klum chaaw ray ooy (the sugar-cane growers' association). Membership was restricted to those farmers who had at one time grown sugar-cane. The association provided a number of services to sugar-cane growers, including extending cheap inputs, providing marketing information (e.g., on the price for sugar-cane), guaranteeing the price for sugar-cane for that year, registering members' sugar-cane, and helping to organise aw raeng (reciprocal labour exchange) groups.

Relevant literature on the role of co-operatives in

Thailand's rural development suggests that these institutions make available resources which benefit only a section of the rural population; co-operatives exacerbate stratification because they benefit wealthier and not poorer villagers. Participation in control of local resources is only facilitated for the rural elite, whilst poorer villagers remain excluded. A number of ways in which this occurs have been suggested. Membership of co-operatives is restricted to the wealthy, since it is usually conditional on the ownership of land and other assets. Local elites dominate the co-operatives so that those small-scale farmers who become members are excluded from the power positions. Elite farmers gain more from membership than do the poorer members because they are in a better position to take advantage of the services the co-operatives can offer. For example, with more collateral at their disposal, they can borrow more; and the more one grows, the more one will benefit from the co-operatives' marketing services. Alongside this theme, a number of more general criticisms of co-operatives have been levied. These include criticisms of managers, of co-operatives which are not multi-functional, of the lack of co-ordination between co-operatives and their implementing agencies, and of the failure to shift decision-making power down from government officers to members (Akin 1982; Demaine 1976; Takeshi 1971).

Data from Saentor suggest that co-operative institutions did not have a major impact on the village.

However, on the other hand, where the co-operative institutions did affect the local community, they operated in such a way as to enhance the participation of the local elite in decision-making power and access to local productive resources, whilst excluding the poor from these.

Apart from the loans it extended (see previous section), the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative had little impact on the community. Of the 100 households surveyed, 27 were involved with the co-operative during the fieldwork year. Of these, 20 mentioned "cheap credit" only in response to the question, "Why did you join the co-operative?" (in question I(i) of survey 1 and H(i) of survey 2 - see appendix one). Out of 27 surveyed co-operative members, 25 had borrowed money from the co-operative. Only around half of these 27 members had bought things there, and many of these had bought general households items such as soap and toothpaste, and not agricultural inputs. Of those which had bought inputs, most did not buy them from the co-operative either regularly or solely. Only one of these 27 respondents gave any reason other than credit for joining the co-operative. Of the 16 respondents to the survey who grew sugar-cane, only two chose to join the co-operative's quota rather than a private quota (and one of these was an ex-committee member). It was acknowledged at the co-operative's annual general meeting that it was competing poorly with the private quotas because of the latter's greater resources and flexibility. None of the respondents to the survey

marketed their rice through the co-operative. Clearly, credit was pre-eminent amongst the co-operative's functions. Part of the reason for the lack of a role for the co-operative outside of lending, is that the marketing services it offered related to sugar-cane and rice, neither of which were the main village crops by the time of the fieldwork.

These survey based findings were supported by observational data. The co-operative was hardly ever mentioned without reference to credit. I would never have found out about the co-operative's other functions by simply chatting to villagers. They were described to me by administrating officials. Although officials mentioned the ad hoc ways members might help one another out, I saw no evidence of this in practice. People did not explain their decisions on, say, joint actions, by reference to the co-operative. There was one example of a communally owned ten-wheel truck shared between ten co-operative members in Saentor - but this was the only such example in the entire district.

If the co-operative appears to have had only one function, the various klum described in this section had none. Of the 100 households surveyed, 7 were members of the farmers' group. However, over twice this number of respondents stated explicitly that they did not know what the group was. There was no meeting of the farmers' group during the fieldwork year. Nor was there a meeting of the youths' group; and the only evidence of the housewives'

group was when they hosted one of the merit-making days following the death of the village headperson's mother. Most people did not know what these groups were. Those women who knew of the housewives' group were dismissive of it, saying that it was boring and that it took up time to no avail. The government officer responsible for the group described it as an anachronism that was about to die out. He explained that it had been designed to combat the underemployment of rural women, but since underemployment was not an obvious problem for women in an area like Saentor, it was of no use. When I asked questions about general agricultural education in the village, informants never mentioned these klum, despite the fact that, in the case of the farmers' group and the youths' group, agricultural education was avowedly their major concern.

The sugar-cane growers' association seemed more promising, with a membership of almost a quarter of the households surveyed. However, with the big shift in crop choice from sugar-cane to baby corn, this, too, was something of an anachronism. When surveyed, 10 members mentioned important agricultural functions the association performed (notably, guaranteeing the price for sugar-cane that year). But of far greater interest to the villagers were its non-agricultural functions. The association ran an annual lottery. A percentage of members' earnings from sugar-cane was pooled to buy various prizes which members competed for at the lottery. Also, all members were entitled to a fifty per cent reduction in hospital fees at

the government hospital in Thaamakaa, which the association had helped build. Again, if I had only listened to villagers, I would have assumed that the lottery and the cheap hospital fees were the association's only important roles. Of the 24 members surveyed, 18 mentioned these as a reason for joining the association.

The co-operative institutions established in Saentor were not positive participatory institutions. They did not expand control over local political and productive resources. They did not have much impact at all, being single-functional, anachronistic and shrouded in apathy and disinterest. Where the co-operative institutions <u>did</u> have a substantial role, they increased the control local elites had over resources to the exclusion of the poorer villagers. The main way they did this has already been dealt with: namely, the institutionalised credit made available by the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative.

Apart from the effect of the co-operative institutions in exacerbating the difference in economic status of the landed and landless villagers, there is a second way in which the co-operatives benefitted the already-wealthy as compared to the poor. A large proportion of the rich villagers, notably members of sub-category (a)ii in the interpretive schema of the village described earlier (chapter 2, section 2.7), were involved in the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative and the farmers' group to an unusual extent. These tended to be wealthy, ambitious and entrepreneurial farmers, who saw the advantages these

institutions offered in terms of credit, contacts, and access to a variety of other resources such as inputs and marketing information. These rich villagers were heavily involved in these organisations, often to the point of being on their management committees. A number of elite villagers monopolised co-operative institutions as part of their larger strategy of accumulation (chapter three, section 3.2).

4.4 Participation and Marketing Systems

Credit, co-operatives and marketing are closely connected facilities. Credit extension tends to be the co-operatives' single function, and those co-operatives which do provide marketing services compete badly with their private counterparts (Vasantha 1980).

There were four main groups of cash crops produced in the village: fruit and vegetables of various kinds, rice, baby corn, and sugar-cane. The following figures refer to the 100 surveyed households:

Type of crop	No. of growers (households)	Total amount grown (ray)
Fruit and vegetables	46	182
Rice	29	252
Baby Corn	53	190
Sugar-cane	16	100

Other agricultural produce were grown to only a negligible extent in Saentor; for example, only a handful of the surveyed households raised animals commercially.

With regard the marketing of these produce, only baby

corn created data relevant to the issue of participation. A large percentage of the fruit and the other vegetables grown did not find its way to the market at all. It was either consumed or given away by the producers. The rest was marketed in an ad hoc way, reflecting the largely unsystematic production of these crops. Sometimes growers took their own produce to market, notably the wealthier households who owned their own pick-up trucks. Others simply took their produce to one of the village stores. More commonly, the produce was shifted by a mae khaa (market woman or female merchant). There were two kinds of mae khaa: poor villagers who walked a cart load of produce to sell at the Thaarua market each day, or bigger merchants from outside the village who picked up large amounts of produce to sell further afield. There were also one or two rich villagers with transport businesses who shifted considerable amounts of produce to Bangkok each day. Frequently, the same producer shifted their produce by a combination of these methods.

The marketing of fruit and vegetable did not involve an exploitative system whereby rich marketers benefit from the labour of poor producers. In the event, most produce was not marketed. Most of what was marketed was shifted either by the growers themselves or by poor mae khaa. Since the bigger, more commercial orchards required large capital investments, and the commercial production of vegetables was capital intensive (specifically, it required considerable amounts of expensive insecticide), the

producers of these tended to be, by definition, wealthier farmers who could stand what marketing costs there were.

For different reasons, the same conclusion can be drawn with regard to rice. As noted, rice could not be grown in the immediate vicinity of the village, due to the sandy soil. Saentor's rice fields were situated around three or four kilometres out of the centre of the village, on the other side of administrative unit no. 10. Given this, and the emergence of rice production for sale rather than household consumption, villagers in the survey area were continuing a well-established process of selling or renting out their rice fields to households situated nearer to them. Almost all of the villagers who had recently sold rice fields explained that they had done so in large part because the fields were so far away; they sold them to farmers situated nearer to the fields. Of the 100 surveyed households, 29 owned a total of 252 ray of rice fields. However, of these, 13 households rented out a total of 190 ray. So, over half of the rice fields owned were rented out by almost half of the owners. However, only 7 households in the survey area rented in rice, and these rented in a total of only 29 ray. This suggests that rice was generally the larger landowners' crop; and rice fields were rented out by owners in the survey area, to renters not in the survey area. Hence, the marketing of rice did not have a big impact on Saentor. Only one household in the survey area (which owned a thresher) was involved to much extent in rice marketing.

The other two major cash crops, sugar-cane and baby corn, were closely connected. Up to four years prior to the fieldwork, the principal village crop was sugar-cane. Sugar-cane became hugely unpopular, especially amongst the small-scale farmers. It was capital intensive: notably, hired labourers were usually required during harvesting. There was only one harvest (i.e., one income) per year, and the price for the crop fell to be so low that many farmers were in constant debt. Consequently, around two years before the fieldwork, there was a huge shift by farmers from sugar-cane to baby corn. This latter was seen as a desirable crop because good returns can be obtained from small plots using only household (or reciprocated) labour, and it affords a much steadier inflow of income since it can be sown and harvested up to five times a year (the average crop cycle is around forty-five days). The price was good and insecticides were not necessary for its production. Of the 100 households surveyed, only 16 grew a total of 100 ray of sugar-cane: hence, the marketing of sugar-cane did not have a major impact on the village. Only 3 of these households were likely to continue to grow sugar, since they were large landowners who grew a total of 30 ray of cane between them. Many of the other 13 farmers expressed a desire to transfer from sugar-cane to baby corn. Some of them were restricted by their debts to sugar-cane quota heads.

By the time of the fieldwork, 53 of the surveyed households grew baby corn. The following table reports the

size of the plots baby corn was grown on in the survey area:

No. of growers (households)	Amount grown (ray)
16	less than 2
16	2 - 3
17	4 - 6
4	6 or over

The vast majority of baby corn was grown on small plots of less than 6 ray. Also, 19 of the 53 surveyed households which grew baby corn rented in land, including many of the poorest and smallest-scale farmers. These data confirm the observation that baby corn was the crop of the small-scale, tenant and part-tenant farmer, the ex-sugar-cane growers who were escaping from their debts to the sugar-cane factories and quota heads, by switching to a more lucrative crop suitable for small plots. This is born out by certain of the characteristics of baby corn. It lent itself best to small-scale, household based production. Large-scale production was not viable because it was labour intensive during sowing and harvesting: if the crop was not sown simultaneously, the corn would ripen at different times; and if it was not harvested quickly, the pods grew to be too big to sell.

This shift in crop choice by the poorer farmers was facilitated by the emergence of a marketing system which mirrored its predecessor, the sugar-cane quota system. One version of this is as follows. An urban based thaw kae (rich merchant, usually Chinese Thai) provides farmers with all the inputs necessary for the production of baby corn

(seed, fertilizer and so on). The merchant gives a village based middleperson or agent the capital. The middleperson uses this capital to purchase the inputs to give to the farmers, their clients. The middlepersons perform certain other functions. For example, they facilitate loans from the thaw kae to the clients and arrange for a tractor to plough the farmers' land after each harvesting. Through the agent, the thaw kae arranges to pick up the produce from the clients. A truck would come into the village each day. The baby corn is resold to a factory, usually for canning. The cost of the inputs is deducted from the price paid the farmer for the produce. The merchant and the middleperson share the profits from the inflated price they charge the farmer for the inputs. The middleperson also receives a proportion of the price for the baby corn, say, 25 satang (or a quarter of a baat) for each kilo a farmer produces.

There were a number of variations on this theme. For example, one of the village agents was a tractor owner and could, therefore, provide the service of ploughing his clients' land himself. He was also a Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative's committee member and provided the inputs to his clients by buying them, using his own capital, from the co-operative. None of Saentor's baby corn growers operated outside of this system. There were a growing number of village based agents in Saentor, who numbered around six during the fieldwork year, in response to the continued popularity of the crop.

Of village produce, only baby corn was marketed in such a way that the surplus of a community of poorer producers was systematically extracted by a minority of wealthy merchants and middlepersons. The baby corn producers were the poorer farmers. Many of them rented land, most rented land was given over to baby corn, and the vast majority of baby corn was grown on plots smaller than 6 ray. Certain of the characteristics of the crop made it suitable for production by the small farmer. The village based merchants' agents tended to be rich villagers. Only they had the resources necessary to get and do the job, including contacts, transport facilities, banking and other financial facilities, and storage space. These rich villagers did grow baby corn, since they were so closely involved with the marketing of it. They extracted the farmers' surplus. The percentage of the price for the crop they earned kept down the producers' profits, usually by one-sixth. The inflated price the farmer paid for the inputs was shared between the urban based merchant and their village agent. Also, most merchants and the village based agents were emerging as important creditors to their clients (see chapter five, section 5.2).

4.5 Social Reproduction and Education

Research into educational development in Thailand adopts a variety of perspectives. There are a number of accounts of the historical development of the Thai education system

(Manich 1951; Wyatt 1966; Ekavidya 1970). Other analyses assess the structure, impact, and problems, of Thailand's system of education in general; underlying these are explicit or implicit assumptions concerning the relationship between education and development (Harbison and Myers 1964; Tanintara 1979:1-11; Anderson and Bowman 1965; Hanf et al. 1975). The distinction is often drawn between formal and non-formal education (NFE). Data relevant to the latter usually pertain to the impact of NFE programmes (Ubon and Tips 1986; Ahmed and Coombs 1975; Brembeck and Thompson 1973; Watson 1980:157ff.). Macro-level research into formal education falls broadly into two categories. Firstly, analyses of the content of formal education at various levels (Samart 1984; Tanintara 1979; Kusol 1972:325-365) highlight the failure of institutions to adopt curricula and an 'educational style' which promote questioning, open-mindedness, and critical thinking on the part of pupils and students (Watson 1980; Paiboon, Sermsri, and Phian 1982). Secondly, analyses of the structure of formal schooling highlight problems such as the lack of a satisfactory educational infrastructure (Watson 1980), including the shortage of skilled teaching personnel (Pharani 1970:43-47), wastage and a high drop out rate (Watson 1980:219-229) and underemployment of graduates (Suchart 1981:16-17).

Relevant literature often reports differentials in educational attainment in specific communities or areas. Education is perceived to be a resource which can lead to

rewards in the form of high status and financially lucrative professions (see chapter six, section 6.1). Leanor (1982) reports gross differentials in access to primary schooling in Thailand. Dias and Sripen (1984) report from an East-Central sub-district that whilst almost all children in the compulsory education age range group (i.e. six to fourteen) attended village primary schools, only a tiny minority of pupils progressed from these to secondary schools. Regarding NFE opportunities, they cite differentials between households of disparate economic status, and between males and females, in access to vocational training (ibid.:21-23). Turton (1976:295) reports a correlation between literacy and economic status; a fact relevant to Surapol's claim (Surapol 1976:329-332) that 'social participation' (defined with reference to community development programmes - ibid.:14-15) is correlative to both literacy and access to formal education. A reason of "paramount importance" as to why landownership is an important factor in Northern Thai village society cited by Potter (1976:53-54), is that only the children of owners of large tracts of land gained post-primary level qualifications from urban based educational institutions.

Education in Saentor has changed beyond recognition within living memory. Older villagers could still remember the time, sixty or so years prior to the fieldwork, when the only education available was that offered by monks in the temple. By contrast, today's villagers are faced with

a complex educational scene. The following is a summary of educational opportunities available to the villagers:

Primary level: The most important educational institution for the villagers was the government-run village primary school, one of four in sub-district Saentor, where all villagers could receive free, compulsory education for six years. Fifteen staff (including the headmaster and deputy) taught 230 children aged between six and fourteen. All pupils sat a graduation examination. The school had a kindergarten for younger children. Although the majority of villagers attended this school, and non-attendance was not a problem, it was not generally highly regarded.

Parallel to this were a number of private primary schools (and their kindergartens) in Thaarua and Thaamakaa. These were fee paying and generally perceived to be better than the village equivalent because they began academic study earlier (at the age of five), and because they were wealthier and therefore had superior facilities. In a small number of cases, children attended elite primary schools further afield, in other districts.

Secondary level: The most prominent of the local secondary schools was Thaamakaa secondary school in the district town. This was state-run, but fee paying. It was very popular amongst the villagers: the oldest, most established and largest secondary school in the area, and the only state-run secondary school to offer all six secondary level grades (pupils were aged between twelve and

eighteen). It was well equipped with good facilities. Because of its popularity, it was over-subscribed; hence, entrance was by examination. Other state-run, fee paying schools in the area were not so popular. They only offered the first three years of secondary school education, and were neither as well-known nor well equipped as Thaamakaa. Hence, they were under-subscribed and no entrance examination was necessary. Termly fees at all government-run secondary schools were the same.

There were a number of private secondary schools in nearby urban centres. Typically, the entrance fees for these were very high, and termly fees were more than at state-run institutions. In some cases, children attended elite secondary schools further afield, both outside of Thaamakaa District and in Bangkok. These were perceived by the villagers to offer the best prospects in terms of careers.

Tertiary level: Post-secondary education was available principally in Bangkok. Especially prominent was Ramkhamhaeng university, Thailand's open university, which, though fee-paying, pursues a flexible policy with regard entrance and course structure.

Non-formal education: During the fieldwork year, a sewing class was held under a village headperson's house for two month. It was attended by teenage girls who had completed the six years at the village primary school, but had not studied on. There was a small entrance fee and students brought their own materials, but the district

office helped supply machines, teaching staff, desks, etc. This was by way of a trial run and may be repeated. Prior to the sewing class, there was a weaving class run in the same place and along similar lines. Just after I left the field, classes were to be established to teach hairdressing and cutting. Graduates were expected to use skills acquired in such classes either in their homes (thereby saving on household outgoings) or to get paid jobs. Other non-formal educational institutions included the klum kaan kasaed (farmers' group), klum mae baan (housewives' group) and the klum yuwa (youths' group), all of which met irregularly, usually including training sessions on a variety of subjects. A number of more established institutions taught vocational skills in the nearby towns (mainly sewing and mechanics).

The point to note is the latter-day diversity of educational facilities, both in terms of the different kinds of institutions at the same educational level, and the different levels of schooling. Different generations of Saentorians enjoyed quite different educational opportunities, reflecting the educational development of the area. Villagers over the age of around sixty usually had received no formal education other than from the temple. Typically, middle-aged villagers completed around four years of free, compulsory education at the village primary school. It was for villagers below the age of around thirty that educational opportunities began to vary

considerably, reflecting the recent proliferation of educational institutions in Central Thailand.

The most pertinent factor determining educational attainment in Saentor was household wealth. Household economic status determined educational attainment in a number of ways, some more subtle than others. Most obviously, all education apart from the village primary school was fee paying. Only certain of the village households could afford entrance and termly fees.

'Unofficial' fees were also important. I was repeatedly told of the system whereby parents whose child fails the Thaamakaa secondary school entrance examination pay a lump sum to the school which then gives their child a place. A large number of informants described this system and specific figures were always quoted as the necessary payment. It was so transparent that it appeared to be part of official school policy. However, it became clear that wealthy villagers were effectively bribing their children's way into the school. Officials (both at the school and elsewhere) denied the practice. Some villagers were vehemently angry at what they called the "illegality" of it. Some parents denied having secured a place for their children in this way, whilst others were adamant that these had done so. Interestingly, during the fieldwork year the new headmaster of Thaamakaa secondary school attempted to end this practice of 'buying' places. Much to the chagrin of certain wealthy villagers, word went around the village that only children who passed the entrance

examination would be offered a place. Nevertheless, an example of a 'bought' place came to my attention after this 'announcement'.

The children of certain of the wealthiest village households benefitted from the system whereby government officials and their relatives were exempt from fees at government-run schools. Of the 100 households surveyed, 7 had at least one member who was a high status government official, including policemen, teachers and medical centre staff. These were rich households.

Apart from official and unofficial fees, poor parents were disadvantaged in other ways. Wealthy parents could pay for teachers to give their children special lessons, notably to help them pass the Thaamakaa secondary school entrance examination. Poor households were less able to stand the fixed costs of studying, including the purchase of uniforms, books and equipment, and travel costs. These increased proportionate to the level of education. For example, only the children of the very rich could even contemplate tertiary education in Bangkok. Wealthier households could support offspring in full-time education. Poorer children either had to leave school to help earn money, or had to supplement their families' income by working whilst studying, or had to help facilitate their parents' work by doing more housework. One of the themes of a staff/parents meeting at the village primary school was the tendency for some parents to "overuse" their children at home.

A slightly less direct way in which poor parents suffered disadvantage was the role of supra-village contacts in securing educational opportunities. The importance of contacts at the supra-village level was discussed in the previous chapter, in the context of the bias in political knowledge and power toward wealthy villagers (section 3.2). The point was made there that the wealthiest villagers knew people the poor did not, including policemen, officials at the co-operative, and various district level government officials. Richer villagers made frequent reference to their "important friends" and other villagers agreed that they had "big friends". Although local political offices (e.g., village headperson) and other positions (e.g., membership of the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative's management committee) were important in securing contacts, wealthier villagers without any official capacity made sure that they met important outsiders. The institutionalised meeting places for village elites and supra-village personalities (such as restaurants and card games) have been mentioned. As Turton pointed out, much investment is made in "establishing and reproducing social relations with strategic superiors and subordinates" (Turton 1989:83). There were blatant attempts to secure the help of contacts to gain access to educational institutions on the part of wealthy villagers. The District Officer, the headmaster of Thaamakaa secondary school, village headpersons - even myself - were amongst those approached. On the whole,

poorer villagers were denied this source of assistance.

The question of differentials in the behaviour and performance of pupils from households of disparate economic status within the same institution was raised. This did not prove very fruitful for the obvious reason that there were no educational institutions which taught an even roughly equal proportion of pupils of disparate economic status. For example, the village primary school taught few of the children from the very richest households, since these tended to attend private schools in town. Nevertheless, staff reported that there was no difference in diligence, commitment, and so on, between those few pupils of wealthy households who <u>did</u> attend the village primary school and poorer pupils. They pointed out that this was overshadowed by the gross superiority of girls over boys. Attendance at the school was generally excellent, and children of poorer households did not do noticeably worse than those of the rich in the Saentor primary school graduation examinations. Participant-observation supported this. Diligent, committed students were as likely to be from poor as from rich households. One observation suggests that it was more likely to be the children of wealthy parents who were less conscientious, irrespective of which school they attended: secure in the knowledge of a sizeable inheritance and a comfortable life, they lacked the motivation to study diligently.

However, because of the educational scholarships available to poor children (chapter five, section 5.1),

staff at Thaamakaa secondary school had some chance to compare the performance and behaviour of rich and poor pupils there. They made reference to a number of subtle factors which could affect the performance of poor, as opposed to rich, children, and which became progressively more important as one moves from one grade to the next. One such was that the children of wealthier parents had the opportunity to undergo educative experiences denied the poor, for example to travel around the country visiting relatives who had 'made good' and left the village. As mentioned above, where households could afford to support a child in full-time education only with a degree of difficulty, that child would have to take on household responsibilities which the children of rich households could avoid. These became increasingly demanding the older the pupil became. Hence, when I interviewed them, the staff at the village primary school denied any significant differential in terms of the behaviour of their pupils along rich/poor lines; but in interviews at Thaamakaa secondary school, staff said that there were important factors which affected the performance of their poorer and their richer pupils respectively.

Another less direct way in which poorer villagers were denied the advantage was that, despite the perceived connection between educational attainment and comfortable, well paid jobs (see chapter six, section 6.1), there was rarely a smooth passage from the one to the other. Post-primary education was a necessary and not a sufficient

condition for the securement of a good job. Apparently, there were very few desirable jobs available. Those there were required more than educational qualifications. For example, it was understood that for a village male with secondary school education to become a policeman, a payment of 60,000 baat and contacts within the force were necessary. Village secondary school graduates only rarely moved straight from school to, for example, a government officer's post. Indeed, a considerable number never fulfilled the dream of a comfortable, well paid, urban based job and had returned to the village. This was born out by the fate of those youngsters who graduated from Thaamakaa secondary school during the fieldwork year. Fewer than half of the school-leavers applied for anything, and it was clear during conversations with graduates that they were very pessimistic about their futures.

This factor exacerbated the other advantages wealthier households had over the poor. It was the former who were likely to have the extra resources necessary to fulfil the potential of secondary (or post-secondary) level qualifications - notably, contacts and down payments. The one poor Saentorian who had a scholarship to enable him to graduate from Thaamakaa secondary school, was still unemployed at the end of the fieldwork. He could not find the 300 baat application fee for university, never mind the 60,000 baat required to fulfil his ambition to get into the police. The wealthy could stand to continue supporting a post-primary level graduate after their education had

finished and before they secured a job. In some cases this was a considerable length of time, and it was accepted that such a person was neither able nor expected to farm. More generally, this situation made the whole business of post-primary level education more of a gamble than a sensible long-term investment strategy. A major reason why middle ranking households, which could afford the costs of educating their offspring better than could the poor, were hesitant about sending their children to study on, was that "we may get nothing in the end".

Predictably, then, educational attainment was correlated to household wealth in the study site. Typically, the children of Saentor's richest households attended a private, fee-paying kindergarten/primary school in an urban centre, either Thaamakaa or Thaarua or further afield; they did not attend the village primary school. These, and the children of wealthy parents who did attend the village primary school, would go on to complete six years of secondary level education, either at Thaamakaa secondary school or a private, fee-paying school inside or outside of the district. A number of these went on to (or were planning to go on to) tertiary level education, usually in Bangkok or a provincial city. Some wealthy parents had begun to talk of continued study abroad.

It is worth pausing to put the extent of rich households' investment in the education of their offspring into some kind of perspective. Consider the following case studies. The first belongs to the sub-category of (a)i

households, the richest of the village elite (chapter two, section 2.7). This household consisted of a couple, who had four sons. They owned 46 ray of land, only 6 ray of which was inherited. The other 40 ray had been bought over a period of a number of years. They rented out 13 ray to five different renters for an annual rent fee of over 10,000 baat. They had 20 ray of sugar-cane and 13 ray of orchard. They made 10,000 baat per month from a transport business which shifted agricultural produce from Saentor to a market in Bangkok. During the fieldwork year, they borrowed 150,000 baat from a commercial bank to buy land. The female head of this household was about to set up as a baby corn middleperson. All of the four sons of this household went to a private kindergarten/primary school outside of the province for seven years. The fees at that school were 8,000 baat for the first term and 4,700 baat for each subsequent term; there were three terms per year. So, for each of their four sons, over 14,000 baat per year for seven years were paid in termly fees alone. The two eldest sons had proceeded to a secondary school in Bangkok. Although the fees there were only 700 baat per year, this is misleading. It would have proved very expensive to fund two children's board and lodge in the capital. The parents paid all expenses themselves. No fees were waived and there were no scholarships involved.

The second case study is of a household which belongs to the second sub-category of rich villagers, (a)ii (chapter two, section 2.7). This household consisted of

parents and their three children. They had inherited 10 ray of rice fields and 6 ray of other land, and had bought a further 2 ray. The rice fields were rented out, and they grew fruit and vegetables on the other 8 ray. They ran one of the main stores/noodle shops in the village. Two of the three children (one son and one daughter) studied on after the village primary school. They completed three years at Thaamakaa secondary school, and by the time of the fieldwork year they had gone on to a college outside of the province. Fees at the latter were 6,000 baat per year per pupil. So, this household paid out 12,000 baat per year in termly fees for their children's education. Again, there were no scholarships or waived fees involved. The explicit ambition for the children of both these households was tertiary level education in Bangkok.

By contrast, children of poor households merely completed their six years in the village primary school. Very occasionally, a pupil from a poor household studied on, but never at the expensive private secondary schools available to the wealthy. More often than not, these few completed only the first three grades at the secondary level, unlike their wealthier counterparts who completed all six. In a number of cases, they attended vocational schools rather than general secondary schools. The only pupil from a poor household in Saentor who completed six grades at Thaamakaa secondary school could do so only because he was given a scholarship by the school.

A number of middle ranking households found themselves

in a better position than the poor. Specifically, they were able to support a child in full-time education. Nevertheless, they were concerned by the costs of post-primary level education and the problem of securing a good job after graduating. These tended to compromise. Their children studied on at one of the various vocational schools, which were cheaper, shorter and more likely to achieve a return on investment than six years at a secondary school.

These data are supported by the fact that informants made it clear by implicit and explicit references that the village was well aware of the correlation between household wealth and educational opportunities. This was a context for the expression of resentment by the poor. Poor people often told stories of how they had been forced out of education by their parents' poverty. Occasionally, poor people would complain that a certain rich youth was "lazy, stupid and uninterested", not like their own child, and that their continued education was unjust. Of the respondents to questions in section B(iii) of survey 1 (notably: "What obstacles are there to your plans for your children's education?" and "Why do you only plan for your children to study at the village primary school?" - see appendix one), money was by far their biggest concern regarding their offsprings' education. Poor children often volunteered that they did not or would not study on because "phoo mae may mii ngen song" (my parents haven't the money to send me).

Data presented in this section suggest a correlation between educational attainment and household economic status. However, one related aspect of this theme which should be attended to is the issue of a gender bias in educational strategies and attainment. Typically, the gender issue is ignored in literature on education in rural Thailand, despite the intrinsic importance of this and its relevance to other related data and conclusions. Attitudes regarding the education of males versus females in Saentor, and differentials in educational attainment between males and females, were sought during informal conversations with informants and in the questions of section B on surveys 1 and 2 (see appendix one).

Two incompatible, indeed contradictory, attitudes emerged from discussions and interviews. On the one hand, there was a prima facie gender bias within villagers' attitudes toward education. Repeatedly, I was told of the persistence of the traditional belief that education was appropriate for men and unnecessary for women. This was explicitly connected to the traditional system of exclusively male education at the temple. It was also specifically related to the fact that parents were afraid to have their daughters highly educated because there would be bad consequences of this. For example, their daughters would find it hard to get a husband. They would leave, or spend a considerable time away from, home. They would "get into trouble", with the hint of unwanted pregnancy. They would not want to do, or be unskilled at, kaan baan

(housework). Generally, they would lose interest in their aging parents. It was considered dangerous for women to be educated; men's education is important because they are phuu nam (leaders - of households, communities, and so on).

This attitude undoubtedly influenced educational attainment. Occasionally, parents explicitly said that they were only interested in the education of their sons. In a household where all but one child had studied on, it was usually a daughter who had stopped. A daughter was most likely to receive education if she had no brothers. Parents tended to persist more in the pursuit of the education of their sons. Repeatedly, wealthy parents would seem to throw good money after bad to push sons who were notoriously unmotivated and kaerae (badly behaved), and who would eventually drop out of school. Daughters were not given nearly so many chances. Of the 100 households surveyed, 12 had funded the fee-paying education of at least one male member and not funded the equivalent education for an equivalent female member; the reverse (i.e., fee-paying education for a female household member but not for equivalent male members) did not occur in a single case.

Saentor's primary school was analysed during the fieldwork year by reviewing graduation examination results and from my experience of teaching English at the school. This revealed that girls were ahead of the boys at the primary stage of schooling. Teaching staff were adamant that this was the case. Hence, more girls than boys got

into Thaamakaa secondary school, since entrance was, at least to some extent, dependent on examination. However, this trend was reversed by the fact that more boys than girls were set to continue at some other secondary school which did not require an entrance examination. So, more girls than boys studied on where this was more dependent on merit, but parents reversed this trend by being more inclined to pay for sons than daughters to continue elsewhere. Ironically, all the staff at the village secondary school were women, except for the headmaster and his deputy. I was told that this did not reflect any official school policy, "it's just that women are more interested in and better at education than males".

Nevertheless, alongside this was evidence of a more egalitarian attitude. A number of informants explicitly denied any sex bias in their attitude toward education. Interestingly, many of these were of the oldest generation of villagers. They said that gender was irrelevant, and parents simply wanted to give all of their children the most education possible. Some of the biggest investments in education were made for daughters. A number of respondents to survey 1 specified very ambitious plans for the education of their female household members - including the ultimate ambition, study abroad. Some of the informants who were adamant that there was a gender bias in education in fact spent as much on the education of their daughters as they did on their sons. A considerable number of females <u>did</u> receive post-primary and fee-paying primary

education. Of the village primary school's 32 graduates during the fieldwork year, 11 of the 21 who studied on were female. Of the 100 households surveyed, 29 had at least one female member who received fee-paying education.

These findings are confusing because of the coexistence of two contradictory attitudes, both of which influenced decisions. A traditional, sexist attitude toward education persisted, which was grounded in the memory of temple based education for males only, and traditional gender roles and identities. However, this was being undermined by a new attitude based on the universally high regard for educational attainment and the rewards it could bring (chapter six, section 6.1). Hence, in conversations specifically about the issue of gender and education, informants stated that gender is important to decisions regarding education; and this was reflected in some of the data. However, in relevant conversations which were not specifically about the gender issue, but where one may have anticipated that informants would volunteer reference to gender, they did not do so. For example, only 1 of the 60 respondents to survey 1 mentioned gender in the context of the questions about their plans and problems concerning the education of their children (section B - see appendix one). Many of the informants who espoused a sexist attitude toward education in fact funded the education of daughters. One factor which mitigated the effect of a traditional attitude on decisions regarding education is that it appeared that the very wealthiest in

the village were least concerned by the gender issue, and it was the wealthy who pursued post-primary and private education the most.

Whatever conclusions can be drawn with regard the issue of gender and education, they do not undermine the main point of this section. There was a general correlation in the study village between educational attainment and household economic status. In the light of this, the following scenario presents itself. Children of wealthy households are securing considerable educational qualifications. Since household wealth is often primarily agriculture based (i.e., based on landholdings) those villagers who stand to inherit the land in Saentor are those who are gaining the substantial educational qualifications. The point of getting good qualifications is that these are the means to jobs outside the village (see chapter six, section 6.1). Hence, Saentor's future landowners will live and work in towns outside the village and the village will be peopled by landless households whose members neither received nor or likely to gain access to educational qualifications or land. The future will see the development of a landowning class of urban dwellers and a landless class of renters and labourers within the village.

This trend may become established, but at present too many factors disrupt it (see question B(iv) of survey 1: appendix one). For one thing, educational attainment and household economic status were only generally correlated.

Of course, there were exceptions to this norm. For example, one or two rich parents seemed uninterested in their children's education, and some poor children won scholarships to study on (chapter five, section 5.1). Almost no wealthy household had children all of whom gained substantial educational qualifications and urban based work. Some wealthy children did not take to studying. The difficulty of translating qualifications into high salary jobs has been referred to already in this section. Some wealthy students studied on, even in some cases to degree level, but returned to live in the village because they did not get jobs outside. Others came home simply because they preferred to live in Saentor than in the city. This in not surprising, since they usually had wealthy, comfortable homes to come back to. Some daughters were not encouraged to continue studying. There was the pressure of the tradition for one offspring (usually, but not always, a daughter; most commonly, the youngest) to continue working in the natal home. Likewise, it was understood that a disproportionately large amount of land would be inherited by those children who, for whatever reason, did not study to as high a level as their siblings.

4.6 The Coalescence of Political and Productive Power

The focus in this chapter has been on elite villagers' monopolisation of local resources necessary for production and reproduction. Relatedly, the previous chapter reported

the concentration of access to and control over local political resources, in the context of the developing village. It is important to explicate the articulation of political and productive power. As Hirsch puts it:

> The emphasis here is on the coincidence of economic status that is based on a combination of control over production and trade with the assumption of political position within the village at a time when such position is increasingly ambiguous vis a vis representation of interests (Hirsch 1987:60).

The sand quarry was one of the clearest examples of the coalescence of control over political and productive resources. It has been shown in this chapter that the 'squeeze' on cultivatable land in Saentor was exacerbated by the sand quarry's expansion (section 4.1 above). However, a number of points reveal the importance of political influence to the whole enterprise. The quarry was clearly exploitative, and not only in terms of the monopolisation of increasingly scarce local resources. Most sellers were not free to choose whether or not to sell their land, in two ways. Firstly, one of the most common of the reasons villagers gave for selling land was indebtedness. More strikingly, there was a domino effect: if land around a plot was sold and excavated, that plot became useless. Access would became difficult and then impossible, it would be unable to retain water because of the excavated land around it, and it would eventually phang (collapse or cave in). The owner of such a plot was left with little choice but to sell.

Arguably, one of the reasons the sand quarry owner

could continue this exploitative enterprise was some very obvious, though unofficial, "state patronage" (Turton 1989; Hart 1989). Rumour had it that the kamnan received 3-4,000 baat per year to turn a blind eye to the quarry's illegal operations, that the police were 'bought off' so that an illegal amount of land could be transported in each truck, and that the village headperson was a waged 'intermediary' between the quarry owner and the local police. When some farmers became worried that a second sand quarry was to be started, they gave the clear impression that, though concerned, they knew their protestations would be useless.

Whilst the sand quarry stands as a particularly clear example of the coincidence of productive and political power, and the way the two feed into one another, this was characteristic of all the elite villagers. An unusual degree of control over productive resources coupled to political 'clout' were the hallmarks of rich villagers.

It is important to focus on quite who is meant by 'the rich' here. Referring back to the interpretive model of stratification in Saentor outlined in chapter two, there are two kinds of 'rich villagers': (a)i and (a)ii (section 2.7). Data presented in this and the previous chapter apply to both of these kinds of households. However, within the context of the processes of participation and exclusion outlined, there were predictable differences between the 'styles' of accumulation of the two kinds of rich villagers. The difference between (a)i and (a)ii type households are that the former invested more and outside of

the village, and that the latter had a closer relationship to the rest of the village. These differences informed the way each sub-stratum pursued monopolisation of local resources within the context of the processes outlined in this and the previous chapter. Notably, (a)ii type rich villagers were better able to exploit village based institutions, whilst their (a)i type counterparts were better able to exploit supra-village institutions. For example, with regard political knowledge and influence, (a)ii type household members were better placed to exploit the sub-district council and Saentor's administrative committees, because they were generally more integrated into the village and more recognisably village 'figures'. An (a)i type villager may well eschew, say, becoming a baby corn middleperson, because it would require more intensive interaction with the rest of the village than they generally preferred. On the other hand, (a)i type household members were better placed to interact with hugely influential supra-village institutions because of their investment interests outside of the village. Certainly, such distinctions are only general. Nevertheless, differences of emphasis between (a)i and (a)ii type rich villagers in terms of their strategies of accumulation were discernible.

4.7 Concluding Remarks

The aim of this and the previous chapter has been to

present data pertaining to the continued stratification of the village community by reference to the participation of the rich in access to and control over local resources, to the exclusion of the 'ordinary' villagers. The focus in the previous chapter was on the concentration of local political resources, and some of the effects of this in the context of the developing village were discussed. This chapter has considered certain of the more important of the local resources necessary for production and reproduction, and has attempted to elucidate some of the processes whereby these are monopolised by rich villagers.

In an important recent publication, Turton suggests a theoretical framework for understanding the position of village elites in the rural social formation (Turton 1989). He suggests:

> it may be that the 'great divide' is rather between the majority of poorer rural producers and a composite local bureaucratic/commercial class or coalition of class elements which may be 'represented' by a local power bloc and includes and is supported by the village-level upper stratum (Turton 1989:84).

The peculiar position elite villagers occupy means they can,

> derive advantage from their external connections and alliances and from their roles in 'linking' the majority of villagers with state and market structures (ibid.:82).

Local level economic elites - both officeholders and non-officeholders - are the mediating nexus between village and supra-village 'levels'. On the one hand, the way 'into' the village for bureaucrats, policemen, and other supra-local figures, is precisely through rich villagers, and not

only or necessarily through the village level officeholders amongst these. On the other, elite villagers stand to gain in two ways. Their unusually extensive control of resources mean they can extract ordinary villagers' surplus from 'below', for example by renting out land, lending money, charging a rent price on their instruments of production, and by their position in the marketing system (notably, as baby corn middlepersons). Secondly, they gain direct and indirect state patronage from 'above', including cheap credit and inputs, strategic information, salaries, and political and economic contacts.

Turton's is an illuminating and I think accurate account of the situation in at least one important respect. It is wrong to characterise wealthy villagers' behaviour in terms of, say, becoming a village headperson or some other representative figure, or joining the co-operative or educating their children, or any other individual strategy of accumulation or economic betterment. Saentor's elite pursued an integrated strategy of accumulation consisting of a variety of articulated and co-ordinated endeavours which created a complex web of interconnected manoeuvres. The aim of this and the previous chapter has been to pull apart and thereby elucidate the more important of the various strands to this web which were discernible in Saentor. Each of these are only one of a number of contexts of accumulation epiphenomenal on the one crucial means of accumulation. Elite villagers accumulate by virtue of occupying a particular position in the political-economic framework.

CHAPTER FIVE

STRATIFICATION AND ECONOMIC ATTITUDES

Data presented in this and the following chapter pursue the theme of causes of stratification. Chapter two adopts a macro-level perspective to consider the origins of intra-village differentiation in terms of historical transformations. Chapters three and four continue this theme, but shift the focus to ongoing processes discernible at the local level which intensify inter-household economic status differentials. In this and the following chapter, a third 'level' of causes is under consideration. Subtle constraints are imposed on villagers' everyday economic decisions and behaviours by their systems of values and beliefs. The data presented here support the contention that:

> An intervening variable mediating the relationship between low position and lack of upward mobility is a system of beliefs and values within the lower classes which in turn reduces the very voluntary actions which would ameliorate their low position (Hyman 1970:186).

The aim of this and the following chapter is to elucidate some of the more important elements in that "system of beliefs and values" which is pertinent to Saentor.

5.1 Villagers' Perception of Stratification

The issue of social agents' own perceptions of their

stratified communities has received some attention in the literature (Tumin 1970). Turton (1976:276) refers to his Northern Thai villagers' "economic self-ranking system", which consisted of "the really rich", "those who have", and "the poor". He points out that not only differences in wealth, but also patterns of consumption and relations of production, are important in the formulation of this. Anan (1984:409-411), in a similar vein, refers to the increased tendency for villagers to differentiate themselves according to cash as well as landholdings. Hirsch (1987), in the context of highlighting the problem of characterising the rural social formation in crude class terms, refers to one of two "basic disjunctures" as "that between material realities as perceived by an outside observer and as felt by the villagers themselves" (ibid.:60). He goes on to question the strict categorisation of the rural population into rigidly defined socio-economic groupings, "particularly as these are categories alien to the conceptualisations of the villagers" (ibid.).

An alternative strand to this theme is found in reports of a discrepancy between the 'reality' of increasing stratification, and ideologies which both mask and facilitate this. Black (1972) argues against what he claims is a common misconception of Middle Eastern tribal societies: namely, that these are egalitarian when in fact they are stratified according to inherited wealth and based on tyranny. He presents data from Luristan which suggest

a discrepancy between daily reality (i.e., differentiation and exploitation), and an ideology of egalitarianism which insists on the possibility of mobility between disparate wealth status groups. Parkin (1972) explores the role of "paradoxes of custom" in both masking and facilitating transformations which lead to unequal accumulation and stratification. In the Giriami society he studied, an idiom of inter-generational cleavage, the role of elders, and bridewealth and funerals, are three areas of custom which facilitate the introduction of conditions for unequal accumulation, whilst paradoxically masking these.

For Thailand, Turton refers to one element of villagers' discourse which is apparently at odds with their "economic self-ranking system" mentioned above:

> individuals may frequently be reluctant to be regarded as different, or particularly rich or superior, or to admit to the existence of strata of 'superiors' or 'inferiors' within village society, or at least in their own village (Turton 1976:291).

He distinguishes between individual items of ideology (e.g., notions of luck, fate and merit) and the "whole panoply of ideological practice and ritual" in the context of this discrepancy between ideology and daily reality (ibid.).

I have avoided using the term 'ideology' in this section, in view of the apparent confusion over the meaning and use of this term (Marx and Engels 1974; Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner 1980; Fardon 1985; Asad 1979; Therborn 1980). The issue at hand is simply whether Saentorians appeared to perceive the stratification of their community,

and, if so, in what ways.

There was an overt recognition of stratification and a willingness to talk about it on the part of Saentorians. The villagers were preoccupied by the issue of wealth based status differences. Villagers frequently discussed stratification explicitly during conversations. On other occasions, it was clear from their comments that the fact of stratification was being assumed, taken as read. Villagers acknowledged intra-village differentiation both in those cases where the topic of conversation lent itself to implicit or explicit references to stratification (e.g., discussions about the local education or credit systems, or instances of rich couples raising the children of poor households), and in those cases where this was not so. Certain words and phrases occurred repeatedly, such as khwaam yaak con (poverty), ruay (to be rich), thaana (status), chan (level or stratum). Every respondent answered question K(i) on survey 1 (namely: "Are all villagers equally wealthy?" - see appendix one) in the negative. Some people laughed at the idea; there was a general sense of this being a favourite theme. Similarly, all of the respondents to the taped interviews acknowledged stratification (notably, in answers to questions 2A-D: see appendix two).

On the very few occasions people explicitly denied stratification in Saentor, the contexts of the denials made them special cases. For example, people said Saentor was not stratified during conversations about the Indian caste

system, and tramps in England. The very few people who denied that their community was stratified in such special contexts, acknowledged stratification in less unusual circumstances. Also, it was clear that what the informant had in mind during such denials was often not differences in villagers' economic circumstances, but the idea that such differences created 'higher' and 'lower' people. They wanted to stress the social and cultural homogeneity of the community <u>despite</u> differences in relative wealth, access to resources, and so on.

Typically, the villagers constructed a three-tier model of stratification (although there were more vague references to "many strata" or "people of many different kinds"). This consisted of <u>khon ruay</u> (rich people), <u>baan klaang</u> or <u>phoo kin phoo chay</u> (middle households or people with enough to get by), and <u>khon con</u> (poor people). There was a notable consonance between different villagers' accounts of which households fitted into which categories. For the most part, informants agreed as to who was rich, middle and poor. These strata roughly coincide with the interpretive model of the community outlined in chapter two (section 2.7).

The overt recognition of stratification by informants is perhaps linked to the decreasing degree of isolation of the village community. In 1976, Turton suggested that,

> locally at least, consciousness of a broad class difference between peasant producers and agents of the state bureaucracy (to a lesser extent at this stage between town and country) overshadows such consciousness as there is of class differences within the peasantry (Turton

1976:292).

Although class is not the issue here (see chapter seven), Turton's point stands that a strong distinction in the minds of the villagers between their village and 'the rest' (be it town, state bureaucracy, or whatever) could underpin an ideology of egalitarianism versus stratification, or at least of similarity versus difference, within the village community. (Incidentally, Turton's comment should be put into the context of his more recent ideas regarding the "great divide" (Turton 1989:84), which were discussed in section 4.7 of the previous chapter.)

Saentor today is far from being a discrete, isolated community. Physically, sub-district Saentor still consists primarily of households strung out along the sides of rivers and tributaries, which have been arbitrarily divided into ten units for administrative purposes. There are no geographically isolatable communities. Almost all transformations promote the integration of Saentor into supra-village structures. Most development projects are concerned to increase transport and communication between the villages and between villages and the town: for example, Saentor's K.S.Ch. road, the Saentor-Thaarua bridge, and the public telephone (see chapter two, section 2.3). The majority of villagers have access to vehicles and cause to go out of the village (e.g., to visit relatives, on business at the District Office, to go shopping, on hospital visits). It may have been appropriate at one time to distinguish 'villages' according

to who attended which temple and school, but the situation is increasingly confused where three temples and four primary schools serve ten administrative units which cross-cut named 'villages' (see chapter one, section 1.1).

'Macro-structures' such as the irrigation system, the tax system, the official administration, and the sugar factories all weaken the Saentor/other distinction. A large number of households had members who lived more or less permanently outside of the village and were, for example, studying full-time or working in urban centres. Some villagers lived in Saentor but worked outside as policemen, clerks and so on. Conversely, a number of Saentorians were incomers from elsewhere. The village attracted a number of 'professionals' and entrepreneurs who were not Saentorians, including khaaraadchakaan (government officials) such as the school and medical centre staff, and the sand quarry owner. Ideologically, almost all households are linked to Thailand and the world through mass media; and at school, English and other subjects introduce the villager into wider spheres. Repeatedly, I was told that Thaamakaa District was "khrung muang khrung chonabod" (half town, half countryside). An ongoing debate in the village was whether Saentor should give up its status as a village, and allow itself to be incorporated into the thaesabaan (urban municipality) which administered Thaarua. During the fieldwork, this suggestion was rejected in a village vote.

With the increasing erosion of village/not-village

distinctions by physical, administrative and ideological factors, the emergence of increased awareness of intra-village stratification is facilitated, or at least not hindered.

Within the context of this general recognition of stratification, there were important tensions between the perceptions of the situation by the rich and the poor. In general, the poor were more arrested by the topic of stratification than the rich. They voluntarily introduced it into the conversation more frequently, and discussed it more vociferously and lengthily. Informants were very keen to describe themselves (and other very closely related households) as con (poor), and to point out who was ruay (rich); by contrast, wealthy informants only occasionally volunteered that they themselves were khon ruay (rich people) or designated other specific households as con (poor). Where this did not hold, comments by wealthy villagers were usually grounded in specific circumstances rather than the kind of general preoccupation with stratification expressed by the poor. For example, comments made by wealthy villagers who held administrative positions in their official capacity, and comments by wealthy villagers whose offspring had established households of widely divergent economic status, are to some extent special cases. When wealthy villagers were openly 'accused' of being rich, they tended to deny this to their audience with phrases like "may ruay rok" (not rich really). When the wealthy did talk about stratification at

length, they almost invariably emphasised some conciliatory aspect to the conversation, such as, "yuu duaykan daay" (we can all live together) or, "may mii panhaa" (it's no problem). Poor people did so too, but to a noticeably lesser extent. Finally, when poor people talked critically of particular rich people, they tended to widen the debate out to a discussion about the rich and the poor in general; wealthy villagers did so to a markedly lesser degree.

Relatedly, there was an element peculiar to rich villagers' discourse on stratification. Wealthier villagers often commented that, whilst there are wealth differentials in Saentor, one really must look elsewhere for "khon ruay ruay" (the very rich), or "khon thii con cing cing" (the really poor) - upstate Kaancanaburi, where landlords owned thousands of ray of sugar-cane, Bangkok, the North-East where people were really poor, the West, and so on. Poorer people never volunteered this point. It could be interpreted as an attempt on the part of the rich to 'play down' (but not deny) intra-village differentiation, by placing it in a wider context.

It should be noted, however, that rich Saentorians to some extent espoused different attitudes in different contexts. The comments made in the foregoing apply to rich villagers' discourse whilst in the village. Once outside the village, and especially in circumstances where personal status was important (e.g., with groups of other local notables), wealthy Saentorians were less reticent about their status.

An element of poorer villagers' discourse on stratification could be seen as an over-stress on wealth based status differences. Far from being embarrassed about saying they were poor, certain villagers frequently, and many villagers occasionally, appeared almost overly preoccupied with their poverty and village differentiation. A number of people introduced themselves as poor on first meeting. They repeatedly referred to themselves as con (poor) in almost every interaction. Even the most obscure situations would be used as platforms from which to express their status and the fact of stratification. For example, a poor villager who made snacks in the village often refused to let me pay for what I had eaten - quite spontaneously, people nearby would say, "we poor will do that. The rich wouldn't give you anything!". The only English phrase the poorest villagers knew was: "no have money"; they used this frequently, in a rueful, jokey way.

One prominent feature of village life which perhaps contributed to certain villagers' overt self-identification as khon yaak con (poor person) - indeed, to the acknowledgement of stratification in general - is the responses to poverty in the village which could be loosely termed 'welfare systems'. These were explicitly implemented to alleviate the problems of the village poor. Some were well-established and institutionalised, whilst others were of a more ad hoc nature. They include:

Health: Households with less than 5 ray of land or a certain minimum in wages from labouring, irrespective of

the number of household members, were given a 'poor card' (bad songkhro) entitling them to free treatment at the village medical centre and the government hospital at Thaamakaa. More informally, the staff at the medical centre did not charge patients who did not have a 'poor card' but who were finding it difficult to pay for treatment.

Education: One of two scholarships at the village primary school was specifically for a talented poor student. This was worth 800 baat/year, tenable at any government secondary school in the district. The funds were donated and administered by ex-pupils. The government school at Thaamakaa had two kinds of scholarships, one for talented students and one for poor pupils. The latter was for 500-1,000 baat/year and its allocation depended on the poverty level of the families concerned and not the quality of the pupils' work. One secondary school in the district had the policy of accepting poor children for whom termly fees were waived; the school provided clothes, food, and so on, for these pupils, who comprised ten per cent of the school's total intake. The village primary school operated a policy of providing free school meals to the children of poor families.

Credit: The school and the temple were two of the most important credit sources for the villagers (see chapter four, section 4.2). It was recognised by the administrators (i.e., the school and temple committees) and by the recipients of loans that these institutions were

specifically designed to help the poor, who were excluded from other credit sources. There was a policy of lending a little to a lot of people (recipients typically borrowed 500-2,000 baat per year). Villagers without collateral could borrow by arranging for a guarantor to hand over a land registration document as surety. Borrowers were not required by these institutions to use the money lent in any specified way. There was a sympathetic attitude toward repayment difficulties, and borrowers I spoke to recognised this. Neither institution had ever seized collateral. Relatively speaking, interest was very low.

Miscellaneous: Other more ad hoc welfare systems existed. Government officials turned up at the school one day with blankets for the old and the poor. Labourers chosen from the village to extend the K.S.Ch. road had to be from poor households. When electricity came to Saentor, poor villagers were exempt from, or paid a reduced amount of, the initial installation costs. In fact, there was a shortfall between the amount raised for installing electricity and the amount necessary. Richer villagers raised the difference. On a number of occasions, poorer villagers were given certain items free by the District Office, via the village headperson (e.g., water jars for household use). When a local radio station broadcast a programme from Saentor school, 1,500 baat was raised. The money was used to help poor pupils buy uniforms, books, and such like. Some pupils from poor households had fees waived at the village primary school's kindergarten. Some

older pupils were given help with some of the fixed costs of full-time education (e.g., uniforms). Occasionally, fees were waived at Thaamakaa secondary school for the children of poor households. By the end of the fieldwork, plans had been laid to use money provided by a local politician to fund the training of poor villagers (five villagers from each administrative unit in the sub-district) in hairdressing. This was intended to be a non-formal education programme aimed at giving poor villagers the opportunity to gain professional skills.

Welfare systems such as these contributed to and reflected both the general acknowledgement of stratification by the villagers, and what I called the 'over-stress' by the poor on their status. I pursued the issue of the administration of these welfare systems: specifically, I tried to find out how administrators decide who are and are not deserving recipients of help. Usually, I was given answers such as, "everybody knows", or, "we know who is poor". Informants sometimes appeared bemused by questions like, "how do you decide who is poor?", as though the answer was so obvious that the question was almost unintelligible. Occasionally, in the context of more institutionalised welfare systems, and by government officials, I would be presented with a formal methodology for determining who deserved these kinds of help. Invariably, it transpired that whatever the formal method mentioned (e.g., a house-to-house survey by the village headperson), it was not felt necessary to implement it

because it was common knowledge who the village poor are. It was precisely because of this informality with regard the administration of these systems that they were open to abuse. A more formal administration may have curtailed, for example, the village headperson's practice of giving the medical centre's 'poor cards' to wealthy friends to help fund their attendance at his card games, or the Village school's allocation of a scholarship to the daughter of one of the wealthiest village households to study on at Thaamakaa secondary school.

5.2 The Economic Attitudes of the Rich and the Poor

The point was made in chapter two that a major distinguishing feature between rich and middle ranking households is that they tended toward different patterns of behaviour and decisions in the economic arena (section 2.7). The present section continues that theme by considering the 'economic attitude' prevalent in Saentor, focusing specifically on this hint that different strata of villagers operate by reference to different 'economic attitudes'. 'Economic attitudes' are expressed by patterns of decisions and behaviour relating to interconnected economic phenomena. These include: money, credit and assets; work, economic acuity and ambitions; investment, saving and spending; and responsiveness to new economic opportunities and situations.

The important finding to report is a clear disparity

between the economic attitudes expressed by the richest and poorest Saentorians. Rich, entrepreneurial villagers aimed to 'rationally' maximise returns on assets. This is so for both types of rich villagers: there was no discernible difference between the economic attitudes of (a)i and (a)ii type households (chapter two, section 2.7). Given this, the data presented here should be put into the context of literature in economic anthropology concerning the emergence, behaviour, and roles of entrepreneurs (Barth 1963; Belshaw 1955; Strathern 1972; Finney 1969).

By contrast with the rich, poor villagers did not undertake 'logical' strategies of economic betterment or upward mobility. Indeed, some poor people persistently, and most poor villagers to some extent, behaved in ways which were not only not maximal, but which were not even apparently consistent with a concern for dearth-avoidance. In other words, they seemed to be economically reckless. Middle ranking households proved to be less striking in this respect, since their economic attitude was characterised by a high degree of economic quiescence. Data presented in this and the following section elucidate the economic attitudes of rich and poor households. The distinctive economic attitude of the middle ranking households will be described in section 5.6 below.

I have used the terms 'logical', 'rational', and 'irrational' in a specific and self-conscious way which should be clearly defined at the outset. These terms relate to the stereotypical 'rational economic man' (or,

preferably, 'rational economic person'), who adheres to a strategy of maximum financial returns on minimum inputs, and which has an established place in Western economic theory. In this thesis, 'rational', or 'logical', decisions, behaviours, strategies, and such like, are indistinguishable from those of the stereotypical rational economic person. 'Irrational' decisions, behaviours, strategies, and such like, are disparate to those of the stereotypical rational economic person. The differences in the economic behaviours of strata of villagers is highlighted by reference to this stereotype. Of course, this choice of terminology could be said to be contentious, since it may be taken to beg the question of the universality of 'logical' or 'rational' economic behaviour, and because it may be taken to imply a criticism of the poorer villagers. However, in section 5.4 below, I distance myself from any interpretation of these data which implies a criticism of the poor; and the issue of the universality of 'rational' economic behaviour will be directly addressed in the next chapter (section 6.2). The notion of the 'rational economic person' is of heuristic value in the present context, which helps to articulate the differences between the economic decisions typical of the various strata of villagers.

Work: It was noticeable that poorer villagers frequently declined available work. For example, during the two rice harvests, many of our poorest neighbours refused offers of employment. I pursued possible

explanations of this (e.g., that landless labourers were excluded by the system of reciprocal labour exchange, aw raeng, practised at least in part by most rice growers). In fact, the poor villagers chose not to do this work. Likewise, there was work available for villagers during the sugar-cane harvest. Quota heads, responding to the demise of sugar-cane as a major crop in the area, were loath to draft in migrant labour to cut Saentor's sugar-cane; however, they complained of the 'lack' of village labour. The reasons poor neighbours gave for not doing such work included, "tham may pen" (I can't do it) and, "may choop" (I don't like doing it). Similarly, certain villagers claimed to be unfit for any work, because of undiagnosed illnesses. Medical centre staff suggested that these were bogus. One nurse claimed that, "some people seem to have a disease a day". I occasionally saw middle and upper ranking villagers plead exasperatedly with poorer labourers, trying to persuade them to take on some pressing work. Typically, poor people would say, "haa ngaan yaak" (it's hard to find work). This was contradicted by wealthy villagers who claimed to be bemused by their poorer neighbours' refusals to take available work. Permanent jobs at nearby factories were turned down, for reasons such as "it is too far to travel", even by poor villagers with access to a motor cycle who had in the past lived and worked in Bangkok.

Poorer households did not take what appeared to be good opportunities to improve their income. For example,

there was good, cheap land available for rent around the village; and richer villagers sometimes offered their poorer relatives or neighbours land to rent, under conditions favourable to the tenant. Landowners claimed to be bemused by the fact that poorer villagers showed little interest in taking these opportunities. Of the 18 landless households surveyed, only 4 rented in land. The point has been made a number of times that Saentor's land was of good, even quality. Also, typical rent prices in Saentor were strikingly low. Most renters paid an annual rent fee of 400 baat per ray. Average profits from, for example, 1 ray of baby corn were around 1,500 baat per sowing, i.e., 6,000 baat per year. Baby corn was a popular crop precisely because the income from it was very reliable: growing baby corn was not a risky venture. Although rents on rice fields were more expensive because they were paid in produce rather than cash, these are less relevant anyway since most households in the study site were too far from the rice fields to consider renting them (see chapter four, section 4.4).

Perhaps part of the reason landless households seemed reluctant to rent cheap, available land from which they were almost assured a good return, is that, because they did not own - and, in some cases, had never owned - land, they did not think of themselves as farmers and lacked necessary resources (including skills and confidence). This would seem to be supported by the fact that 16 surveyed households which owned some land supplemented

their landholdings by renting in more land. Renters who supplemented their existing landholdings with some rented land would think of themselves as farmers, and have the necessary resources to farm. However, whilst these points may be relevant in some cases, there were still numerous instances of a reluctance on the part of poor households who did not have any kind of permanent waged work, to rent land which they were capable of working. For one thing, the point has already been made that Saentor's farmers did not have much of a problem in getting hold of the few instruments of production they needed (chapter two, section 2.7). Likewise, most poor households had at least one member who took on agricultural labouring jobs on an ad hoc basis: such people would have no difficulty in identifying themselves as farmers and would have acquired necessary farming skills. And finally, when poorer villagers did rent land in, the arrangement frequently broke down because the renter seemed not to work the land conscientiously, or not to work it at all. Certainly, they did not work rented land to the owners' satisfaction. Some landowners sold land rather than rent it out, explicitly because of the problem of collecting money from tenants who found it difficult to pay the rent price "because they don't work the land properly".

By contrast with the rich, poorer villagers seemed half-hearted when they worked. For example, one neighbour complained vociferously throughout the fieldwork that he was poor. He was chosen as a labourer on the extension of

the K.S.Ch. road. This was highly desirable work because the daily wage was over fifty per cent more than the norm for labouring in the village. I estimate he worked two-thirds of the thirty-nine days. Reasons he gave for stoppages include: "feeling tired", "feeling ill", "other business" (e.g., attending festivals elsewhere). The same villager later secured a job, through the kamnan, with the Land Development Office. After a few weeks he gave up and drifted into the monkhood because "life is comfortable in the temple". Some of the richest and most entrepreneurial villagers - along with most of the Bangkok based investors in Saentor's land - hired live-in workers from the North-East rather than use available village labour, expressly because, in their opinion, "the villagers don't work properly". Rich villagers frequently berated the poor for working only until they made enough to survive the near future, and then stopping. One poor woman, who was married with one child, worked fourteen hours a week in the medical centre; it was understood that she was not, therefore, available for any other work. Another woman who made snacks in the village stopped for a few months in the middle of the fieldwork. She explained that the smoke from the cooking pot got in her eyes, and she was bored with making the food. Profits from these snacks were her household's main income. Whenever poorer informants were pressed with regard to these types of situations, they almost invariably mentioned isara (to be free) and sabaay (to be comfortable).

With regard to attitudes toward work, the starkest contrast was between poor and rich villagers. The latter, the wealthy, capitalist farmers, the entrepreneurs, were renowned for their work rate. I was frequently told not to bother visiting them because they are always away working. It was understood that if they refused an invitation to a ceremony, they were not being rude, they were simply very busy. These rich villagers themselves made frequent reference to their lack of free time, usually by way of apologising for not taking more interest in Saentor's foreign "guests".

Responsiveness to new economic opportunities: Wealthy villagers were innovative and responsive in the light of new economic opportunities, as compared to the poor. They were opportunists. Of course, some of the ventures rich villagers undertook required their greater command of resources (of all kinds: natural, social, technological, etc.), and some of their innovative practices were simply not feasible for their poorer neighbours. However, I would argue that there was also an important difference in attitude in this regard. Wealthy farmers were more prone to risk-taking, profit-maximising, innovative behaviour, more opportunistic, than were the poor, in their respective socio-economic contexts.

The economic ventures of the rich were subject to criticism by the poor. Poorer villagers pointed out the more dubious of the enterprises undertaken by their richer neighbours. For example, some of the villagers were

'addicted' to certain headache tablets and other pills. One wealthy household stocked them from the clinics in Thaarua and sold them in the village, despite a request by the medical centre's nurse to stop because the medicines were bad for the villagers. Similarly, the poor pointed out that some of Saentor's major card games were run by wealthy villagers. The host received a khaa toong (a fee in the form of a percentage of winnings). This was usually a substantial amount. For example, neighbours claimed it would be sufficient to cover the host's household's monthly food bill.

In section 4.4 of chapter four, the marketing system for baby corn was described. Certain wealthier villagers (it was predictable which they were) responded quickly to the new opportunities consequent on the shift in crop choice by smaller farmers from sugar-cane to baby corn. The person who was known to be Saentor's first village based baby corn middleperson is representative. He was an (a)ii type rich villager (see chapter two, section 2.7). His on-farm income was from 5 ray of rice and 6 ray of baby corn, 'rented' from his and his wife's elderly parents. They expected to inherit this land. His quick response to the new economic opportunity created by the emergence of baby corn as a major crop earned him 30,000 baat a year from dealing with seventy clients. He had recently bought a new motor cycle and built a 150,000 baat house, in the main from these profits. All three of his children were receiving fee-paying education, and his plan was that they

would study on to become government officers. He intended to build an extension to his house in the near future. His ambition was to save sufficient capital to provide the farmers with inputs directly himself (as opposed to using the urban based merchant's capital), thereby increasing his profits. He had begun to lend money to clients himself. He was known as a hard worker: for example, he preferred to work his own rice fields rather than rent them out because he had calculated that profits were higher that way. During the fieldwork, he was about to join the Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Co-operatives in order to fund future investments. His answer to question L on survey 1 (namely: "What plans and ambitions do you have for your household in the future?" - see appendix one) was, "yaak ruay yaak mii thaana" (I want to be rich and have status).

The task of being a village based agent was demanding. The agent had to be accessible to clients at any time. There was a great deal of responsibility, notably for other people's money. A good deal of intellectual work was required (e.g., calculating the amount owed for inputs provided). Buying the inputs and delivering them to villagers; contacting the merchant, the clients, and the tractor owner - all these were time-consuming.

Obviously, most poor villagers could not have done this job even if they wanted to. They lacked the contacts (merchants, tractor owners, clients, etc.) and other resources such as transport and storage space. Nevertheless, poorer villagers did not pursue equivalent

kinds of innovative practices which were appropriate to their own milieu. They tended to respond differently to equivalent, new economic opportunities.

During the fieldwork, one poor household had the chance to oversee a Bangkok landlord's recently acquired house and land. The two household heads were to live in the house and manage the land around it; these were situated in the village, around half a kilometre from where they lived. The owner agreed to pay 2,500 baat per month for their services (the exact equivalent to the profit made by the baby corn middleperson described above: 30,000 baat per year). The poor household in question was in constant financial difficulties, including a number of debt repayment problems. They neither owned nor rented land and did not have permanent, full-time employment. They complained about their poverty throughout the fieldwork year. They decided to turn down the offer. Reasons they gave include: to avoid the responsibility and stress of managing the land (e.g., finding labourers to help work it); to avoid responsibility for the content of the house (notably, they were concerned that if anything was stolen, they may be blamed); because it would require a reduction in isara (freedom) and they would not be able to pay thiaw (to 'go around', 'hang out') so much; and because the house was out in the fields and they were afraid of the dark and of phii (ghosts). Their main argument was that if they worked flat out labouring around the village, they could make the same amount of money without all these sacrifices.

However, during the rest of the fieldwork year they did not do this, and their debt problems mounted. Arguably, they responded to their new economic opportunity differently to the way wealthier villagers would have. The Bangkok based owner was rumoured to have decided to employ people from outside of the village to do the job.

Income expenditure: The rich and the poor spent their money differently. Rich villagers said that the poor spent their money unwisely. In one way, Saentor offered an excellent opportunity to explore the validity of this. For around three months of the year, the income patterns of some of the poorest villagers changed dramatically - in terms of both security and amount - when they took up temporary employment in a local sugar factory. Agricultural labourers received 40 baat per day. This rose to 3,500-4,000 baat per month (around 116-133 baat per day) earned in the factories during the season. Parallel to this increase in the amount of income earned was an increase in income security: the sugar factory workers were assured of work throughout the season and of the wage they would receive. By contrast, agricultural labouring around the village was more ad hoc. Of the surveyed households, 18 had at least one member who worked in the factories as a temporary employee during the sugar season. Apart from these, I made an effort to get to know a number of other temporary employees in the village. A large proportion of the households whose members worked in the factories were poor.

This situation afforded the opportunity to trace changes in poorer villagers' spending patterns which paralleled changes in their incomes. From observations and informal interviews, it was clear that the response to increased income was increased spending on luxury items. In case after case, poor villagers spent their extra cash on eating out at noodle shops, clothes, cheap jewellery, pay thiaw ('going around', 'hanging out' - in this context, with the hint of going to prostitutes), and so on. Not one person saved any of their extra income, and no-one invested it in any way.

Specific examples of poor people's spending were bemusing. For example, poor people who held the medical centre's 'poor card', entitling them to free treatment at the village medical centre and the district hospital, persisted in going to private clinics and buying medicines elsewhere. There was no obvious explanation for this. The treatment and medicines were the same as (or very similar to) those available for free, there was no 'anti-medical centre' attitude in the village, and the poor were not embarrassed about using their 'poor card'. It emerged from my lengthy attempts to quantify living costs in the village that many of the poorer informants apparently perceived of luxury items, such as coca-cola, sweets, cake, noodles, etc., as part of one's necessary daily expenses. They appeared to exaggerate village living costs. During the fieldwork, the medical centre nurse tried to implement a policy of withholding the 'poor card' from poor people who

were renowned gamblers, in an attempt "to stop the poor wasting their money".

This use of extra income was reflected in one of the themes in poorer villagers' conversation. I was told repeatedly by informants that they had to devise ways of stopping themselves squandering any extra cash. Most popularly, people would buy a piece of gold jewellery, since it kept its value, could not be frittered away, and could be pawned in the event of a serious cash shortage. Men explained how, for example, if they were lucky gambling they would have to rush home to hand over the cash to their wife who would hide it. In such contexts, informants said, "diaw ko mod" (it'll be gone in a moment), and "keb may daay" (I can't keep it).

The contrast between the wealthy villagers and the poor was stark in this respect. The former were very concerned to spend their money 'wisely'. They would say of poor neighbours, "may ruucak keb ngen" (they don't know how to keep money) - unlike themselves. They frequently referred to a cycle of "earning, saving and investing income". They answered question G(i) on surveys 1 and 2 (namely: "After living costs, do you usually have money left over? If so, how is it usually used?" - see appendix one) in terms of long thun (making investments) and saving in the bank. They frequently berated the rest of the village with "fum fuay" (extravagant with money), and were staunchly anti-gambling.

Economic acuity: It proved difficult to ascertain

living costs from poorer villagers. It was clear from conversations that informants did not budget. They did not quantify outgoings and relate these to income. In fact, they did not appear to quantify incomes either. For example, when I asked around for the usual profits from, say, baby corn, informants clearly did not know 'off the top of their heads'. They had to stop and think to work it out. This is surprising, especially in those cases where baby corn was the informants' main source of income. By contrast, rich villagers revealed a high degree of economic acumen. One man, for example, describing how he went about improving his household's economic status, explained how he used to keep a wall chart in his house with sections on 'incomes', 'outgoings', 'profit/loss' and so on.

The contrast here appeared particularly clearly in the context of surveying the village. Frequently, when surveyed, poorer villagers found it difficult to answer questions about such things as their incomes and outgoings: i.e., about their general economic situation. Often they could not remember, and guessed at answers to questions such as how much they had recently loaned from the temple, or the fee for the land they rented. By contrast, wealthy households' economic situations were usually very easy to ascertain. They knew precisely how much land they owned, rent price charged, income from various crops, and so on. It was to this kind of difference the rich were referring with their frequent use of the phrase "hua samoong" (a good head for business).

Perceptions of assets: During the fieldwork, a poor neighbour had the opportunity to acquire a small amount of very expensive land. The owner, a friend, once casually suggested giving it to him - or letting him buy it at a reduced cost - because she was tired of having to think of what to do with it. Having explained the situation, he told me, "it would be good because I could mortgage it to borrow money the next time I duad roon (get into dire straits)". The land was not seen as investible capital, the basis of a long-term strategy of economic betterment.

This perception of assets and resources was characteristic of poorer villagers. On another occasion, a poor villager explained that the main reason they were pleased to have built a house was that it could be used as surety against future loans from wealthy neighbours. Another informant, on completing his first season at a local sugar factory, started borrowing from neighbours on the assumption that he would work at the factory the next year and so could pay off the loans then - by the end of the fieldwork, he had spent his next year's wage several times over. Relatedly, it was common to hear of poor households who owned a small amount of land which simply lay idle despite the fact that they had surplus household labour. People would say, "they don't work it" and the poor owners themselves would say, "we don't do much with it".

The village wealthy perceived of all resources as potential capital. Typically, they would refer to ngen mun

wian (circulating money). They claimed that any money left over from household expenditure was reinvested. Returns on all resources were claimed to the full: land was rarely left idle, interest and collateral on loans were always claimed, and uninvested income was deposited in the bank for later use and to earn interest.

Economic ambitions: Rich villagers accused the poor of "may moong kaan klay" (not looking ahead, not being farsighted). Typically, poorer people would refer to some money (e.g., extra income from a season in the sugar factory) and say something like: "it's of no use, it's only 1,000 baat and a house would cost 10,000". By contrast, wealthy villagers repeatedly told stories (usually by way of illustrating their criticisms of the economic behaviours of the poor) of how they or their parents had scrimped and saved small amounts over a long period, thereby improving their lot. One rich villager who had 'pulled himself up by the bootlaces' kept an old push bike from the days of his impoverished youth. He explained that it was a symbol of where he had come from and what he had achieved, and the precariousness of his wealth and the perpetual threat of decline.

Occasionally, poor villagers did formulate economic plans which were sometimes very detailed and well thought through. However, they did not attempt to implement these; and the rich would say, "may aw cing aw cang" (they aren't really serious or committed), or, "yaak ruay ngaay" (they want to get rich the easy way). More usually, poor

villagers did not appear to be ambitious in the first place. They tended to hold ambitions such as, "buy a motor cycle" or, "build a house" - consumption items rather than strategies to effect a permanent shift in economic status and security.

Responses to question L on survey 1 (namely: "What plans and ambitions due you have for your household in the future?" - see appendix one) support these observations. The 29 respondents who simply answered "none" were almost all from poor and middle ranking households. A further 7 respondents, again mainly from poor and middle ranking households, answered "to get out/stay out of debt". Almost invariably, fuller, more obviously ambitious answers were given by wealthy villagers. Indeed, by contrast with the poor, the wealthiest Saentorians seemed obsessively concerned to be rich. They tended to be more ambitious, took a longer-term view of their economic activities, and were more 'rational' in the way they borrowed, budgeted, spent, and so on.

5.3 Poor People's Apparent Economic Recklessness

The important finding reported in the previous section is that rich villagers' attitudes, decisions and behaviours pertaining to interconnected economic phenomena, tended to be different to those of the poor. Poor villagers did not seem to pursue 'logical' strategies of economic betterment or upward mobility. This was true of grand investment

schemes which involved relatively large sums of money over a long period of time, and important shifts in life-style; and, perhaps more significantly, it was true of the small-scale, everyday kinds of economic behaviour which everyone agreed could improve one's economic lot in life in a short period of time. By contrast, rich villagers came close to the stereotypical rational economic person. They pursued 'logical' strategies of personal accumulation. The difference between the two groups was more than that consequent on the gross disparity in control they had of resources.

However, this conclusion can be pushed further. A major theme which runs throughout the economic attitude of the poor is that of apparent economic recklessness. In case after case, poor people pursued forms of economic behaviour which were consonant with the data presented in the previous section, but which, given their precarious economic situation, were dearth-threatening and apparently reckless. Repeatedly, poorer economic agents 'sailed close to the wind' in ways which were a stark contrast to the rich and therefore require explanation. Two case studies may help to elucidate the point.

During the fieldwork, one poor household clearly had economic problems. They had recently mortgaged their only 2 <u>ray</u> of land to a wealthier neighbour. Apart from this, they frequently loaned money from other villagers. They had a 7,000 <u>baat</u> debt at the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative which they had been unable to shake off for five

years. They were 2,000 baat in debt at the school. All their debts were incurred simply to cover household expenditure. Apart from debts, the grandmother of the house was seventy-six years old and likely to need hospital treatment in the near future. The son of the household left the village primary school during the fieldwork year and desperately wanted to study on at the secondary level. The household motor cycle (their only form of transport) was so old that it was in constant need of repair. Why was it the case that the heads of this household persistently declined offers of work around the village throughout the fieldwork period? Why was it the case that they were notorious for spending inordinate amounts of time and money gambling (on cards, boxing, cock-fighting, etc.)?

In another case, a poor household wanted to build their own house. The way they went about doing so exemplified the economic attitude of the poor. They decided during the fieldwork year that the time was ripe, since the husband had secured temporary employment at a sugar factory for that season. This seemed sensible; however, he decided to build during the season and before he had saved enough of his income to cover the costs of the venture. He explained that this was because the day of the building was "auspicious". However, he agreed that there were many other auspicious days after the completion of the sugar season. He also said haste was necessitated by the impending rains; the rains arrived four months after the completion of the sugar season, as usual.

The consequences for this household of not waiting until the end of the season were severe. Firstly, there was the obvious point that not enough money had been saved for their enterprise. They ended up borrowing almost all of the 8,000 baat the house cost. Added to this is the fact that almost all of the income the husband had received from the factory before starting to build had been spent on luxury items during 'shopping sprees' in nearby towns. Secondly, because of building during the season, the husband was not free to do any of the labouring work. Hence, he had to pay labourers, using borrowed money, to do work he knew he could have done himself.

There were other consequences of not building at a time when he was free. Rather than pay labourers, he could have used the liang khaek system, whereby neighbours give their labour in return for meals and refreshments. Since he was not around to organise this, he had to use the more expensive method of hiring villagers. When hundreds of baat worth of sand were delivered for the foundations, there was nobody to level it out or supervise it. Inevitably, it became the children's and dogs' play area, and most was lost before building began. He was not 'on hand' to deal with the local craftsman who agreed to oversee the work. Apart from this, the household had not found out the real costs of the materials required to build the house. It transpired that they were about twice as expensive than at first thought, but that the building had to go ahead because, for example, the craftsman who was to

supervise building had been 'booked' and the sand for the foundations had been delivered.

These cases are intended to show how the economic decisions of the people involved go beyond an attitude of mere non-accumulation. In neither of the above cases could the household in question afford the behaviour described. These economic decisions seemed reckless. In the latter example, the household was landless, in constant debt, and often unable to meet household subsistence needs. For example, they were one of the few households in the village who were forced to buy food from the local store 'on tick'. The 8,000 baat debt they incurred by building their house was a burden to them at least for the rest of the fieldwork year. It should be reiterated that this was not atypical behaviour for poor villagers.

Economic decisions and behaviours of rich villagers seemed to comply closely with the stereotype for rational persons. By contrast, poor people did not typically pursue strategies of economic betterment. Indeed, in the light of their precarious economic situation, they appeared to be economically reckless. Credit was the single clearest context for the prima facie economic recklessness of the poor. In chapter two, credit was one of the "cluster of characteristics" which distinguish households of disparate economic status (section 2.7). In the previous chapter, data were presented to show that the "large farmer bias" (Webster 1986) in the distribution of investment capital in the form of institutionalised credit, is an important

strand in the web of exclusion of the poorer villagers from participation in control over productive and reproductive resources (section 4.2). The focus here is on one particular aspect of patterns of attitudes, behaviour, and decisions regarding credit which were typical of the poor, namely, what would seem to be recklessness. The data presented here should be distinguished from those cases of very genuine hardship which a number of poor debtors suffered and not through any kind of recklessness on their part at all, but due to their exclusion from access to resources.

Frequently, poor people appeared to get into debt unnecessarily. One of the clearest examples of this was their tendency to buy luxury items ngen phoon (on hire-purchase). Common items include jewellery, clothes, radios, and household furniture such as cupboards. Typically, the purchaser did not have the means to buy the item outright themselves. More importantly, they were not in a position to keep up repayments. One woman who began to buy clothes from the market in Thaarua and resell them ngen phoon in the village gave up after only a few weeks because too many people who bought them were unable to keep up repayments.

The following example is representative. A poor village couple bought two gold chains ngen phoon, the total sale price for which was 2,900 baat. They agreed to pay the middleperson 4,000 baat (sale price plus interest) over a period of ten months. They sold the two chains within

this period. They sold the first one to pay off the middleperson, because they could not keep up with repayments. However, they spent the money they got for it on household use. So they sold the second chain and did use the money to partly pay off their buyer. They had sold the two gold chains for 2,200 baat. They were still 1,000 baat in debt to their buyer at the end of the fieldwork. Despite persistent questioning, there was never any reason suggested as to why the purchase of two gold chains was necessary in the first place.

It was not only to acquire luxury items ngen phoon that poor people appeared to borrow recklessly. They borrowed cash when it seemed clear that they could have avoided it. For example, one neighbour was working on the extension of Saentor's K.S.Ch. road. His wage was delayed a few days, so he borrowed a couple of hundred baat from friends and relatives. He was not in dire need of cash, he simply preferred to borrow the money rather than wait for the wage to come through. Poor people's borrowing habits seemed to depend more on what loans happened to be available than on a 'rational' appraisal of either real needs or repayment prospects.

One of the richest villagers decided that, because she felt sorry for the poor, she would make available 10-20,000 baat which anyone could loan interest free. The only proviso was that loans were paid back on time. I knew of at least five households who had taken the chance to borrow, but had not repaid the loan. This rich lender was

one of a number of wealthy villagers who refused to lend to their poorer neighbours again. The poor seemed to borrow because the money was available, and not only out of necessity or after a consideration of their needs or their ability to repay the loan.

A number of poorer households were permanently in debt. For example, it was common for poor households to borrow from the temple. On the day for repayment, they would borrow the amount owed (say, from a relative), pay back the temple loan, re-loan the original amount, and pay back the relative. In this way they avoided repaying the debt at the temple - rather, they renewed it. Other poor villagers who had managed to secure an IC loan (e.g., because they had a landowning relative who was prepared to guarantee their loan from the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative) had learnt to live with the loan for years; due to the punitive increase in the annual interest rates, it was now astronomical. Although this may echo the strategies employed by richer, entrepreneurial villagers, who move debts around rather than pay them off in order to maximise access to investment capital, there are obvious differences. Poor villagers are perpetuating a condition of vulnerability, whilst the entrepreneurial villagers are taking risks for the sake of deferred returns.

It should be noted that the apparent recklessness of the poor regarding credit was not due to the fact that debt repayment defaulters went unpunished. One could not be in debt and simply get away with it. Bad debtors were

accountable in a number of ways. For example, there were many examples of collateral seizure (including land) and of the costly loss of goods bought ngen phoon. Someone who was known to be a bad debtor found it increasingly difficult to secure loans because wealthy villagers refused to lend to them. To some extent, there was a general social stigma against being a notorious debtor. For example, some villagers went to such lengths to explain how they did not buy goods ngen phoon if they could not really afford them, that they left the clear impression of an implied criticism of those who did. In chapter seven, the point is made that inter-household lending was a well-established area of tension and hostility between rich and poor (section 7.2). For example, one of the strongest weapons rich villagers could deploy in the fight to get their money back from defaulters, was to gossip about them around the village. Some debtors kept certain loans a secret: the rest of the village would waa (scold or criticise them) because they had borrowed foolishly and without forethought.

One of the clearest examples of what is being referred to here as economic recklessness, is the way poor villagers did not modify their life-style when they had debt problems. For example, the cycle of gambling, debts to fund gambling, and economic decline, was common in the village. People did not gamble less and work more as debts mounted. Addiction to gambling can go only so far in explaining these behaviours. Having lived in the

community, I did not get the impression that genuine addiction to gambling was a major problem. For one thing, gambling was always presented in terms of sanuk (fun; 'partying'). Also, for example, poor villagers who were not notorious gamblers often responded to debt difficulties by shifting the debt around rather than changing their economic behaviour in order to pay it off. If a debt with a creditor was becoming difficult, the debtor might borrow from someone else to pay off their original creditor; or, if debts in the village were too problematic, the debtor would pawn something in Thaarua. Economic decisions concerning rates of work, saving/spending ratio, use of assets, inclination to budget, and so on, would not appear to change.

Poor people's 'credit culture' was established and recognised in the village to the extent of being expressed in elements of traditional village culture. For example, one poor debtor suggested that it did not really matter if one did not repay a debt - perhaps in a previous life one's present creditor was one's debtor and they had failed to pay back their loan to you then..... Likewise, one of the commonest contexts of bon caw (to make a reciprocal vow or contract with a spirit) was when a creditor agreed to reward the spirit on the return of a loan from a recalcitrant debtor.

5.4 Economic Attitudes and Cultures of Poverty

The data presented in the previous two sections are open to various misinterpretations which I hope to pre-empt in this section. Specifically, it is important to distinguish sections 5.2 and 5.3 above from the well-established 'culture of poverty' debate. The contention that poor groups have a distinctive culture has a considerable history in the social sciences. Frazier (1966) characterised poor negroes in American cities as disorganised and infected with social pathologies. Glazer and Moynihan (1963) continued this theme of a 'lower-class culture':

> what are we to do with the large numbers of people emerging in modern society who are irresponsible and depraved? The worthy poor create no serious problem.....but the unworthy poor? No one has come up with the answers (ibid.:50).

Miller (1958) looked for the sources of delinquency and crime in six "focal concerns" which are distinctive of the lower-class. Matza (1966) amassed a large number of derogatory conceptions of the lower-classes under the title: "The disreputable Poor".

Characterisations of 'lower-class culture' are echoed in anthropological literature. Lewis (1959, 1966) aims to elucidate the "culture or sub-culture of poverty". 'Culture' is defined in terms of a "design for living.....a way of life, remarkably stable and persistent, passed down from generation to generation" (Lewis 1961:xxiv). The 'culture of poverty' emerges in a variety of historical

contexts. Lewis himself was mainly concerned with the urban poor of Puerto Rico and Mexico. His method consisted primarily of family case studies: he transcribed autobiographical material from taped interviews with individual family members (Lewis 1966:xxiv). He presents characterisations of the 'culture of poverty' which, he claims, has some universal traits (Lewis 1961:xxv-xxviii).

The 'poverty/lower-class culture (or sub-culture)' programme has been heavily criticised. Firstly, classic elements of the 'poverty/lower-class culture' contradict the claim that these are <u>cultures</u> at all: they are,

> so lacking in basic elements of organisation universal among human lifeways that they stand quite outside any usual definition of the term culture (Valentine 1968:21).

Secondly, much of the 'culture of poverty' literature is methodologically questionable. For example, how justified is Lewis in moving from the case study of one family to characterisations of an entire culture?

However, the most important charge against the 'culture of poverty' idea is that it is "pernicious":

> the presentation and particularly the popularisation of these notions have had one outstandingly important effect. That is, these formulations support the long-established rationalization of blaming poverty on the poor (ibid.:15).

The 'poverty culture' idea was seized upon to justify programmes based on a highly negative stereotype for poor groups. The poor were characterised by a series of negative traits: personal disorganisation and an inability to defer gratification, for example. 'Poverty culture' was

said to be a deviant form of middle class culture which is passed on through the generations and which should be eradicated (e.g., by social work), thereby enabling the poor to escape the main cause of their predicament: themselves and their distinctive, deviant culture.

Data presented in the previous two sections of this chapter could be mistakenly confused with some of the literature in the 'culture of poverty' debate. For example, amongst the negative traits which lewis claims typifies the culture of lower class, urban based Mexicans, are:

> a strong-present time orientation with relatively little ability to defer gratification and plan for the future, a sense of resignation and fatalism based upon the realities of their difficult life situation (Lewis 1966:xii).

This echoes some of the comments made in the previous two sections of this chapter.

Given this, the data presented in sections 5.2 and 5.3 above should be explicitly distanced from the 'poverty culture' programme - and especially from the charge of "perniciousness". Firstly, proponents of this programme were attempting holistic descriptions of entire cultures of certain (poor) social groups. By contrast, I am not attempting a description of poor Saentorians' culture. I do not think that poor Saentorians' culture was distinct from other cultures in the study site. Culturally, the similarities between strata of Saentorians far outweigh the differences. This does not contradict the claim that, in the economic arena, rich and poor Saentorians tended toward

different patterns of behaviour and decisions.

In fact, unlike the proponents of a 'poverty culture', I am not primarily interested in the poor at all (nor in the rich or any other stratum). The only important focus is the <u>difference</u> between the rich and the poor in terms of the dissimilar ways in which they typically operated in the economic arena. I am not primarily concerned to characterise the poor in isolation - only by contrast with the rich. For example, the way poor households disposed of their income is irrelevant in and of itself; what matters is only the observation that poor and rich villagers disposed of income differently.

Sections 5.2 and 5.3 of this chapter are not at all evaluative or judgemental. Any interpretation of these sections as a criticism of the poor would be wholly mistaken. For example, I present differences in the work patterns of rich versus poor villagers (section 5.2). These data are in no way meant to imply that the poor were 'lazy', which is an <u>evaluation</u> of poor peoples' economic behaviours. True, rich Saentorians often called the poor "lazy": but that is their evaluation - one which is interesting in itself - and not mine. My point is that rich and poor Saentorians had discernibly different attitudes toward work.

In contrast to the 'lower-class/poverty culture' literature, I have contextualised the data presented in this chapter. The role of 'external factors' in the creation of rural poverty in Thailand - both sweeping

historical transformations of the Thai countryside (chapter two) and ongoing processes of participation and exclusion (chapters three and four) - have been considered at length. Clearly, therefore, it would be quite untenable to interpret this chapter as claiming that the cause of poverty is poor villagers' deviant culture, or that poor people 'only have themselves to blame'. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the notion that a consistent difference in the economic attitudes of rich versus poor villagers plays a part in the ongoing differentiation of the community.

The danger, amidst the polemics in the 'culture of poverty' debate, is that we will 'throw the baby out with the bath water'. Indisputably, the 'poverty culture' literature was based on questionable methodology and abused by policy makers. Nevertheless, something of the perspective adopted by the 'poverty culture' proponents should be retained. The corollary to a critique of the 'culture of poverty' literature is not that different strata within an economy are entirely indistinguishable. Valentine (1968), for example, one the strongest critics of this literature, explicitly denies that "cultural distinctions confined to the poor are either impossible in principle or necessarily non-existent in fact" (Valentine 1968:15). He goes on to suggest:

> There can be no doubt that living in poverty has its own destructive effect on human capacities and that these impairments become part of the whole process perpetuating deprivation (ibid.:145).

He is explicitly concerned to elucidate "what kinds of cultural designs do animate the existence of those who live in poverty" (ibid.:16). Whilst I would dispute his continued use of the term 'culture', Valentine is right to want to retain something of the 'culture of poverty' approach.

One example of a 'respectable' endeavour which (like the present chapter) is in danger of being tarnished by too extreme a stance against anything remotely akin to a 'culture of poverty', are analyses of the "affluent worker" (Goldthorpe et al. 1969). This literature considers the embourgeoisement of the British working class in the context of increased post-war affluence. One of the themes in it is whether the working classes "assume a way of life which is more characteristically 'middle-class'" (Goldthorpe et al. 1968:1) - a perfectly defensible endeavour despite the 'lower-class culture' undertones.

I am concerned in this chapter to report stark contrasts in the attitudes, behaviours and decisions typical of rich versus poor Saentorians. In this section, I hope to have distanced myself from the "pernicious popular and scholarly tradition of "lower-class culture" and the policy correlates of this tradition" (Valentine 1968:67).

5.5 Acknowledgements of Disparate Economic Attitudes

Informants referred to the disparate economic attitudes

described in this chapter in a number of contexts, which helps confirm that this is an important feature of the study site. Firstly, villagers conceptualised the disparities in economic related attitudes, behaviours, and decisions typical of rich versus poor Saentorians by reference to a distinction between Central Thais and Chinese Thais. Chinese Thais in Thailand are stereotyped as thrifty, entrepreneurial with good business acumen, and hard working. This is in contrast to the more easy going, fun-loving and relaxed attitude said to be typical of Central Thais. Villagers were aware of these stereotypes, despite the fact that there were no Chinese Thais who were recognisable as such in Saentor itself, partly because they are well-established in Thailand generally, and partly because Saentorians were familiar with Chinese Thais in nearby towns and other parts of the sub-district. Hence, comments were made to the effect that, "our rich Saentorians are like the Chinese and poorer villagers are like the Thais".

Similarly, during conversations regarding the history of the village, reference was frequently made to those predecessors who cleared the forest for cultivation. Of these, informants distinguished two groups: those who persisted in clearing only enough for household subsistence production, and those who responded to the maturation of a market for land (involving land registration at the District Office) by clearing large tracts for purely commercial purposes. Informants described the latter as

chalaad (clever; 'smart') and khayan (diligent) since their foresight and entrepreneurial acumen ensured future prosperity; the former were referred to as ngor (foolish). Again, the comparison was made with equivalent types of economic agents in the latter-day village.

Disparities in the economic related behaviours of strata of villagers were referred to in a variety of contexts. For example, the taped interviews with local officials contained a number of questions directly related to stratification (notably, questions 2A-D: see appendix two). A number of by now familiar themes emerged in the responses to these: stratification was said to be due in part to the disparate economic attitudes with which strata of economic agents operate. Rich people were said to be more diligent than the poor. By way of illustration, the story was related of the noodle seller who gets up before dawn and sells noodles into the night. He now owns a town house. There is a difference in economic acumen. For example, some people responded to the fact that the merchants at the Thaarua market do not have snacks to eat, by making barbecued chicken to sell. Villagers use their money differently. The rich know how to save. Poor villagers waste their money (especially on gambling and whisky). If a poor person gets 10 baat, they spend 8 baat on whisky. What can you do with 2 baat? Rich people use their money more effectively. Poor people do not lay plans. They do not budget or think ahead. For example, if a poor person wants something which they cannot afford,

they buy it anyway. These comments were made purely spontaneously by respondents to the taped interviews.

5.6 Economic Attitudes: Comments and Qualifications

Data pertaining to behaviours and decisions in the economic arena reveal a difference between the economic attitudes expressed by rich versus poor villagers. However, some further explanatory comments should be entered at this point. These are intended to clarify this observation, and not to call it into question.

So far in this chapter, the focus has been on rich and poor villagers. Some mention should be made of the economic attitude distinctive to middle ranking households. The principal theme in middle ranking villagers' economic attitude was quiescence. For the most part, middle ranking households' income came from a combination of farming their own land, using mainly household and reciprocal labour, plus regular employment in waged work. Hence, they worked more according to the pattern dictated by their crops and their jobs, and so had fewer opportunities for the expression of an idiosyncratic attitude toward work. Their work patterns were more clearly dictated than was the case for the richest and the poorest in the community. They enjoyed a reliable income which exceeded household expenditure. Middle ranking villagers tended to be neither accumulators like the rich, nor apparently 'irrational' like the poor. They were quiescent. Often, they did not

maximise what opportunities they had to extract surplus from other villagers. For example, they tended to bank money rather than lend it out, and they often 'rented' land out to relatives at little or no charge. They did not undertake ambitious entrepreneurial projects, even within the village. Typically, they worked inherited land and were not active in the land market. On the other hand, it was the middle ranking villagers who spent a considerable proportion of their income on luxury items, such as stereos, videos, and other household assets. Also, they would incur extra expenses 'unnecessarily' by, for example, raising relatives' offspring. Nevertheless, this was not recklessness. They tended to live comfortably within their means.

It is not the case that the economic attitude of poor people described above could be explained by reference to their low educational attainment. The differential in the educational attainment of poor versus rich villagers has been discussed (chapter four, section 4.5). It may appear that poor people behaved the way they did (notably, with regard to loans) because of a simple failure to grasp the arithmetic of their situation. Whilst this line of reasoning may go some way toward explaining some of the poor villagers' economic decisions, it is for the most part untenable. I was repeatedly struck by the villagers' numeracy: for example, when they rapidly calculated and compared the prices of everyday household items and when they described the various lotteries villagers played.

Likewise, it should be reiterated that poverty in Saentor was only relative. As stated, this was a comparatively prosperous Thai village and even the poorest member of the community was in reasonably good health and had the basic requirements for survival. It was not the case that poor villagers were in a state of malnutrition or simply physically weakened, or that they were in sheer despair, and that this explains their everyday economic decisions.

Difficulties surrounding the quantification of households' economic status were discussed in chapter two (section 2.6). Incomes are not easy to quantify. Notably, the point was made that there are a number of ways illegal acquisitions could be made by villagers, including theft, prostitution, the host's fee during gambling sessions, gambling windfalls, selling illegally brewed liquor, and so on. No doubt some instances of what appeared to be reckless economic decisions given the prima facie economic circumstances of the households in question, were due to economic facts about the income of those households which were not readily ascertainable.

The point should be stated explicitly that there was only a general correlation between patterns of economic decision-making and household economic status. Some counter-examples existed. One household, for example, consisted of a couple and their niece. They were apparently khon con (poor people). They owned a little over a ray of land and the husband was a local tractor

driver. They were not awaiting inheritance. Despite their low income and lack of assets, in many respects this household resembled wealthy village entrepreneurs. The woman was a (small-scale) baby corn middleperson dealing with around ten farmers, from which she made about 3,000 baat per month. She had ambitions to expand this operation. This household were important village creditors. All savings were either deposited in the bank, went toward their life insurance policy, or were lent out at interest to other villagers. They had flirted with land mortgage arrangements: they once took the land registration document from a debtor (a relative) but returned it when this caused domestic difficulties. They had no major debts, and had bought their land themselves. Their ambition was to buy a tractor like the one the male household head was hired to drive, and they described where the budget for this would come from. They had formulated specific plans for their niece's post-primary education. Their belief set regarding the causes of stratification and social mobility was that which one would expect of a rich villager (see following chapter, section 6.6).

The village headperson was a good example of a wealthy villager whose behaviour did not accord with that of rich people as characterised in the foregoing. He was notorious for failing to maximise his assets by not working the land he owned, for squandering his wealth on 'partying', and for his gambling sessions. During the fieldwork, almost half of his inherited 20 ray of land was sold to Bangkok

investors to fund gambling debts. His economic decline was a source of great interest in the village.

Similarly, there were examples of poor households who were non-accumulatory (section 5.2) but not economically reckless (section 5.3). In this respect they were akin to middle ranking villagers. For example, one household consisted of an elderly couple whose children had grown up and left home. They owned around 3 ray of inherited land on which they grew baby corn and some fruit (annual income from which was around 3,500 baat), and they took agricultural labouring jobs around the village (from which they made 40 baat per day each). Also, their children occasionally sent home some money. This couple had known great poverty. When their children were growing up, they were forced to sell over a ray of land. The memories of that time were very clear to them. They claimed to work twenty days a month for wages whilst also working their own land. My observations bore this out. They were hardly in debt (they had recently borrowed 1,500 baat from the temple to cover medical expenses when the husband became ill). Whilst not being economically ambitious, these poor villagers were very careful with money, avoided unnecessary debts, worked "all day every day", and - inspired by their memories of real poverty - lived within their means. One could hardly describe this household as economically reckless.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

Saentor was a stratified community (chapter two), and ongoing processes can be seen to exacerbate intra-village differentiation (chapters three and four). This chapter reports a paradox in poor villagers' discourse. On the one hand, poor Saentorians were overtly aware of the stratification of their village, perceived of themselves as relatively poor, and were vociferously concerned by their low economic status (section 5.1). However, these findings are dissonant with data pertaining to the economic attitudes of poor as opposed to wealthy villagers. Rich and poor were shown to operate according to disparate economic attitudes. The poor eschewed even straightforward strategies of economic betterment. Furthermore, some poor people most of the time, and all poor people some of the time, appeared to be economically reckless. Given their circumstances, their economic decisions were dearth-threatening. By contrast, rich people espoused attitudes, decisions and behaviours in the economic arena akin to stereotypical rational economic persons (sections 5.2 and 5.3). The aim of the following chapter is to attempt a reconstruction of some elements of the system of values and beliefs typical of poor villagers, which help explain this paradox.

CHAPTER SIX

CONSTRAINTS ON THE ECONOMIC DECISION-MAKING OF THE POOR

The previous chapter reports a paradox. On the one hand, poor villagers were aware of economic stratification and concerned by their low economic rank (section 5.1). However, this is dissonant with the attitudes they expressed in their economic lives, which gave rise to non-accumulatory and apparently reckless economic decisions and behaviours (sections 5.2 and 5.3). In this chapter, an attempt will be made to explain this paradox by reconstructing some aspects of the underlying system of values and beliefs constructed by the poor.

6.1 Differential Access to Resources

The most obvious explanation for the different patterns of economic behaviour typical of poor versus rich villagers, is the disparity in their access to resources. Some of the forms of economic behaviour typical of the poor are not 'irrational' (as this and other related terms were defined in section 5.2 of the previous chapter), in the light of their recognition that, as has been discussed in previous chapters, their access to control over resources is increasingly restricted. For example, the story was related of the poor villager whose friend offered him a

valuable piece of land because she was tired of having to think about what to do with it (chapter five, section 5.2). Since he lacked other resources necessary to implement any kind of very ambitious investment plan (including savings, collateral, land, contacts, and so on), it is perhaps understandable that he perceived of the land's value in terms of surety against future loans rather than as the basis of a long-term strategy of upward mobility.

Another clear example concerns education: in the context of their decisions regarding the education of their offspring, poor people's apparently 'irrational' economic decisions are explicable in the light of their recognition of their restricted access to resources. All the villagers, irrespective of disparate age, gender, wealth, and educational attainment, expressed their high regard for education. Poor villagers often bemoaned their own lack of education and stated that they wanted their children to study as much as possible. This was reflected in the response to my arrival in the village. Innumerable villagers (mainly children, but teenagers and adults too) leapt at the chance to have us teach them English. Visitations were received from parents and relatives trying to arrange long-term private tuition for their children (often in order to help them pass the entrance examination for Thaamakaa secondary school). We were told repeatedly that we could happily live forever in Saentor on the money we could make from teaching. Of the 100 surveyed households, 54 had at least one member who had received

some form of education other than that offered at the village primary school. This is an astonishing number, given that some of the other 46 households were either childless or only had children of pre-school age. Parents solicited supernatural help to improve their children's chances of educational success, by, for example, visiting a person pen caw (a spirit medium) and undertaking extra tham bun (merit-making). Villagers gave one very expensive private secondary school in Thaarua the nickname khruud luad khruud nua (to tear your flesh and blood), because of the lengths parents would go to get their children to study there. The vast majority of respondents to questions in section B(iii) of survey 1 (notably: "What are your plans for your children's education?" - see appendix one) who had children of, or younger than, secondary school age, said they wanted their children to "rian suung suung" (study to a high level). Relatedly, the village primary school was a far from insignificant feature of the village; it formed something of a village centre, and occasions such as wan dek (national children's day) and staff/parents meetings were always very well attended. When the academic year was over, the village was buzzing with plans and speculations and excitement as to who would study on and where.

From informal conversations and in responses to questions in section B(iii) on survey 1 (notably: "If you plan for your children to study other than at the village school, why?" - see appendix one), it is clear that the advantage of high educational attainment perceived

throughout the village was that it is the means to comfortable, well paid jobs outside of Saentor. This was so even for those villagers who commented that education was important because it is the way to "day khwaam ruu" (gain knowledge). On being pressed, these informants invariably said that "knowledge" is important because, without it, one would be unable to get a good job. Frequently in this context, villagers would describe at length the hardships of life and work in the village and their desire for their children to have an easier life. They did not want their children to farm in the hot sun. Repeatedly, the specific ambition was for children to become urban based government officials.

Given this perception by all villagers of the value of education as an important resource, it is interesting to look at the strategies undertaken by rich and poor villagers respectively in their pursuit of educational attainment. Predictably, wealthy villagers laid long-term plans to ensure that provision was being made for their children's education. The wealthiest respondents to question L on survey 1 (namely: "What plans and ambitions do you have for your household in the future?" - see appendix one) gave answers in terms of their children, with explicit or at least implicit reference to their education and securement of a good job. During conversations, richer villagers referred to specific investment strategies: for example, the sale of a particular piece of land to cover school fees, or a particular loan which would contribute to

the costs of putting a child through secondary school. More usually, there would be vague comments about having secured the money necessary to fund their offspring's education.

By contrast, poor villagers' economic decisions concerning education appeared to be dissonant with their avowed high regard for education and their perception of its value. They tended not to save for their children's education. They did not formulate long-term strategies to secure secondary and tertiary level education for their children. Their economic behaviours did not appear to respond to the educational situation of their children: for example, they did not work harder, save more, gamble less, and so on, in anticipation of their offspring leaving the village primary school. Also, although I was told repeatedly by poorer parents that their children could not study on because the household could not afford it, the village primary school scholarship for poor children was not allocated in the fieldwork year. There were a number of reasons for this, some of which the parents had no control over. Nevertheless, it is true that poorer parents made little effort to find out about or secure scholarships available at a number of schools for the children of poor households.

However, it would be a mistake to conclude that here we have a situation where the rich acted 'rationally' but the poor did not. The dissonance between the appreciation by the poor of the value of education, and their 'failure'

to pursue strategies to secure a high educational attainment for their children, was understandable in the light of other relevant data. The 'apathy' on the part of poor parents regarding their children's education, despite their overt references to the value of education as a means to securing betterment for the household, was a perfectly realistic response to their recognition of the shortfall between the resources required to educate their children as they would have liked and the resources they in fact commanded. Whilst the rich made provision for investments in the education of their children, the poor lacked the capital to warrant such strategies. As was outlined in chapter 4 (section 4.5), this capital is highly varied, ranging from, for example, money for termly fees to contacts who could help graduates translate qualifications into desirable jobs.

This conclusion is born out by the fact that when poor parents found themselves at less of a disadvantage, they responded 'rationally'. For example, the son of one poor household was offered a scholarship to study through Thaamakaa secondary school. His mother responded by selling her last piece of land to acquire the means to keep him at school. A son who became, for example, a policeman, was a far more valuable asset than a ray of land.

6.2 Forms of Economic 'Rationality'

Some of what may have appeared to be 'irrational' economic

decisions - as this term is used here - were not so in the light of a more subtle understanding of the diversity of the forms which economic 'rationality' can take. Some of the decisions and behaviours of poor economic agents were 'rational' - but they aimed to maximise something other than financial returns on assets. Specifically, what they aimed to maximise was not what rich villagers aimed to maximise.

This perspective helps explain poor villagers' decisions regarding work. The observation that poorer villagers declined opportunities to work was reported in the previous chapter (section 5.2). In a situation where a household has sufficient to live on, there is nothing 'irrational' about labourers trading-off extra income against isara (freedom) and khwaam sabaay (comfort), and calculating that the 'unnecessary' work was not worth it. Rich villagers seemed somewhat bemused by this, and frequently criticised the poor for being "so lazy they stop work once they have enough to live on". Nevertheless, neither party was more 'rational' than the other. They simply aimed to maximise different things.

This point should be put in the context of the well-established debate between formalists and substantivists in economic anthropology. The debate is about the appropriateness of Western economic theory in analyses of non-Western economic systems. If non-Western subjects are 'rational' economic agents, then the applicability of Western economic theory is given; and if not, some other

tool of analysis is called for. An oft-cited confusion in the debate is between instances of economic agents acting 'irrationally', and instances of these acting to maximise something other than financial returns on assets. The distinction is called for between 'irrational' decision-making by non-Western economic agents, and ethnocentric assumptions about what it is 'rational' agents will be aiming to maximise (Polanyi 1957; Dalton 1961; Burling 1962; Cook 1966; Firth 1967; LeClair and Schneider 1968; Prattis 1973).

This perspective accounts well for some aspect of poor villagers' economic decision-making - notably, in the context of their non-accumulatory behaviours (section 5.2). However, it is less potent in the context of what was referred to in the previous chapter as 'recklessness' (section 5.3). On a number of occasions, the financial circumstances in which poor people operated were apparently so precarious that their economic decisions could not be explained by reference to a trade-off between maximising economic and noneconomic factors. In other words, there comes a point when the 'rational' pursuit of, say, freedom as opposed to financial returns, is indistinguishable from reckless (hence, 'irrational') economic behaviours; specific examples of this were outlined in the previous chapter (section 5.3).

6.3 Dearth-Avoidance Versus Profit-Maximisation

Scott (1976) characterises the peasant as typically a dearth-avoider rather than a profit-maximiser:

> subsistence-orientated peasants typically prefer to avoid economic disaster rather than take risks to maximise their average incomes (Scott 1976:vii).

Given this, he suggests, a number of points follow. Institutional patterns in pre-capitalist agrarian communities are explicable in the light of this basic need for a guaranteed minimum, including technical, moral and social arrangements of such societies by which all village families are guaranteed a minimum level of subsistence. The threat to these is from the penetration of the village community by state and capital. His characterisation of the peasantry elucidates conventional systems of stratification. The status system is grounded not in differences of income, but in differences of levels of economic security. Exploitation is relative not to the amount extracted, but to the extent to which processes of extraction threaten dearth. Major peasant rebellions are elucidated. A 'norm of reciprocity' and 'right to subsistence' underpins the peasant notion of social justice.

Some of the apparently 'irrational' economic behaviours of the poor reported in the previous chapter are explicable in the light of Scott's characterisation of the peasantry. For example, reference has been made to the tendency for poor villagers to perceive of assets not as

investment capital, but rather to see assets as, for example, collateral against future loans. This was said to be in contrast to the attitude of the rich (chapter five, section 5.2). However, perhaps these poor villagers were pursuing 'rational' strategies of dearth-avoidance in preference to taking the kind of risks entailed by attempts to maximise returns. Especially pertinent here are the occasions when poor villagers described their detailed plans to 'get rich', with an enthusiasm that belied their apparent disinclination to implement these. Poor people wanted to get rich - but they wanted to avoid dearth more than this.

However, again, this point can only account for certain of the behaviours of poor people. It is most pertinent to the non-accumulatory decisions typical of the poor (section 5.2). A number of data presented in the previous chapter suggest that a good deal of the economic decisions typical of the poor were dearth-threatening, notably in the context of household borrowing (section 5.3).

6.4 Economic Behaviour and Everyday Resistance

Some other of the economic decisions peculiar to the poor are explicable as "everyday forms of peasant resistance" (Scott 1985; Scott and Kerkvliet 1986):

> Most of the forms this struggle takes stop well short of collective outright defiance. Here I have in mind the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance,

> slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth (Scott 1985:29).

Undoubtedly, some of what might pass as 'irrational' economic behaviour was grounded in a quiet, but aggressive, response to their situation by the poor. For example, one of the most volatile situations which frequently arose in the village was when a rich creditor knew that a poor debtor had acquired the means to pay off a debt, but continued to refuse to do so. Some of the poor people who did not pay back the entrepreneur cited in the previous chapter who made 10-20,000 baat available as interest-free loans, did just this (section 5.3). Similarly, one of the few ways the poor could 'retaliate' was to decline offers of work around the village when the employer in question was known to be desperate for labour. During the sugar-cane harvest, for example, it was known that some growers were in trouble because the season was drawing to a close and their quota heads were having difficulty finding harvesters. The refusal on the part of village labourers to cut sugar-cane starts to make sense in the light of this (section 5.2). Likewise, it was not uncommon for wealthy landowners to be inconvenienced by renters. As described in the previous chapter (section 5.2), landowners frequently complained that renters were not keeping their side of the bargain by not working the land properly and therefore being unable to pay the rent price. Some landowners explicitly stated that they sold land rather than rent it because of such problems.

Resistance of this kind is grounded in relations of

hostility, anger, resentment and antagonism between rich and poor villagers, which are brought into focus in the next chapter (sections 7.2 and 7.3). The point will be made there that the antagonism between the rich and the poor (section 7.2) is offset by other, contradictory themes in villagers' discourse (section 7.3).

6.5 The Perceived Consequences of Economic Decisions

If it were the case that poor economic agents perceived of their environment as essentially benign, then they may well persist in anti-accumulatory and even reckless economic decision-making. Perhaps the poor felt it did not much matter how they behaved because they would always get away with it in the end.

Data pertaining to the real and perceived consequences of poor villagers' forms of economic behaviours are complex. On the one hand, the natural and social environments were seen to be less benign than in the past. A common topic of conversation, particularly amongst the poor, was of how little food is freely available in the village as compared to the 'old days'. They rued the days when the river flooded the village annually and teemed with fish, crabs, shrimps, and other food sources. Previously, one could wander the village and help oneself to fruit, vegetables, and so on; nowadays, all land is owned, crop production is more specialised, and produce is destined for markets. Forest animals, once a major food source, had

disappeared with the forest itself. Poor people frequently mentioned how difficult it is to find food these days - one has to find money first, and the food is invariably expensive (see chapter two, section 2.8).

Without wanting to exaggerate the extent to which Saentor had ever been a closed corporate community (Nidhi 1988; Kemp 1988; Turton 1989:89), poor villagers were clearly aware that supposedly traditional social safety nets do not exist in today's village. Informants found the idea that rich people help the poor laughable. The poor vociferously criticised the rich for not helping them out even when the poor person in question was a close relative. I was repeatedly told that the only kind of 'help' the poor could expect from the rich consists of loans involving collateral and interest.

Relatedly, there were examples of villagers whose economic behaviours precipitated significant economic decline. The house I rented during the fieldwork was available because the owners had sunk into such dire financial straits that they were forced to leave Saentor. Though once prosperous, they were said to have squandered their assets (including large landholdings) principally by what was referred to as tid len (gambling 'addiction'). An ongoing saga during the fieldwork was whether, and when, the bank was going to seize the house as collateral on unpaid loans of around 80,000 baat. The story of this household was well known in the community. Equally well known were the examples of the ongoing economic decline of

certain households due to precipitous economic behaviours. For example, the high profile decline of the village headperson, who was heading calamitously toward economic ruin due to gambling, not working his land, and so on, was often a topic of conversation.

These data suggest that poorer economic agents were operating in an environment in which 'traditional' social and natural safety nets were seen to have disappeared. However, they <u>did</u> perceive of their environment as 'benign' in another, new sense. Poor villagers were not maximising incomes and minimising outgoings. Hence, there was a lot of 'slack' to be taken up in times of difficulty. Poor villagers knew that there were a number of (non-'traditional') strategies available which would help them keep their heads above water, both in terms of increasing incomes and reducing expenditure. It should be borne in mind during this discussion that Saentor was a relatively prosperous Thai village.

For one thing, there was a great diversity of ways in which poor villagers could make money if they really had to. There was no shortage of paid work, including agricultural and other forms of labouring around the village, work outside of the village in Bangkok or the provincial centres, and permanent and temporary jobs in local agribusiness and light industry (sugar processing factories, chopstick factories, paper mills, and so on). A number of poorer households had an offspring who worked away (as a beautician, car mechanic, tailor, etc.) and sent

money home. Villagers could undertake a number of other money-making ventures. These included small-scale, ad hoc enterprises such as noodle stalls and other snacks sold in the village, and buying clothes from Thaarua to resell at a small profit in Saentor. Some villagers took on short term piece-work (e.g., assembling arrangements of plastic flowers).

A good example of the spare cash villagers could find when absolutely necessary occurred during my exit from the fieldsite. Certain of the richer villagers took it upon themselves to demand that Thai hospitality should extend right up to our last moments in the village. To our great embarrassment, the villagers were 'invited' to give us gifts of money. Even the poorest of households would insist we took the 30 baat, 50 baat, even 100 baat which they thrust in our hands. Similarly, I was repeatedly struck by the fact that even the poorest villagers could afford to spend money on apparently minor medical problems, often involving relatively expensive purchases at private clinics in preference to free treatment at the village medical centre.

Likewise, the sheer diversity of credit sources meant that even the landless could expect to get cash from somewhere when they were desperate, even if it were only to pay off debts elsewhere (see chapter four, section 4.2). Also, it was difficult to see what rich lenders could do to punish recalcitrant borrowers apart from waa (scold and criticise them in the village). The poor often had no

substantial collateral to seize and only the most thick-skinned lender would incur the wrath of borrowers by suing them at the District Office. It was common for lenders to effectively write off a debt which borrowers could not or did not repay (though they often swore they would never lend again).

Poor villagers were clearly not minimising expenditure. The cost of merely surviving in Saentor was low. They knew that in times of real crisis there were straightforward ways in which they could reduce outgoings. They saw the gap between their present situation and that of maximum incomes and minimum expenditure. Relatedly, whilst it is true that natural and social safety nets were not very evident, they existed to some extent. Some poor people could rely on substantial help from some of their rich relatives and friends; and for many of the poor, the river continued to be a source of free food, their kitchen gardens helped reduce outgoings, they reared chickens around their houses, and so on.

This argument that poorer villagers perceived of their environment as essentially benign (albeit in a non-'traditional' sense) should be put in the context of a prominent theme in relevant literature: namely, the marked and increasing 'vulnerability' and 'precariousness' experienced by poor villagers, where this is interpreted in terms of control over local resources necessary for production and reproduction. Reference to the "increasing economic vulnerability among farmers already close to the

margins of economic survival" (Bruneau 1984:356) is typical, and not only with reference to Thailand's poorer regions (namely, the North, Bruneau's study site, and the North-East). The point of chapters three and four above is that ongoing local processes in Saentor are counter-participatory. In other words, the poor have an increasingly tenuous grip on local resources: both decision-making resources, and productive and reproductive resources such as land, credit and marketing facilities.

It may appear that the two points are contradictory: the assertion that poor villagers perceived of their environment as essentially benign is apparently incompatible with their increasing vulnerability vis-a-vis their control over local productive resources. However, the two points are, in fact, compatible. On the one hand, the consensus that the poor are experiencing increasing vulnerability refers to processes of increasing exclusion from control of local resources. The argument in the present section is about catastrophe and dearth. For Saentor's poor, there was marked and increasing vulnerability (in the sense of increasing exclusion from control of local resources), whilst on the other hand poor villagers were not (and did not perceive of themselves) as thereby threatened by catastrophe. To put the point bluntly, the poor knew that they could lose all their assets such as land and still survive.

There were no examples of people falling into real dearth. The case of the owners of the house I rented was

very rare; and whilst it was true that they had been forced to live out of the village, they continued to enjoy quite comfortable lives because a number of their offspring had well paid jobs. The son of this household was a government official and sarawat kamnan (one of the chief assistants to the kamnan), for example. Whilst the incidence of landlessness was increasing, the landless knew they would not starve. Arguably, the economic decisions of poorer villagers were explicable in terms of their perception of an environment which was benign in a non-'traditional' sense.

6.6 Belief Sets Regarding Wealth Status

One of the reasons for the differences in the patterns of economic behaviours typical of rich versus poor villagers reported in the previous chapter, is that poor villagers constructed a belief set about stratification which was different to that constructed by the wealthy. Informants' beliefs regarding the causes of household economic status and the possibility of economic mobility were pursued by participant-observation, data from which were supported by responses to questions K(ii)-(v) of survey 1 (see appendix one). The important finding is a sharp contrast between those beliefs held by the majority of villagers (i.e., poor villagers and middle ranking villagers), and those held by a minority which consisted principally of the wealthy.

Explanations of differentiation: Causes of

stratification were suggested by villagers during informal conversations, and in answer to question K(ii) on survey 1 (namely: "Why are some people richer and some people poorer?" - see appendix one). The majority of comments during conversations on this issue implied non-judgemental accounts of the causes of stratification. Poor and middle ranking villagers explained wealth status differentials in terms of some variation on the theme of differential inheritance. They believed that people are wealthy now because they inherited substantial amounts, and poor because some parents had little or nothing to give. Variations on this theme include references to household size and the wisdom of ancestors who had cultivated large tracts of the forest in the past. Some informants mentioned inheritance and large incomes from good jobs (especially as government officials) and poor people's inability to save capital because of the low wages for agricultural labour. Others referred to the wealth of one's spouse: people were rich or poor depending on whether they married a rich or poor person. Of the 60 respondents to survey 1, 41 answered question K(ii) along similar lines (see appendix one). Often, explanations of this kind were accompanied by a tone of sympathy for the poor.

However, an equally consistent theme amongst a minority of respondents involved highly judgemental explanations of stratification in critical tones. These include claims that the poor are poor because they are "lazy": notably, they stop work once they have enough money

for their immediate needs. They lack commitment. They are incapable of handling money sensibly: for example they gamble and drank whisky. They are generally wasteful of assets. For example, they inherit some land, or agree to rent some, but then do not work it. They are too short-sighted to realise whatever ambition they have. The converse of such qualities were given as explanations of rich villagers' wealth. With the exception of a very small number of miscellaneous cases (e.g., the kamnan and individuals of highly ambiguous economic status), these beliefs were espoused by rich villagers. Explanations of the status of the wealthy which contained criticisms (such as, "they are rich because they are stingy", or, "the wealthy exploit the rest of the village") were not made in this context.

Incidentally, an anomaly in the villagers' comments emerges at this point. The consensus in the village was that the principal reward from merit is great wealth in the next life. This was stated on innumerable occasions. However, almost without exception, when villagers were asked to explain present wealth differentials, they did not mention merit acquired in previous lives. In other words, people said they make merit now in order to be rich in future lives, but did not explain people's present economic status by reference to merit made in previous lives.

In part, this anomaly was clarified by conversations late in the fieldwork. Firstly, villagers made the distinction between those people whose wealth was clearly

linked to 'concrete' explanations (such as receiving a large inheritance or gambling excessively), and those whose status was more of a mystery (e.g., the kind of farmer who has inherited assets and works hard, but suffers persistent bad fortune and remains poor). Villagers were likely to invoke the doctrine of merit in the latter case but not the former. Relatedly, the two kinds of explanations operate on different levels. So, for example, a woman is rich because she married a wealthy husband, and she is rich because she had a sufficient store of merit to warrant the good fortune to marry a wealthy man. In everyday conversations, it was the first level explanation that was quoted - unless the conversation was specifically about the kind of rewards one could expect for having made considerable merit.

Another important explanation of this anomaly is that, as will come clear in the next chapter, poor villagers wanted to criticise the rich: this would have been made more difficult if they had to admit to the fact that the rich earned their present high economic status by acts which had improved their store of merit. Finally, it was simply felt to be inappropriate to dwell on one's own, or others', store of merit.

Upward mobility: poor to rich: Perceptions of upward mobility in the sense of the poor becoming rich were pursued during informal conversations and in question K(iii) on survey 1 (namely: "What should the poor do to get richer?" - see appendix one). Poor and middle ranking

informants claimed that it was hard or impossible for the poor to become rich. Typically, they explained that the poor rap caang (take agricultural labouring work around the village) and hence tham wan kin wan (work a day and spend money earned the same day). They are, therefore, unable to save capital. Of the 60 respondents to survey 1, 43 answered question K(iii) along these lines (see appendix one). Frequently, people ruefully suggested that "the only thing the poor can do to get richer, is the lottery". These villagers also did not perceive of the possibility of downward mobility. A few informants mentioned that the poor could get richer, without suggesting (or even denying) that they could get rich. These tended to suggest strategies which the poor could, and occasionally did, undertake, such as find land to rent and well paid employment. A small minority of informants and respondents made a distinction between the landed and the landless poor in this context.

However, a minority of predominantly rich villagers claimed that it was easy for the poor to become rich, and the fault lay with the poor for not having achieved this: they failed to improve their lot in life because they are lazy, incapable of saving money, not committed, and so on. These informants tended to be the same people who gave judgemental explanations of wealth differentials. They also tended to stress the possibility of mobility in both directions and not just from poor to rich. Many of them called on personal experiences of upward mobility, usually

with reference to the diligence of their parents.

Upward mobility: rich to richer: Perceptions of upward mobility in the sense of the rich becoming richer were explored during informal conversations and in question K(iv) of survey 1 (namely: "What can the rich do to get richer?" - see appendix one). Responses to K(iv) on survey 1 were very uniform. Only 2 of the 60 respondents denied that it was easy for the rich to get richer (one because the rich "gamble too much", and the other because inflationary price rises make it impossible for anyone to get rich). However, there were different views on how the rich get richer. Poor and middle ranking villagers simply cited the kinds of activities wealthy villagers could be seen to be undertaking in the village. Interestingly, "lend money and collect interest and/or seize collateral" figured in one-third of responses to the survey, reflecting the significance of inter-household borrowing in the village as a source of increased differentiation. Other points include: invest capital (e.g., by buying more land), farm inherited land and sell the produce, rent land out and collect the rent price, put money in the bank to get interest, and sell building sand to contractors. Some respondents answered explicitly in terms of 'money makes money': i.e., the rich will inevitably get richer, almost as matter of course.

By contrast, the wealthy themselves stressed that the rich could only get richer because of certain attitudes and qualities they possessed. These include being sensible

with money, being diligent, being committed and dedicated, and so on. Downward mobility always threatened, and was the fate of those who lack such qualities.

Examples of upward mobility: During informal conversations and in responses to questions K(v) on survey 1 (namely: "Do you know anyone who was poor and is now rich? If so, how did they achieve this and why do others not follow suit?" - see appendix one), informants were given the opportunity to further reveal their beliefs regarding mobility, by giving particular examples of households which had moved up the economic scale.

Out of 60 respondents to survey 1, 20 claimed never to have witnessed a poor person become rich. Of the remaining 40, at least twelve explanations of how the person(s) in question achieved this were cited. Similarly, at least nine different explanations of why others do not follow suit were suggested. This diversity in responses was reflected in more informal conversations.

However, again, comments made during informal conversations and the responses to the survey question ranged from the judgemental to the non-judgemental. A typical example of the former is: the poor person(s) in question achieved increased wealth by hard work and good sense, and the poor do not follow suit because of lack of commitment, laziness and silliness with money. A typical example of the latter is: people become rich when their children grow up and can earn money themselves; the poor cannot follow suit because there are too few good jobs

around. Wealthier villagers tended to cite the former type of explanation. Poorer villagers tended to cite the latter.

Data presented in this section suggest that two sets of beliefs with regard to economic status and mobility were constructed in Saentor. The majority opinion, held predominantly by poor and middle ranking villagers, was that 'external' reasons (usually inheritance) explain wealth differentials. It is hard or impossible for the poor to become rich. The rich become richer because 'money makes money'. There are no examples of poor people becoming rich - or, if there are, the upward mobility of the poor person(s) in question was due to 'concrete' factors, such as offspring reaching working age.

The minority opinion, held typically by Saentor's richest households, claimed that it is personal qualities which explain relative economic success. It is possible (indeed, easy) for the poor to get rich, and they fail to do so because of their poor personal qualities. The rich become richer because of their positive personal attributes. The upward mobility of specific poor people is due to their commendable personal qualities. In short, the richest people believed you get what you deserve, whereas the poor believed you get what you are given.

Turton once suggested that:

> In so far as new categories of wealth and status are recognised in the village, their dividing lines are blurred by real and false perceptions of mobility between them (Turton 1976:291).

Objective 'reality' regarding economic status and mobility

in Saentor was highly complex. It was hard to see how the poor (especially the landless) could get rich. Some of the richest people in the village used to be poor. Most poor people did not become rich. People's status depended largely on circumstances outside of their control (e.g., on inheritance). Personal qualities (such as diligence, thriftiness, laziness, and so on) sometimes clearly played a part. Some rich people became poor, but most did not. And so on. Such a diversity of 'facts' supported a number of positions on the interconnected issues of the causes of relative wealth status and economic mobility. Rich and poor drew on different, even contradictory elements of this confused 'reality' to create their different sets of beliefs.

In part, this is predictable. Some social facts pertained more to one or another economic status group. For example, most of the wealthy could draw on personal experiences of self-motivated mobility. Certain of the richest villagers had 'pulled themselves up by their bootlaces', for example by working abroad for a few years and returning with capital to invest. Others could refer to the diligence and thriftiness of their parents. Almost all the wealthy villagers could at least refer to their grandparents, whose foresight in clearing and registering large tracts of the forest secured prosperity up until the present. By contrast, most poor peoples' direct experience was of circumstances beyond their control determining their present lot in life.

The apparently 'irrational' economic decisions which were characteristic of poor villagers was in part grounded in a fatalism with regard economic status (past, present and future) which undercuts 'rational' forms of economic behaviour. This point should be related to what is often cited as an element of Thai peasant culture, namely, that Thai peasants in general have a fatalistic Weltanschauung due to their adherence to Theravada Buddhism:

> Buddhism.....makes the Thai farmer passive and fatalistic. He cannot compete in an economic situation and he accepts tragedy as inevitable (Kaufman 1960:210).

Data from Saentor suggest that Kaufman's comment is now quite inappropriate as a characterisation of Thai villagers in general. The richest stratum of villagers (and some of their neighbours) were anything but passive and fatalistic, they competed aggressively in the economic arena, and they felt that tragedy or success were of one's own making. The crucial point is that Kaufman's comment does still typically apply to Saentor's non-elite strata. The poor believed that households are blown by the vagaries of the economic wind; and one's own everyday economic decisions and behaviour is deemed to be largely irrelevant.

6.7 The Moral Correlates to Relative Economic Status

Poor Saentorians did not perceive of 'rich' and 'poor' as mere economic categories. They were moral categories, too, in the sense that they related to a range of moral qualities. For the poor, 'the rich' referred to a certain

moral stereotype, namely, a person who pursued 'logical' strategies of accumulation. By contrast, 'the poor' referred to someone who adhered to a 'traditional' morality. The poor took the high moral ground with their frequent references to the moral correlates to economic status. Repeatedly, they would conclude anecdotes or repeat formulas with summary statements like, "khon ruay khaw baep nan" (that's what the rich are like) and, "khon con tham yaangnan" (that's how the poor do things).

The moral stereotype of the rich created by the poor includes reference to their unhealthy obsession with money (literally, in the case of the oft-cited observation that "the rich are too tight to eat"). 'Rich people' refuse to recognise the 'legitimate' claims of both kin and poor neighbours on their wealth. They are not 'fun' because they refuse to spend money 'partying' or pay thiaw ('going around' looking for fun). They are never free from work. They are ying (arrogant, proud, haughty) toward their less fortunate neighbours. The way wealth was earned was also considered to be relevant. Renting land out and lending to neighbours at high rates of interest were condemned, for example. By contrast, the stereotypical poor person is good natured, kind-hearted and generous with the little they have; they stress freedom and comfort and fun, and are sympathetic toward their kinsfolk and fellow villagers. They are relatively unconcerned by money.

Poor people felt that the pursuit of strategies of upward mobility or subsistence security was not worth it

because of the high moral costs incurred. In trying to become rich, or even less poor, one would have to stop behaving like 'the poor' and start behaving like 'the rich'. This moral pressure played itself out in a variety of ways. It pre-empted poor people's pursuit of strategies which (as well they knew) could improve their lot: for example, being seen to save rather than fritter cash, or appearing overly concerned with money by working more than was necessary, would incite moral condemnation. Similarly, it committed the poor to strategies of 'counter-mobility'. In moral terms, poor people could not, for example, afford to ignore appeals for loans by poor relations or even poor neighbours, since to respond is to be '<u>khon con</u>' (a poor/good person) and to not respond is to be '<u>khon ruay</u>' (a rich/bad person).

A case study will elucidate the point. A single, thirty-two year old man wanted to save his extra income from a season in the sugar factory for what he foresaw as a lonely old age. Alongside the desire to bank the money were two other pressures. Firstly, he was very upset when he was vehemently scolded by poor friends and neighbours for being <u>khii niaw</u> (stingy - the classic epithet used by the poor to berate 'the rich') because he was known to want to save the money. On the other hand, he knew that if he resisted that pressure and banked the money, his relatives would request loans from him which he would not feel he could refuse. In a direct attempt to avoid this, he arranged for the bank to not issue a bank book in case

someone found it and realised he had money to lend. This dilemma was that felt to some extent by all poor people: the dilemma between pursuing 'rational' economic strategies and the moral costs of doing so.

One element of village culture exacerbated this feature. The notion of waa was crucial to the villagers. 'Waa' means to scold, criticise or speak disparagingly of someone, usually covertly. Villagers' behaviour was hugely affected by the need to avoid waa. Repeatedly, informants would explain that they did so-and-so or refrained from so-and-so because "khaw ca waa" (people will waa). People also said that they did things despite the fact that people would waa, and that it was all right that I did so-and-so: "no-one will waa". Moral stereotyping and its effects on behaviour took place in this atmosphere of great concern over the response by others to ones actions.

It was precisely in order to comply with their moral stereotypes that some poor informants in some contexts insisted on presenting themselves as worse off than they in fact were. Typically, poor people would claim, for example, that money from the sale of land was all used up when in fact there was still some left in the bank, that the wages they received for extraordinary jobs around the village were less than they were, and that the income from their cottage industries was lower than it was. Poor villagers denied that other households were poor, or that they there were as poor as they themselves were. On numerous occasions, and not for reasons that were obvious

at the time, poor people insisted they were the poorest in the village. And, as noted in the previous chapter, there was the tendency for certain at least of the poorer villagers to persistently present themselves as yaak con (poor) even when the situation did not seem to warrant it (section 5.1). All of these are examples of poor people wanting to be seen to be poor precisely because they thereby complied closely to the moral identity they felt comfortable with.

Reference will be made in the following chapter to one feature of the moral stereotyping undertaken by the poor, namely, poor people's claim that 'the poor' are "better Buddhists and more interested in making merit" than are 'the rich' (see section 7.5). Part of the moral stereotype poor people created for themselves was that they, as opposed to 'the rich', were the true custodians of traditional village religion. It is interesting to speculate on the effect that this particular aspect of their ideology may have had on their economic behaviours.

The main way the villagers made merit was by donating assets, including the money donated during festivals, financial donations to the temple, food to the monks in the early morning, and gifts of land to the temple. On the one hand, the poor to some extent rewrote, or reorientated, the doctrine of merit to suit their circumstances. The poor (as opposed to the rich) emphasised that one's heart, state of mind and attitude - as opposed to what was actually given - were important in determining the value of merit-

making activities, and that the amount of merit one acquires is not proportional to the size of donations. The poor thereby validated their merit-making activities, which necessarily involved relatively small donations. However, this was over-ridden by the general understanding that the amount one gave ought to be proportional to the amount one had available to give. So, if poor households were to become substantially more wealthy, and in order to comply with the moral stereotype for a 'poor person', a large proportion of this wealth would simply be spent on more merit-making. In this sense, the moral stereotypes the poor created, and which to some extent they felt obliged to enact, motivated against the pursuit of 'rational' economic strategies. A disincentive for the poor to pursue upward mobility was that it would entail more spending on making merit which was not required so long as they remained poor.

Secondly, their contention that they were the better Buddhists committed the poor to forms of income expenditure which they could ill afford, despite their attempt to reorientate the doctrine of merit-making away from the amount donated and toward the attitude and feelings of the donor. For example, on moral grounds they felt obliged to attend festivals and ceremonies which almost invariably had merit-making components to them (such as house-warming ceremonies, ordination festivals, funerals, and remembrance days for deceased relatives) - although, obviously, attendance was also in part grounded in the fact that such events were fun and enjoyable. There were fixed 'entrance

fees' (or contributions) paid by villagers who attended some of these. The host recorded the amount each guest payed on attending the ceremony (khian banchii: to write the account), usually by asking a respected, elderly man to write down contributions paid by the guests. The standard 'fee' was 100 baat. However, this varied because each time two parties reciprocated attendance at the ceremonies organised by the other, the contribution rose. Villagers, in describing the system, referred to this increase as dook bia (interest - the same word as used for interest on loans), and used the analogy of aw raeng (reciprocal labour exchange). Whilst all guests were committed to this fixed contribution, the poor - whose moral ideology required they attend such functions - could least afford it. This is hugely ironic in the light of the oft-made claim that in the traditional corporate village, the main system of redistribution was the merit-making activities of the rich during communal events:

> temple ceremonies were important village functions which had a levelling effect on social inequalities through their use as a means to redistribute food and other goods to the poorer members of the village. Wealthier members of the community were called upon to contribute disproportionately as a form of merit-making (Douglass 1984:32).

Indeed, it is worth pausing to consider this well-established claim that villagers' merit-making operates as a pressure against unequal accumulation and toward economic egalitarianism, at least in the supposedly traditional, pre-capitalist village. The question divides into two issues. Firstly, is the doctrine of merit a mechanism of

equalisation of economic status, because the rich and poor donate proportionate to their assets? Secondly, is the doctrine of merit a mechanism of redistribution of wealth, in the sense of wealth being passed, via merit-making institutions and activities, from the rich to the poor?

To take the latter first, it was difficult to see how merit-making was a redistributive process at all in Saentor. Irrespective of who gave how much in making merit, there was no process whereby funds donated ended up in the hands of poor villagers. There was no mechanism whereby the donations villagers made to make merit (feeding monks in the early morning, giving money and other materials to maintain and improve the temple, giving monks food, money, etc., during ceremonies, and so on) were redistributed in any way.

One possible exception to this is the system of loans extended by the temple to the poor villagers (see chapter four, section 4.2 and chapter five, section 5.1). However, interest was charged on these, albeit lower than that charged elsewhere. Indeed, many borrowers saw loans from the temple as a way of making merit in the form of 'donating' this interest, confirming that these were in no sense disguised handouts from the rich to the poor. Besides, the funds were not unambiguously provided by rich villagers. Another possible exception is that monks often succeeded in accumulating wealth during their time in the temple. The point is made in chapter seven that this was a source of some resentment on the part of the laity

(section 7.7). However, poor village males did not usually become monks in order to secure financial gain: the sacrifice in terms of life-style and time was too great.

Nor was merit-making an equaliser of households' economic status. Whatever the traditions, there was not a clear correlation between the amount households donated in making merit and their economic status. A number of factors other than economic status determined expenditure. For example, it was village practice that a monk was supported by his family. One monk who had no kin in Saentor had to change temples during the fieldwork year because he was not being fed. Parents from outside the village who sent their sons to Saentor's temple hired a village family to feed them during their spell in the monkhood. So, the very regular donations households made were determined largely by whether there was a household member in the monkhood at the time. Likewise, some villagers were simply tid tham bun ('addicted' to merit-making), and household economic status was irrelevant to this. As noted the 'entrance fee' to religious ceremonies was fixed and there were plenty of noneconomic factors determining expenditure on personal festivals such as ordination ceremonies, funerals, and so on (see chapter seven, section 7.4). Observational evidence suggests that there was no differential between rich and poor villagers in terms of the amount of food, drink, etc., they provided during big ceremonies.

Even if there were some cases of rich households

giving more to make merit than the poor, this was not a process of equalisation. Rich households were not expected to give so much that they became poor. The changes in the way merit is made is important here. For example, straightforward cash donations are now common. The important thing about cash is that it can be easily and accurately quantified; unlike, for example, large donations of rice, whose value to the donor will depend in part on unknown factors such as the success of the next harvest. It is easier for donors to give large amounts of cash which they can be sure they can afford and which will not precipitate economic decline. One rich villager, for example, gave an enormous donation of 80,000 baat to the temple during the fieldwork to help build a new gate. Since this is a specific cash donation, she could calculate whether or not she could afford it. There was never the suggestion that this villager had made herself poor by donating the money. Likewise, another woman won the lottery during the fieldwork. Whilst it is true that she spent a very large proportion of her winnings making merit, she also bought a new motor cycle and paid off a sizeable debt at the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative. The only cases of rich households' economic status being affected by merit-making were highly idiosyncratic: for example, where the household head had become seriously and chronically ill and merit-making was believed to be the only cure.

Whilst the focus here is on the way moral stereotyping

of 'rich' and 'poor' by the poor constrains their economic decisions, it should be noted that 'rich' and 'poor' were moral as well as economic categories not only for the poor villagers. They were so for the wealthy, too. As noted in the previous chapter (section 5.1), there was a tendency for the rich to 'play down' (but not deny) stratification in their community. They were noticeably more reticent about admitting they were rich than the poor were about saying they were poor. Given this, the rich indulged in moral stereotyping of 'the poor' to a lesser extent, preferring to restrict their comments to specific protagonists in specific dramas. For example, it was relatively rare for wealthy villagers to make comments like, "khon con tham....." (the poor do this or that) or to end anecdotes with, "that is typical of poor people". Poor villagers frequently made equivalent statements about khon ruay ('rich people'). Nevertheless, by implication, and especially in the context of eliciting rich villagers' belief set regarding stratification and mobility (see previous section), the rich constructed the stereotype of 'the poor' as lazy, wasteful, stupid with money, irresponsible, unambitious and lacking commitment, short-sighted and untrustworthy - the opposite to all that typified themselves.

Clearly, these moral stereotypes and the patterns of economic behaviour described in chapter five (sections 5.2 and 5.3) fed into one another. Whilst everyone perceived of the differences in economic related behaviours that were

discernible in the village, the 'moral superstructure' epiphenomenal on these depended on the perspective one adopts - that of the rich or that of the poor. For example, the moral correlates to economic status from the perspective of the rich compelled rich people to bank money in spite of the requests from their poor neighbours for loans, because it was wise and thrifty and sensible to do so. The moral correlates to economic status from the perspective of the poor compelled the poor to fritter away their wages. When the poor saw wealthy villagers behave in this way, their stereotype of 'the rich' as "stingy" was re-confirmed. When rich people saw poor people fritter away their wages, their perception of 'the poor' as "wasteful" was reinforced. In each case, the party in question was both complying with their own version of the moral correlates to economic status, the moral dictates laid down for their own behaviour; whilst at the same time reinforcing the stereotypes created by 'the opposition'.

6.8 Concluding Remarks

In chapter two, the argument that rural development in Thailand consists primarily of the integration of 'the village' into wider capitalist and state structures, is reviewed. The net consequence of this for the social formation is said to be stratification in terms of emergent differentials in household's economic circumstances. This theme is continued in chapters three and four by reference

to the ongoing processes of differentiation, as revealed by a single village study. In chapters five and six, the causes of stratification are pursued on a different 'level'. In chapter five, data were presented which suggest that poor villagers operate by reference to distinctive economic attitudes which commit them to non-accumulatory and even reckless economic behaviour; in the present chapter, some explanations of this have been suggested. Poor villagers' economic attitudes, behaviours and decisions are informed by various aspects of their system of beliefs and values. The resultant pattern of economic related behaviour is typified by non-accumulatory, and even dearth-threatening, decisions. By contrast, wealthy villagers operate much like the stereotypical 'rational economic person', and middle ranking villagers tended to be economically quiescent. The implication of these data is that differentiation is exacerbated by the kinds of economic decisions implied by the system of beliefs and values constructed by each strata of villagers.

Data presented here are intended to pursue a recurrent theme in the literature, namely, the response on the part of the poor to their predicament. A well-established assumption made in much of the relevant literature (and argued for in this thesis) is that the transformation of the Thai countryside has increased the vulnerability of a substantial proportion of the peasantry, in terms of their increasingly precarious situation <u>vis-a-vis</u> access to local resources (chapters two, three and four). Given this, much

research is focused on the responses on the part of poorer villagers to their increasingly vulnerable economic situation. These are said to include 'survival strategies' such as out-migration, cottage industries, cash borrowing and the like (Scott 1976; Douglass 1984:103-151; Hirsch 1987:264-279). Data presented in this and the previous chapter throw new light on this theme. The focus here is on the constraints on those responses which are more subtle than straightforward resource shortage. The influence of their system of values and beliefs pervades poor villagers' economic lives in a way which undercuts 'rational' responses to their predicament.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SOCIAL IDENTITIES, SOCIAL RELATIONS AND DIFFERENTIATION

Research into the transformation of the Thai peasantry often appears to confuse and conflate economic and social phenomena. Typically, writers make vague references to "socio-economic classes", "social stratification", "class formation", and so on, when in fact, only economic processes (such as the increased concentration of control of means and instruments of production, the effect of unequal credit relations, and systems of surplus extraction) are really relevant to their analyses. One of the notable exceptions to this is Turton's explicit concern with "the extent to which social relations may have been transformed" in stratified rural Thai economies (Turton 1976:268). An important premise to this thesis is that the economic and the social aspects of the transformation of the peasantry should not be confused. There is nothing inevitable about the effect of intra-village differentiation at the social level (Rosenfeld 1951). A major research task is to elucidate the consequences of stratification for social identities and relationships. What is the effect of increased intra-village wealth status differentials on the way villagers identify themselves and each other? To what extent and in what ways does differentiation inform social relations?

7.1 Economic Stratification and the 'Class Hypothesis'

One framework within which the effect of stratification on social relations can be considered, is the 'class hypothesis'. This would seem to be an appropriate starting point for a debate on the effect of stratification on social relations in the village. In Saentor, there were marked economic status differentials (chapter two) which can be seen to be increasing (chapters three, four, five and six) and of which there was a shared and clear perception (chapter five, section 5.1). Given this, one could expect the emergence of class identities and class consciousness, and that relations between villagers are informed by these. Does stratification inform villagers' social identities and relationships? Did people identify themselves and each other on the basis of a recognition of relative economic status and a shared social and economic experiences? was there a growing consciousness, amongst villagers of comparable wealth status, of themselves and others as a distinct class? On the other hand, was there a distinctive style of interaction between economic agents of the same, and of different, economic status? were social relations grounded in a consciousness of class?

Turton (1976) addresses directly the issue of whether intra-village differentiation gave rise to class based antagonism in his Northern Thai village study site. He looks at the changing types, causes, and means of

settlement, of disputes between villagers:

> these factors may be seen to some extent as a not yet fully coherent expression of class conflict in a transitional moment in a wider historical shift from a precapitalist to a capitalist mode of production (Turton 1976:285).

He suggests, for example, the possibility that cattle theft "expresses an element of class antagonism within the peasantry" (ibid.), and that an irrigation dispute (a small group of entrepreneurs cut a diversion canal upstream of the traditional irrigation canal in order to open up a large cash-crop fruit plantation) had overtones of "open class antagonism" (ibid.:287). With regard to new types of dispute settlements, all recorded cases of the revenge physical destruction of property - "a poor man's mode of redress, or mode of resentment" (ibid.:291) - were against "rich peasants", and several were a direct retaliation against meanness or the refusal to comply with traditional requests. Reference is also made to the self-help associations wealthier villagers formed in response to the threat of theft of their cattle; though Turton does not explicitly refer to this as class action, he does claim that the wealthiest villagers "can be seen to be beginning to constitute and reproduce themselves as a class" (ibid.:293). These examples are taken to be evidence of latent conflict or implicit expressions of differences of interest between peasant classes.

In a similar vein, Bruneau looks at the transformations underlying the "class struggle within the very heart of the peasantry" (Bruneau 1984:343) which gave

rise to civil unrest in Thailand between 1973-1976. He concludes that:

> A process of disintegration of the rural community is going on with strong antagonism between the very small owners, share-croppers and landless peasants on the one hand, and the village elite on the other. The class struggle between these poor and rich peasants became obvious during the agrarian conflicts of the period 1973-76 (ibid.:357).

However, going back to Turton, his earlier conclusions reveal a cautionary note. He describes his examples of "class conflict" as,

> to some extent, kinds of sub-political action, as expressions of new structural alignments and contradictions and antagonisms between them, as forms of ideological practices pre-figuring more developed, more apposite forms of class conflict (Turton 1976:292).

Specifically, he admits that we are dealing with "actions whose manifest purpose may be somewhat removed from their latent or underlying, or not yet fully conscious purpose" (ibid.).

Turton's apparent hesitancy with regard to the real nature of what may appear to be class based antagonism is reflected - and perhaps underpinned - by his comments regarding emergent class consciousness in the stratified rural Thai community. He suggests that consciousness of the broad class difference between peasant producers and agents of the state bureaucracy (or, to a lesser extent, between town and country) overshadows consciousness of class differentials within the village. This is exacerbated by the lack of political parties and associations to articulate the interests of the peasantry

or different classes in it. Richer peasants have more in common with other peasant classes than with the non-rural bureaucratic and capitalist classes - especially women and kinsmen of different class positions. Given a wider-than-village context, the village rich - "big fish in a very small pond" (Potter 1976:51) - do not appear to be so rich after all. The longevity of the peasantry as a whole lends itself to the consolidation of peasant ideology and forms of collective action; the wealthier villagers have emerged as the supporters of tradition (Turton 1976:292-293).

Hirsch suggests that class consciousness "has not kept up with the material realities of changing production relations" (Hirsch 1987:59). Siwarak (1985) claims that the persistence of the system of patronage and the effectiveness of state domination causes this lag in the emergence of class consciousness despite material relations of production (cf. Turton 1984). In a more recent treatment of the Thai social arena, Turton suggests that:

> If we are to avoid mechanistic, static, teleological, or dogmatic forms of analysis, and in a concrete situation of relatively recent and rapid changes, then we are bound to say that 'class formation' and all the more 'class consciousness' are in an inchoate, fluid state (Turton 1989:75).

7.2 Social Relations Between the Rich and the Poor

This chapter explores the effects of stratification on village social relations. The class hypothesis provides an appropriate framework within which this issue can be

pursued. In this section, one case study will be the focus, namely, the social relations which pertained between Saentor's rich and poor villagers. Was it the case that villagers identified themselves and each other as rich and poor, and that social interaction was then informed by these social identities?

Data emerged from Saentor which are compatible with the thesis that the experience of stratification has promoted a consciousness between members of each economic stratum of their shared economic experience and mutual status, and that this, in turn, promotes distinctive social relations - styles of interaction and behaviour - between economic status groups. For one thing, there was evidence of separate social spheres for the rich and the poor. Poor villagers commented that they felt more comfortable with other poor villagers than they did with rich neighbours. Different physical arenas for the rich and poor (e.g., parts of the village or certain communal meeting places) did not exist in the village. However, there clearly were different social arenas. For example, the village headperson often gave meals in the saalaa (meeting hut) at the back of his house. It was understood that the poor would never be invited and would not be welcome; they would occasionally sit on the stairs of the houses around the headperson's to look on. By contrast, wealthier villagers did feel they could join in the party uninvited. Different kinds of card games existed. One was for rich people and large sums were gambled, whilst the other was for the

'ordinary' villagers. Interestingly, the villagers called the former baeb phuuchaay (men's style) and the latter baeb phuuying (women's style). The only people who wandered by to spectate at the former kind were rich people. The rich would never spectate or join in at the poor villagers' game, excepting that a number of these were actually hosted by wealthy villagers.

My exit from the field afforded a number of relevant data. There were two sets of farewell arrangements, one organised by the rich villagers and one by the poor. There was no communication between the two groups of organisers, and all kinds of confusion and resentment arose. For example, both rich villagers and poor villagers organised farewell parties (the former were called baeb phuuchaay: men's style). Almost nobody who attended the one attended the other - except, when some richer villagers 'infiltrated' the poor peoples' party, the latter were forced to hang around on the edge of the proceedings (much as they did during one of the village headperson's meals) despite having prepared the whole event.

There were repeated efforts to restrict my partner and myself to the poor person's sphere of social activity. On one occasion, we took the opportunity to help a wealthy family pick vegetables. The response was great agitation on the part of our poorer friends. We were 'lectured' throughout that evening about how the wealthy family were taking advantage of us. Since they were rich enough to hire people, why should they get free labour from us? We

should never do this kind of thing again. Other such interactions became increasingly well-established. For example, we were told throughout the fieldwork to stop hiring a couple of wealthier villagers' bathrooms, and to hire them from our poorer neighbours. Villagers referred to khon la chan (a 'level' each) in the context of conversations regarding whether rich and poor villagers mix easily together.

Related to this evidence of separate social spheres for the rich and the poor were expressions of hostility and anger by the poor which were directed toward the rich-in-general. The following is a list of words and phrases used by poorer villagers and directed toward khon ruay ('the rich', as opposed to specific rich people). Many of them were collected during the first two or three weeks of fieldwork. They are at least as strongly derogatory in Thai as their translations are in English:

nam cay may dii: to not have a good heart.

hen ke tua: to think only of oneself, to be selfish.

naa luad: to be selfish and heartless, a 'bloodsucker'.

khii niaw: to be stingy.

ngok ngen: to be avaricious, greedy for money.

khii korng: to be given to cheating, taking advantage of others, trying to get out of obligations.

khon khem: a person who drives a hard bargain, an unfair bargain, who exacts full payment in kind (for debts owed, injuries inflicted, etc.).

may hay aray: to not give anything away.

may chuay khon con: to not help the poor.

may khawcay khon con: to not understand the poor.

may khawcay kan: to not understand one another.

taa keng: to be good at cursing violently, being abusive.

phuutcaa maa may daek: to speak in a way a dog wouldn't take.

uad tua: to boast, brag (about oneself), show off.

teng tua ruu raa: to dress sumptuously, luxuriously.

ying: to be haughty, vain, proud.

khii oor: to be a 'dandy', given to boasting.

Occasionally, local myths and stories were used to express the resentment the poor felt toward the rich. For example, the mae thooranii myth says that the Earth Goddess is capable of opening up the ground to swallow bad people. Poor villagers, recounting the myth, cited the occasion just prior to the fieldwork when a ditch mysteriously appeared by the house of a despised moneylender. On the other hand, it is interesting that the resentment the poor expressed toward the wealthy was not mitigated by the doctrine of merit. People did not say "so-and-so is rich, and that's all right because they must have made lots of merit in their previous life, so they deserve it". This concords with the point made in the previous chapter that villagers connected wealth status with merit only prospectively and not retrospectively (section 6.6). They frequently stated that the point of gaining merit in this

life is to come back rich in the next, but hardly ever explained present wealth status in terms of merit made in previous lives. Indeed, the poor villagers' understanding of the causes of economic status, as 'concrete' factors such as the amount inherited over which they have no control (chapter six, section 6.6), lends itself to resentment and hostility toward their more fortunate neighbours.

Comments such as those listed above were not made in a social vacuum, and it may be instructive to outline the kind of social situations which typically prompted them. Some such social situations were spontaneous, in the sense that they arose in one part of the village and faded away to emerge again at a later time. Others were more institutionalised, well-established, and persistent areas of friction between the rich and poor. A case study of each type of situation is reported here.

In February of 1988 a wealthy villager asked his neighbours whether, if he were to install an electric water pump, they would rent water from him. Since their alternative sources of household water (in this case, a government hand pump and other wealthy villagers' electric pumps) were notoriously inconvenient, a number of people agreed they would. The owner bore the cost of installing the electric pump himself. All the other households contributed 20 baat toward the cost of a long water pipe to carry the water to their houses; however, these contributions fell short of the total cost of a pipe, so

the owner put up the rest of the money. During the fieldwork seven households rented water from this source at 30 baat per month.

The owner's household was ruay (rich). The renters who were con (poor) were vitriolic in their conversation about this situation. They were extremely angry with the owner's household on a number of counts, including demanding the rent price on exactly the first of each month and not tolerating late payment, reminding the renters that it was time for payment, timing their use of the electric pump to ensure that they did not overuse it, scolding the renters for overusing it, and not letting the renters take extra water on special occasions. Underpinning their criticisms was the general point that the owner was making a profit out of the renters. He was supposed to save the difference between the rent and the electricity bill to pay for repairs to the machine, but it had never broken down and he spent the money rather than put it aside for repairs.

A number of considerations suggest that this is an example of antagonistic social relations between richer and poorer villagers rather than, for example, a personality clash. For one thing, one of the seven renters was a relatively wealthy middle ranking household which could have established their own water pump but chose not to. During the fieldwork, they bought a video and undertook household improvements which were more expensive than a water pump. This household did not have a different

relationship with the owner to the other renters, such as close kinship ties. Their attitude was a stark contrast to that of the poorer renters. They agreed (when asked) that the owner probably did make a profit from the rent price, but were quite unperturbed by this. They stressed that it was a good, convenient system.

In-depth knowledge of this small drama and its protagonists suggests that the poorer villagers were somewhat unfair in their attitude toward the owner, which is further evidence that this was an example of inter-strata antagonism. He bore the considerable cost of installing the system himself. He donated the difference between contributions toward the communal water pipe and its cost, despite the fact that it was of little direct use to him. The details of the renting (rent charge, monthly payments, etc.) were agreed on before he decided to install the system. Renting was considerably more convenient than any of the alternatives on offer, as even the most critical of the poorer households occasionally admitted. The owner unequivocally accepted responsibility for repairing the machine if it were to break down.

Relatedly, there was evidence that the poorer renters exaggerated the owner's profiteering. The former claimed he made an initial 5,000 baat investment, received 210 baat/month in rent fees, and paid a monthly electricity bill of between 70 and 120 baat. According to the owner's household, the initial investment was 5,000 baat for the bore plus 2,000 for the pump, and the monthly electricity

bill was never less than 200 baat. This latter account accords best with relevant background information.

More generally, the issue of household water supply was infused with poor-rich antagonism in Saentor. One of the most prominent differentials in household assets between the rich and the poor was a private electric water pump. Frequently, poor informants mentioned their ambition to install such a pump, usually in the context of elucidating why it was hard being poor in Saentor. "Unsatisfactory water supply" was one of the most common of the responses by poor villagers to question H(v) on survey 1 (namely: "What does the village lack which you would most like it to have?" - see appendix one). A medical centre nurse claimed that the biggest development problem in the village was the lack of a private water supply to every household. Since the poor could not afford to install pumps and the government hand pumps were unsatisfactory, the poor were forced to rent water from the rich. She volunteered that this was a cause of tension between richer and poorer villagers. Importantly, whilst poorer villagers reiterated this doctor's comments during conversations about village development, wealthier villagers either did not mention the household water supply issue, or explicitly dismissed it as unimportant. Not infrequently, they agreed it used to be a problem, which has now been solved.

Finally, poorer villagers told the following story. About two years before the fieldwork, one of the kamnan's

assistants canvassed the idea of a tap water scheme. A huge bore supplying water to all households was to be installed, the cost of which would be met by contributions from the whole community. The use of water would be metered like household electricity. The poor villagers were generally in favour of the scheme. The rich villagers, who had or could afford personal pumps, blocked the proposal. They withdrew their support, and the suggestion foundered because those who remained in favour were unable to bear the cost of the venture. Poor villagers told a similar story regarding a proposal to build small canals in the village, tributaries from the main irrigation canal. Again, rich people were said to have blocked the project when a number of them refused to donate land on which the small canals were to be dug.

Inter-household borrowing created a more institutionalised arena in which economic status based hostilities were played out. At least four considerations made this almost inevitable. For one thing - as poor villagers frequently pointed out - access to the major sources of institutionalised credit was, in practice, largely restricted to the rich (chapter four, section 4.2). Hence, a considerable demand for non-institutionalised credit was maintained.

Secondly, it was understood that poor villagers could only expect to get a loan from richer villagers they knew well. They could not simply approach <u>any</u> rich villager and set up a loan. Since for each borrower there was only a

small number of households who fulfilled the criteria for lenders (i.e., sufficiently wealthy, related to the borrower in the right kind of way, and known to be sympathetic to loan requests), a certain 'incestuousness' emerged which led predictably to tensions between lenders and borrowers.

Thirdly, one element in the cultural context of lending made it likely to be an area of tension in Saentor. A question begged by the usual approach to the study of rural credit systems in Thailand, is that of the cultural context in which these systems operate. Often, the literature reads as though the credit systems described had been introduced into a Western culture. Indigenous cultural norms and sanctions with regard to ownership, debt (in general), reciprocity, property, guilt and forms of condemnation, etc., which make up the background to credit systems in Thai villages, are usually ignored. One of the themes in Saentor's borrowers' culture suggests that this factor is important: there was plenty of evidence of irresponsibility toward other people's property, including numerous anecdotes and first hand experience of the way people mistreated borrowed items (e.g., not returning them, re-lending them, breaking them, and selling them).

And finally, the point has already been made that an apparent recklessness about poorer villagers' borrowing was one of the clearest expressions of their distinctive economic attitude (chapter five, section 5.3).

Predictably, then, poorer villagers expressed

hostility and anger toward the rich in the context of inter-household borrowing. Typical criticisms included indignation at the high interest rates the rich charged, anger at the humiliation suffered when the rich gossip around the village about loans, resentment toward the rich who refuse to lend money when requested, and disgust at the way the rich use loans as an opportunity to seize collateral from loan repayment defaulters. Predictably, there were certain classic, 'mythical' stories repeatedly told by the poor about the behaviour of rich lenders. One such was the case of a poor household whose male head was known to have a drink problem. He borrowed 100 baat at 10 baat/day interest. Each morning, the lender walked through the village from their house to the borrower's to demand the 10 baat. Typically, such a story would be concluded with a statement like, "khon ruay khaw baeb nan" (that's what the rich are like).

The significance of inter-household borrowing as an arena of hostility is indicated by the fact that certain wealthy villagers denied that they lent money when it was known that they did so. Of the respondents to question I(xi) on survey 1 and question I(viii) on survey 2 (see appendix one), 23 admitted that they lent money and quoted an interest charge. Although this is a sizeable number, certain other respondents denied that they lent money at interest when in fact they did so. In one case, a respondent was adamant toward the end of the survey that she did not lend money at interest - having explained

earlier in the interview that she acquired her stereo/radio by seizing it from a loan repayment defaulter. More commonly, respondents shied away from admitting that they charged interest on loans, preferring to couch their lending in terms of hay yuum and yib yuun (to lend or hand over money at no interest) and songsaan phii noong kap phuan baan (to feel sorry for friends and neighbours). In some cases, reluctant respondents finally admitted they did charge interest, once we had gone to great lengths to establish that they also gave interest-free loans to help people out. Some respondents who admitted that they loaned money, insisted at length that they did not charge high interest, did not seize collateral, and so on - "not like the rich". My attempts to clarify the system of land mortgages in the village were repeatedly frustrated by lenders who denied the practice took place, and who denied that they had ever entered a land mortgage arrangement. For example, one rich villager claimed that the whole practice had died out in Saentor. It turned out that he held at least five land registration documents from debtors in the village. However, even having determined this, it was difficult to clarify the details. My informant (his daughter) said it would be naa kliad (rude, horrible, hateful) for her to ask him about it.

Inter-household borrowing also created hostility and anger on the part of the rich toward the poor. Certain rich people, far from lying about their lending, felt cheated and angry toward the poor because of their

"irresponsible attitude" toward loans (see chapter five, section 5.3). A considerable number of wealthy villagers were adamant that they would never lend money out again.

It is important to point out that the scenario of the village rich lending to the poor and thereby creating mutual antagonism was only one among many of the loan situations which existed in the village. Sometimes, the wealthy borrowed from the wealthy and the poor from the poor. Occasionally, a wealthy household would borrow from a poor household. The same individual or household would sometimes be both lender and borrower, setting up a chain effect. Other situations (e.g., the poor woman who bought clothes from Thaarua to resell in the village on hire-purchase) broke down the rich:poor::lender:borrower stereotype. Friction, antagonism and hostility arose from most of these credit relations.

Related to these expressions of hostility, anger and resentment by the poor is observational evidence that the rich felt threatened by the poor. A number of wealthier villagers ostentatiously carried guns. Rich villagers referred repeatedly to the fact that they were worried about thieves. Some rich villagers erected huge iron gates in front of their houses, and secured their windows with iron bars. Some of the wealthiest villagers kept expensive pedigree guard dogs and geese to protect their houses. One wealthy villager cemented cut glass into the top of the wall around her house. Another claimed that five per cent of the village hated him and envied his wealth - but he

knew who they were and "was ready for them". When I mentioned this to another rich villager, their immediate reply was, "yes, it's the same for me".

7.3 Rich-Poor Social Relations: Contradictory Data

The case study of social relations between rich and poor villagers has produced data which support the class hypothesis. Data presented in the previous section suggest that villagers identified themselves and each other according to their respective economic status, and that this informed their social relations. However, there was a second, coexistent set of data relevant to the way rich and poor villagers interacted, which quite contradicts this. These refute the class hypothesis, and belie the effect of stratification on social relations in the village.

Firstly, there was the repeated insistence by all the villagers that the rich and the poor get along well. During conversations involving rich/poor type distinctions, informants would typically volunteer statements like, "tae yuu duaykan daay" (but we can all live together). This was so even when the conversation specifically involved admonishments of villagers identified as rich or poor. Almost invariably, respondents faced with direct questions would insist that stratification was not a cause of disharmony or disunity in the village. The informant who commented that more friction is caused by one person's dog

biting passers-by than is caused by economic status differences, captured the general tone. Repeatedly, villagers made comments such as, "thuk thuk khon thii nii pen phii noong kan" (everyone here are brothers and sisters) and, "ruucak thuk thuk khon" (I know everyone here). The traditional use of kinship terms by non-relatives to refer to one another created or reinforced an impression of apparent harmony. Even the liveliest and most vociferous of the villagers explicitly denied that they harboured strong emotional attitudes toward their rich neighbours.

There was a marked lack of evidence of class based action of a direct kind in Saentor. For example, despite the concern for security on the part of the rich reported in the previous section, it was not the case that disputes and their settlement could be understood in terms of class action (Turton 1976). Of the numerous cases of theft in the village, only a minority were carried out by poor villagers toward the rich. Poor villagers were every bit as concerned about thievery as were the rich. There was no physical destruction of property. There was a notable amount of violence during the fieldwork - for example, a young man slashed four friends during a drinking session with a machete, and there was a fight between a wife and her husband over gambling. Just prior to the fieldwork, one man took a gun to shoot another. There were instances of armed robbery in the village during the fieldwork. However, none of the violence I came across in the village

was best explained by reference to stratification. There was no evidence of the expression of class antagonism at the level of physical action at all. The most explicit the poor ever were with regard their hostility toward the rich only involved the kinds of "everyday forms of peasant resistance" (Scott 1985; Scott and Kerkvliet 1986) referred to in the previous chapter (section 6.4).

Certainly, these data should be linked up to an important element in village culture, namely cay yen as the ideal for behaviour and attitudes. 'Cay yen' means literally to be 'cool hearted' - to be level headed and take things in one's stride. It was common, for example, for poor villagers to respond to direct questions such as, "do you feel jealous or angry toward the rich?" with, "no, but I know people who are". Such responses were getting the best of both worlds. They maintained the ideal of cay yen whilst also expressing resentment. However, the concept of cay yen goes only some way toward explaining the contradictions between the data presented in this and the previous section: as mentioned, there was physical violence during the fieldwork, and there were a number of instances of very heated public arguments; Saentorians did get excited and cay roon ('hot hearted', tempestuous) when the situation was felt to demand it.

7.4 The Fragmentation of Social Identities

The aim of this chapter is to elucidate the effect of

intra-village differentiation on social relations. The class hypothesis has been used as an appropriate framework within which to pursue this theme, and the focus so far has been on social relations which pertain between rich and poor villagers. Data pertaining to the case study of rich-poor social relations are contradictory. On the one hand, data presented in section 7.2 suggest that social identities are created by the experience of stratification, and that this manifests itself in village social relations. This is belied by the data presented in the previous section.

In this section, an explanation of these contradictory data is suggested, which can be summarised as follows. Economic based status differentials to some extent define the social identities of social agents in Saentor, and this identity then informs the behaviour, attitudes, and styles of interaction of those social agents. Hence, for example, the data on rich-poor social relations reported in section 7.2. However, there are a number of other, coexistent claims on the identities of social agents; attitudes, behaviours, and styles of interaction will be informed by each of these various claims. These give rise to the data reported in the previous section which are dissonant with the class hypothesis as it applies to rich-poor social relations. The claim on social identities made by economic based status differentials is only one amongst many; and it is not an especially powerful one. 'Class consciousness' and 'class action' are consistently undercut by the multi-

dimensionality of social identities. This section reports some of the more potent claims made on Saentorians' social identities.

Kinship: Poor people clearly felt obliged to distinguish between rich people on the basis of the kinship relationship which pertained between them and the rich people in question. The way poorer villagers spoke of and related to a rich person depended on whether that person was yaad phii noong (a relative) or not. At first, this was apparent from observations. For example, in diatribes against khon ruay (rich people), poorer informants did not cite close relatives in their examples. Later, poor informants acknowledged this explicitly. They would say of rich kinsfolk, "waa may daay" (you can't say anything about them). Poor informants seemed well aware of the contradiction between the claims on their social personality made by differentiation and by kinship. They often went to great lengths to explain how they must modify their attitude and behaviour toward rich kin. The claim made on social identity by kinship is particularly important because there were a large number of close kin of disparate economic status in Saentor.

The nation: All the villagers clearly identified themselves as Thai. They persistently appealed to a common notion of Thailand and the Thai people. The villagers repeatedly contrasted khon Thai (Thai people) with other peoples: farang (Westerners), khon ciin (Chinese), khon laaw (Laotians). There were frequent references to

national symbols. For example, the owner of the house I rented gave me a Thai flag to hang out on important national days in his absence. There was a good deal of interest in the king's birthday and national children's day. Buddhism was clearly presented as a national symbol. Most striking was the persistent reference to "khon Thai....." ("Thai people.....") by all informants: "Thai people like hot food", "Thai people are kind", "Thai people peel mangos like this", and so on. On one level, villagers identified themselves and were united by reference to a common notion of the nation and 'Thai-ness'.

Turton (1978a:127-129) looks at ideological aspects of the then current situation in the Thai countryside. He focuses on the mobilisation of symbols of 'nation, religion and monarchy', to argue that these persist as potent elements of ideology despite the emergence of a more critical and questioning attitude in at least some parts of rural Thailand. Over a decade later, my experience was that these elements of villagers' ideology persist still.

Hamlets: Half-way through the fieldwork, I decided to move house. The response was unexpected. The people in the area around our house were greatly perturbed. Comments were made such as: "you will be living far away" (about forty yards); "everybody around here will demand an explanation"; "people around here won't see you any more"; "we don't want you to go"; "The people over there are drunkards - they're unkind, not interested in you, noisy, violent and rowdy"; "people here don't mix with people over

there"; "if you go and live over there, our friendship is over"; "it's dangerous over there".

Similar events had occurred before this. For example, I met a group of youths from the other side of the village who liked to sit around a bottle of whisky and 'party'. When I responded to their invitation to join them, my immediate neighbours were clearly agitated. They advised me not to go and paced nervously around my house whilst I was away. Eventually one of them cycled round to bring me home. This was followed by a long lecture. I should stay away from those people and that area; they were not good people, they drank whisky. When I ventured to ask if they would have harmed me (e.g., robbed or beaten me), they said, "no.....but they do like violence and are very dangerous".

From interactions such as these, the following picture of the community emerged. The village was divided up into discrete 'hamlets', each containing a handful of households. A number of interconnected factors coincided to create these, including geographical positioning, kinship, personal relations, and economic status. The boundaries between the hamlets were remarkably fixed. Households in the same hamlet interacted in distinctive ways. People would wander into one another's houses, eat together, share things. There may be some joint action, such as jointly organising a festival. They tended to be intimate and relaxed with one another, and a degree of mutual economic and social responsibility was felt between

them. Inter-hamlet relations were a stark contrast. Typically, people would wander from one hamlet to another only reluctantly, and not at all unless there was some business in hand (such as visiting a relative or asking for a loan). Insults between hamlets underpinned by mutual distrust was the norm, even if these were not expressed openly between villagers.

When questioned directly about this aspect of village social relations, informants' comments corroborated the observational data. Villagers said that they did not really like to mix and preferred to stay in their own hamlet. The owner of a village food stall commented that not everybody in the village ate there, only people from "round here". Whenever I explained my ideas about hamlets to villagers, they were always quick to endorse them.

The village: A clear theme in villagers' discourse was an ideology of the village as an homogeneous, seamless whole, a closed corporate community which occupied its own distinct social space. For example, there were clear expressions of an attitude of 'Saentor versus the rest'. We were repeatedly told how lucky we were to find Saentor because other villages are not kind and interested in us the way Saentorians are. People were pleased and proud that we had chosen to go and live in Saentor, even if they were upset that we had not, for example, taken up their offer to live in their particular house. Informants took every opportunity to be dismissive of other villages and villagers. This attitude was often expressed by

comparisons with Bangkok. People liked to say that the village is not like the city. People here are phii noong kan (literally, brothers, sister and cousins - more colloquially, close relatives), sanid (close to one another) and tong chuaykan (must help one another out). By contrast, Bangkok was baeb yaeroop (European style). Villagers liked to cite specific examples of Saentorians who had gone to live in the city, and did not even know their neighbours' names. Similarly, people liked to claim that, despite economic stratification, there was no social stratification. For example, people would say, "may mii khon tam khon suung" (there aren't low people and high people) or, "may mii khon yay khon lek" (there aren't big people and little people), in the context of acknowledgements of wealth based status differentials in the village. Sometimes people said that the village community was samoe kan (even, level, equal).

Particularly graphic expressions and reiterations of this ideology were afforded by village rituals and ceremonies. Generally, such occasions brought the village together in a way which cross-cut even the most established stratification based hostilities. On some occasions, villagers of widely divergent economic status collaborated to organise a ceremony. For example, a poor household might collaborate with rich households which wanted to make merit, or with rich households with which it had close kinship ties. More generally, religious institutions provided a common focus which united the villagers. The

temple provided chairs, table, coffins, and all the other facilities necessary to stage festivals, which were shared by all the village. The same community of monks serviced everyone's ceremonies. Indeed, the rigidity of the format for the various festivals united the village in one common ritual experience.

Specific ceremonies had some poignant elements in this respect. On one occasion, for example, a Saentor woman was to marry a man from another village. Firecrackers were set off to warn the woman's party that her groom's entourage had arrived in the village and were making their way to her house. In a state of great excitement, the woman's party performed a part of the ceremony referred to as "kan pratuu" (blocking the door). They grabbed gold and silver chains and held them, a person at each end, on the stairs leading up to the house. The pairs were lined up one after the other. A few yards in front of the house, other pairs lined up to block the way with sticks. Each barrier could only be passed with a bribe of money. The incident was great fun. There was a strong sense of 'Saentor versus other'. Insults were hurled to the visitors, usually with reference to their village: "your lot are mean", "so this is what you are like in your village", "we don't do that here", and so on. The Saentorians involved were of disparate economic status.

During the ordination ceremony for young men about to enter the monkhood, the procession, on the way to the temple, stop to waay (show respect with a prayer-like

gesture) a number of particularly large spirit houses. Although these are in fact private spirit houses like any situated outside Thai houses, it was clear from numerous conversations that the villagers perceived them as village spirit houses. The whole procession waay the spirit owners of the village. Similarly, the procession stops to waay elderly villagers and large caedii (memorial edifices). These need not relate to the ordinand in any special way. The procession is paying reverence to the notion of a continuing village which transcends the demise of one generation and persists.

A particularly graphic expression of village unity occurred during the funeral for the village headperson's mother. The whole village turned out, since the deceased was a well-known and important member of the community. At the end of the ceremony, all the mourners - who had been milling around - walked up the narrow steps leading to the coffin at the top of the crematorium to pay their last respects. The various members of the community, with their different economic statuses, feuds and rivalries and resentments, were pressed together to form one body of persons.

This common ideology of the village as an homogeneous, seamless whole has important implications, and it is perhaps worth pausing to explore it further. It is dissonant with at least two observations on the village made in earlier chapters. Firstly, the point has been made that the village community is decreasingly isolated due to

factors (physical, administrative, and ideological) which continually break down a Saentor/other distinction (chapter five, section 5.1). The decreased isolation of the village is dissonant with an ideology of the village as an homogeneous, seamless whole. Secondly, Saentor's elite have been characterised as occupying a unique position in the rural social formation. Specifically, they articulate the village with supra-village structures of state and capital (chapter four, section 4.7). If Turton (1989:84) is correct, and the "great divide" is between the bulk of the village, versus the stratum of elite villagers plus supra-local commercial and bureaucratic "class elements", then an ideology of the village as an homogeneous, seamless whole would seem to be - at best - something of an anachronism.

More interestingly, it should be put into the context of another set of data with which it sat awkwardly, to say the least. The following discussion is not intended to call into question the claim that this ideology of 'the village' plays a sometimes important role in determining social relations; rather, it is intended to qualify this. Reference has been made to the sand quarry which was established in the village (see maps four and five). The quarry was an important factor in the exclusion of villagers from local productive resources, notably land. I was told repeatedly by informants of how they had been forced to sell their land to the quarry when it became useless to them, because the land around their plots had

been sold and excavated. In numerous cases, villagers were forced to sell their last remaining plots of land. Relatedly, the quarry exacerbated land price increases, as villagers were well aware (chapter four, sections 4.1 and 4.6).

The sand quarry issue was pursued during conversations with informants. A crucial phenomenon occurred. I would ask a question such as: "is the sand quarry a problem?", and expect the answer, "yes". Frequently, the informant would reply, "no". It was difficult to get villagers to agree that the sand quarry was a problem, that it was causing difficulties, or that it was bad or wrong, that it should be stopped, and so on. Even when I described the most blatant scenario - my very last, profitable piece of land sold under duress and against my wishes - informants frequently maintained that this situation was common, but "no problem".

Two possible reasons for these responses have emerged in other contexts. In chapter four, the point was made that the sand quarry owner enjoyed a good deal of political 'clout', based primarily on state patronage (section 4.6). To some extent, villagers felt it would be pointless to vociferously criticise the enterprise. Secondly, reference will be made later in this section to the sand quarry owner's successful attempts to manipulate the perception of him by the villagers, by means of economic and noneconomic patronage. In part, this influenced the kind of attitude villagers had toward the quarry.

However, whilst the quarry owner's political influence and his patronage might be said to explain villagers' reluctance to criticise the quarry, this was so only to a certain extent. For one thing, there was a difference between talking about the owner of the quarry and talking about the quarry itself. Even during conversations in which the distinction was made explicit and everyone agreed that the owner was kind and powerful, informants still often declined to criticise the general operation. Informants who described at length how, in the past, they lost their last piece of land due to the quarrying of plots around theirs, including detailed descriptions of how they used to use their land and repeated reference to its value and to not wanting to sell it, denied that the sand quarry was a problem. Likewise, whilst it is true that some of the villagers who declined to criticise the operation were in some way involved in it (either directly, e.g., owned a transport company which helped shift the quarried land; or indirectly as part of the same 'set' of wealthy, capitalist investors), this was not true of the majority of informants. Nor was there any evidence that the villagers were intimidated by the quarry owner and forced into silent acquiescence. The owner was never seen in the village, and there was never any hint that informants were afraid to speak their mind. For example, a minority of informants <u>did</u> vehemently criticise the operation.

As the fieldwork progressed, an explanation for this rather confusing state of affairs emerged. A question such

as, "is the sand quarry a problem?" is ambiguous. The villagers interpreted it in the 'narrow' and not the 'broad' sense. They interpreted it as, "is the sand quarry a problem for me, now?" and not (as was intended) as, "is the sand quarry a problem for the village in general, in the future?". Answers were then suggested accordingly. Those few people who agreed that the quarry was a problem were those who happened to be having a problem with it at that time. For example, they were in the process of losing land to the quarry, or they had recently lost land and were still experiencing the consequences. For most people, it did not happen to be a direct problem for them at that time: either their land was already long gone, or they never had any in the vicinity of the quarry in the first place. Hence, typical answers to my questions included, "raw may kiaw" (we're not involved) and, "may pen khaay naan laew" (no, we sold ages ago). Likewise, of the 60 respondents to survey 1, 54 agreed that the price of land was increasing dramatically, and gave reasons for this (see question C(ix): appendix one). However, only 5 of these respondents mentioned the sand quarry; and of these 5, most had some obvious reasons for doing so, such as that they were in the process of selling land to the quarry owner (see chapter four, section 4.1).

In the context of the sand quarry, an important instance of this 'narrow perspective' on the village emerged. Around the time of the fieldwork the quarry owner bought some land in a new site in the village, directly in

front of the temple (see map five). The obvious concern was that a new quarry was about to be established in that area, since the land was in the 'floodplain', the ex-river bed. The 'narrow perspective' emerged very clearly in this situation. On the one hand, the fact that one or two farmers sold their land is typical of the 'narrow perspective'. They claimed to not know what the owner wanted the land for. In discussions with them, I got the clear impression that the whole thing was no longer any of their business, and that they felt no responsibility for the situation. On the other hand, the only people who did express concern were those who were in danger of being directly affected: namely, those with land in the area in front of the temple. There was no concern expressed by the rest of the village.

The villagers interpreted and perceived the sand quarry in a 'narrow' way. Their concerns and responsibilities did not extend to the village-in-general level. They did not take a village wide perspective on the issue. This would seem to be dissonant with an ideology of the village as an homogeneous, seamless whole. They did not deal with the general effects of the quarry on the whole village into the future. They only evaluated the quarry in terms of how it affected themselves, immediately.

This was not atypical of the villagers, and a number of data are elucidated by this analysis. During conversations relating to village development (both informal and in the context of responses to section H on

survey 1 - see appendix one), I often had to change an informant's perception from the 'narrow' to the 'broad'. For example, a typical answer to the question, "what do you think is the best development initiative here?" was, "I've never got anything". The question was intended to be about the village, whilst the answer was on the personal level. Also, it was noticeable that there were no initiatives undertaken by villagers which had village wide implications. The only macro-perspective taken on the village was that by developers: local bureaucrats and officials. Indeed, village wide initiatives imposed on the village were frustrated. For example, people were well aware of how common rabies was in the village; yet when the medical centre nurse tried to inject dogs against rabies "for the good of the village", a number of owners thwarted her plans by refusing to help or to pay the 30 baat injection fee. The proposed tap water scheme and small canal project referred to in section 7.2 above were blocked by individuals for whom they had little relevance. Villagers fell out during the village development competition two years prior to the fieldwork when some people refused to join in the preparations. Resultant feuds were carried over into the fieldwork period. Reference was made in chapter five to a rich villager's attempt to set up a 'revolving' fund for interest free loans to the poor (section 5.3). This fell apart when some borrowers refused to pay back their loans. One villager did have a number of ideas which he felt would benefit the

village as a whole: for example, that the villagers pool money to buy a communal car which could be parked at the temple and which anyone could use, and that the village hire a guard to make the place safer (especially at night). However, he made it clear to me that he felt that such ideas as these could never be implemented in Saentor.

Similarly, established systems which assumed wide-scale involvement and benefit were undermined. Communally owned property did not get looked after properly. For example, people said that one of the problems with a newspaper reading centre was that it would not be owned by any one person or household, and would, therefore, fall into disarray and be abused. On a number of occasions, informants described how members and managers cheated the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative and the farmers' group. On visits to local sugar factories, managers were very open about the corruption of the sugar-cane quota system they witnessed. Villagers frequently mentioned that a drawback to len shae is that players cheat the group. Village officials were similar in this respect. The kamnan allegedly pocketed the village development competition prize money. The village headperson was said to have given medical centre 'poor cards' to his gambling friends. Most local officials took office for private gain rather than public service (see chapter three, section 3.1).

This point should be linked to the exclusion of 'ordinary' villagers from participation in the decision-making process affecting their community, elucidated in

chapter three. Villagers <u>were</u> apathetic about their village, in the sense that they adopted a 'narrow' perspective on things happening around them. The local political culture was both a cause and an effect of this (chapter three, section 3.1).

On the one hand, there was an ideology of 'the village', an homogeneous, tight-knit community, a seamless whole. Undoubtedly, this played an important role in mitigating the effects of differentiation at the level of social relations. However, from a different perspective, it is important to point out that this ideology should not be overstated. Villagers tended not to interpret processes in any village wide way (e.g., the sand quarry), nor did they always act in a community-minded, mutually beneficial and 'good for all' way (e.g., they did not pulling together to get rid of rabies in the village). Villagers liked the idea of Saentor as a genuine community, whilst at the same time they retained a 'narrow perspective'. They enjoyed the identity of 'the village', but this did not inform behaviours to the extent one might expect. In fact, some elements in people's discourse expressed the contradictions discussed here. For example, villagers spontaneously compared Thais and the Chinese, and commended the latter for co-operating in joint ventures and berating (or being amused by) the former for being unable to do so.

Interestingly, Uthong (1990) reports observations from a study site in the same region as Saentor which are similar to those recorded here. A tension in relevant

background literature was reviewed in chapter two above (sections 2.1 and 2.2). It is commonly assumed that the stratification of the latter-day rural Thai community is a consequence of the process of the penetration of pre-capitalist, corporate villages by structures of state and capital, which began in the mid-1800s (Douglass 1984; Witayakorn 1983). This is dissonant with the recent 'deconstruction' of the South-East Asian village, which questions the very existence of the corporate village in empirical reality (Breman 1980; Kemp 1988). This tension in the literature fuels two kinds of debates, which are closely related but which can be distinguished. The historical debate concerns the precise nature of the 'traditional' Thai village community which is transformed. A second debate concerns the nature of the latter-day rural Thai community, in terms of its 'corporate-ness'.

In pursuing these themes, Uthong (1990) is primarily concerned that one inappropriate model for rural Thai communities is not criticised, or deconstructed, only to be replaced by another which is equally incapable of elucidating the rural social formation in general: "what is urgently needed is a close investigation of what the villagers themselves think" (Uthong 1990:2). She reports that the residents in her study site <u>did</u> think of their community as a distinct village which has clear-cut geographical boundaries; and that their "common social identity" is reinforced by various ritual elements, notably, the village's Spirit Ceremony (ibid.:6-8). On the

other hand, Uthong's study site does not coincide neatly with the 'corporate village' model either: the village "corresponds to all and yet does not fall completely within any single model" (ibid.:27). The village was a self-contained community with hardly any contact with the state, and yet it had no 'risk insurance' (Scott 1976:40) against, nor any collective response to, crises. Today's villagers are conscious of their distinct identity, but only sometimes acted communally on the basis of this. Contradictions abound:

> residents are conscious of their distinct identity and that consciousness may be provoked to enlist some communal actions. And yet, within the village, the sense of community has only a little relevance to their differential actions toward each other. In other words, there is still 'the village' but its reality exists only in some domains (Uthong 1990:27).

The fractured picture of the rich: One of the more interesting of the claims made on social identities and social relations in the village, which clearly competed with that made by the economic factor, involves the self-conscious attempt on the part of certain rich people to manipulate their identities and, hence, the way the rest of the village should relate to them.

Data pertaining to economic attitudes in chapter five reveal that wealthy Saentorians come close to the stereotypical 'rational economic person' (section 5.2). In the previous chapter, it was argued that one of the more subtle constraints on poor villagers' response to their economic situation, is moral correlates to economic status and behaviours (section 6.7). The issue emerges as to how

wealthy accumulators coped with this moral factor. How did 'rational' accumulators deal with the condemnation of their economic behaviours by the majority of villagers; what was the effect of the 'moral stereotyping' referred to on their decision-making?

There was a clear distinction between those wealthy villagers who responded to the moral condemnation their economic decisions incurred, and those who did not. This distinction did not coincide with the difference between the two types of rich households outlined in chapter two (section 2.7). There were examples of both (a)i and a(ii) type household members who did and did not respond to the criticisms their accumulatory behaviours invited. Certain rich villagers apparently undertook no strategies to assuage the poor, pursued policies of accumulation, and paid the price of moral condemnation by other villagers. They were in a state of almost constant antagonism with their poorer neighbours. They became the archetypical 'rich/bad' persons. They figured in almost all expressions of disgust and hostility by their poorer neighbours. More usually, rich villagers did respond to the moral pitfalls of accumulatory behaviour, with a combination of strategies.

Before describing these strategies, it is important to clarify that the data reported here are not incompatible with the claim that rich villagers' economic attitudes committed them to patterns of economic behaviour which are close to what one would expect of 'rational' economic

maximisers (chapter five, section 5.2). Commonly, rich people undertook strategies to assuage the rest of the village - but these were quite clearly designed to not seriously undermine the strategies of accumulation which rich people pursued. I was struck repeatedly by the fact that 'a little goes a long way' as far as rich villagers' image building was concerned. None of the strategies discussed in this section seriously impinged on rich villagers' personal accumulation. Indeed, I would go as far as to say that the way the wealthy villagers undertook assuagement itself expressed their distinctive economic attitude. In other words, they were clearly 'rational' in this respect: i.e., they maximised returns on the 'investment' made, and minimised outgoings. For example, strategies of assuagement of the kind described here were undertaken very ostentatiously, and frequently referred to by the rich in conversations. In such ways, they pursued strategies of assuagement in the most efficient manner available.

Turton suggests that,

> forms of noneconomic patronage (social, religious, etc.).....can have the ideological effect of mitigating or concealing the extent of differentiation and contradiction (Turton 1989:82-83).

Certain of the wealthy Saentorians clearly undertook forms of reconciliatory patronage, both noneconomic and economic. They would ostentatiously give things away to poorer villagers. For example, a number of wealthy villagers had large orchards. They claimed (and there was certainly some

truth in this) that they did not sell any of the fruit, rather they distributed it around the village to relatives and poor neighbours. Similarly, they would frequently give away a small proportion of their baby corn harvest. Some baby corn middlepersons patronised their clients by lending money at no interest. Generally, they were concerned to be seen to respond to requests by kinsfolk. Poor villagers would say, "pen kan aeng ngaay" (it's easy to be friendly and informal with them) and appreciate that they were not too proud or arrogant to 'hang out' in the village and talk to the poor as equals. One rich villager, for example, was famous for hiring too many people for the work involved, and hiring labourers who were sanid kan (close, good friends). Poorer villagers loved to work for him because it was so easy and such fun. They said that it was like aw raeng (reciprocal labour exchange), even though they were in fact hired.

Some of the rich would go to great lengths to explain how, though they were wealthy, if you look at their families' history the wealth could be seen to have been earned by honest toil and not by strategies such as exploiting borrowers. They wanted to appear unconcerned to maximise their economic potential by, for example, waiving rent fees on their land if the renter was known to be having difficulty paying it. And generally, a large part of their energy was devoted to publicising practices such as these.

On another level, these wealthy villagers would

express a concern for, and patronise, the village as a whole. They would be ostentatious on committees such as those administering the school, temple and newspaper reading room. Asked why they took on these roles, they would say, "yaak chuay luuk baan" (I want to help the villagers). The scholarships available for graduates of the village primary school to study on came from donations by rich ex-pupils. Patronage of the village as a whole was facilitated by the local tradition of private solutions to public problems. One wealthy villager gave the land and the money necessary to build the first village medical centre, and built a much frequented saalaa (shaded meeting hut) which he later converted into a newspaper reading centre. Another built the original strip of all-weather road in the village. A local landowner donated 3 ray of land for the Saentor-Thaarua bridge project. The district hospital in Thaamakaa was built by an association of sugar-cane farmers.

One of the clearest examples of patronage mitigating condemnation concerns the owner of the sand quarry. The quarry was a major factor in the exclusion of poorer villagers from access to land. Villagers were forced to sell their land to the quarry when it became useless to them, because the land around their plots had been dug. In a number of cases, villagers were forced to sell their last remaining plots of land against their wishes. Relatedly, the quarry exacerbated land price increases, as villagers were well aware (see chapter four, sections 4.1 and 4.6).

It seemed perfectly clear that the sand quarry was detrimental to the villagers, and especially the poorest amongst these. Nevertheless, it was rare to elicit criticisms of the quarry owner from villagers and common to hear positive descriptions of him, even from those who had been forced to sell what may well have been their last piece of land against their wishes. This phenomenon has already been addressed in this section, where the argument was made that whilst villagers' social identities were informed by an ideology of the village as an homogeneous, seamless whole, this is dissonant with their tendency to adopt a 'narrow perspective' on their community.

The point here is that the positive image the villagers had of the quarry owner was in part due to the fact that they felt obliged to modify their attitude toward him because he patronised their village in straightforward ways. For example, I was told on a number of occasions, and by different informants, that he occasionally gave free sand to the village for public building purposes. During the fieldwork, he gave sixteen truck loads of sand to the temple to help build a new shelter for the sick patients there, and ten truck loads to raise flooded land around a village primary school. Similarly, he regularly laid molasses on the roads his trucks ran along to protect the roads and to keep down dust. The most common comment I encountered with regard the sand quarry owner was, "<u>khaw cay dii</u>" (he is kind).

Apart from their economic and noneconomic patronage of

villagers and the village, some rich villagers legitimised their activities by aligning themselves with traditional village practices, mainly social and religious. They made time to attend numerous festivals and ceremonies, both inside and outside the village. This served two functions. Firstly, it was a way of making and re-confirming useful contacts (superiors and inferiors), and of generally maintaining a 'high profile' in the area. Secondly, it afforded opportunities to appear in line with traditional values and practices - for example, by being seen to make the effort to attend, and by appearing to be generous by making large, well publicised donations to the proceedings. The poor were impressed when the rich gave large financial donations and other presents to the village school on National Children's Day, when they gave large, ostentatious donations to the temple, and when they made their pick-up trucks available to take villagers to a special merit-making ceremony outside the village. During religious ceremonies, the same group of eminent male village elders - economically elite villagers - played out important roles ostentatiously. For example, during temple services they would sit on a raised platform, from which women were banned, on the same level as monks, and chant dialogue with the abbot.

Whilst there were clear examples of rich villagers' attempts to align themselves with traditional religious and social practices, some anomalous data emerged at this point which is worth mentioning. The issue of whether there was

a clear correlation between economic status and expenditure on personal religious and ritual festivals and ceremonies was pursued. The assumption was that rich villagers would spend a good deal of time and money on ostentatious personal ceremonies (e.g., ordination ceremonies for sons entering the monkhood, weddings and funerals, house-warming festivals, etc.), in order to align themselves with religious and ritual traditions, to help make contacts, to express and re-establish their personal standing in the community, and so on. This was not the case. Some of the biggest festivals were organised by poor households (in accordance with their 'moral stereotype'), and rich villagers sometimes organised small, discreet ceremonies. In conversations, informants denied that the size of personal festivals was correlated to households' economic status.

Nevertheless, the size of festivals and ceremonies organised obviously did differ markedly, and this was a topic of great interest to the villagers. For example, there was a good deal of competition between different organisers as to the size and success of the festivals they organised. A number of factors determined how big a festival one should organise. For one thing, the consensus was that the amount of merit made was not determined by, for example, the amount of money one spent staging a festival or ceremony. Nobody believed that one acquired more merit for bigger rather than smaller festivals. Organising households were in a dilemma. Since guests at

festivals were expected to contribute financially, the organisers had to be careful not to have too big a ceremony and thereby be accused of haa ngen (looking for money). On the other hand, the festivals were fun. If small festivals were organised, one could be scolded for not being fun and being too mean to organise a good party. Another factor was the number of friends and family a household had: some households simply had more people to invite. Also relevant is the fixed 'entrance fee' to festivals described earlier. Some organisers definitely had an eye to the 'entrance fees' their guests were expected to pay, notably those households which felt they had contributed inordinate amounts at other ceremonies. Finally, there were certain informal, but quite well institutionalised guide-lines for organisers - for example that an oldest son would be given a large ordination ceremony whilst his younger brothers would not, and that wedding ceremonies were not considered important (see chapter 6, section 6.7).

A quite different set of strategies existed by which some rich people responded to moral condemnation by the poor, and attempted to manipulate their social identities and the way the rest of the village related to them. These were 'practical' strategies. One of the more obvious was to build one's house out of the densely populated body of the village, in the fields. In many ways - vehicular access and security, and so on - this was a cause of great inconvenience to the more entrepreneurial villager. The advantage was that, out the eye of daily public scrutiny,

it was easier to avoid, ignore or counter condemnation of one's activities. This strategy certainly worked. Rich villagers who were most frequently criticised by the poor lived in the centre of the community.

Similarly, some of the richest villagers were not originally from Saentor. By arriving in a new village with, for example, capital from working abroad, they avoided some of the more obvious moral constraints on economic activity (e.g., the claims by relatives on ones assets) and ensured a degree of 'distance' between themselves and the rest of the village. The same was achieved by those rich villagers who simply did not spend much time 'hanging around' the centre of the village - provided they offset the charge of being 'snobbish' by undertaking some other of the strategies mentioned above.

The distinction between two types of rich villagers was made earlier (namely, between (a)i and (a)ii type households: see chapter two, section 2.7). One of the differences between these is that (a)i type households were socially and culturally 'distant' from the rest of the village, whilst (a)ii type households were more recognisably Saentorians in terms of their life-styles. Hence, 'practical' strategies to assuage the village on the part of the rich were most typical of (a)i type villagers.

The strategies described here had a marked effect. The poor had what could be termed a 'fractured picture' of the rich. Informants would feel obliged to distinguish between sub-categories of rich people. They clearly

created two sub-categories which can be loosely termed, 'rich, but a good person' and, 'rich and a bad person'. The latter was that sub-category of rich people whose behaviour most obviously accorded with the moral stereotype of 'rich people' constructed by the poor (see chapter six, section 6.7), whilst the former consisted of rich people who were perceived to be less blameworthy in terms of the kinds of qualities which interested the poor. The converse - i.e., two sub-categories of poor people constructed by the rich - did not emerge.

The potency of this phenomenon in terms of "mitigating or concealing the extent of differentiation and contradiction" (Turton 1989:82-83) should not be understated. Occasionally the poor would go as far as to express a certain admiration for the diligence, intelligence in investment, work rate, and so on, of members of the 'rich, but a good person' sub-category. Often, there was a certain confusion on the part of the poor as to whether these wealthy villagers really <u>were</u> rich, even when it was patently obvious that they were so and that their wealth accumulation involved straightforward methods of surplus extraction.

Similarly, the exact same behaviours were condemned when undertaken by someone who was perceived as 'rich and a bad person', and praised when undertaken by a 'rich, but a good person' (or vice versa). For example, certain rich villagers were vehemently criticised for lending money to the poor at high rates of interest and with collateral.

These same rich villagers were also condemned in no uncertain terms for refusing to lend money (at interest and involving collateral) when it was requested of them by the poor. Other rich villagers, who had worked hard to ensure a more favourable perception of themselves by the poor, were praised for lending money when requested (on standard terms). Generally, making merit in the village was always praiseworthy - except when certain of the least popular rich villagers did so. Their large donations to the temple were sneered at as attempts to make up for years of meanness.

This 'fractured picture' was complicated by the fact that the same rich individual could switch from one sub-category to another, often on the basis of apparently quite petty 'misdemeanours' or behaviours perceived by the poor as admirable. Likewise, different poor people sometimes placed the same rich person in different categories.

Interestingly, wealthier villagers who achieved the epithet 'rich, but a good person' would self-consciously adopt the same moral perspective on their less popular counterparts as that held by the poor. They would criticise the less popular members of their economic status group in precisely the same terms used by the poor (arrogant, obsessive about being rich, etc.), including criticisms of precisely the kinds of 'rational' economic strategies which they themselves pursued in other contexts. They would explain how one should stay within certain boundaries if one was to avoid being despised by the rest

of the village. They would cite cases of rich people who strayed beyond these (e.g., by ignoring requests for help by close relatives) and had thereby incurred the wrath of other villagers. What is the point of being rich if you have no friends? Arguably, this was another strategy by which some rich villagers distanced themselves from the moral stereotype of 'the rich' created by the poor. Similarly, the point made in chapter five that the wealthier villagers 'played down' stratification (without denying it) is relevant here. Notably, the wealthy rarely volunteered that they themselves were khon ruay (rich people) in the way that the poor were eager to mention their status as khon con (poor people). Again, this should be interpreted in the context of attempts by some of the rich villagers to distance themselves from the 'rich/bad' category created by the poor.

Miscellaneous: The above is not intended to be an exhaustive list of factors which compete to inform social personalities. Other important examples include credit relations (who is in debt to whom; an experience of indebtedness common to people of disparate economic status), personal likes and dislikes (which can cross-cut and fragment 'class' lines), and labour patterns (e.g., rich and poor villagers working in the same sugar factory during the season).

In chapter two, some of the problems of categorising economic agents in terms of relative status were addressed (section 2.6). Difficulties arose concerning the

delineation of basic economic units, and the evaluation and comparison of the economic status of these. These difficulties exist for the villagers as much as for the researcher. The villagers were also presented with ambiguities regarding 'household', 'family' and individuals; and with economic units whose income and outgoings were incomparable, who were of deceptive economic status, whose economic status changed over time, and so on. This is why certain households were never unambiguously placed by the villagers in an economic category. On the one hand, therefore, poor villagers were presented with some households - their own or others' - whose economic status was unclear to them.

However, that point should be distinguished from the argument outlined here. The argument here is that even when the poor <u>did</u> perceive of a domain of households which they could comfortably call <u>khon ruay</u> (rich people), each poor person had to re-categorise members of that domain on the basis of a number of criteria. Disparate and competing claims (kinship, hamlets, gender, etc.) on villagers' social identities (and, hence, their behaviours, styles of interaction, attitudes, etc.) create a myriad of social groupings, alignments and delineations. They pull people together and push them apart in a variety of ways. Differentiation makes one such claim. However, since it is only one of many, and not an especially powerful one, the emergence of class from stratification is impeded.

7.5 The Ideological Struggle Between the Rich and the Poor

This chapter pursues the theme of the consequences of stratification for village social relations. The class hypothesis has been considered by reference to the social relations between rich and poor villagers. Contradictory evidence has given rise to the main argument of this chapter. This consists of the thesis that whilst the economic factor makes a claim on social identities and, therefore, to some extent informs social relations, a number of other, often more important claims are made which cross-cut economic status based differences.

Before pursuing this main theme further, it is worth pausing in this section to present data pertaining specifically to our case study of rich-poor social relations. There were some cases of rich and poor villagers whose relations were informed very obviously by the economic factor - their interactions were informed by the kind of noneconomic factors mentioned in the previous section only to a lesser extent. In the context of these, an interesting phenomenon occurred. Rich and poor villagers whose interactions were not markedly influenced by noneconomic factors (e.g., their kinship relation or being in the same hamlet or working at the same sugar factory) interacted in a distinctive and noteworthy way.

The argument presented here should be related to the notion of 'rich' and 'poor' as moral, and not only economic, categories introduced in the previous chapter

(section 6.7). It was reported there that poor villagers created a moral stereotype for 'rich people' and 'poor people'. One disincentive to poorer villagers' pursuit of even the most obvious strategies of upward mobility and economic security (see chapter five, sections 5.2 and 5.3) was that these entailed behaviour which complied with their moral stereotype of 'rich people', and contradicts that of 'poor people'. There would be a high moral price to pay for certain economic strategies. The point was made that rich villagers, to a lesser extent and more by implication, also undertook moral stereotyping of economic categories.

Resentment, anger, antagonism and hostility were 'syphoned off' as a contest at the ideological level over certain morally laden concepts, or, rather, the appropriation of these; a struggle over the pictures presented of what the rich and the poor are like. When groups of rich and poor villagers, whose relations were not clearly informed by the kinds of noneconomic factors cited in the previous section, expressed and played out their mutual antagonism, they did so by reference to a contest at the ideological level over the appropriation of certain concepts. Typically, the concept in question had great moral significance to all villagers. It was inconsistently, but repeatedly, associated by members of one economic status group with that group, and, conversely, disassociated from the other status group. This was done more or less irrespective of the observable facts of the matter. The result was some kind of struggle over the

appropriation of the concept and, hence, what the rich and the poor are like.

An example will clarify the point. During the fieldwork, a number of comments were made by poor villagers to the effect that, "the poor are more interested in making merit than the rich", or, "the rich aren't really interested in making merit, not like the poor". The notion of merit-making is highly significant in moral terms to the villagers. The villagers were unanimously and proudly Buddhist, and merit-making was the quintessential element of their religion. For example, when I pursued the topic of religious education in the village (i.e., how much the villagers knew about Buddhism and from what sources), informants clearly implied a synonymity between Buddhism and merit-making (e.g., the answer to my enquiries as to how villagers learnt about Buddhism was: "our parents taught us how to make merit").

Comments such as these were not made consistently. In conversations, some informants made or assented to these kinds of claims, whilst others did not. The same informant assented and dissented at different times. Only 30 out of 60 people answered K(vi) on survey 1 (namely: "Are poor villagers more interested in making merit than rich villagers?" - see appendix one) in the affirmative. Also, people who assented to the claim sometimes meant different things: that the poor were <u>more interested</u> in making merit than the rich (because they are better people, more religious, etc.), that the poor <u>in fact</u> made merit more

than the rich, that they did so because they wanted to come back rich in the next life, and so on. Nevertheless, the claim was a persistent element in villagers' conversation.

The relationship between the claim that the poor were more interested than the rich in making merit had a somewhat tenuous relationship to observable reality. There was no obvious difference between rich and poor villagers in terms of behaviour (as observed) or attitudes (as reconstructed from what people said) regarding merit. In circumstances where the point of a conversation was not the characteristics of rich people, poor informants implicitly denied any distinction. For example, when I discussed funeral rites with a bereaved poor family, they spontaneously described how it is the rich who perform the sob haeng style of funeral (i.e., preserve the body for some time before cremation) because they have the money to make merit regularly before the funeral proper. This was not said in a tone of jealousy. In fact, the obvious differentials with regard merit ran along lines other than those of economic status. Elderly villagers were more interested in merit-making than the young, and women more than men, according to both observational evidence and other of the villagers' comments.

To some extent there was a struggle over the appropriation of the notion of merit-making. The rich vehemently denied the claim that there was any difference between themselves and their poorer neighbours regarding merit.

Other examples of this phenomenon highlight different elements in the analysis. The single most pertinent example was the appropriation of the concept of khwaam cay dii (kindness, good heartedness). This shares all the features of the analysis laid out above, but of particular note was the struggle which ensued over the appropriation of this concept. Repeatedly, I found myself in the uncomfortable position of being told by poor villager X that, "the poor are cay dii but the rich are not", with wealthy villager Y being cited as good evidence for this; only to be told later by Y that, "the rich are kind but the poor are not", with X being invoked as the example.

Richer informants often associated themselves with khayan (to be diligent) and the poor with khii kiad (to be lazy). This, along with other of the characterisations of the poor by the rich, were often made in the context of wealthy informants' explanations of intra-village stratification, and comments about social mobility. Poorer informants used this particular opportunity to indulge in such stereotyping to a markedly lesser extent (see previous chapter, section 6.6). Here, the distortions between observable reality and the claims being made were particularly clear. Rich informants who joked about never going anywhere, who boasted about not having to work, and who literally sat in the shade under their house all day, made such comments. Poorer villagers who were notorious amongst their neighbours for being "work-shy", would reverse the formula.

This aspect of the phenomenon emerged very clearly in one particular context. Poor people frequently berated the rich for the way they responded to the presence of my partner and myself in the village. They wanted to create the impression that our wealthy neighbours took advantage of us, for example by overcharging us for our rented house and the use of their private bathrooms. They insisted that our rich neighbours were not interested in us, never gave us anything, did not help us at all, and so on. In fact, I would say that <u>all</u> the villagers were hospitable, generous and welcoming, and that there certainly was no differential between the rich and the poor in these respects. Whilst the poor enjoyed stereotyping the rich in this context, their admonishments were unfounded.

Nevertheless, as was shown in the previous chapter, villagers sometimes <u>were</u> uneasy when obvious counter-examples to these kinds of claims emerged (section 6.7). Poor villagers claimed that the rich were <u>khii niaw</u> (stingy), whilst the rich counter-attacked with <u>fum fuay</u> (to be silly with money). On a number of occasions, poor villagers who tried to save some extra income were strongly criticised by their poor neighbours. Arguably, this was because they were upsetting the rich:poor::stingy:non-stingy scenario. Hence, as argued in the previous chapter (section 6.7), the apparently bemusing economic decisions made by poorer villagers (chapter five, sections 5.2 and 5.3) are in part a response to the moral pressure to make the stereotypical 'poor person' and the actual behaviour of

poor people comply. Similarly, the rich people whose bathroom I hired told our neighbours that there was no rent charge; poor people who we gave presents to at the end of the fieldwork spread the rumour they had bought them from us. Whilst the relationship between the claims being made and reality was tenuous, it was not non-existent.

It is true that all the morally laden concepts in question are interconnected. One of the most persistent was chuaykan (to help one another out). The poor persistently claimed that they helped one another in the way the rich did not. 'Kind', 'generous', 'not stingy', 'mutually co-operative', 'good Buddhist', etc., are all clearly interconnected, as are their negatives. The conclusion is not that these all collapse into one another. Rather, it is that a single, coherent and multifarious picture of one's own and the others' status groups is being created.

Toward the end of the fieldwork, a poor neighbour mentioned that, "it is really the poor who are interested in village ceremonies and festivals; rich people don't really bother with them". This was wholly untenable. Moreover, it raises the point that the kind of ideological struggles referred to here were more or less well-established. The one about festivals and ceremonies (with its connotations to do with 'fun', religion, the community, and so on) was a one-off, an idiosyncratic comment which accorded with the general picture of the poor and the rich being constantly created and reaffirmed. I have no doubt

that if I had pursued this idea, a fair number of poor people would have assented to it.

Scott (1985) presents data from his Malaysian study site which may seem similar to those reported here. His theme is that it is not necessarily to the large scale, organised forms of peasant resistance (mass movements, revolutions and the like) that one should look in the search for the rural poor's responses to exploitative situations. Everyday forms of peasant resistance may be more to the point. One such is "an exchange of small arms fire, a small skirmish, in a cold war of symbols between the rich and the poor" (Scott 1985:22). He refers to "the symbolic resistance of the poor" (ibid.:236) in the form of "the war of words, the ideological struggle" (ibid.:240).

The data presented here should be viewed in the context of Scott's work (cf. Scott and Kerkvliet 1986). However, there is a crucial difference of emphasis between Scott's comments and those that apply to Saentor. I would argue that it is misleading to refer to Saentor's ideological struggle in terms of "war", "weapons", "resistance", or any other military metaphor. The main reason for this has been stated in the argument of this chapter: rich-poor hostilities were based on the relatively weak claim made on social identities by the economic factor, and this is constantly over-ridden by other, more potent claims, including those discussed in the previous section. Hence, the "war" between the rich and the poor remains a war of words only, because people were not

interacting with one another on the basis of the economic factor alone, but on the basis of a number of different, cross-cutting identities. Poor people, for example, could not be unequivocally hostile to the rich because of the various claims (of the kind outlined in the previous section) on the way they had to relate to particular rich households.

A second reason is specific to relations between the rich and the poor villagers. Rich-poor hostilities in Saentor were essential personal and not political. Despite appearances, they were specific and not general. When a poor person expressed anger toward khon ruay (the rich) in the way described in section 7.2, this is ambiguous. It could be based on a general perception of exploitative systems throughout the community. For example, the resentment could be based on the recognition that the rich get richer by, say, lending money at interest, marketing small farmers' baby corn, and bribing their children into secondary schools. On the other hand, it could be based on specific circumstances and interactions involving particular people at a certain place and time: e.g., the refusal by a rich creditor to extend one's loan period, or to allow one to take extra rented water during a festival. I would argue that whilst poor people's hostility toward the rich was based on both of these, the latter was more important than the former.

Corroboratory evidence is given by the data presented in the previous chapter pertaining to villagers'

explanations of stratification and their belief sets regarding intra-village differentiation (section 6.6). These reveal that poor villagers almost never explained stratification, mobility and so on in terms of exploitation. Whilst the previous chapter reported the difference between the belief sets regarding stratification constructed by the rich and the poor, that difference was not grounded in a recognition by the poor that stratification was consequent on exploitative relations. There was very little reference to general exploitation, such as descriptions of exploitative systems, during conversations with the poor. For example, it was common for poor informants to either berate a rich person for not lending them money when asked, or to praise a rich person for lending money on request, but I never heard any poor villagers explain that the system of intra-village loans was exploitative. A very small minority mentioned exploitation (aw priab) in the context of discussions of how the rich were getting richer. They said that the rich take advantage of the poor, by, for example, becoming a baby corn middleperson and making a profit out of the work of the poor. But comments like these were extremely rare and very much the exception and not the rule. For example, it was far more common for the small farmers to commend the baby corn middleperson system (chapter four, section 4.4) because it is "convenient and cheap", than it was for them to criticise it for being exploitative. Poor informants frequently referred to the system of land rents in the

village, but not in terms of the way tenant farmers were effectively exploited by their landlords. Only once did I come across an analysis of the situation in the village which systematically invoked the notion of exploitation, and that was in the taped interview I did with the medical centre nurse (see appendix two). Her comments were a sharp contrast to those typical of informants, and accentuated just how rarely villagers interpreted their community in terms of general exploitation.

It was clear that individual poor people's attitudes toward the rich were inspired mostly by specific instances of the meanness and stinginess of individual rich people in particular circumstances, or by the kind of jealousies one household felt toward another. General systems of exclusion and exploitation formed no more than a backdrop to, and not the basis of, their resentment. A poor person would be humiliated by a moneylender, or told that they could not take extra water for a festival by the water pump's owner, or cheated by a middleperson, and this inspired expressions of hostility and anger toward the rich. Individual instances of meanness and stinginess were far from rare. The clash of economic attitudes, behaviours and decisions of the rich and the poor created the possibility of these (chapter five, sections 5.2 and 5.3). When a feud between villagers of disparate economic status blew over, so did the hostility and anger. In other words, there was not a consistent feeling of resentment by the poor <u>en masse</u> toward the rich in general grounded in a

perception of exploitative systems. Turton suggests that one of the reasons for a "lack of clarity" regarding the situation in the Northern Thai countryside around two decades ago, is that,

> there are as yet no (or extremely few and relatively undeveloped and insignificant) political parties or other associations to articulate the specific interests of the peasantry as a whole, let alone different classes of agricultural producers and other sectors of the rural population (Turton 1976:292).

This point is pertinent to Saentor, and is one of the reasons why it would be wrong to interpret expressions of rich-poor hostilities there in terms of some kind of 'class struggle'.

The confusion, of course, is that the specific and personalised anger felt by the poor was expressed in terms of khon ruay (rich people in general). However, this is misleading. Resentments were played out on the level of ideology and did not spill over into more overt forms of retaliation because those resentments were essentially personal, even though they were expressed in terms of the rich-in-general. In this sense, the 'ideological struggle', far from being any kind of weapon, operated as a kind of safety valve by which the villagers expressed inter-'class' hostilities in an essentially non-confrontational way.

This lack of a perception by poorer villagers of the exploitative nature of rich-poor relations of production should also be tied up with the strategies, described in the previous section, by which some rich villagers

manipulated the perception of themselves by the poor. These are themselves an impediment to the emergence of 'class relations' between rich and poor villagers. The manipulation by the rich of the poor people's perception of wealthy villagers was successful in dissuading the poor from an holistic appreciation of exploitation. It helped maintain a perception of the situation on the part of the poor which was personalised rather than politicised.

7.6 Social Relations Between the Poor

The main thesis presented in this chapter is that social identities are only partially or inconsistently created by economic experience. This conclusion should be put into the context of the long-established debate in sociological literature concerning the essence of social stratification. The classical Marxist view is that social status is grounded in one's location in the economic or productive structure. The conclusion drawn from data presented in this chapter sides with the 'pluralists', or 'multi-dimensionalists', and their forerunner, Weber: social status is not determined strictly by economic experience (Barber 1968; Tumin 1967:8-18). As one commentator puts it:

> Class is hardly the only social experience available to villagers. Factions, neighbourhoods, and kinship ties, to mention only a few, create their own fracture lines, which do not often coincide neatly with class. Villagers are also united for some purposes with their local antagonists (Scott 1985:140).

If this argument is correct, then presumably it can be applied to social relations other than those between rich and poor villagers. In this section, the main argument of this chapter is applied to a second case study pertinent to the class hypothesis, namely social relations between poor villagers. To what extent and in what ways does a shared economic experience inform the identities of poor villagers and the way they relate to one another? According to the 'class hypothesis', differentiation gives rise to a consciousness of a shared economic experience between members of, for example, the poorest stratum of villagers, which in turn promotes a distinctive style of 'intra-class' interaction. However, if the argument of this chapter is correct, we would expect data pertaining to the case study of social relations between the poor to be contradictory, reflecting the facts that economic status makes a claim on social identities, and that this claim is only one relatively weak claim amongst many. Data presented in this section show this to be the case.

Poor villagers commented that they felt more comfortable with other poor villagers than they do with their rich neighbours. Throughout the fieldwork there was strong evidence of a distinctive style of interaction between poor people. This tended to be of an intimate, bawdy, relaxed and raucous nature, compared to the way other categories of villagers interacted. Take the case of two poor villagers who exemplified this style of interaction. One was a twenty-five year old man, the other

a thirty-one year old woman. Both were married with children, they were not closely related, and they were equally poor. When they interacted they jokingly insulted one another, both physically (e.g., rubbing one another's head) and verbally (e.g., calling one another "dog's mouth"). There was a degree of physical intimacy, for example pretend 'fights' and throwing things at one another. Jokes between them tended to be <u>risque</u> and suggestive. This style of interaction was also exemplified by whole groups of poor villagers. On one occasion, for example, a group of poor villagers met to dress my partner in traditional Thai costumes in anticipation of the poor persons' farewell party mentioned above. The people there were not closely related, there were men and women of different ages, and they were all poor. Again their interaction had the ingredients of bawdy, raucous fun and verbal and physical intimacy. At one point a man pretended to misunderstand a request to "pass that shirt" and tried to take off one of the women's shirts. Later, one of the older women took it upon herself to model the particular kind of bra my partner was told to wear, in a very suggestive manner and to the hilarity of the group.

Obviously, there were many kinds of relationships and many styles of interaction in the village. The kind of interaction described above was not peculiar to the poor in the sense that nobody else interacted in that way. However, the contention here is that certain people interacted in this distinctive way <u>because</u> they were poor.

Certainly, poor villagers liked to present the poor as having a distinctive style of interaction. One aspect of this is that they would 'define away' counter-examples to this image. When two poor people did not interact in this distinctive way (e.g., because of a personality clash between them) it was typical of the one to deny that the other was poor, even where this was clearly untenable. Conversely, when villagers of disparate economic status did interact in the way described here, the poor would deny that the other party were rich.

However, these data should be put into the context of other contradictory evidence. The point was discussed in chapter two that a number of households are of ambiguous economic status (section 2.6). This will affect intra-'class' relations, because in some cases poor villagers cannot say whether they themselves or another particular household are poor or not. However, even where poor people can define a class of households as khon yaak con (poor people), some striking data emerged. For one thing, there was an almost complete lack of co-operative action or joint ventures undertaken by and between the poor. Certainly, opportunities for class based action between poorer villagers existed. For example, an obvious solution to the household water supply problem mentioned above was for groups of poorer villagers to co-invest in a semi-communal bore and pump. The emergence of baby corn as the principal village crop also afforded the opportunity for poor villager joint action. Smallholders often struggled during

the labour intensive parts of the growing cycle in a way that could have been avoided by the small farmers undertaking aw raeng (reciprocal labour exchange) together.

Likewise, the poor liked to say, "khon con chuaykan" (the poor help one another out). Although this accorded with their stereotypical 'poor person', those examples of systems of mutual benefit, ad hoc self-help and co-operative action between the poor which poorer people liked to cite, turned out to be bogus. For example, I was repeatedly told that the poor undertake informal self-help in the form of interest-free loans. If a poor person happens to acquire some money, they lend it to other poor people on the understanding that the recipients do likewise. Not only did I witness no examples of this practice, but I was repeatedly surprised by the un-generous loans arranged between poor people (e.g., 10 baat interest per month on a 300 baat loan, plus collateral).

In other contexts, poor villagers often denied that they liked or were friendly with other poor villagers. There was aggressive rivalry between poor villagers as to who was really poor, including vehement denials by one poor person that another person was poor at all, or that they were nearly as poor as they themselves were. Only a minority of these are explicable by reference to the phenomenon of poor villagers 'defining away' counter-examples to poor people's distinctive interactive style: there were plenty of examples of this kind of rivalry between poor people who in other circumstances appeared to

get along very well. Clear examples of mutual antagonism between poor villagers emerged - for example, when competition heated up for equipment such as a gas cooker and a mosquito net which I was unable to bring back from the field.

These contradictory data pertaining to the case study of social relations between poor villagers, support the argument of this chapter. Each individual social agent had a fragmented social personality. They were, for example, Thai, Saentorian, a member of such-and-such a hamlet, khon con (a poor person), so-and-so's brother/wife/cousin, and of such-and-such an age/sex. Hence, they each belonged to a variety of non-coextensive social groups: a kinship group, a hamlet, the village, phuak khon con (the poor), an age 'set', and so on. Each individual was expected to interact with the various members of their different groups in a myriad of ways which made competing claims on their behaviours. So the data on, for example, 'intra-class' social relations were bound to be ambiguous, even contradictory. The situation as far as the 'class hypothesis' is concerned is that economic status did create villagers' social identities, associated and disassociated villagers to create groups whose members interacted in distinctive ways; however, because economic status made only one (relatively weak) claim on social identities, it was constantly being over-ridden by other more important factors.

In fact, as far as co-operation and intra-group

cohesion are concerned, these were most distinctive of kinship groups. In some contexts, kinship made the single most potent claim on villagers' social identities. The only examples of jointly owned water supplies (or anything else) were those involving groups of close kin. Close relatives were the only people from whom one could seriously expect to get an interest-free loan. Most commonly, reciprocal labour groups consisted of closely related villagers, some of whom happened to have a shared economic status.

Specific, well-known examples of what appeared to be, and were sometimes presented as, either instances of village co-operation or of self-help between the poor, were better explained in terms of kinship. For example, the liang khaek village labour system was used a number of times during the fieldwork year: i.e., a number of people would assemble to jointly undertake a task, and the organising household would provide food and drink throughout the day. Likewise, when misfortune befell certain households, villagers responded. For example, villagers joined together to pay hospital fees when a man suffered a serious head injury whilst repairing part of the temple; on another occasion, a house burned down and villagers gave money, clothes and other necessities, to help out the owners. These data are misleading in the sense that whilst they appear to relate to some common culture of co-operation based on an ideology of village cohesion or on shared economic status, and were

occasionally presented by informants as such, they were usually better explained in other terms. Almost invariably, it was groups of close kin who helped one another out in these kinds of ways.

But it should be reiterated that it was not only groups of kin who, for example, co-operated. Members of each of the social groupings formed co-operated. So, for example, hamlet members (qua hamlet members) may group together to organise a festival. Poor people (qua poor people) co-operated to organise my farewell party. During the bigger festivals, village women would work together for days to prepare food. Neighbours (phuan baan) co-operated to undertake liang khaek. And so on. However, the extent to which group members co-operated, and the kind of co-operation in play, depended on the group in question, and, underlying that, the strength of the claim being made on social identities. So, for example, one could expect an interest-free loan from a close relative but not a non-related fellow hamlet member.

This argument elucidates, and is elucidated by, data pertaining to social relations between wealthy villagers. On the one hand, there was evidence of a claim made on villagers' social identities by a shared experience of elite economic status. Some social situations were exclusive to rich villagers, including the expensive card games and the village headperson's meals, which have already been mentioned. Rich villagers organised farewell parties when I left the village, to the exclusion of the

poor. I referred earlier to an occasion when elite villagers banded together to help the District Officer in his quest to buy more of Saentor's increasingly valuable land. They furnished him with information as to who might be likely to sell (e.g., because of their debts) and which plots of land were the better investments (chapter three, section 3.2). A large part of the reason for the increasing marginalisation of the kamnan by elites (despite his political position) was that he was from a household which was poor, relative to other of Saentor's officeholders.

Notwithstanding this, the claim made by shared elite economic status on rich villagers was not a strong one. Cohesion between elite villagers pales into insignificance when compared to the way closely related rich villagers interacted. Take the case study of three separate, wealthy households. One was headed by a wealthy farmer, and the other two were headed by his sisters. One sister was a school teacher at Thaamakaa secondary school and an entrepreneur, and the other owned a substantial transport business. These three rich siblings continually helped one another out in mutually beneficial, economically advantageous ways. The brother managed the school teacher's recently acquired land, which she was planning to sell when the price had risen; his children attended her school (his son, still at the school, even lived with her). The other sister shifted all her brother's agricultural produce. Both sisters benefitted from their brother's many

'positions' (notably, a Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative committee member and a baby corn middleperson). Such extensive and long-term reciprocal co-operation between elite villagers was typical of closely related rich households and not of rich households in general.

7.7 Stratification, Class and Traditional Status Systems

This chapter has explored the effects of stratification on village social relations. The main thesis which has emerged is that the economic factor - shared and contrasting economic experience in the stratified community - plays some role in creating social identities and informs social relations in some ways and to some extent. There was, for example, some evidence of what could be interpreted as emergent class identities, inter-class hostilities and intra-class cohesion. However, the economic factor competes with other claims being made on social identities, such as those made by an ideology of the village as an homogeneous, seamless whole, and kinship relations. The economic factor did not stake a claim on social identities of sufficient strength to confirm the 'class hypothesis', as this was defined in section 7.1 above.

The argument in this section is that, whilst it is true that the economic factor at present makes a relatively weak claim on villagers' social identities, that claim is increasingly potent. Arguably, economic experience is an

increasingly significant component of villagers' social personalities. The focus here is on the relationship between, and relative importance of, stratification and 'hierarchies'. 'Hierarchies' is defined as traditional status differences or systems of rankings of an essentially noneconomic character. This should be distinguished from the notion of 'hierarchy' as this is interpreted by French structuralist inspired anthropologists. Dumont (1966), for example, is concerned with the classification of hierarchised opposites within an ideology, which is not the theme of this section. As one commentator puts it, Dumont "strictly distinguishes hierarchy from social stratification and mere inequality" (Barnes and de Coppet 1985:1).

Irrespective of their position in the "loose structure" debate (Embree 1950), early fieldworkers emphasised the place of hierarchies, 'unequal relations', in the Thai village societies and culture which they studied. Typically, they referred to, for example, patron-client relations, age, gender, and ritual/religious based status differentials (Sharp et al. 1953:28; Phillips 1965:32-33; Kaufman 1960:31-33). Likewise, as mentioned in chapter two, historical analyses of the pre-capitalist rural community point out that,

> in virtually every relationship between two people (or among people), there was a distinction in which one appeared subservient to another (Elliott 1978:22).

Predictably, then, the first major attempt to characterise the Thai social formation after Embree's "loose structure"

paradigm (Embree 1950) - namely, in terms of patron-client relations, entourage and circle (Hanks 1975; Van Roy and Cornehls 1969) - is grounded in the recognition that, "each Thai regards every other person in the social order as higher or lower than himself" (Hanks 1975:198).

The extent to which Hanks' characterisation of the Thai social order really does provide a break in the loose structure tradition is debatable (Hanks 1975; cf. Potter 1976:7-8). Nevertheless, there remains the unequivocal recognition in relevant literature (notably, early field data from rural Thailand), of hierarchies within the village community which are not, or are only tangentially, related to stratification. Hence comments such as:

> considerations of class do not take precedence, nor is the economic element considered a distinct fact of differentiation or stratification (Van Roy and Cornehls 1969:24).

Field data from Saentor suggest that, whilst hierarchies could be seen to persist, these had been transformed by the experience of differentiation. Douglass (1984) elucidates the transformation of one oft-cited hierarchy, namely patron-client relations. He argues that traditional patronage systems have been transformed by the increased prevalence of market relations:

> The transformation has been one moving away from a broad basis in religious, social, cultural and economic relations to one based on economic relations and economic class divisions (Douglass 1984:91).

Specifically, he cites the demise of the patron's concern for the client's welfare, the increased specificity of the relations, and their explicitly contractual basis. Both

the worsening of terms of trade between the patron and client, and the loss of subsistence guarantees and the protective nature of the relationship, negatively affect the lives of the subservient group (cf. Bruneau 1984:353-356).

Comments in a similar vein can be made regarding other of the more prominent hierarchies discernible in Saentor. Whilst age, gender and religious authority continued to be factors in social relations, they had all been transformed by changes affecting the village economy and polity. Female heads of wealthy, entrepreneurial households were accorded a high degree of respect by all poorer households. The respect shown to the elderly was correlative to their economic status: reverence for the elderly of wealthy households, and a continuum ranging from disinterest to outright humiliation for the rest. The tradition of unquestioned respect for monks was likewise corrupted. Lay people covertly berated the monks for wanting to be rich and joining the temple solely to make money. Opportunities for accumulation by monks certainly existed (e.g., the envelopes of money presented to the monks for their personal use by merit-makers during ceremonies). People said that the temple contained plenty of rich monks, and observational evidence bore this out. For example, it was common for monks to buy their relatives expensive luxury items such as television sets. Hierarchies were noticeably more prevalent in determining social relations in those situations where considerations of wealth did not apply.

For example, age differences between people of the same economic status, or between economic agents and children, strongly influenced social relations.

The argument that hierarchies are being transformed by the experience of stratification is supported by informants' comments. Repeatedly, I quizzed informants on whether status (thaana) could depend on something other than wealth. They replied that wealth is the only basis of status. I explicitly suggested other status determining factors to informants, such as a high level of education, a good moral character, and extensive knowledge of Buddhism. The response remained unchanged. The use of a number of metaphors to refer to the rich and poor suggest that economic stratification is emerging as a major element in Thai village discourse on unequal relations. These include: dek dek muubaan (village children, to mean the poor), khon tam khon suung (low people and high people, to mean the poor and the rich), and khon yay (big people, to mean the rich). Such phrases were only used in reference to stratification, never to hierarchies. No other stratifying feature of the village was nearly so persistently referred to as wealth based status differences. Frequently, thaana (status) was used as a synonym for wealth differentials. For example, if, when I was told that such-and-such a household were big landowners (or some other determinant of wealth), I then asked, "mii thaana suung suung may" (do they have high status?), I was answered in terms of, "I already said so!".

The thesis presented in this chapter can be qualified or refined by the data reported in this section. At present, factors other than stratification make a strong claim on villagers' social identities and relations. For example, the point has been made that, in a number of contexts, kinship relations stake the strongest claim on villagers' social personalities, behaviours, and styles of interaction. However, when one considers the traditional status systems frequently referred to in relevant literature, it emerges that these are in a process of being transformed by the continued experience of stratification. This suggests that, whilst at present the claim made on social identities is relatively weak, it is an increasingly important factor.

7.8 Co-operation, Individualism and Stratification

The interpretation of village social relations suggested in this chapter can be applied to an ongoing debate concerning Thai village culture and village institutions. In chapter four, the role and functions of co-operative institutions in Saentor were considered in the context of data pertaining to 'popular participation' and ongoing process of differentiation (section 4.3). It was mentioned there that much of the relevant literature is concerned with the failings of co-operatives to expand access to the resources they make available. This often includes criticisms of the workings of the co-operatives, with reference to factors

such as inadequate management, poor inter-agency co-ordination, and the single-functional nature of co-operatives' services. The same general approach has revealed that the system of co-operatives tends to benefit the wealthier farmers to the exclusion of the poor (Akin 1982; Takeshi 1971; Demaine 1976).

However, a quite different kind of debate has emerged alongside this literature. This concerns the socio-cultural milieu in which the co-operatives operate. On the one side, some writers have argued that the success of the co-operatives is conditional on certain features inherent in their socio-cultural backdrop:

> features such as co-operative spirit, principles of equality, solidarity, common interest, and democratic organisation among farmers, which formed the basis of co-operative movements in the West, are insufficient or lacking in Thailand (Meer 1981:179).

'Natural' forms of co-operation and a 'spirit' of co-operation versus individualism are prerequisites to co-operatives getting a hold and persisting in given socio-cultural contexts. This is questioned by writers who insist that the socio-cultural milieu is not important to participatory development institutions such as co-operatives. The persistent failure of state sponsored co-operatives suggests that they differ from 'natural' co-operation in kind and not only in degree. They must, by definition, differ, since state sponsored co-operatives are bureaucratised whilst forms of traditional co-operation are not. Co-operatives should be studied in isolation, since only then will their functioning be properly understood

(Robertson 1984; Nash, Dandler, and Hopkins 1976).

One perspective in this debate raises the issue of whether the Thai village can be characterised as typically co-operative or typically individualist (or, collective, cohesive or fragmented) in terms of both the cultural-ideological nature of the society and indigenous co-operative institutions. Embree's (1950) seminal paper claims that in Thailand there is a lack of closely woven patterns of co-operation and joint action (e.g., for accomplishing agricultural tasks), which reflects an individualism inherent in this "loosely structured" society. By contrast, Potter (1976:34-50) reports a number of 'natural' co-operative institutions (e.g., labour exchange groups and the ownership of common property administered by ad hoc representative committees), and concludes that co-operation,

> is the basic theme of social relationships within the village. It is the basic village ideology (ibid.:42).

A quite different perspective on the debate is work done on the 'blooming democracy' period of civil unrest in Thailand during the mid-1970s. Turton (1987:35-43) describes the emergence, activities and demise of the Peasants' Federation of Thailand, a large-scale collective grass roots social movement, which involved the co-ordinated mobilisation of thousands of peasants.

The contention of this chapter is that there are a variety of competing claims on social identity (i.e., criteria by which villagers are linked and disunited), of

which economic status is but one and which do not coincide, and which inform social relations. This argument is pertinent to the debate over whether the Thai village should be characterised as essentially co-operative or individualist. From the perspective of the previous section, this debate is based on the wrong question. The question is not whether traditional or 'natural' village institutions or cultural-ideological values are individualist or co-operative. The question should be: who co-operates with whom in what ways and on what grounds?

Each Saentorian was expected to co-operate in a variety of more or less institutionalised ways with other members of the various groups they belonged too. What groups they formed depended on the kind of criteria for uniting and distinguishing villagers outlined in this chapter, including kinship groups, hamlets, the village, groups of employees at the same sugar factory, households, gender groups and so on. The amount and kind of co-operation varied between groups. There is no single clear theme of co-operation or individualism running through the socio-cultural milieu of the village; or rather, both themes co-exist as each villager co-operates in different ways with a variety of members of a variety of groups of which s/he was a member. To put the point another way, it is not useful to ask whether the village 'coheres'. The villagers 'cohere', each with a variety of other villagers, on the basis of a number of criteria, in a variety of ways. However, it is not useful to characterise 'the village' as

an essentially coherent social unit. Given this, it is not surprising that when one researcher recently undertook to determine whether his village study sites were essentially co-operative or individualist, he found contradictory evidence of elements of both co-operation and individualism and hence concluded:

> at no point in time can villages or villagers be characterised as exclusively collective or individualist, but rather that elements of each are manifested according to the pertaining material situation (Hirsch 1987:294).

7.9 Concluding Remarks

An important assumption in this thesis is that the effect of stratification at the social level cannot be assumed, but should be considered as an independent issue. Preceding chapters have pursued the theme of the causes of differentiation. This chapter has considered the effects of intra-village differentiation in terms of social identities and relations. The main conclusion to be drawn is that the economic factor informs social identities and social relations to some extent; but this is limited by other, frequently more powerful claims made on these. Nevertheless, the economic factor has been shown to be increasingly important in this respect.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

This thesis explores what is recognised to be a salient feature of latter-day rural Thai communities, namely, stratification or differentiation. Transformations of the Thai countryside have created disparities, within the same locality, between households' economic status and circumstances. Data pertaining to this theme were collected during long-term, intensive field research in a Central Plains village community. This final chapter consists of a brief review of the main findings reported in the thesis and suggestions for related future research.

8.1 Summary of the Main Findings

Chapter two considers stratification from the perspective of macro-level, historical transformations of the rural Thai economy, polity, and society. An account of the emergence of stratified rural economies, which is reported with a notable degree of consistency in related literature, is reviewed. This focuses on the penetration of traditional, pre-capitalist, 'corporate' villages by structures of state and capital (Douglass 1984). This account is juxtaposed with recent 'deconstructions' of the corporate village, which centre on the claim that the

immutable, traditional village - the closed corporate community - is an ideological construct and not empirical reality (Kemp 1988, 1989). Compromise between these two bodies of literature is advocated so that the important insights offered by each are not lost; and relevant field data from Saentor are reported (sections 2.1-2.3).

During a brief review of theoretical literature and published field data from rural Thailand, which concern characterisations of the peasant differentiation consequent on the transformation of rural economies, the focus in chapter two shifts toward the delineation of latter-day, stratified village communities. Problems concerning the characterisation of a differentiated rural Thai community are considered. An interpretive model of Saentor is constructed which defines three main categories of households (rich, middle ranking, and poor) on the basis of a cluster of interrelated characteristics (sections 2.4-2.7). In a later chapter, this model is shown to accord with the villagers' own perceptions of their community (chapter five, section 5.1).

Having considered literature and field data pertaining to the historical origins of stratification, and having presented an account of the differentiation discernible in the study site, the focus in chapters three and four shifts to ongoing local processes whereby resources are monopolised. Various of the more important strands in the web of accumulation spun by the local elite are disentangled. Rich villagers pursue an integrated strategy

of accumulation which brings together a number of interconnected, mutually reinforcing factors: political knowledge and influence, investment capital in the forms of land and credit, co-operatives' and marketing resources, and educational opportunities. One theoretical perspective which helps structure these data is given by the notion of 'popular participation'. Rich villagers participate in access to and control over local resources: both political resources found in regulative institutions and the decision-making process, and local resources necessary for production and reproduction (Pearse and Stiefel 1979). A way of interpreting the position of Saentor's elite is to say that they extract other villagers' surplus from 'below' (e.g., interest on loans and rent charges on instruments of production) and enjoy state patronage from 'above' (e.g., cheap credit and other inputs from the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative, and free health and educational services because of their status as khaaraadchakaan: government officials). Rich villagers articulate the village with the supra-village 'levels' (Turton 1989).

Chapters five and six continue the theme of intra-village differentiation, focusing on villagers' economic related decisions and behaviours. Different strata of villagers were found to express dissimilar attitudes in the economic arena. Rich Saentorians behaved much like the stereotypical 'rational economic man (or person)'. By contrast, poor Saentorians were 'irrational': i.e., their economic behaviour was dissimilar to that which one would

expect of 'rational economic person'. They tended toward non-accumulatory and even apparently reckless economic decisions. Middle ranking villagers were economically quiescent. This was acknowledged by informants themselves to be an important feature of their community.

The data presented in chapters five and six are intended to show that 'external' causes or origins of stratification interact with 'internal' ones. Chapters two, three and four deal with the 'external' bases of stratification: the integration of 'the village' into wider structures of state and capital, and ongoing processes of exclusion from access to local resources. The point of chapters five and six is to show that these interact with a quite different set of phenomena, namely, the dissimilar attitudes which inform rich and poor (and middle ranking) villagers' economic decisions and behaviours. Chapter six shows how the economic attitudes of the poor are the corollary to elements of the system of beliefs and values which they construct. This goes some way toward explaining the paradox, reported in chapter five, that poor villagers persisted in 'irrational' economic behaviours despite their unequivocal recognition of stratification and their explicit concern with their low economic status.

The theme in chapter seven is the consequences of stratification in terms of villagers' social identities and relations (Turton 1976). The 'class hypothesis' is considered: i.e., does the experience of differentiation give rise to the emergence of a consciousness amongst

villagers of shared and different class identities, which, in turn, informs social relations within the community? The case study of social relations between the rich and the poor produced contradictory evidence. This suggests that, whilst social identities and relations are to some extent informed by the economic factor, this competes with other, noneconomic factors which also stake a claim on villagers' social personalities. This is confirmed by a second case study: social relations which pertain between poor villagers. However, whilst the economic factor is not the sole determinant of villagers' social identities, it is argued that it is increasingly important in this regard.

8.2 Suggestions for Related Future Research

Chapters five and six comprise the section of this thesis which most obviously has implications for future research, since other chapters pursue already-established areas of enquiry. The observation that different strata of villagers operate in the economic arena according to dissimilar attitudes is a new point of departure.

In chapter six, an attempt was made to explain poor villagers' 'irrational' economic decisions and behaviours in terms of an underlying system of beliefs and values. Something similar should be attempted for the wealthiest stratum of villagers. Rich Saentorians seemed clearly to have absorbed some kind of a 'capitalist culture': their attitudes, patterns of behaviour and decisions were close

to those of the stereotypical rational economic person. They tended to pursue 'logical' strategies of personal accumulation. What system of beliefs and values underpins this?

Some elements of this system have been touched on. For example, the rich (like the poor) saw their behaviours as moral (chapter six, section 6.7; chapter seven, section 7.5). They extolled the virtues of thrift, foresight and ambition, and saw their poorer neighbours as feckless, deservedly poor and unable to 'stand on their own two feet'. No doubt there are other elements in their system of beliefs and values which would further elucidate their economic behaviours. To what extent, for example, is the penetration of a capitalist culture of personal accumulation facilitated by rich villagers' images and ideologies of the West? Are the differences between the ways the rich and the poor operate in the economic arena connected to differences in the way these two groups view Western and 'traditional' rural Thai culture?

In analyses of the emergence of differentials in economic security and well-being within the rural sector, there has been a good deal of interest in the 'survival strategies' implemented by the poor (Scott 1976; Douglass 1984:103-151; Hirsch 1987:264-279). Implicitly, the assumption is made that villagers respond in 'rational' (i.e., maximal) ways to their precarious and vulnerable position. Data presented in chapters five and six call this assumption into question. Poor villagers' responses

to their predicament should be reconsidered in the light of the finding that elements of their system of values and beliefs impede their pursuit of 'rational' survival strategies.

Relatedly, the findings reported in chapters five and six should be applied in the context of development theory and practice. One of the reasons for pursuing the theme of economic related attitudes was to challenge development thinking which assumes that economic agents operate in like ways in the economic arena. At least as far as Saentor is concerned, this assumption is wrong. The point is important to development planning and could be taken on board when evaluating development initiatives. To what extent are specific development initiatives sensitive to the economic attitudes of the poor? What are the implications of this for their success? Can the failures of development programmes be elucidated by adopting the perspective taken in chapters five and six?

Other of the data presented in the thesis are important to development planning and the implementation of development programmes. Chapter three considers the extent to which 'ordinary' villagers are involved in the decision-making process. It was shown there that, despite an established system of representative political institutions and a pro-participation rhetoric in developers' discourse, most villagers have no say in the decisions which affect their community. The point was made that this is a general development issue in itself. Future research should focus

on this failure to involve villagers in decision-making, in order to help facilitate greater participation in this sense. To what extent, for example, is participation dissonant with elements of Thai culture other than explained by the persistence of a traditional political culture?

Rich villagers' economic attitudes underpin their pursuit of personal accumulation. The relevant literature reports various strategies of accumulation undertaken by the wealthy, such as acquiring superior educational qualifications and monopolising local political knowledge and influence. In such ways, village elites gain access to local resources (see chapters three and four). The assumption (often implicit) is that these amount to investment strategies from which the rich households in question will achieve a return. However, the question of quite how these 'investment strategies' are translated into personal economic gain is often left begging. For example, it was reported in the thesis that rich Saentorians often eschew local political office precisely because these are not always straightforwardly translatable into personal economic gain (section 3.2). Likewise, a large number of students from wealthy households who gained substantial educational qualifications returned to Saentor because they could not find, or did not want, jobs elsewhere (chapter four, section 4.5).

The strategies of accumulation pursued by the wealthy should be elucidated by focusing on the relationships

between the various factors or strategies of accumulation discussed in chapters three and four. These factors, to some extent, feed into one another. This is so in a number of straightforward ways. For example, data were presented to show that rich villagers' political knowledge and influence is in part based on their access to important contacts (chapter three, section 3.2). Also, rich villagers monopolise marketing resources where possible (chapter four, section 4.4). Obviously, it is because of their high profile in the area and their extensive contacts that rich villagers can undertake the job of marketing baby corn (see chapter five, section 5.2). Likewise, it was claimed that poor villagers are excluded from political knowledge and participation (chapter three, section 3.1) and that co-operative institutions fail to increase their grip on local productive resources (chapter four, section 4.3). Part of the reason co-operatives fail to address the central problem of poor villagers' exclusion from resources is that the poor lack the political 'clout' to establish genuinely participatory co-operative institutions. Nevertheless, the ways in which various factors of exclusion and participation are integrated are not always straightforward. More work addressing this issue is necessary, in order to explain how such factors operate to facilitate personal accumulation by the wealthy.

The point was made in chapter one that the second half of this thesis is motivated in part by a frustration at the lack of an 'anthropology of development' for rural Thailand

in the relevant literature (section 1.5). By focusing on qualitative appraisals of individuals' behaviours and interactions, chapters five, six and seven represent development orientated research which attempts to clearly adopt an anthropological approach.

One example of this bias in the literature is the failure to construct any kind of a 'phenomenology of poverty' for rural Thailand. Processes whereby villagers are made poor are frequently described, and objective characterisations of poverty are drawn; but there is not a clear picture of the subjective experience of poverty. Despite the numerous criticisms of the 'culture of poverty' programme which were reviewed in chapter five (section 5.4), one of the commendable aspects of some of that literature is that it attempts to describe poverty as experienced by the poor themselves. Lewis, for example, in reconstructing a 'culture of poverty' for the Puerto Rican poor, says,

> I have tried to give a voice to people who are rarely heard, and to provide the reader with an inside view of a style of life which is common in many of the deprived and marginal groups (Lewis 1966:xii).

Whilst Lewis's 'culture of poverty' programme is seriously flawed (see chapter five, section 5.4), the attempt to reconstruct the subjective experience of poverty is to be applauded. In a similar vein, Lewis frequently lamented the paucity of novels, plays, and other literature which adequately portray poor people's lives. Similarly, Turton (1987) is concerned by the ways in which Thailand's rural

poor are 'silenced'. For example, official history ignores episodes crucial to the poor peasantry. Turton's reconstruction of the events surrounding the civil unrest of the mid-1970s - notably those concerning the Peasants Federation of Thailand - is one attempt to redress the imbalance (Turton 1987:35-43).

Something of this theme has been pursued in this thesis. For example, reference has been made to the humiliation experienced by the poor during their antagonistic dealings with rich money-lenders and water pump owners (chapter seven, section 7.2); and the moral aspects of stratification which impinge on the poor is a theme which weaves in and out of the latter half of the thesis. This aspect of stratification should be brought more clearly into focus, and attempts made to reconstruct the subjective experience of poverty. A clearer picture of what it is like to be poor in Thailand should be attempted.

Similarly, a clearer picture of Thailand's 'bureaucratic culture' should be constructed. Increasingly, the articulation of village and supra-village 'levels' is prioritised over the exclusive study of one or another 'level'. This has informed this thesis (e.g., the role of Saentor's elites in articulating village and supra-village 'levels' is discussed in chapter three), and it has been the focus of important recent literature (e.g., Turton 1989). Nevertheless, sometimes it is appropriate to bring one or another of the 'levels' of Thailand's rural social formation into focus. For example, Turton's

characterisation of district level local powers is an important contribution which helps elucidate supra-local structures with which the village interacts (Turton 1989:87) - as does the work on political culture reviewed in chapter three above (section 3.1). These would be enhanced by the application of anthropological concerns and methodologies to the 'level' of the local bureaucracy. For example, an important contribution to an anthropology of rural development in Thailand would be made by the study of cultural-ideological factors pertinent to the local bureaucracy. The point was made in chapter three that local officials stereotyped villagers very negatively as "foolish and apathetic". This was true even of Saentor's kamnan and other village based officeholders. Ideological constraints such as this on the way bureaucrats interact with the rural people should be elucidated.

Compared to their richer and poorer neighbours, middle ranking households are rarely the main focus of attention in this thesis. Some data pertaining specifically to middle ranking households have been reported: for example, case studies are presented for two types of middle ranking households (chapter two, section 2.7), and the economic quiescence distinctive to middle ranking households is described in chapter five (section 5.6). In other parts of the thesis, conclusions regarding the village as a whole apply to middle ranking households by implication: for example, the argument in chapter seven that the economic factor makes one relatively weak, but increasingly potent,

claim on villagers' social identities and modes of interaction, applies to middle ranking households as well as to the rich and the poor. Nevertheless, the point remains that the richest and poorest strata of villagers have been brought into sharper focus than their middle ranking neighbours.

Certainly, the middle ranking households offer opportunities for important future research. Casting back to the 'Russian debate' and other theoretical literature on peasant differentiation (Harriss 1982), it is important to elucidate their fate (chapter two, section 2.4). Does their economic attitude of quiescence (chapter five, section 5.6) 'work' in the sense that they achieve social reproduction, or is it the case that wealthier middle ranking households (namely, (b)i type households: chapter two, section 2.7) achieve a degree of upward mobility due to their greater access to resources? Are the poorer of the middle ranking households (namely, (b)ii type households: chapter two, section 2.7) declining into the ranks of the 'rural poor', as they suffer reduced access to resources because of the kind of 'downward pressure' described in chapters three and four? Will the future see a shift in the bases of middle ranking households' wealth away from agriculture and land and toward permanent employment in an expanding labour market (see chapter four, section 4.1)?

8.3 Concluding Remarks

This thesis presents data pertaining to the issue of intra-village differentiation in Thailand, which were collected during a year-long period of intensive anthropological fieldwork in a Central Thai community. In this final chapter, the main findings reported in the thesis have been reviewed, and directions for related future research have been suggested.

APPENDIX ONE: SURVEYS 1 AND 2

Questions on Survey 1

A. Household composition

(i) Number of people living in the household.
(ii) Age and sex of household members.
(iii) Kinship relations between household members.

B. Education

(i) For each household member (and anyone for whom household members are responsible), where have they studied and for how long?

(ii) For any household member who received fee paying education, what fees were paid and who paid them; was there a scholarship involved, and if so what were the terms of the scholarship?

(iii) For any household member in education or of pre-school age, what is their guardians' plan for their education? If the plan involves education other than the free compulsory education at the village school, why is this so and what obstacles to pursuing their plans do they perceive? If their plan only involves free compulsory education at the village school, why is it not more ambitious?

(iv) If parents intend the household's youngsters to study extensively, and the household owns farmed land, who do they envisage will work their land when they themselves are unable to?

C. Access to land

(i) How much land does the household own (distinguishing between rice fields and others)?

(ii) Are any members of the household awaiting land as inheritance of which they are certain? If so, how much land will they receive and when do they expect to acquire it?

(iii) How much land does the household rent in: what are the rent terms and from whom do they rent?

(iv) How much land does the household rent out: what are the rent terms and who rents their land?

(v) Is the household presently involved in a land mortgage arrangement? If so, what are the terms of the arrangement and are there any problems with it? If the household in question is the borrower, why did they need to borrow money; if this household is the lender, do they intend to seize land in the event of defaults on repayments?

(vi) Has the household ever been involved in a land mortgage arrangement in the past? If so, and this household was the borrower, did they lose land - if so, how much? If this household was the lender, did they seize land or was the loan repaid - if the former, how much land was seized?

(vii) Where did the household acquire the land they

own: amount of land inherited; amount of land bought, including when it was bought, how much for and from whom; amount of land seized from defaulters, including when it was seized and from whom?

(viii) Has the household ever sold land - if so, how much, when, why did they sell, total sale price, and to whom did they sell?

(ix) What is the approximate value of the land the household owns? Has the value changed recently - if so, why, and by how much; will the value change in the foreseeable future - if so, why?

(x) Is the land they own good or bad land? In what ways is it good/bad? Have they ever improved their land; if so, why and in what way?

D. Land use and income from land

(i) What is the land the household works used for?

(ii) Baby corn: how many harvests per year and what are the typical profits from each harvest?

(iii) Sugar-cane: what sugar-cane quota are they in: the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative quota, the sugar-cane growers' association quota or a private quota? What is their total yearly profits from sugar-cane?

(iv) Orchards and vegetables: how are their fruit and vegetable produce marketed? What is their total yearly profit from fruit and vegetables?

(v) Rice: how much profit do they expect from each rice harvest?

(vi) Does the household grow any other produce not mentioned in the above? If so, what and what are the typical profits?

(vii) Is the land they use worked only by household members? If not, do they hire people to work the land - if so, what is their typical system (number of people hired, when, to do what tasks, and for what daily wage)? Are they in the aw raeng (reciprocal labour exchange) system; if so, what is the typical system (with whom do they exchange labour, how often and to do what tasks)?

E. Non-farm incomes

(i) What regular jobs does each household member have, either inside or outside of the village, apart from farming their own or rented land?

(ii) What is the income from each of these jobs?

(iii) What irregular work does each household member do; what is the typical monthly income from this?

(iv) Are there any other sources of regular or irregular income which the household receives?

F. Luxury items and other assets

(i) The house: did they build their house themselves; if so, when, how much was spent on it, and where was the money they used acquired from? If not, how did they acquire their house? What repairs/improvements have been undertaken in the previous ten years - when were they undertaken, how much did they cost, and from where did they acquire the money spent?

(ii) Vehicles: does the household own a pick-up truck, motor cycle and/or bicycle; if so, how many of each?

(iii) Household luxury items: does the household own a television set (if so, is it black-and-white or a colour set), a radio and/or a cassette player (if so, what was the purchase price), a refrigerator, a gas cooker, a video player, and a camera? How many of each item does the household own? For each item, was it bought using their own cash, loaned money, or on hire-purchase? For each item, was it bought new or second hand?

(iv) Water supply in the home: does the household have a private water supply for their own use? If so, is it an electric motor pump or a petrol run machine; do they rent it out - if so, to how many households and at what rate? If the household does not have a private supply, do they rent water from another villager; if so, at what rate? Do they use the government hand pumps?

(v) Water supply in the fields: does the household have their own water supply for their fields? If so, is it an electric water pump or a petrol run machine; do they rent it out - if so, to how many households and at what rate? If the household does not have a private supply, do they rent water from another farmer; if so, at what rate and whose water pipe do they use?

G. Production and appropriation of surplus

(i) After living costs, is there usually money left over? If so, how is it usually used?

(ii) Has household income ever been insufficient to meet living costs? If so, is this the case often? How does the household respond to a shortfall; if the usual response is to borrow money, where is the money usually borrowed from and on what terms?

H. Village development

(i) What has the village received to help it develop?

(ii) What is the best or most useful thing the village has received to help it develop?

(iii) The proposed newspaper reading centre: how much does the respondent know about it and what is the source of their knowledge? Were they consulted about the proposed centre - if so, in what way? Is the centre a good idea?

(iv) The Saentor-Thaarua bridge: is the bridge a good idea? Will all the villagers enjoy equal benefit from it?

(v) What does the village lack which the respondent would most like it to have?

(vi) How would the respondent go about requesting it?

(vii) Have they ever requested anything in that way?

I. Co-operatives and credit

(i) Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative: is there anyone in the household who has ever been a member of the co-operative? If so, who, how long for, and have they ever had an official capacity there? Why did they join? Have they ever borrowed from the co-operative; if so, when, how much, what were the terms of the loan, what was the loan used for, and is/was repayment a problem? Have they ever

bought inputs from the co-operative; if so, what?

(ii) Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Co-operatives: is there anyone in the household who has ever been a member of the bank? If so, who, how long for, and have they ever had an official capacity there? Why did they join? Have they ever borrowed money from the bank; if so, when, how much, what were the terms of the loan, what was the loan used for, and is/was repayment a problem?

(iii) Commercial banks: does any household member have a bank account? Have they ever borrowed money from a commercial bank; if so, when, how much, what were the terms, what was the loan used for, and is/was repayment a problem?

(iv) The village primary school: is any household member on the school committee? Has any household member ever borrowed from the school; if so, when, how much, what were the terms of the loan, what did they use the loan for, and is/was repayment a problem?

(v) The temple: is any household member on the temple committee? Has any household member ever borrowed from the temple; if so, when, how much, what were the terms of the loan, what did they use the loan for, and is/was repayment a problem?

(vi) Richer households: has any member of the household ever borrowed from richer neighbours? If so, do they do so often - about how many times per year? What interest is typically charged?

(vii) Merchants and middlemen: has any member of the household ever borrowed from merchants and middlemen? If so, do they do so often - about how many times per year? What interest is typically charged?

(viii) <u>len shae</u>: have any household members ever played <u>len shae</u>; if so, at how many places do they play, and at each place how much is pooled per round? How many rounds are there to each game, and what is an average interest paid?

(ix) Pawning: has the household ever pawned anything; if so, do they do so often or regularly, and have they ever lost pawned items due to defaults on repayments?

(x) Hire-purchase: have they ever bought goods on hire-purchase; if so, what goods and have they ever been unable to pay off the debt?

(xi) Has the household ever lent money to other villagers? If so, does it do so regularly? Typically, what interest is charged?

(xii) Farmers' group: have any household members ever been in the farmers' group? If so, have they ever had an official capacity, why did they join, for how long were they members, and what were the benefits of membership?

(xiii) Sugar-cane growers' association: have any household members ever been in the association? If so, have they ever had an official capacity, why did they join, for how long were they members, and what were the benefits of membership?

J. <u>The sub-district council</u>

(i) What does the respondent know of the council,

especially who are its members and what is its purpose?

(ii) When did the council last meet?

(iii) At its last meeting, what was discussed and decided?

(iv) Has the respondent ever attended a council meeting; if so, how many times and in what capacity?

K. Wealth differentials

(i) Are all villagers equally wealthy?

(ii) If not, why are some villagers rich and some poor?

(iii) What should the poor do to get richer?

(iv) What can the rich do to get richer?

(v) Does the informant know anyone who was poor and is now rich? If so, who, how did they achieve this, and why do others not follow suit?

(vi) Are poorer villagers more interested in making merit than rich villagers?

L. Future plans

What plans and ambitions does the respondent have for the household in the future?

Questions on Survey 2

A. Household composition

(i) Number of people living in the household.

(ii) Age and sex of household members.

(iii) Kinship relations between household members.

B. Education

(i) For each household member (and anyone for whom household members are responsible), where have they studied and for how long?

(ii) For any household member who received fee paying education, what fees were paid and who paid them; was there a scholarship involved, and if so what were the terms of the scholarship?

C. Access to land

(i) How much land does the household own (distinguishing between rice fields and others)?

(ii) How much land has this household inherited?

(iii) How much land has the household ever bought, including when it was bought and for how much?

(iv) How much land has the household ever sold, including when, how much did they get for it and why did they sell?

(v) What is the approximate value of the land the household owns?

(vi) How much land does the household rent out; what are the rent terms?

(vii) How much land does the household rent in; what are the rent terms?

(viii) Are any members of the household awaiting land as inheritance of which they are certain? If so, how much

land will they receive and when do they expect to acquire it?

D. Income from land

(i) What does the household plant on the land (either owned or rented) which they farm?

(ii) Baby corn: how many harvests per year and what are the typical profits from each harvest?

(iii) Sugar-cane: what sugar-cane quota are they in: the Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative quota, the sugar-cane growers' association quota or a private quota? What is their total yearly profits from sugar-cane?

(iv) Orchards and vegetables: what is their total yearly profit from fruit and vegetables?

(v) Rice: how much profit do they expect from each rice harvest?

(vi) Does the household grow any other produce not mentioned in the above? If so, what and what are the typical profits?

E. Non-farm incomes

(i) What regular and irregular work do household members do, and what is the income from each job?

(ii) Does the household have any other significant income?

(iii) How is the land they own or rent in worked: household labour, hired labour and/or reciprocal labour exchange?

F. Luxury items and other assets

(i) Vehicles: does the household own a pick-up truck, motor cycle and/or bicycle; if so, how many of each?

(ii) Household luxury items: does the household own a television set (if so, is it black-and-white or a colour set), a radio and/or a cassette player (if so, what was the purchase price), a refrigerator, a gas cooker, a video player, and a camera? How many of each item does the household own? For each item, was it bought using their own cash, loaned money, or on a hire-purchase scheme? For each item, was it bought new or second hand?

(iii) Has the household ever purchased any other item on hire-purchase?

(iv) Water supply in the home: does the household have a private water supply for their own use? If so, is it an electric motor pump or a petrol run machine; do they rent it out - if so, to how many households and at what rate? If the household does not have a private supply, do they rent water from another villager; if so, at what rate? Do they use the government hand pumps?

(v) Water supply in the fields: does the household have their own water supply for their fields? If so, is it an electric water pump or a petrol run machine; do they rent it out - if so, to how many households and at what rate? If the household does not have a private supply, do they rent water from another farmer; if so, at what rate?

G. Production and appropriation of surplus

(i) After living costs, is there usually money left over? If so, how is it usually used?

(ii) Has household income ever been insufficient to meet living costs? If so, is this the case often? How does the household respond to a shortfall; if the usual response is to borrow money not at interest, from whom do they usually borrow, if they borrow at interest, what are the terms; do they sell or pawn items?

H. Co-operatives

(i) Thaamakaa agricultural co-operative: is there anyone in the household who has ever been a member of the co-operative? If so, who, how long for, and have they ever had an official capacity there? Why did they join? Have they ever borrowed from the co-operative; if so, when, how much, what were the terms of the loan, what was the loan used for, and is/was repayment a problem? Have they ever bought inputs from the co-operative; if so, what?

(ii) Farmers' group: have any household members ever been in the farmers' group? If so, for how long were they members, why did they join, and what were the benefits of membership?

(iii) Sugar-cane growers' association: have any household members ever been in the association? If so, for how long were they members, why did they join, and what were the benefits of membership?

I. Credit

(i) Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Co-operatives: is there anyone in the household who has ever been a member of the bank? If so, who, how long for, and have they ever had an official capacity there? Why did they join? Have they ever borrowed money from the bank; if so, when, how much, what were the terms of the loan, what was the loan used for, and is/was repayment a problem?

(ii) Commercial banks: does any household member have a bank account? Have they ever borrowed money from a commercial bank; if so, when, how much, what were the terms, what was the loan used for, and is/was repayment a problem,

(iii) The village primary school: is any household member on the school committee? Has any household member ever borrowed from the school; if so, when, how much, what were the terms of the loan, what did they use the loan for, and is/was repayment a problem?

(iv) The temple: is any household member on the temple committee? Has any household member ever borrowed from the temple; if so, when, how much, what were the terms of the loan, what did they use the loan for, and is/was repayment a problem?

(v) Has any member of the household ever been a village committee member? Has any member ever been on the sub-district council? Has any member of the household ever been a village headperson, an assistant to a village headperson, sarawad kamnan (chief assistant to the sub-district representative) or phuuchuay kamnan (assistant to

the sub-district representative)?

(vi) Richer households: has any member of the household ever borrowed from richer neighbours? If so, do they do so often - about how many times per year? Have they ever handed over their land registration document as surety? Have they ever lost land because of land mortgage arrangement? What interest is typically charged?

(vii) Merchants and middlemen: has any member of the household ever borrowed from merchants and middlemen? If so, do they do so often - about how many times per year? What interest is typically charged?

(viii) Has the household ever lent money to other villagers? If so, do they do so regularly? Have they ever received a land registration document as surety? Have they ever seized land from a borrower? Typically, what interest is charged?

(ix) Does the household have any other debts elsewhere; if so, what are the details?

APPENDIX TWO: RECORDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Section One: Questions Put to All Respondents

1. Questions relating to village development:

A. What is the most important current village development problem, and in what way is it important?
B. What is the most important obstacle to village development?
C. (i) How important do you think it is to get villagers to participate in the formulation of plans and to participate in the implementation of them, with regard development?
(ii) At the moment, in what way is the participation of villagers achieved?
(iii) What programmes are there which will increase the participation of villagers in the future?
(iv) What are the obstacles to the participation of villagers in development?
D. Do you think that everybody gets equal benefit from development?

2. Questions relating to village stratification:

A. Do all villagers have similar status?
B. If not, why is this so?
C. How important do you think differential status is?
D. What can be done to make the population have equal status?

Section Two: Questions Put to Specific Respondents

3. Questions put to the medical centre's nurse:

A. What is the biggest health service problem?
B. What is the role of the medical centre in village development?
C. What differences are there between rich people and poor people, between people who have had a lot of education and those who have not, and between the old and the young, in terms of their use of medical centre facilities?
D. In what way can the service offered by the medical centre be improved?
E. In what way does the medical centre give special attention to poor patients?
F. What is the value of the sub-district council?

4. Questions put to the village primary school's deputy headmaster:

A. What is the most important problem regarding education in the village?
B. What is the role of the village primary school in village development?
C. (i) In your experience, do rich pupils have better educational opportunities than poor pupils?
(ii) If so, why is this?

D. In what way can the educational attainment of poor pupils be increased?
E. In what way can the system of education be improved?
F. In what way does the school give special attention to poor pupils?

5. Questions put to the village headperson:
A. What is the role of the village headperson in village development?
B. What does the village lack most of all?
C. Regarding village development, what special attention is given to the poor?
D. What is the value of the sub-district council?

6. Questions put to the kamnan:
A. What is the role of the kamnan in the development of the sub-district?
B. What does the sub-district lack most of all?
C. Regarding the development of the sub-district, what special attention is given to the poor?
D. What is the value of the sub-district council?

7. Questions put to the Community Development Officer:
A. What is the role of the Community Development Officer in the development of his area?
B. What does the Development Officer's area lack most of all?
C. Regarding the development of his area, what special attention is given to the poor?
D. What is the value of the sub-district council?

8. Questions put to the District Officer:
A. What is the role of the District Officer in the development of the district?
B. In what ways does district development planning give special attention to the poor?
C. What is the value of the sub-district council?

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