San Fernando Valley State College

BUDDHISM--AS IT INFLUENCES BUSINESS BEHAVIOR IN NORTHERN THAILAND

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Business Administration

by

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June, 1970
The thesis of William R. Baldwin is approved:

APPROVED by thesis committee

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td></td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td></td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement of the Problem.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope of Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedures of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization of the Thesis</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economy of Thailand</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rise of Neo-Buddhism</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buddha's Teachings</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buddhism in Thailand</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>THAI-BUDDHIST BUSINESS BEHAVIOR</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influence of Buddhist Doctrine.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Four Noble Truths</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Eightfold Path</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karma.</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Animism</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influence of Sangkha (Monkhood) and the Wat</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

BUDDHISM--AS IT INFLUENCES BUSINESS BEHAVIOR IN NORTHERN THAILAND

by

William R. Baldwin

Master of Science in Business Administration

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The cultural differences between Western and Eastern countries is a problem in achieving success in commercial enterprise. This study is an attempt to take a Northern area of Thailand and do a first hand study of business conduct as it is influenced by Buddhism. A look at Buddhist ethics should reveal some difficulties Western entrepreneurs have in understanding and dealing with on Eastern culture. This thesis attempts to indicate these differences.

Research was conducted by sustained personal observations in managing a United States Air Force Purchasing and Contracting Office and an Air Force Base Exchange in Northern Thailand. Interviews were conducted with businessmen both at the air base and in the villages, as well
as Bangkok. The study revealed that the Thai-Buddhist culture significantly influences the commercial spheres of activity. This influence is the result of (1) constant and daily practice of karma which limits interest in capital investment; (2) acceptance of the first three of the four Noble Truths, which indoctrinate the Thai in suppressing desire; and (3) the fourth Truth, or the Eightfold Path, which fosters traits not compatible with aggressive economic growth because of the mild, gentle, aloof conduct which can allow exploitation.

Animism, tolerated by, but not a part of, Buddhism, fills a human need for spiritual deities which Buddhism does not provide. Although its influence is diminishing, animism (especially astrology) does affect commerce to a slight degree.

Growth is hampered because work is not considered important in itself, thus tending to decrease willingness to work more hours. There is a strong inclination to neglect business in favor of sanuk (pleasure, leisure). Savings or capital reserves are not a consideration. Consumption, a necessary activity to determine economic production and growth, is stilted because of Buddhist teachings of suppressing desire.
PREFACE

The study presented here, giving an insight into some of the influences of Buddhism on the conduct of business in Thailand, is not intended to serve as a practical manual for the Westerner to learn to manipulate or control the Thai businessman. Its purpose is to develop an understanding of the tendency of the Thai business community to conduct itself within the philosophy of Buddhism developed through the centuries.

There are many publications and practical guides for the overseas manager. One factor omitted from many such manuals is the necessity for empathetic understanding of the oriental culture—in this case, that of the Northern Thai businessman. Understanding, respect, and sensitivity are essential if true harmony and progress are to be derived from the business environment. To facilitate the arrival at such a state, management should appreciate how Buddhism permeates almost every facet of business activity in Thailand. This is not to imply that the business affairs are a purely religious activity adhering to all the religious teachings. We are speaking here of the "tendency toward" Buddhism and the long-developed traditions that influence business activity.

Although there are factors that dilute the Buddhist influence—such as the Thai government bureaucracy, a
military dictatorship which assumed power during the 1932 revolution and still declares the country under martial law; the European influence which has been present for many years, but is more pronounced now that Thailand is a base of operations for the United States in the conduct of the war in Vietnam; and the overseas Chinese who control much of the business and finance of Bangkok--the reader should develop an understanding of Thai-Buddhist culture as it relates to the business environment. Perhaps future Western approaches to business activity in Thailand will be tailored in such a way as to increase the rate of progress desired, while respecting and appreciating the cultural influences the Thais wish to retain.

Many of the Buddhist qualities which have a bearing on the Thai businessman's conduct of his business were also operant in the relationship between the researcher and his sources. The Thai tendency to deny his own importance often made it difficult to obtain meaningful answers during the course of an interview; the responses more often being what the subject felt would be pleasing to the interviewer. Americans--particularly military Americans--are outsiders. To gain psychological insight or understanding, the interviewer had to establish trust over an extended period of time. The degree of true communication often was doubtful because of the respect and awe the Thais have for Americans, especially military personnel, and people of apparent wealth and power. The
few interviews which resulted in a sense of real communication and empathy on the part of both parties were a satisfaction unsurpassed in other activities because of the realization that the barrier of reservations had been diminished to a noticeable degree.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study was made in an attempt to ascertain how the practice of Buddhist codes of ethics and religion affects the behavior of the business community in northern Thailand. No effort is made to discuss all aspects of the influence, nor is it argued that Buddhism is the only determinant in the business community. Numerous other pressures and influences permeate this sphere of activity: the Thai government; the attitudes of Europeans, Chinese, and Americans; and the Vietnam conflict. The objective is simply to examine some of the important doctrines of Buddhism and to develop a conceptual framework that will aid in the understanding of these doctrines as they relate to the business community. The work is intended as an exploratory effort in the business-religion aspects of twentieth century northern ("up-country") Thailand.

The changes presently resulting from pressures outside Buddhism create a paradoxical situation in Thailand. Mr. Pote Sarasin, Minister of National Development, stated that his country desires to maintain the traditional (religious) aspects of life and culture, while at the same time
showing progress in company with other civilized countries of the world.¹ The very factors of growth, progress, and expansion in business are, however, sometimes in conflict with the philosophy of Buddhism, which is little concerned with the future and thus neglects planning, expansion, efficiency and improved procedures—the very ingredients so vital to the desired progress. Through the years, Thais have revealed an uncanny knack for adapting to foreign influence in ways that can both satisfy their goals and their cultural patterns. By adaptation to, rather than adoption of, foreign practices, the Thais consider the changes as their own.²

In Thailand, Buddhism presently is adjusting itself to the challenging impact of Western culture. The conflict in South Vietnam is affecting change on Thailand at a rapid and pressing rate. Thailand's cooperation with the United States and her geographic location make her readily available as a base of operations and as a resource for supplies and services. This situation not only has swollen the Thai economy, but it has introduced a foreign influence not previously experienced. Thai businessmen, predominantly Buddhists, work closely with U. S. Forces. They meet the Western (American-European) capitalist influence daily, yet attempt to retain Buddhist practices and

²Ibid.
principles. Fortunately, Buddhism can be flexible and practical, traits which make possible the adaptation mentioned above.

The degree of changing attitudes resulting from such adaptations currently in process will help to determine the future strength of Buddhist philosophy as a meaningful force in the Thai business community.

Statement of the Problem

There is a gulf between the cultures of Western and Thai businessmen which causes misunderstanding and often consternation. Northern Thailand is a prime area for business development, as Bangkok was several years ago. Closing the cross-cultural gulf, through understanding of, and empathy for, the Buddhist philosophy will assist in the microeconomic development of the area. It is the purpose of this study to relate observations of business customs and conduct to the practices and philosophy of Buddhism, and to give the reader an insight into the Thai-Buddhist culture as it affects such customs and conduct.

Scope of Study

The study is limited to Buddhist influence in northern or "up-country," Thailand with some reference to the differences experienced in cosmopolitan Bangkok.

Interviews with construction contractors, service contractors, small suppliers, shopkeepers and
restauranteurs in the area of Takhli, Chainot, and Norkansawan, Thailand, provide the basis. In addition to data gathered from northern area businessmen, a sampling of practices and customs in Bangkok is mentioned for contrast.

Hypothesis

There is an influential relationship between Buddhism and the conduct of business in Northern Thailand. The study of this relationship can develop an understanding of the Thai-Buddhist business behavior, an important factor to the successful development of this new business frontier.

Procedures of the Study

The task of determining how areas of activity are influenced by Buddhism is complicated by the multiplicity of forces acting simultaneously on the phenomena studied and by the impossibility of eliminating some of these by means of a controlled experiment or test.

The work must rely on reports made by personal observation and on data gained through personal interviews—a system not always infallible. In spite of these difficulties, however, valid generalizations have been established to give the reader an insight into Buddhist tendencies in the Thai "up-country" business community. There is no pre-occupation with formal theories; statistics do not play a
valid part in this work; rather, a first-hand survey carrying out sustained local investigations and observations of the Buddhist and his code of behavior in business is the basis of this work.

Informal and frequent interviews were held with Thai businessmen and the noted information later recorded on a questionnaire form. The sampling consists of five Thai businessmen from the cosmopolitan Bangkok area and twenty-five businessmen from the northern area consisting of Takhli, Chainot and Norkansawan. The interviews determined facts, attitudes, and beliefs which relate the Buddhist ethic to business behavior.

In addition to the thirty recorded interviews, sustained observations were made of Thai military and civil service personnel of the Base Procurement Office, as well as employees of the United States Air Force Base Exchange facility at the Royal Thai Air Force Base, Takhli, Thailand.

Method

Behavioral predictions and statements are not invariant, but are based on facts which generally hold true and are, therefore, supported by facts rather than proved by them. General statements are derived from the observation of numerous experiences and are more accurate when applied to a group rather than to the individual. It is recognized that one observation does not constitute
evidence from which to draw a generalization.

The author was a "participant observer." This type of observation is concerned with the inner character of culture and its meaning in man's life. The participant observer's description of a culture need not have analytical emphasis, it may be simply meaningfully socially descriptive. In applying descriptions of the few to the conduct of many, the researcher is moving from the particular to the general.

Organization of the Thesis

The study is divided into four chapters. Following the introductory chapter, Chapter II presents literature related to the study. Chapter III is concerned with the Thai-Buddhist business community. It is here that the writer examines the relationship between microeconomic development and various aspects of Buddhism--doctrine, karma, animism and the monastic life. Chapter IV includes an analysis and summary of the data collected. A bibliography and 3 appendices--Interview Data and Personal Observations--follow.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Economy of Thailand

The Kingdom of Thailand is in the center of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula. It is about three-quarters the size of the state of Texas and is compact except for one long strip extending down the Malay Peninsula. About ninety percent of its thirty million people are rural and the only large city is Bangkok, a growing metropolis of two million on the Chao Phraya River in Central Thailand.¹

Thailand is an agrarian country enjoying a higher standard of living than its neighboring countries. Rice is the staple crop and principal export. Peasant farmers usually own their own fields and preserve in their villages a way of life which modern influences have only just begun to alter. To date the Thai have been largely free of resentment and bitterness against the West; this is generally attributed to Thailand's having never been colonized.²

Business is growing at a rate of five percent a year


²Ibid., p. 8.
as compared with a rate of three percent for the population. The heartland of the Thai nation, the great plain of the Chao Phraya in the Central Region, comprises approximately thirty percent of the country's total area and forty percent of its population. This region has been stripped of natural cover and converted into a huge rice paddy. Water control projects have been increasing the reliability and volume of the rice crops and extending the area that can be farmed profitably. In 1960 an estimated 3.6 million acres were irrigated; this increased to 4.8 million acres by 1967 with the completion of other irrigation projects.\textsuperscript{1}

With a developing trend toward economic diversification, nonagricultural activities also are gaining in importance. Construction increased its contribution to the gross national product from one and six-tenths percent in 1951 to five percent in 1961, and continued its growth to a level substantially higher in 1968 as a result of United States activity in Vietnam. In the 1951 to 1961 period, communications and transportation increased from three percent to eight percent; banking and finance from four to five percent. Agricultural activity expanded both in volume and variety with rubber, corn, tapioca, fibers, fruits and vegetables becoming significant export crops.\textsuperscript{2}

Although conservation programs have reduced revenues by

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
curtailing the cutting of some tropical timbers including teak, the value of other forest products has doubled in the past ten years. Although industry is still small, its contribution to the national income more than doubled between 1951 and 1961.¹

Buddhism

Unlike some other great religions, Buddhism preaches a system of human conduct based primarily on rationality and relying little on the supernatural. For 2,500 years Buddhism has been one of the greatest civilizing forces the Far East has ever known. Today it is the dominant religion of Burma, Thailand, Tibet, Cambodia, Laos, and Ceylon, and a vast spiritual influence elsewhere in Asia.

Buddha's life became a profound example to millions of his fellow men in the centuries that followed. He retained from Hinduism (1) the idea that all living things go through countless cycles of birth, death, and rebirth; (2) the doctrine of karma, the cosmic law of cause and effect by which virtuous conduct is rewarded in future reincarnations and bad conduct leads to retribution; (3) the concept of the world as an abode of ignorance and sorrow from which wise men should seek release; and (4) the idea of renunciation—that the path of wisdom lies in taming the appetites and passions of the flesh.

The spiritual goal of every Buddhist is Nirvana,

¹Ibid.
and this realization can come only after long and laborious effort. By means of good and self-denying deeds and thoughts one is purified through successive lives. The road is hard and one is bound for many lives to the cosmic merry-go-round which is called the "Wheel of Rebirth," the Buddhist belief in reincarnation. In the end, by perseverance, one's insight leads to the sudden discovery of the truth and final release from the wheel, Nirvana.

Buddha's basic teaching consisted of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. The Truths deal with the cause and cure of human suffering, and the Path is the practical technique of action, the detailed prescription by means of which the cure can be achieved. These concepts will be discussed in greater detail as they apply to business conduct (Chapter III). Practice of these virtues form a method of self-discipline that will lead to a life of good works and inner peace of mind.

The principle of the changing self which for unworldliness and pure idealism is outstanding among teachings of any religion, causes the good Buddhist to renounce all attachment to the temporal world. Even Buddha, himself, is not worshipped as a man or a God, but as the embodiment of a principle of enlightenment. It is commonly accepted that there were many Buddhas before Gautama (the founder of Buddhism), and there will be many more after him until the end of time. He was merely one human vehicle for an eternal spiritual concept. Buddhism is not so much a
set of rules as a technique of action by which the individual can gradually divest himself of his worldly desires and finally achieve the spiritual tranquility of selflessness.

Because, to practice Buddhism in its ideal form, demands detachment from the turmoil of daily life it has become largely a monastic religion. Though the majority of Buddhists are laymen who practice few austerities and who live and worship as simply as the laity of other religions, the ideal Buddhists are the monks who follow the path more strictly and who live either in solitude or, more often, in the great monasteries which are scattered throughout the Buddhist world. In Thailand, virtually all Buddhist males spend at least a few weeks of their lives as monks, regarding this period as a part of their education, after which almost all return to a lay life.

Although Buddhist monks officiate at funerals, perform ceremonies, and educate the young, their main function is to serve the layman as an example of the Buddhist way of life and to point the way toward Nirvana. The Buddhist monks live a life of the utmost simplicity and spend much of it in meditation. They own almost no personal property and are supposed to get food only by begging. Belongings include only a robe, an alms bowl for food, a needle, a string of one hundred eight beads which they count while meditating on the qualities of the Buddha, a razor to shave the head, and a filter to strain insects from the
drinking water, lest they inflict suffering on living things.

The three essentials for the Buddhist monks are poverty, inoffensiveness, and celibacy, although certain Buddhist sects permit their monks to marry. They are permitted meals only before noon, made up of the food donated to them. Their diet is usually vegetarian, although they are expected to eat whatever is offered to them and may consume flesh if they have had no hand in, or foreknowledge of, the slaughter of the animal; they follow strictly the Buddhist rule against harming any living thing.

In begging, the monks practice self-discipline; for example, they may make no distinction between the homes of rich or poor, even though the former may provide a tastier meal. With the practice of asceticism they confer a favor in the form of "merit" on those from whom they accept gifts, and it is the giver who says "thank you."

Wherever it penetrated, Buddhism brought with it high ethical concepts: tolerance, nonviolence, respect for the individual, love of animals and nature, and belief in the fundamental spiritual equality of all human beings.

Most intelligent Asians believe that Buddhism and Communism are basically opposed. To Buddhists, man's purpose is spiritual. The Buddhist attitude toward both war and revolution is that they are based on greed and violence and hence are wrong. Like all great religions, Buddhism postulates a life of the spirit that transcends the human
span. It teaches that this life of the spirit is the only true reality. Finally, it teaches that the good life is to be attained only through an act of free will and reason. Buddhists are passive, but they insist on liberty of thought.¹ Buddha said:

Believe nothing, O monks merely because you have been told it...or because it is traditional or because you yourselves imagined it. Do not believe what your teacher tells you merely out of respect for the teacher. But whatsoever, after due examination and analysis, you find to be conducive to the good, the benefit, the welfare of all beings—that doctrine believe and cling to and take it as your guide.²

Rise of Neo-Buddhism

The impact of Occidental philosophical and scientific thought on Thailand during the last part of the nineteenth century and during the twentieth century caused many changes in the religion of the Thai that were exposed to such influences. As a result, the most radical intelligentsia accept only the Principles of Karma, the Three Fundamental Principles, and the Eightfold Path. The Four Noble Truths are somewhat neglected.

The path taken by the educated Thai in the face of Western scientific influence stresses Buddha's sympathetic and cooperative nature, his love and respect for people,

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²Ibid., p. 44.
rather than his teachings per se.\textsuperscript{1} Neo-Buddhism, therefore, is strongly social and altruistic. Desire is now considered meritorious if directed toward social ends, for example the elimination of poverty and the curing of disease. Nirvana is considered too abstract as a goal.\textsuperscript{2}

Buddha's Teachings

Buddha maintained that there were two extremes from which he who leads a religious life should abstain. One is a life of pleasure devoted to desire and enjoyment which is base, ignoble, unspiritual, unworthy and unreal. The other is a life of mortification which is gloomy, unworthy, and unrealistic. An individual who has "attained" is removed from both these extremes and has discovered the way which lies between them--the "Middle Path" which produces insight and knowledge and tends to calm; to higher knowledge, which leads to peace. What is this Middle Way? It is the sacred Eightfold Path.\textsuperscript{3} The Eightfold Path is the fourth Noble Truth, and is the technique for success in handling the first three; i.e., (1) life is suffering, (2) love of life is the cause of suffering, (3) loss of the love of life is the only way to get rid of suffer-


\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 117.

Buddhism in Thailand

Buddhism in Asia determines the character of the nation and the individual; it influences power, sex, psychology and economics. Buddhism is not only religion and philosophy, it is also nationalism and ideology. It is really the ultimate source of Asian values in all phases of life, including business; yet, it is an area in which the West is woefully ignorant. Rarely has the West understood the social, political, and economic aspects of Buddhism or the power and force of the Buddhist faith. Buddhism's standard image on the West is a passive religion that teaches man that he must reject power and passion and seek a gentle middle way to find the Buddha's equivalent of Paradise.

Life in Thailand historically has centered around the Buddhist temple called Wat. The monks indirectly exert a great influence on all aspects of the society. Unfortunately Westerners do not seem to realize their importance and follow a seemingly safe but self-defeating pattern of separating Buddhism from politics, economics, etc. They cannot be separated. The presence of monks is

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3Ibid., p. 10.
a constant Buddhist symbol in Thai life, comforting to the populace.\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid.
CHAPTER III

THAI-BUDDHIST BUSINESS BEHAVIOR

Introduction

The average Thai businessman is exposed to the influences of Theravada Buddhism (the "denomination" accepted in Thailand) in a variety of ways, from the earliest period of his life until his death. What does this influence provide for him in the way of a course of business ethics or conduct? Since Buddhism does not concern itself with this world and thus ignores something as worldly as economics, it places restraints upon business expansion in two ways: it creates an indifference on the part of the Buddhist businessman to financial gain beyond what is practical and necessary; and it specifies behavioral restrictions. These restrictions do reinforce the Buddhist view that affairs of this world do not matter and lead only to sorrow for those who take them seriously. The five moral precepts promise worse life in the next reincarnation for those who defraud or practice deceit.¹ The idea of reincarnation does imply another chance, however,

and serves to weaken such admonitions.

Although the doctrine of all-embracing compassion was an important part of Buddha's teaching, it was a passive compassion directing believers to love all those who suffer in this world, but not directing them to relieve the suffering.¹ For this reason, the devout Buddhist businessman has not even a moral reason for accumulating wealth. Passive compassion results in the performance of compassionate acts not in the interest of improving the status of the individual aided, but to earn for the doer merit for a higher reincarnation. Community action projects involving material improvements are successful, particularly when administered by monks, because merit accumulates.

In order to determine the extent to which the Thai businessman might actually be influenced by Buddhist indoctrination, the writer devised a series of questions designed to evaluate the proprietor/customer relationship. The answers obtained are the results of informal conversation on the topic under examination rather than of direct interrogation. The questions and responses are as follows:

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¹Ibid., p. 3.
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The answers to questions one, two, four, and seven indicate the reluctance of successful citizens to become involved in the problems of the less fortunate. Whatever action taken is motivated by the desire to merit, as shown by the answers to questions eight, nine, and ten.

Results of the interview show that the businessmen do not belong to organizations with objectives of improving the status of others or relieving the suffering of
unfortunate groups. None of the men interviewed belonged to a civic-action group. Individually, businessmen assist others, but only as it gains merit for them in order to obtain a higher status in the next reincarnation. On numerous occasions, businessmen were observed giving coins to crippled people, very old people, and other unfortunates. This was done with only a wai (gesture of respect). No words were exchanged. When questioned as to the problems of the unfortunate, the businessmen often knew nothing about these people and said that the gain of the merit was the purpose of the donation.

In order to comprehend the strength of the influence of Buddhism on the Thai businessmen it is necessary to know something about the fundamentals of Buddhist teaching.

Buddha's basic doctrine and analysis are the "Four Noble Truths":¹

I. Existence is unhappiness. (Life is suffering.)

II. Unhappiness is caused by selfish craving. (Love of life is the cause of suffering.)

III. Selfish craving can be destroyed. (Loss of the love of life is the only way to get rid of the suffering.)

IV. The causes of suffering can be destroyed by following the Eightfold Path:

   1. Right understanding (views)

   2. Right purpose (aspiration)

3. Right speech
4. Right conduct
5. Right vocation
6. Right effort
7. Right alertness (mind control)
8. Right concentration (mindfulness)

In addition, the Principle of Karma, the law of cause and effect manifesting itself in merit—earning to enhance a higher reincarnation—is a prime consideration in Thai Buddhism. Animism, which includes spirits, superstitions and astrology, is not a part of pure Buddhism but is tolerated by Buddhism and sometimes practiced by the monks.

The remainder of this chapter will be a study of business thought as it is affected by the more important segments of Buddhist doctrine, the monkhood, the community Wat, and the effect of these on the microeconomic development of Thailand. All portions will be interspersed with various Buddhist "ideals."

Influence of Buddhist Doctrine

The Buddhist code defines the ethical and moral system and provides the justification for the Sangkha (monkhood).¹

The Four Noble Truths

The Four Noble Truths deal with the cause and cure of human suffering, the fourth truth being the practical technique of action to achieve the cure. Practice of these virtues forms a method of self-discipline that will lead to a life of good works and inner peace of mind. Buddhism is not so much a set of rules as a technique of action to divest men of worldly desires and achieve selflessness.

After experimenting with extreme poverty, Buddha, who had been raised in the luxurious surroundings of nobility, determined that moderation was most effective and developed the Eightfold Path as the method to achieve the Middle Way. This avoids the two extremes of asceticism and luxury. The Four Noble Truths are:

I. "Existence is Unhappiness" or "Life is Suffering." Buddha determined that suffering is involved in birth, old age, disease, decay, association with unpleasantness, separation from what pleases and not to win what one desires. The origin of suffering is the thirst for existence that leads from rebirth to rebirth, accompanied by pleasure and lust; the thirst for pleasure, thirst for existence, and the thirst for the impermanent. To eliminate or suppress suffering, the Buddhist must extinguish thirst through the annihilation of desire and allowing it no place within the being.

II. "Unhappiness is Caused by Selfish Craving" also
interpreted as "Love of Life is the Cause of Suffering." This truth seeks the origin of existence. All our misfortune flows from an eternal will-to-live, either because we are pleased to believe in our survival or because we live in perpetual fear of failing to secure ultimate peace.

III. "Selfish Craving Can Be Destroyed," or "Loss of the Love of Life is the Only Way." If the will in the second truth is the cause of existence then it only needs to be suppressed to nullify its effect immediately.¹

IV. "Selfish Craving Can be Destroyed by Following the Eightfold Path or the 'Way.'" The Way is the technique by which craving and unhappiness can be destroyed.

The central purpose of the Four Noble Truths is the removal of suffering from human experience. Buddha realized that pain and misery are bound up with desires which, when attained in place of satisfaction, bring more desires and misery.² Desire is the major reason for evil.³

Attempting to establish through interviews the knowledge pertaining to suffering, desire, and craving as they relate to happiness, was difficult. The responses to questions relating to the Four Truths were predominately a polite "yes," clearly indicating the respondents did not


³Ibid., p. 104.
understand the interviewer, further validating the contention that the Thai is unable to work with abstract concepts. As will be noted shortly, however, the fourth Noble Truth which actually is the Eightfold Path to the Middle Way, is more easily discussed and it was possible to obtain reasonable responses within its context.

A query about the suffering of life, selfish craving, suppression of craving, and how this affects the Thai brought the response, "Mai Pen Rai" (it doesn't matter), along with obvious lack of real understanding. Careful observation of Thai businessmen regarding the truths did indicate an acceptance of suffering and a lack of craving or envy. These observations can be deemed substantially valid after a comprehensive review of the entire interview summary. Acceptance of current status, and the suffering involved, is more understandable to the Thai in the Principle of Karma; each individual is in the status he has earned in previous life cycles and that by doing good deeds he will be able to earn a higher reincarnation and therefore less suffering in the next rebirth. The Thai understands Buddhist "ideals" more easily than abstract thoughts which transfers concepts to practical application. Ideals relating to the path include:

(1) Though living at home, be never desirous of anything (envy and desire)

(2) Though surrounded by family, hold aloof from worldly pleasures (suppress desire)

(3) Dissuade covetousness (desire and envy)
(4) The perfect way is only difficult for those who pick and choose (suffering and desire)

(5) Pain, if you seek serenity in Oneness, will vanish of its own accord (suffering)

(6) Let things take their own course (destroy craving)\(^1\)

The Thai businessman bases his behavior on the four Noble Truths, but he does so without being consciously aware of the nature, origin, and removal of suffering except as they are projected through the Eightfold Path, Principle of Karma, and Buddhist Ideals. The survey of businessmen, found in Appendix B, contains responses indicating that one hundred percent of those interviewed do accept their status as something earned and do not crave more business growth or expansion. Misfortune in business is accepted gracefully with a sincere "Mai Pen Rai." The practices, revealed in the "ideals," reduce suffering and increase happiness. Business volume is accepted as it comes in the normal course of events and there is no effort to gain a percentage of the market or use sharp business practices to overcome competition. Profits earned are not considered a necessary means of capital investment for expansion. Sustained observation revealed profits were used to attain the desired goal of a higher rebirth through merit-making, to enjoy festivals, and to socialize. Happiness is an important factor in this life.\(^2\) The Thai is

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\(^1\)Burtt, op. cit., pp. 227, 238.

\(^2\)Data Interview, Appendix B.
not an economic creature, but a creature of the spirit, the only true reality sphere. This is further validated in the section on Karma and business development. Thus, Thai business behavior is influenced by the Four Noble Truths. We have studied the first three which establish the nature, origin and removal of suffering. The fourth truth, the practical method of effecting the removal of suffering, follows.

The Eightfold Path

The first two steps of the Eightfold Path, right understanding and right purpose, are preliminary conditions that are essential. Without a right understanding of the problem of life and a settled purpose to achieve the solution, no further progress can be expected. These two steps are also interpreted as right knowledge and right intention.

After considerable merit making and several reincarnations, the goal of Nirvana is anticipated. This goal is attained depending on the state of knowledge or state of ignorance. If ignorance prevails, more cycles of the wheel of existence permit more merit-making (karma) until right knowledge is attained.

A Westerner might consider this goal as annihilation,

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2 Burtt, op. cit., p. 29.
a blotting out of all experience, but to the Thai who follows the discipline it means a calm, cool selflessness. Ethically, it is the freedom from desire.\footnote{Ibid.}

Desire results in worry and tension, a common Western occupational hazard. In the twelve months during which the northern Thai businessmen were observed on a daily basis, there was little evidence of worry or tension. Occasionally a young man showed signs of worry and tension because of his desire to please and gain respect of the Americans.\footnote{Interview Data, Appendix B.} Older men further developed along the Buddhist ethic of the Middle Way, believed that since they could not control what is to be, nothing could be accomplished by worry and tension; the results of desire. When a man sincerely believes this thesis and incorporates this attitude, he can be free to relax and enjoy life as it is. This manner of thinking is called Choei, it is the abolition of desire evidenced by noninvolvement and calculated indifference.\footnote{Jerry Schecter, The New Face of Buddha (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1967), p. 100.} This attitude on the part of Thai businessmen was sometimes misinterpreted by American procurement personnel as a sign of lack of interest, or apathy. During observations of contract negotiations, it was clear that such was not the case. The Thai, being free from strong desire, was also free to think clearly and
impersonally using strategy for which the Americans were not prepared. These two steps were perhaps the most dominant in business practice. He can, and usually does, conduct business in a calm, mild, selflessness which frees him from desire and in effect arrives at right understanding and right purpose. This, to the Thai, is successfully attaining his goal.

The third and fourth steps of the "Way," right speech and right conduct, along with the fifth step—right vocation, constitute a pledge of one's readiness to order his daily life in a manner consistent with his announced goal, and constitute the moral foundation on which progress toward the goal can be built.¹ This means the Buddhist should use words as a medium of thorough honesty, follow the rules of moral conduct and earn his living in a way that is ethically reputable. It was evident in contacts with Thai vendors and contractors that this doctrine was a conscious factor in conducting their business life. The author could depend on the word of a Thai businessman for proper action with a minimum of written documentation.

Buddha taught that "he who acts rightly, him joy follows, as his shadow which does not leave him."² Hatred in this world does not come to an end through hatred, but

¹Burtt, op. cit., p. 29.
through love, this has been the rule from all eternity. ¹

In practice, these steps can be rationalized to fit the situation and therefore are not as binding as they might appear. For instance, the prohibition against taking life results in firing squads shooting at a paper target behind which the criminal stands. The fishermen simply catch fish and lay them aside on the banks in the sun. If the fish should be so unwise as to expire it certainly is not due to the fishermen killing them.²

Stealing is rationalized by putting attention on the intent. If no one is harmed by the theft, it is not evil. Shoplifting in the United States Air Force Base Exchange was of major proportions—no evil was involved since trucks brought endless merchandise and no one was harmed.

Lying was similarly rationalized. The Thai is sensitive to embarrassing others or being embarrassed. If a falsehood will prevent such a situation then the moral precepts have not been violated. This perhaps was the most annoying trait in the performance of purchasing and contracting. American procurement personnel would believe there had been a meeting of the minds with contractors because of a smile, a sincere "yes" in response to questions of availability and delivery of supplies and services. Later, it would be learned that the Thai had no idea what

¹Ibid.
²U. S. Army Area Handbook for Thailand, p. 120.
the item was, far less having information as to availabil-
ity and delivery. This resulted in a disruption of plan-
ning on the part of military personnel and embarrassment to
the contractor who lost face when the situation was exposed
and the business was given to a competitor. Because the
Thai does not comprehend the importance of adhering to a
tight schedule, he does not realize that his "innocent
lies" are, in fact, damaging and therefore they constitute
a violation of Buddhist doctrine.¹

In the process of expediting delinquent contracts,
the Procurement Officer arranged interviews with the busi-
nessmen. A female interpreter was used to determine the
facts and to pass on mild reprimands. After four such in-
terviews she burst out of the room in tears. Another
western-educated Thai employee explained that the conversa-
tion she had been obliged to interpret violated her Thai-
Buddhist culture on two accounts. Firstly, women do not
speak to men in the forceful manner she had attempted.
Buddha did not have a high opinion of women and it was re-
flected in his teachings.² To speak in the manner in-
structed was violating the cultural pattern. Secondly,
the interpreter was placed in the position of embarrassing
the contractors in a face-to-face confrontation. Harsh

¹Suhr, op. cit., p. 104.
²Arvon, op. cit., p. 54.
words cause pain to both parties involved. She had not practiced right speech and right conduct.

Although the Thai businessman is not dedicated to achievement, growth, and profit as is the Westerner, he is dedicated to the fifth step of the path—right vocation. Businessmen are refreshingly honest and naive, interested in pleasing the customer to gain prestige and respect. The interview data indicate that doing business with the United States Air Force carried prestige which was valued above profit. Because of the lack of attention to specifications and other details, the contractor often had to do work over, resulting in a reduction of profit. Since a reputable image as a businessman was an overriding concern and in accordance with Buddha’s fifth step of the path, the businessman faced his loss without distress.

To generalize, Buddhist businessmen do follow the third and fourth steps (right speech and conduct) and attempt to follow the fifth step (right vocation). Buddha said to be generous, courteous, benevolent, treat others as yourself and be as good as your word. The vast majority of Northern businessmen interviewed and observed were within this behavioral standard. They conducted business


3 Interview Data, Appendix B.
with consideration for the feelings of their client or 
customer. Face-to-face confrontations were rare and when 
necessary the use of a third person was employed to avoid 
embarrassment. They were aware of sincerity and mildness 
and responded accordingly. To most Thais, the notion that 
status or prestige should be accorded to an individual in 
ratio to his wealth would seem preposterous. This is in 
consonance with the first step of the Eightfold Path, 
right understanding. In accordance with the third step, 
right speech, most Thais would be too polite to offend a 
purse-proud foreigner by saying it was preposterous. The 
sixth, seventh, and eighth steps of the Middle Way—right 
effort, right alertness and right concentration—are funda-
mental conditions of systematic progress toward the goal 
of the Middle Way.\(^1\) Properly practiced they lead one to 
the power of absolute concentration by which the mind shows 
itself completely free from the sudden promptings and un-
predictable actions which arise from craving. The rare 
person who reaches this stage is no longer subject to re-
birth but leaves the wheel of life and enters Nirvana. 
This is a state of liberation, inner peace and strength, 
insight into truth, the joy of complete oneness with real-
ity, and love toward all creatures in the universe.\(^2\)

The practice of the precepts which lead one toward 

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\(^1\)Burtt, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 29. 

\(^2\)Ibid.
Nirvana controls Thai behavior in all aspects of life. The sixth and seventh steps are the businessman's deliberation prior to making a decision. During the one year course of observation only one contractor was considered to have behaved impulsively, and he was from Bangkok. All others conducted themselves in consonance with "right effort" and "right alertness." In the conduct of business with Thai contractors, the atmosphere was not one of tense excitement, but was calm and thoughtful with a touch of joviality. Inter-Thai business transactions produce a similar atmosphere. Since selfishness and desire not in accordance with Buddhist philosophy, there is a greatly diminished need for pressure to obtain business with the result that there is true freedom of action and thought in a relaxed atmosphere.

The eighth and last step of the holy truths, right concentration or right mindfulness, teaches that:

1. The phenomenal world is unreal

2. The degree to which man accepts this emptiness or unreality of the phenomenal world determines the degree of his deliverance

3. Right mindfulness is the supreme virtue of Buddhism.

This holy truth involves detachment from all objective and subjective diversity. It is fulfilled when the personality can abstract itself from all desire and abandon all will to live (at any cost).

1Arvon, op. cit., p. 41.
This virtue is the main issue and constitutes the supreme virtue of Buddhism. In divesting earthly things of all reality and making inner contemplation the sole and essential condition of a liberating escape, Buddhism can be only a passive ethic. It directs man to refrain from evil much more than it directs him to do good. A profound and admirable calmness results, verging upon indifference.2

The Buddhist virtue of uppekha means to practice detachment from persons and things. This is a virtue implying objectivity and impartiality.3 To feel things are not intrinsically important is to be "cool-hearted" and to be as uninvolved as possible is, if not carried to excess, a general Thai value.4 Adherence to this value eliminates the forces of competition and the motivation for material gain which are essential to business growth and expansion.

The Thai believes his business is impermanent since it is of the world. Therefore, it is easy for him to maintain a calm detachment toward it. This outlook is the same for laborers who put little value on their job, as evidenced by absenteeism, turnover rate and lack of pride in

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., p. 43.
4 Ibid.
the work.

A contract for grouting the airstrip at Takhli Royal Air Force Base offered interesting instances of the traits expected of Buddhists. After exhaustive coordination by U. S. military officials, the landing strips were closed for five days to allow the tar in the cement separation cracks to be removed and replaced. Closing the field seriously hampered combat operations, and it was expected that the contractor would work rapidly. When the author inspected the progress he found an idle and broken machine which was replaced by ten women with kitchen paring knives. They were calmly picking at the tar as though they had the rest of their lives. A male supervisor was overseeing the work without comment.

The atmosphere established by the workers was jovial, social and carefree. They were not absorbed by their vocation; this impermanent worldly task was not interfering with sanuk (having pleasure). The job was not intrinsically important and schedules were not a part of their orientation. The supervisor was not concerned about the broken machine and seemed to have no concept of production rate. The frustrated American operations personnel, with their boisterous reprimands brought forth winning smiles and expressions of "Mai Pen Rai." It was a paradox of cultures, i.e. six million dollar aircraft idle while a few women—the picture of serenity and poise—worked on the runway with their paring knives for ten cents an hour. They were
happy with an inner peace not shared by the shocked U. S. officials.

Summary. The main thesis of Buddha's teaching calls for the destruction of suffering in man's experience and the choice of a substitute at the expense of desire. In the practice of the Eightfold Path toward the elimination of suffering, the businessman is allowed much individual discretion, except for the admonition to follow the middle of the road. Although they take advantage of this "discretion," or rationalization, the Thai businessmen in the area studied are remarkably homogeneous in their business traits and ethics in relation to the Eightfold Path.

The eight requirements that will eliminate suffering by correcting false values and giving true knowledge of life's meaning have been summed up as follows:

1. First, one must see clearly what is wrong (right understanding).

2. Next, one must decide to be cured (right purpose).

3. One must act (right conduct).

4. One must speak so as to aim at being cured (right speech).

5. One's livelihood must not conflict with his therapy (right vocation).

6. That therapy must go forward at a velocity that can be sustained (right effort).

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7. One must think incessantly (right alertness).

8. One must learn how to contemplate with the deep mind (right mindfulness).

By following this guide, the businessman thinks and speaks with care and truthfulness in a career which will not be damaging to himself or others and keeps his sights on the last two steps which are essential to reaching his goal.

This orientation develops a calm freedom from ego drives and strong desires which can ultimately lead to Nirvana. As these precepts apply to normal business methods, observations revealed that cooperation among the "competitors" in locating and transporting merchandise was more common than trying to outdo one another. There was no "puffery" in promoting themselves to gain business. Losing a piece of business caused no outward signs of disappointment—only a smile and Mai Pen Rai. There was a noticeable detachment from the business operation. The business was not so important as the family, the Middle Way, or karma.¹ Buddha had cautioned businessmen not to be absorbed by their work, teaching that the real meaning of life was inner peace.

¹Interview Data, Appendix B.
Karma

Karma is the Buddhist law of cause and effect. It means that good deeds cause good to happen and evil deeds cause evil to happen. Considering that the Buddhist ethic dictates avoidance but does not require that positive action be taken, it follows that good deeds mean abstention from the affairs of this world. Buddha stated, "Those who love nothing in this world are rich in joy and free from pain." If one commits no positive evil and avoids all pitfalls of the flesh, he may be reborn into a higher status. Thus, Buddhism is a highly subjective faith. One is not required to take any social action beyond tolerance of and/or compassion for his fellow men. Suffering is inevitable. If people are poor, or otherwise in despair, it is the result of karma, their own evil deeds having brought them to such a condition. They can be raised from misery only through a subjective reordering of their lives; no outsider can help them. Only self-knowledge brings salvation.

The doctrine of karma is central to the structure of the Buddhist belief. Every act, word, and thought has its consequences. The Buddhist believes this is the result

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1 Sutton, op. cit., p. 4.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
of a cosmic principle. All forms of existence are related to karma, the system by which higher incarnations are earned, bringing one closer to the ultimate goal, Nirvana.¹

The acceptance of the doctrine of karma in business practice was evident in the relaxed, nonaggressive behavior exhibited by most of the businessmen observed. It was a common sight each morning to see merchants presenting food to the saffron-robbed monks. A significant "investment" on the part of a Thai businessman was the purchase of a caged bird, bought for the sole purpose of setting it free. Employees frequently gained paid time off from work in order to work on a project at the Wat and customers might take advantage of the merchant without fear of retaliation. Such charity and nonaggression are practiced in order to accumulate merit for a higher reincarnation. However admirable this practice may be from a moral point of view, it is not conducive to our concept of business success.

To determine the extent of the value placed upon participation in the practice of merit-making, the following questions were asked of the businessmen in the survey (see data in Appendix B).

1. Do you try to earn merit every day?  
   Yes  100  No  0  (?)  0

2. Do you ever work at the Wat?  
   Yes  64  No  36  (?)  0

3. Do you give coins to the old, poor, and crippled?  
   Yes  100  No  0  (?)  0

4. Do you donate 10% or more of your income to the Wat?  
   Yes  80  No  8  (?)  12

5. Do you donate food to the monks every day?  
   Yes  100  No  0  (?)  0

6. Do you charge monks for small purchases?  
   Yes  0  No  100  (?)  0

7. Were you or do you plan to be a monk?  
   Yes  88  No  12  (?)  0

8. Do you give time off to employees to perform tasks at the Wat, for merit?  
   Yes  100  No  0  (?)  0

Since karma is Buddhism to the average Thai peasant, this list could go on indefinitely. These few examples do serve to show the importance of the practice of merit making.

All businessmen interviewed as well as all other shopkeepers, clerks, and laborers, met on more casual terms accepted "merit" as a realistic and ever-present principle which they believed in and practiced daily. One hundred percent earned merit by contributing time, effort, or funds to the community Wat. All business owners had given time off to employees to perform merit for the Wat at the same time earning some for themselves. One reason for the practice of serving a period of time as a monk was
to earn merit.

After determining that karma was practiced extensively it was logical to determine if there was just a superficial acceptance or if the Thai businessman really believed in and had knowledge of the subtle aspects of karma. As mentioned earlier, it is difficult for Thais to work with abstract thoughts, but the following questions were asked:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>(?) (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you hope to earn a higher reincarnation in the next life cycle?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Will much merit assure you of this?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If you had 10,000 baht ($500) would you give it to the monks for a school rather than buy extra stock for your business?</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Would you help out a competitor in trouble?</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If you cheat a customer do you lose merit?</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Does merit also earn you respect and prestige among your colleagues?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such an orientation as karma influences business decisions in several ways. The expenditure of accumulated funds for merit earning prevents the business owner from increasing his stock and buying additional machinery or equipment. This in turn limits the scope of the business
and prevents growth, expansion and improved service. Contrary to Western ideas, the Thai businessman feels successful in that he has spent his money to earn respect and prestige among colleagues, monks and customers, and merit for the future. In remaining small, he is better able to maintain serenity, to practice gentleness and contemplation, and to devote time to his family. To the businessman of any level, these latter factors are more important than dedication to business development.

Merit-making has no economic utility but is capital investment, so to speak, in psychic well being. It is not for present-day business progress but for a better reincarnation. Although in the past there has been little organized effort in the practice of karma, Buddhism is now modifying the object of merit-making to include practical projects that will better the life of the community.¹

The Buddhist concept of merit-making does not provide an incentive for the businessman to become wealthy by accumulating capital; rather, it is the reverse. It is the already accumulated merit which is the measure of one's present wealth or other good fortune. The possession of this wealth helps one to devote more time to merit-making which will bring more material and spiritual wealth in the next life cycle. It follows, therefore, that the poorer one is, the more he should spend on merit-making to catch

¹Schecter, op. cit., p. 99.
up. This is rather regressive from a welfare point of view since it means the poverty-stricken man must divest himself even farther of what little goods he may possess in order to achieve a higher place in the next life. As for capital accumulation in business, karma requires that one spend existing assets for meritorious purposes rather than for business investment.¹

The foregoing two groups of questions, along with those on compassion in the introduction of this chapter, indicate clearly that a man's obligations and responsibilities are to the progress of his own soul, not specifically to the welfare of others; that the Thai cares little for organized works of charity and social service; and that whatever charitable deeds he does enact, are performed in the name of merit for himself, rather than out of concern for his fellow. The application of this concept to the Thai businessman means that he must be absolutely independent. There is no aid for a failing business, nor does he expect any. The Thais have not learned to look to government or social organizations for support.² Although the Thai businessman is independent, the passive Buddhist ethic negates any initiative by not requiring positive and progressive action. This is not, as some Americans conclude, symptomatic of Thai disinterest in self-improvement. It is merely an age-old tradition and one not likely to

¹Ibid.
²Sutton, op. cit., p. 7.
disappear.

An attitude such as karma, developed literally from the cradle on, is bound to be a handicap in a society striving to achieve a social and economic growth within the framework of its own culture.

**Animism**

Through the centuries Buddhism changed and adapted to satisfy the needs for avoiding misfortune. Thus, Thai Buddhism is involved with a facet that is somewhat foreign to its original nature: animism. Animism is the worldly orientation to complement the Buddhist spiritual orientation for avoiding unfortunate situations. Animism is tolerated within Buddhism rather than accepted as a part of it. It includes spirits or minor dieties, spirits of specified deceased humans, ghosts and sorcery, amulets, and religious practitioners (similar to fortune tellers).\(^1\) Superstitions are developed from these factors.

The concept, though irrational and unmethodical, defines for the peasant the broad outlines of the world and his position in it. As beliefs and practices are perceived to be ineffective they fall into disuse with no regrets. There is an ad hoc piecemeal approach to the opportunities and crises of life.\(^2\)

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. 389.
The universe is believed to be suffused with an impersonal power that may impart extraordinary effectiveness to any object or person; but it is temporary and unstable.

All business establishments and many gardens and rice fields observed in up-country Thailand have a "spirit house," containing miniature human figures and mounted on a five-foot post in the east corner of the property and believed to give protection.\(^1\) Spirits of ancestors, friends, etc., are believed to dwell in them. The peasant communicates with the spirits and places food and flowers in the house daily. Although all of the businessmen interviewed were unsure of how this practice worked they were convinced that if the spirits became offended, misfortune could come to their business. Conversely, the spirits could generate good luck if they were kept satisfied, assuming superhuman forces can be induced to cooperate.\(^2\)

It is unnecessary to solve today's problems in order to pave the way for a smoother tomorrow. No matter how bad business is today, proper treatment of the spirits can bring improvement tomorrow. There is no need for an analytical and corrective approach to the problem.

To determine the extent of the belief in animism—spirits and astrology—these questions were put to those interviewed:

\(^1\)White, op. cit., p. 132.

\(^2\)Piker, op. cit., p. 389.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
<th>No %</th>
<th>(?)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you wear an amulet?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you have a spirit house at your business?</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you ask spirits for protection and good luck?</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Could you tell me how the spirits work and help?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Spirit practices change periodically rather than lasting a lifetime?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Would you open a new business on a Tuesday in November, March or July?</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Would you open a new business only on 13th, 14th, or 15th of each month?</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Are the spirit rules you believe the same as those all other people believe?</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Spirits and astrology are not as popular as they used to be?</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One hundred percent of those interviewed, in addition to all others observed, wore amulets. An amulet is a metal or ceramic pendant hung around the neck which, after it has been blessed, gives protection to the wearer and also reminds him of his dependence on Buddha as he goes about his business. During a lull or while waiting to see someone, businessmen could be observed fondling the amulet and meditating.

Superstitions were developed on a family or even an
individual basis. It was discovered that three contractors engaged by the United States Air Force would not conduct business on various dates of each month in order to retain good luck from the spirits. Even when negotiations for a contract were scheduled on those days, there was no exception to this pattern. This was a superstition personally developed by these businessmen. Another man postponed the opening of his new business in deference to the same spirits who were expected to stay way from his sick son because of a string tied around his waist.

Other superstitions were more universal. Sixty percent of those interviewed said they would not open a new business on a Tuesday in November, March, or July. Forty-two percent would be sure to open a new venture or start in a new position on the thirteenth, fourteenth, or fifteenth of each month. Most religious ceremonies are held on the eighth day of the waxing moon, the day of the full moon, or the eighth and fifteenth days of the waning moon.\(^1\) Timing of important events must be in harmony with the astrol forces to improve the potential for success.\(^2\)

The responses were far stronger for the visual practices than for the questions determining belief. This superstitious facet of the culture is diminishing and becoming less important in influencing business but at this

\(^1\)U.S. Army Area Handbook for Thailand, p. 197.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 195.
time it is still significant.

From the above data, it was generalized that the Northern Thai businessman is significantly superstitious. This trait influences some decisions in the conduct of business but is diminishing as an important factor in decision-making.

Influence of Sangkha (Monkhood)
and the Wat

There are four hundred thousand saffron-robed monks in Thailand. This is four times the size of the Thai armed forces.¹ Eight-eight percent of the businessmen interviewed had served, or planned to serve, a period of their life as a monk. As a monk, they would live a life of utmost simplicity, spending much of their time in meditation about the philosophy of Buddhism.²

The monks roaming over Thailand in their saffron robes are highly respected. Their presence gives the Thai a sense of security as he trusts them completely.³

The monk often is the first person to be sought out for advice on business matters.⁴ Interview data indicate seventy-six percent of those in the sample do seek advice of monks and all of the seventy-six percent consider the

¹Schecter, op. cit., p. 95.
²Ibid., p. 99
³U. S. Army Area Handbook for Thailand, p. 110
advice to be realistic.

The Thai businessman believes the monks have intuitive powers. Because of this belief, monks often are utilized as management consultants, giving technical advice.\(^1\) One company consulted a monk before making the decision of where to develop a mining operation.\(^2\)

The Buddhist clergy, always the servants of tradition and stability, are now carrying the first elements of modernization to the villages and are vastly responsible for economic development.\(^3\) New businesses start as a direct result of the monks' progressive efforts. The government uses the monks to promote programs because it recognizes their tremendous influence.\(^4\)

Phra Tep Ratana Molee, abbot of That Phanom, has been a monk for thirty-eight of his fifty-eight years. He is close to the problems in his area and aware of the social, economic and political needs of the people. He has his monks perform community projects, counsel businessmen, and encourage progress for all. The people in his area do not trust the government officials because of many bad experiences with them. When the people see the saffron robes, they are happy and secure. The monks are the community's natural leaders—planning, directing and

\(^1\)Ibid.
\(^2\)U. S. Army Area Handbook for Thailand, p. 110
\(^3\)Schecter, op. cit., p. 90
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 91.
actually doing the work.\textsuperscript{1}

Business ethics are influenced by the monks who are in daily contact with the villagers and are constantly drawn into their secular problems. The monks frequently are related by blood to the laymen who come to their temple to meditate.\textsuperscript{2} The social role of the monks is a response to the vacuum of minimal government services—the lack of schools, medical facilities, social welfare and community services.\textsuperscript{3} In place of these, the monks care for orphans, organize building programs and offer basic technical advice learned in the monastery. They are educated in the fields of architecture, carpentry, tile, brick and cement making, medical care, sanitary practices, business administration, and they even settle disputes.\textsuperscript{4} As the monks learn more and take this knowledge to the field, they create new skills and new businesses, and generally improve the economy of the community (see Fig. 1). As the noncareer monks absorb the education and then re-enter the business community, they become lay leaders and more influential businessmen as they too increase the economic strength of the community.

The Buddhist monks remain apolitical, although they

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 89.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Schecter, \emph{op. cit.}, p. 90.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{4}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
participate in many kinds of state functions down to the inauguration of a new train service or a new building. However, they do not become active in politics per se. Note that of all the businessmen interviewed, most of whom had served as monks, none indicated an interest to become active in politics.¹

The monks genuinely are opposed to Communist advances in the North and are applying the philosophy and means to oppose it. According to the abbot of Nakorn Phanom, just across the Mekong River, "The communists teach that one is born for this world and should try to be happy for oneself. Buddhism teaches one to do good in this life so that one will be born to a higher life in the next reincarnation."² Since the monks hold the respect of the people, as they work with them on dams, roads, and other projects, they can oppose communism and stress the good in Buddhism.³ This influence is not limited to the laborers on the projects, but is spread to the businessmen in the endless hours of discussion at the Wat. Most businessmen contacted were outspokenly against communism. Their opinions were derived from the monks since, in the area studied, there is suspicion of government officials who also try to discourage communism.

¹Interview Data, Appendix B.
²Schecter, op. cit., p. 89.
³Ibid.
Despite the ideal of detachment from the affairs of this life, the monk physically is actually quite involved in them. Only by maintaining an objective view of life and the world can he preserve his detachment.\(^1\) Thus by utilizing his knowledge of various trades and professions he is considered a competent management consultant by the Thai businessmen.\(^2\)

Interviews revealed that ninety-two percent of the sample group had monks perform a ceremony at the opening of their business venture. The author, attending such a ceremony for a new hotel, observed nine monks sitting on nine pillows chanting *sutras* for thirty minutes. A ribbon extended the length of the row of monks, then to a figure of Buddha, and finally attached to the building. The cord transmits a good influence to the business establishment. The monks went to each door of the hotel rooms and, with a white paste-like substance, made a triangle of six spots with a finger as a symbolic blessing. Prior to leaving the premises, the officials of the business presented gifts to the monks on a plastic tray. Since monks have few needs and fewer possessions, the gifts included simple items such as lotus blossoms (a symbol of purity), candles, matches, tooth brush and toilet paper. The final portion of the ceremony was the sprinkling of blessed water on the

\(^{1}\text{U. S. Army Area Handbook for Thailand, p. 110.}\)

\(^{2}\text{Interview Data, Appendix B.}\)
owner by the senior monk. This process launches the businessman into his venture with Buddhist blessing.

Monks seldom pay for their simple needs. They are not charged for transportation, food and other small purchases. The businessman considers donating to monks a welcome opportunity to earn merit. Each morning the monks walk through the streets accepting food from the shopkeepers. This is not considered begging, but accepting, so others can earn merit. Businessmen give robes and major gifts to the monks during a ceremony at the Wat during the festival of That Kathin.

A Buddhist monk might further his studies by becoming a preacher, a doctor, an astrologer, an artist, an artisan, and so on. The average villagers, unlike the monks, had no time for studies because most of their time was occupied in the arduous work of making a living. A monk with education was in demand by the people. The specialized services were given free by the monk, and in return the villagers would present gifts. Thus the knowledge of the monks influenced the activities of the villagers as they worked their farms and shops. The monks were depended on for advice of all kinds—even to the selection of a "lucky" day to open a new business or to a decision on how to handle a business problem.

Some monks, after having been a number of years in the monkhood, leave the brotherhood to lead a layman's life. Whatever knowledge a monk has gained during his
monkhood will be turned into a useful occupation. He will set up his shop, take on one or two young apprentices, who will later probably marry his daughters and set up independent shops, though getting their work from the master. As time passes, there could arise in the vicinity, a village of artisans or tradesmen, most of whom have a connection somehow or other by blood or marriage with the master artist and ex-monk. The older master is consulted on most matters and influences the conduct of many people with the knowledge gained as a Buddhist monk.¹

The words and ways of the monks are so inextricably interwoven in the fabric of Thai village life that these men have a profound influence whether or not they acknowledge it or even want it. Their influence has been subtle and moderate, but prevailing.²

The Community Wat

There are over thirty thousand Wats in Thailand.³ Observations indicate that the Wat functions as more than a place for meditation. It seems to serve as a focal point for social activities. To determine the extent to which businessmen are active in the affairs of the Wat, thereby projecting its influence on the village businessmen, these

²Schecter, op. cit., p. 103.
³Ibid., p. 4.
FIGURE 1

INFLUENCE OF THE BUDDHIST WAT ON NORTHERN THAILAND'S ECONOMY
questions were posed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you go to the Wat at least once a week?</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you ever work at the Wat (to gain merit)?</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you donate ten percent or more of your income to the Wat?</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you give time off to employees to perform tasks at the Wat for merit?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you participate in recreation activities at the Wat?</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Did you ever attend classes at the Wat?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Have you hired people through recommendations received at the Wat?</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Have you ever stored funds at the Wat for safekeeping?</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you go to the Wat often to see friends to socialize?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The businessmen are active supporters of the Wat, in time, effort, and money to a degree that is very significant. Since one hundred percent of those interviewed did attend classes at the Wat and since practices concerning time, effort, and donations are taught there, it is apparent that the influence is retained in later years.

Sixty-four percent have worked at the Wat performing
maintenance and administrative duties. This is regarded as highly meritorious and a praiseworthy sacrifice of time, labor, and wealth; so much so that all employers questioned allowed employees the opportunity to participate in this merit-making activity. When queried about the loss of employee time and the effect on business workload and profits the answer was a standard "Mai Pen Rai."

The answers to questions five through nine indicate that businessmen participate in all the services and activities offered to a significant degree. It appears that businessmen do not participate in the recreation program or vault service to a great extent. The observer suspected misunderstanding in their interpretation of recreation and socializing which are almost synonymous to the Thai. Socializing is the most popular activity at the Wat and it was observed that considerable business is conducted while visiting.

The Wat is a source of advice and information. The Wat is accessible to all people. It provides education, serves as a place for feasts, music, fireworks, theatrical performances and exhibits of artistic works.¹ This was its established function in Northern Thailand.

The data support the generalization that the Wat and the resident monks are an important influence, in a practical way, to the businessmen.

Influence on Microeconomic Development

In studying the manner in which Buddhism affects economic development in up-country Thailand it is well first to establish the American orientation to business as viewed by an Oriental author, Lin Yutang. This will point out the cultural contrast in the philosophy of business in East and West.

Dr. Lin writes that the three American vices are efficiency, punctuality, and the desire for achievement and success. These make Americans unhappy and nervous, and steal from their inalienable right to loaf, thereby cheating them of a good idle and beautiful afternoon. In the Orient, and certainly in Thailand, these traits are unimportant. The Thais apply an attitude to such things: "Mai Pen Rai" (it doesn't matter). Americans place action above "being" (thereby omitting "character") in trying to gain self-respect. The Oriental is punctual provided you give him plenty of time, and he finishes on schedule provided the schedule is long enough. One hundred percent efficiency seems almost obscene.

Thus, the perspective toward industriousness varies greatly in the two cultures. Compatibility is difficult.

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2. Ibid.
but by understanding each culture, friction may be reduced and segments can meet the objective of both cultures even if by different motivations.

As noted earlier, one of the steps of the Eightfold Path is right vocation; however, this step is no more nor less important than the others. Therefore, in following the Middle Way to happiness, i.e., avoiding extremes, the Thai is not absorbed by his business but attends to it dispassionately which is the best of virtues.¹ Since business is a thing created of this world, the Thai knows it is impermanent and can easily perish, so he does not "desire" or "covet" such materialism. He hopes he will become wealthy, but he has no definite strategy for doing so.² If he becomes wealthy, he will be able to earn more merit in order to be born to a higher reincarnation. It was apparent to the interviewer that the Thai men were not afraid of losing their business and had no undue attachment to it. In two instances where business did fail, observations verified that it was not a major disaster in the mind of the owner. Both exclaimed, "Mai Pen Rai," (it doesn't matter) and took positions with former competitors. Because of the dominant Buddhist influence upon Thai life, the goal of the Thai businessman is to earn a living and enough profit to invest in merit for a future life, a

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¹Burtt, op. cit., p. 65.

²Interview Data, Appendix B.
concept quite foreign to Western profit-for-profit oriented business behavior.

When one examines Thai business from the profit motive orientation, he finds that the Buddhist influence tends to stall or paralyze economic growth. When the objective of the business organization is to find intrinsic satisfaction rather than profit, considerations of efficiency are less relevant.\(^1\) It was evident in Thailand that many contractors doing business with the United States Air Force thoroughly enjoyed the status and prestige of the relationship; profit, efficiency, workmanship, and schedules were of secondary interest. This satisfied the objectives resulting from Buddhist philosophy found in the Eightfold Path, i.e. right vocation, right conduct, right mindfulness. The contacts with United States Air Force personnel were considered prestigious social events giving intrinsic satisfaction rather than as an economic or productive function.

Buddhism's lack of concern for worldly affairs results in a difficult task for would-be planners of the economy. Peasant farmers see no need to work harder when there is plenty already. Efforts to diversify crops meet head on with this reluctance to change. The absence of major wants and needs (Buddhist trait of lack of desire) on the part of the Thai people accounts for the basic

stability of the economy, but operates to the disadvantage of a leadership striving to obtain mass effort toward a modernized industrial economy.

The Buddhist's lack of personal desire and emphasis placed upon peace and happiness cause a lack of real interest in future economic growth. The businessmen in the area studied were happy to keep the status quo. The wishes of the moment seemed to take precedence over long-term interests. This orientation develops a spontaneity which makes the businessman irresponsible by Western standards. A great deal of understanding is necessary for Western businessmen to achieve satisfaction in ventures relying on the cooperation of Thais. Workers simply will put down their tools and walk off a job if they desire more pleasurable activity. In a two-month period, thirty employees left the Base Exchange voluntarily. Follow-up investigation as to the reasons for leaving revealed problems of little consequence, or a desire to go to Bangkok or to return to the family. Most ex-workers had no positions waiting for them. They gave no thought to loyalty, the needs of the Base Exchange, seniority benefits, or their own economic future.

Economic need is no guarantee that the Thai will work out his agreement or contract.\(^1\) Associations are made and easily dropped according to usefulness which is

\(^{1}\)Piker, _op. cit._, p. 389.
in accordance with the Buddhist doctrine of not becoming involved or attached. Loyalty in business associations is maintained only until one finds a more beneficial patron. There is no maliciousness intended, and Thais accept this behavior as a normal ethical pattern. Observations clearly indicate that Westerners often become disillusioned and bitter when aloofness and apparent disloyalty occurs.

In spite of a history of disinterest in worldly affairs, the Buddhist leadership is attempting to effect changes, at the same time retaining tradition. This sometimes causes amusing situations revealing the abyss between the old and the new. One such development was the Thai social securities program. In the absence of self-generated programs, Thais frequently look outside Thai needs and Thai experience in pursuing their interest in modernizing. Most Thais not working for the government are self-employed in agriculture or small retail businesses. Social Security came into being not so much from the need for stabilizing and protecting an aging population in an industrial society, its function in Western countries, but rather from the fact that the Thai government observed that most modern states had such a system and, therefore, believed they too ought to have it. Since the family is a revered unit in Buddhism, old people are highly respected and the younger members take care of them as a matter of course. The need for social security was nonexistent, so
the government finally abandoned the program.\textsuperscript{1} The Thai government seems to lack the imagination and creativity to anticipate the real needs of its society. A culture which teaches that people are in their present circumstances as a result of their merit earned in previous life-cycles finds any kind of socialism completely foreign.

Management

Economic developments move slowly in Thailand. This is not surprising, since time means little to Buddhists. Throughout the culture, the spur of dire necessity is absent. The people are well fed and they accept their lot in life as one they have earned in previous lives. Changes, although desirable, do not require fast positive action. Buddhists are adjusted to their situation with little irritation and discontent. As a result, public and private management in Thailand reflect an "artful accommodation of contemporary and traditional influences."\textsuperscript{2}

The artful accommodation of Buddhist tradition and modernizing efforts presents a trying situation to managers eager for progress. As Northern contacts by Bangkok businessmen become more frequent, there has been a slow but apparent growth in the number of achievement-oriented Northern Thai businessmen.\textsuperscript{3} The general business

\textsuperscript{1}Sutton, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 36.
atmosphere of the North is particularly disappointing and frustrating to this progressive group. Trying to reconcile unstable and unsound policy direction with high standards and placing ceremonial customs ahead of business potential create a deterrent to progress. By custom, business managers do not become callous to the gentle Buddhist ways. The author was involved in a business discussion with three contractors at a construction site when a small girl passed with a basket of lotus blossoms. The discussion stopped while one contractor called the girl over so the men could admire the flowers. It was learned later that lotus blossoms, to a Buddhist, symbolize man's rise above worldly desire.

The business discussion deserved neither more nor less attention than the beauty of the flowers and the men did not perceive the act as an interruption of business. On other occasions discussion was halted to observe a huge spider and a pretty bird.

For Thai management, the lack of structure is the structure. There is little management as defined by authors of American management texts. Observations indicate that the only category of Western management which bears any similarity would be the autocratic type; yet even so, the Thai manager supervises his workers in a kindly manner, respecting Buddhist traits and philosophy.
Labor

Neoclassical economics is based on the assumption that the amount of work people carry out will remain the same even though income increases. There is a fundamental contradiction in this which contains two different theories about the effect of an increase in the quantity of income received on the amount of work carried out.\(^1\) One assumption, profit maximization, is based on a belief that an increase in income will not alter the amount of work done; the other suggests that an increase in income will lead to a change in the number of hours worked.\(^2\)

The first assumption applies to the Western concept of business and the Western attitude toward work. Work is considered vitally important either in itself or because of the money or prestige. In Thailand the other set of social attitudes exists but in an inverse relationship described above. Work is only a method of obtaining money for immediate needs. As has been shown previously the passive Buddhist philosophy does not generate a driving ambition for fame and fortune in the Western sense. Money, as a rule, is accumulated neither for business expansion nor for security in later life.

Walt Rostow, in his book *The Process of Economic Growth*, shows that it is the attitude of a population


\(^2\)Ibid., p. ix.
toward work and leisure, consumption and saving that determines the rate of growth.\(^1\) The Buddhist's outlook on work as simply a way to earn a living because the future is not to be interfered with, the concept of sanuk (that one should enjoy life), and the lack of motivation to save, fulfill Rostow's factors for lack of economic growth, and are attitudes that are extremely difficult to overcome. The author noted a tendency toward a high degree of absenteeism after payday. Thai laborers and Base Exchange employees also showed an inclination to walk off the job whenever they had sufficient funds for a trip to Bangkok or North to Chengmai. They gave little concern to what they would do when their money was gone. Questioning on this point again brought forth the most popular phrase in Thailand: "Mai Pen Rai."

These attitudes are in consonance with Buddhist ideals\(^2\) such as: hold aloof from worldly affairs, create your happiness, seek inner contentment, resist creation of pain (work when you don't care to), and though profiting from work, be far above being absorbed by it.

Supervising assigned work and the performance of works created some difficulties for the Western employer. The author found that the Thai employee seeks to belong to a group, and that he functions best in this way. He could

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\(^1\) Theobald, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

not function successfully as a supervisor of Thais in the employ of a foreigner because he would have alienated himself from his fellow Thai workers. In the management of United States Air Force Base Exchange, two groups of employees were working well together. One group consisted of five janitors, the other consisted of twenty-five sales clerks and stockers. Using the standard American custom of appointing the "most promising" individual as leaders for better span of control resulted in a lessening of efficiency. The foreman of the janitors was immediately "out" of his group. They ignored the leader and he felt like a "tool" of the "farang" (American). He finally asked that we cancel his pay increase and allow him to return to the group as a worker. The individual placed in charge of the other group of twenty-five employees was equally ineffective. He did the routine tasks involved, but would not give direct orders or reprimand employees when necessary. This reluctance to assert himself as a leader carried over even to his role of interpreter between the author and the employees. Through the results and actions of the employees it became apparent he was changing instructions by using words chosen to avoid offending his countrymen. He diluted reprimands so as not to lose face for himself and to save embarrassment for the employee as required by Buddha's "right conduct." In other words, the leader was resisting the leadership thrust upon him to conform to his cultural trait of passivity.
Although labor is often not very productive,\(^1\) neither is it well paid. Low productivity of labor is tolerable only as long as labor is willing to accept a correspondingly low level of remuneration.\(^2\) As the pressure of Bangkok's higher costs reach the Northern areas, laborers will be faced with the dilemma of having to decide whether to work longer hours thereby reducing leisure time or to make demands for higher wage rates. Both of these actions tend to be outside Buddhist ethics; the former is to be absorbed in the work and the latter would necessitate face-to-face confrontations. The alternative, in Buddhist fashion, is to continue to accept inadequate remuneration as a natural consequence of existence since all life is suffering and to restrain any desire for consumable goods in order to diminish suffering is proper Buddhist philosophy.

Work is not perceived as the primary instrumentality for the achievement of real success.\(^3\) Ladders of success are not considered. Success is gained, Buddhist believe, by a high reincarnation and supplemented by many patron-agents who can assist in obtaining better positions or contracts. On several occasions the Procurement Officer was approached by Thais, acting as middle-men to "give"

\(^1\)Personal Observation, #14, Appendix B.


\(^3\)Piker, op. cit., p. 180.
contracts to their friends. The request was always based on the fact that the friend was a "good" man or an influential man in the village rather than any mention of his ability to do good work. Again, this validated the fact that the Thai is not an economic creature, but a spiritual one. Thais can work hard, but they view this as a regrettable interruption of more pleasurable activities.\footnote{Ibid.} They are well adapted to Buddha's ideal: Work, but do not be absorbed by it. Gifts and "kick-backs" are an accepted method of arriving at success easily and again, without consideration of abilities. The Buddhist ideal of creating one's happiness does not include the prime condition of the Western Protestant ethic of dedication to hard work.

In the traditional agricultural occupations, success is believed to depend on individual effort and diligence. In other business endeavors, however, success is thought to depend largely on how much others can be induced to do on one's behalf.\footnote{Ibid.} One seeks an influential benefactor who may smooth the road to security and affluence for the supplicant,\footnote{Ibid.} attempting to be a good Buddhist by his search for inner contentment.

The Thai attitude toward life is one of tolerant or wry amusement; the individual refuses to be hurried,
regimented or become absorbed by work.\textsuperscript{1}

\textbf{Change}

Economic growth is an area about which Thai officials are concerned.\textsuperscript{2} The requirements of growth and the strong tradition-oriented culture create a paradox that, if not solved, can affect the stability, or even the existence, of the Northern business community as a contributor to the growth of Thailand. In the past, the Thai has been successful in adapting modern values and claiming the result as Thai.\textsuperscript{3} Buddhism has been adept at adapting to needs of the culture; however, the problems of economic growth are the basic attitudes of the Thai rather than superficial customs, superstitions and ideas, i.e., attitudes toward success, achievement, money, and work. Buddhist traits such as passiveness, gentleness, and serenity are not compatible with the market places of the world, or even those of Bangkok.

The reader must not jump to the conclusion that the above comments denote disaster or hopelessness. Buddha struck a medium by declaring that everything is in a state of becoming.\textsuperscript{4} This explains the ease with which the Thai can accept change when improvement of his lot is apparent.

\textsuperscript{1}Sutton, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 182.
\textsuperscript{2}White, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 132
\textsuperscript{3}Suhr, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid.
One evolutionary step preserves the history of former steps in modified form.\(^1\) Thus the ever-important need for preserving tradition is satisfied. The origin of suffering lies in ignorance.\(^2\) Since everything is in a state of becoming, Buddhism asks, "Why desire something which has no permanence?"

Thailand's economy has stability, that prerequisite of technological revolution. It is a stable temperamental, emotional and religious state, fostered by deep national pride, resilient tradition and the calm benignity of Buddhism.\(^3\) Thus Thailand is sufficiently developed to recognize the need for change.

The friendly, slow business pace in Northern Thailand, often makes the very notion of economics seem irrelevant. The elusive nature of Thai affairs is one of the national facts. Here pleasure really is blunter than duty.\(^4\)

Although economic growth is necessary for Northern Thailand, it must not be considered to outweigh the importance of other goals such as the Buddhist goals of serenity and inner peace. It should not be assumed that every action that increases wealth is necessarily right for Thai

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\(^1\) *Ibid.*


development. Economic development will only be satisfactory to the Thai if it acts to preserve the meaning of life within the framework of Buddhism, not to destroy it. As pointed out in this study, Thai officials are aware of this dichotomy and are concerned about retaining Buddhist values, but have not arrived at solutions.

Those interested in developing the economy of Northern Thailand should bear in mind that people act sensibly only when they feel that they understand and control their surroundings. This means developments should not create unnecessary alterations in the pattern of Buddhist life. Change comes when old systems disintegrate because of the contradictions within them.\(^1\) Buddhism thus far has been able to display Thailand's unusual gift for assimilation and continuity, and thereby reduce contradictions.\(^2\)

Decision-Making

The belief in immortality and the tolerance of misfortune deter progress in that they distract from improving the Thai's lot and affect decision-making. Decisions often are made in piecemeal fashion as exigencies arise, and few decisions have an enduring influence on the subsequent course of life. This is particularly evident in economic activity.\(^3\) The decisions are made on short-range views

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\(^3\)Piker, *op. cit.*, p. 389
only, often because the Thai shows little inclination to defer gratification\(^1\) which is not viewed as strategically significant.\(^2\) Successful decisions often are effected only by the expected benign intervention of an influential agent such as a government official, a monk, or a military officer.\(^3\) Decisions are made with little concern for consequences. Employees are prone to decide to leave a position over small irritants such as the desire to attend a festival without having any immediate prospects of doing better elsewhere. Contractors have deserted projects when a few problems accumulated, fully aware that doing so would jeopardize their future business. The Thai search for success is often pursued with a "Scatter-gun" approach to decisions adopting any and all expedients that appear to offer promise of success or reward, and then dropping them just as readily if success is not quick and troublefree.\(^4\) The businessman in Northern Thailand often has little confidence in his ability to deal with critical or unusual situations in terms of his personal resources or capacities. In the case of air force contracts being administered by the author, two business proprietors and two general managers, faced with what they believed were insurmountable problems, took their cash on hand and fled to Laos.

\(^1\text{Ibid.}, p. 389\) \(^2\text{Ibid.}, p. 392\) \(^3\text{Ibid.}, p. 392\) \(^4\text{Ibid.}, p. 390\)
The Buddhist philosophy negates the possibility of making firm, logical decisions based on an analysis of facts and future potential for several reasons. The non-involvement, nonattachment traits applied to problems of the world, coupled with Buddhist subjective orientations, limit the Thai's confidence to make independent decisions. He depends on a patron-client relationship for assistance on decisions, and on the monk as a trusted and respected consultant for decision-making. In addition to the foregoing, the thought patterns of most Thai businessmen are concrete and particularistic, inhospitable to general theory or abstract reasoning and indifferent to strict logical processes. The world is sensed directly and intuitively with little attempt to categorize events in terms of abstract concepts and formulae. Time is perceived in rhythms and cycles, but not as a straight line projected down a diminishing road toward a future horizon.\(^1\)

Since Buddhism does not foster personal achievement as a goal there is no necessity for deferring satisfaction. The Thai-Buddhists let the future take its course, necessitating more short-range decisions along the way. Believing that the world is unpredictable and that fate does not rely on systematic knowledge, the Buddhist finds no value in long-range decision-making.\(^2\)

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\(^1\)Sutton, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

\(^2\)Interview Data, Appendix B.
deal with specific cases without consciously setting precedents for future cases; few decisions establish any sort of policy lines for later application to individual instances.¹

Summation

This chapter has stated the key doctrines of Buddhism. These were accompanied by experiences, data, and observations gathered in Northern Thailand and references to publications regarding the subject. Each section included a generalization or statement as to the particular doctrinal influence on the business community.

Following doctrine influences, the influence of the Wat and the monkhood was related to business behavior; and finally, a section on the influence of Buddhism on business and microeconomic development concludes the chapter.

All segments of this chapter revealed that business behavior in Northern Thailand is influenced by the philosophy of Buddhism on a daily basis and to a significant degree.

¹Sutton, op. cit., p. 182.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

In working with and observing Thai businessmen in Takhli, Chainot, and Norkansawan the traits most apparent were gentleness and serenity. This was reflected, as noted in this study, by an aura of respect, patience, friendliness, and humility. There was little envy among the businessmen and no evidence of "cut-throat" competitive practices. They seldom displayed anger; often displayed compassion. The fundamental teachings of Buddha are gentleness, serenity, and compassion and these were constantly reflected in the business behavior.

The monks represent the ideal man in Thailand. They are a symbol of Buddhism respected by all. Since each man is expected to serve as a monk, and the data collected show that most do, the Buddhist education received is reflected in business not only by the traits mentioned in the previous paragraph, but by the continued service to the Wat (temple) in administration of the Wat's funds, maintenance of the building, donations of money, and continued contact with the career monks both in giving and seeking counsel on business matters. The businessmen
support the Wat festivals which are the social highlights of community activity. The monks perform ceremonies at all business openings and often set the day for such openings to enhance the success of the business. The trades and skills learned by monks who return to the laity are a source of increased economic activity and improved standards of living. The monkhood and the community Wat are a definite influence on business in the up-country area.

Businessmen hope to become wealthy so that they can use their money to earn greater merit and thereby earn a higher reincarnation. To earn merit, they do not use sharp business practices; they cancel debts to those who meet misfortune; they give new robes to the monks, coins to the poor. This hope for wealth, however, is not supported by positive plans of action for future growth. The Thai believes that if fate determines wealth, it will happen without his interfering very much in the process.

Animism although not part of Buddhism, is tolerated and sometimes incorporated as in the case of astrology. The Thai has superstitions which he believes affect the results of almost any situation. The timing of important events such as business openings, new positions, or starting a new contract, are often set after consulting an astrologer or monk who makes lunar calculations. It is necessary that Thais act in harmony with the astral forces for assuring inner serenity.

Answers to questions regarding business planning,
expansion and management reflected the Buddhist lack of concern about the future; what happens is fate. Although many Thais would like a larger business, they do not make definite long-range plans to achieve it; they feel "if it happens, it happens; if not, mai pen rai [it doesn't matter]." Long-range planning and forecasting are concepts not understood by the up-country businessmen.

Most businessmen take for granted the practice of payoffs and gifts to obtain business, although they do like to do business with the air force because this practice is forbidden by the United States government. There is no Buddhist ethic against corruption unless it does harm to someone.

With much difficulty, it was determined that although Thai-Buddhist businessmen want to be wealthy so they can do more to gain merit for a higher reincarnation, they are not oriented to achievement and profit-making in the business operation. They are quite satisfied with their standard of living, and their position is more important than a salary raise. This brings out the practical application of the Buddhist ethic not to desire or be interested in things of this world. This orientation cannot result in economic progress or growth. As outside interests enter this Northern Thailand area the naivete of the businessmen caused by the gentle, mild Buddhist philosophy makes them vulnerable to opportunists who promise immediate success. The dream of economic progress accompanied by
dreams of reaching the state of Nirvana present a goal difficult to realize.

Businessmen interviewed were one hundred percent Buddhists and eighty-four percent believe they are as good Buddhists as are their parents. Of the Bangkok respondents, forty percent believed they were as good Buddhists as their parents. Eighty-eight percent have served as monks, or definitely plan to do so for at least the minimum period of three months as opposed to forty percent of the Bangkok businessmen. Seventy-six percent of the Northern merchants seek advice from monks at the community Wat on business matters, whereas none of the Bangkok sampling does. Those who consistently seek such counsel are one hundred percent satisfied with the advice received. Buddhist ceremonies at business openings were universal. Sixty-four percent work at the Wat in order to gain merit while in Bangkok only twenty percent do so. One hundred percent believe Buddhism helps to make life happy while Bangkok men scored eighty percent on this question. One hundred percent go to the Wat at least once a week in the Northern area, while forty percent do so in Bangkok. In the Northern area seventy-two percent and in Bangkok one hundred percent of the respondents did not believe the government was practicing Buddhist principles as much as it should.

These data indicate that the Northern Thai businessman is attuned to his religious philosophy, is satisfied with it, practices it, and feels it is responsible for his
present state of happiness. He believes the government does not live up to Buddhist principles as much as it should. Bangkok businessmen follow a similar pattern, but to a lesser degree.

This study of the influence of Buddhism on business behavior in Northern Thailand depicts the following image of the businessman. He is a Buddhist first. His major goal is the attainment and accumulation of karmic merit which is achieved by serving, at least temporarily, as a monk; by conforming to the Buddhist moral code; and by performing meritorious acts.¹ His career or business is simply a way to earn a living and provide means with which to earn more merit. This philosophy reveals itself in outward manifestations generally found of the following characteristics among businessmen:²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humility</th>
<th>Extreme consideration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pleasing manner</td>
<td>Self-effacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness</td>
<td>Poised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>Detachment from persons/things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildness</td>
<td>Avoidance of embarrassment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carefree attitude</td>
<td>Constant awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Avoidance of face to face conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacefulness</td>
<td>Good sense of humor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


²Ibid., p. 139.
politeness, calm, serene demeanor

These afford the businessman an opportunity to achieve his values:¹ (1) to recognize that things are not intrinsically important; (2) to be cool hearted; and (3) to be as uninvolved as possible.

His three chief virtues, contrasting but not conflicting with the value of detachment² are: (1) compassion for others (Karuma); (2) loving kindness (Metta); and (3) empathetic joy (Mudita). These three virtues find expression in:³ hospitality, generosity, friendship, and courteous consideration of others.

Recognizing that neither self-indulgence nor asceticism is a solution to the problems of life, the businessmen attempt to follow the Eightfold Path to the Middle Way, avoiding extremes of all types. This makes life more bearable. This Buddhist philosophy does not promote great profits, growth, expansion, or great achievements—but an inner peace.

During contract negotiations, the Thai businessman did not lose patience or apply high pressure tactics. He was respectful and considerate of the relationship. When he believed an unreasonable demand was being placed on him, he remained smiling and jovial, but at the same time, kept

¹Ibid., p. 141
²Ibid., p. 141
³Ibid.
a distance. After some experience, one learned that the
Thai's real meaning lies in the gestures of the hand rather
than in the face. If the face is similing and nodding
"yes" but the hands are gesturing "no," then "no" is the
answer. The face merely focuses on the relationship rather
than the problem being discussed.

Buddha's teaching of moderation and peacefulness are
among the most important Thai social values.¹ Any respect-
able businessman would not lose this value in exchange for
such a worldly thing as a contract provision and a few
dollars. By avoiding unhappiness the contractors appear
to be easy-going and to have a good sense of humor. How-
ever, it is possible that they might adopt this attitude
simply to avoid face-to-face conflict.²

Mildness and nonaggression are the most important
personal values.³ Whenever one Thai businessman was
praising another (which was surprisingly often) there was
usually a reference to his mildness. This is an attribute
because it is an indication that the man lives by the Bud-
dhist ethic of the Middle Way.

In the process of interviewing Thai businessmen it
was noted that many of the problems of development are
understood by the more educated merchants and contractors;

¹Ibid., p. 139.
²Ibid., p. 140.
³Ibid., p. 139.
however, their Buddhist traits of passiveness, lack of concern for worldly affairs and little concern for the future, prevent them from taking aggressive coordinated action.

In contrast, the more developed Western countries have social attitudes which require work; the idler is frowned upon. Thus only changes in social attitudes will substantially alter the actions of people; economic factors are of relatively little importance.

Buddhism influences business and economic development in Thailand; the Protestant ethic does so in the West. The two cultures are at opposite poles but do have an interest in and respect for each other. As the inhabitants of each make a major effort to understand the real economic problems of the two cultures, a common ground can be found to satisfy the goals of each. Adapting the best ideas of both cultures could result in the West conducting business in a more peaceful and serene atmosphere and the Thai-Buddhist business community becoming more interested in efficiency, investment, and service resulting in economic growth.

The paradox of the Thai businessman's desire to retain the old (Buddhist tradition) and to adapt to the new (Western influence) would produce a very real strain in any culture. Mr. Pote Sarasin, Minister of National Development, said: "Thailand needs industrial growth but we intend to stay primarily an agricultural country. We want no sudden changes. We want to change gradually,
retaining our traditions and customs, but keeping up with
the quick-moving world. The important word is change. ¹
Thailand is changing, but not along the idealistic pattern
advocated by Mr. Sarasin. Buddhism has survived many cul-
tural upheavals by being adaptable. The Buddhist influence
may decrease in business as a result of Western infiltra-
tion, but it will not be eliminated. It is a valid philos-
ophy for the Thais and they will retain it by adapting,
superimposing, and including in Buddhism those activities
which will improve their station in life.

The area studied is so steeped in Buddhism and tradi-
tion that business growth will be slow. In fact, it may
take much longer to develop the necessary cultural changes
and human adaptations than to acquire the physical capital
and technological resources necessary for economic prog-
ress. ² The influence of Buddhism on business conduct, be-
havior and thought is significant to the degree that
Northern Thailand business activity is almost synonomous
with Buddhism.

¹Peter T. White, "Hopes and Fears in Booming Thai-
²Joseph L. Sutton, Problems of Politics and Adminis-
tration in Thailand (Bloomington: Indiana University,
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White, Peter T. "Behind the Headlines in Viet Nam," National Geographic, 27 (February, 1967), 131.
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW DATA

All of the businessmen interviewed were Buddhists. The interviews included five men from Bangkok, a city of two million; twelve men from Takhli, a town of six thousand located one hundred fifty miles north of Bangkok, and the residence of the author for a period of one year; five men from Chainot, a village of three thousand located twenty-five miles north of Takhli; and eight men from Norkansawan, a city of ten thousand located seventy-five miles north of Takhli and a prime source of supplies and services for the air base.

The type of business positions of those interviewed are given as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Northern Area</th>
<th>Bangkok</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proprietor</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent/manager</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Salesmen</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the total indicates thirty men formally were interviewed. References in the study apply only to the twenty-five Northern businessmen unless otherwise stated.

The study is by no means limited to the observations of these thirty men. Conduct and attitude data were
further observed by the author in daily contact with Thais during the course of duties as an air force contracting officer and for a two-month period supervising forty Thais in the operation of the base exchange at Takhli, Thailand. Observations were also made in local shops and business establishments.

In summarizing the data it is noted that most responses were either predominantly yes or predominantly no on a given question. This would substantiate the common perception that Thais, exclusive of Bangkok, are a homogeneous people.¹

The questions were not asked in the straightforward manner indicated. Considerable time was spent to communicate each question, often with the use of an interpreter. Some concepts are difficult for Thais to comprehend because they do not think in abstract terms.²


## APPENDIX B
SUMMARY OF RESEARCH DATA
OBTAINED FROM INTERVIEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crux of the Question Asked</th>
<th>Northern Area</th>
<th>Bangkok</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Are you a Buddhist?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. As avid as your parents?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does Buddhism make you happy?</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you go to the Wat at least once a week?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you make business decisions based on Buddhist principles?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you try to?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you have an altar at your business?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you try to earn merit everyday?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you ever work at the Wat?</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Do you give coins to the old, poor, etc.?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Do you donate 10% or more of your income to the Wat?</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Does your business give food to monks every day?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Do you charge monks for small purchases?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Do you give time off to workers to perform tasks at the Wat for merit?</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Does merit also earn you respect and prestige among your colleagues?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Do you hope to be born to a higher reincarnation when this life ends?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Will much merit assure you of this?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Must you give help to improve the situation of those now in a lower birth even if you receive no merit?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Would you help out a competitor in trouble?</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crux of the Question Asked</td>
<td>Northern Area</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. If you cheat a customer do you lose merit?</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. If a man owes you money and does not pay you do you go to him, get angry and try to force him to pay?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Would you ever cancel a debt when disaster strikes a man?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Would you get someone else to try to collect for you?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Have you fired anyone in the past six months for not being a good worker?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Would you like to have all the business in your town so your colleagues would fail and move to Bangkok?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Do you get angry when your friend seems to get a lot of business and you don't?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. If you had 10,000 baht ($500) would you give it to the monks for a school rather than add on to your business and stock it?</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*28. Do you make payoffs to get business?</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*29. Do you plan to expand your business?</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*30. Have you definite plans to do so now?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*31. In five years?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*32. Would you like to have a big business?</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*33. Would you like to reduce time with your family?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*34. Do you like to do business with Americans?</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*35. Given one choice, is profit more important than merit?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Asked of owners/managers/superintendents only
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crux of the Question Asked</th>
<th>Northern Area</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Bangkok</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36. Do you need a higher standard of living?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Do you like your position/business?</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Would you quit for a 20% raise?</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Do you ever give gifts to those you work for?</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Are you interested in entering politics?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Does your government practice Buddhism like they should?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Do you belong to businessmen's associations to promote business?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Do you belong to any civic action groups (not Wat) to improve conditions of people?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Do you like so many Americans here?</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Is it good for business profits?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. Is it good for Buddhism?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. Does this worry you?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. Do you look at other businesses and think about changing your way of running your business?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. Do you like the way your business runs now?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. Are you going to make big changes very soon?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. Have you been, or plan to be, a monk?</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. Have you gone to monks with business matters?</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. Do they give realistic advice?</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. Did your parents go to monks for business advice?</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. Did you start your business with a Buddhist ceremony?</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. Do you wear an amulet?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Asked</td>
<td>Northern Area</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. Do you have a spirit house at your business?</td>
<td>24 Yes, 1 No</td>
<td>- 5 No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. Do you ask spirits for protection and good luck?</td>
<td>22 Yes, 3 No</td>
<td>2 Yes, 3 No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. Could you tell me how the spirits work and help?</td>
<td>2 Yes, 15 No, 8</td>
<td>- 5 No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. Spirit practices change periodically?</td>
<td>25 Yes, 5 No</td>
<td>- 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. Being a good Buddhist is more important than being a success in business?</td>
<td>- 23 No, 2</td>
<td>1 Yes, 3 No, 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. My family is more important than developing my business?</td>
<td>- 13 No</td>
<td>5 No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. If my business failed I would be a disgrace, lose friends, lose face?</td>
<td>- 13 No</td>
<td>1 Yes, 4 No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. If I am behind schedule on a contract or late on deliveries I expect to be penalized by USAF?</td>
<td>13 No</td>
<td>5 No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. This is a logical practice?</td>
<td>- 9 No, 4</td>
<td>- 2 Yes, 3 No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66. Thai clients get angry when I am late or slow?</td>
<td>- 13 No</td>
<td>1 Yes, 4 No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67. I am happy while I am working?</td>
<td>25 Yes, 4 Yes, 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68. I have fun (choei) performing my job?</td>
<td>25 Yes, 4 Yes, 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. Are you very upset by the sight of very unfortunate people (cripples)?</td>
<td>5 Yes, 16 No, 4</td>
<td>1 Yes, 3 Yes, 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70. Are there social problems in your country?</td>
<td>22 Yes, 3 No</td>
<td>5 No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>71. Do you know the cause of the problem?</td>
<td>2 Yes, 20 No, 3</td>
<td>4 Yes, 1 No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72. Have you considered doing anything about it?</td>
<td>- 25 No</td>
<td>- 5 No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crux of the Question Asked</td>
<td>Northern Area</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>73. Would you open a new business on a Tuesday in November, March or July?</td>
<td>6 15 4</td>
<td>5 - -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>74. Would you open a new business only on 13th, 14th or 15th of each month?</td>
<td>10 8 7</td>
<td>- 5 -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75. Are the spirit rules you believe the same as all other people believe?</td>
<td>3 15 7</td>
<td>- - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76. Spirits and astrology are not as popular as they used to be?</td>
<td>17 4 4</td>
<td>5 - -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

Observations

1. The writer observed businessmen giving coins to the poor, old, and crippled. Donations were given very non-chalantly without signs of compassion. Very little if anything was known of the unfortunate. There was no conversation; simply a wai as a thank-you (Karma).

2. On two separate occasions the writer talked to owners of businesses that failed, one construction contractor, and the former owner of an automotive repair shop. The author had a serious talk with them and was convinced they were truthful when they said "Mai Pen Rai." There was no excessive attachment to the business, both went to work immediately for competitors, more appropriately called colleagues because competition is not such as the Westerner recognizes. They did not feel that it was a major disaster and no "loss of face" attitude was apparent. (Not attached to business; desire)

3. Merchants never seem to fail to donate food to the monks as they come by each morning. No particular notice is made of the monk except to place food in his bowl and either go down on one knee for a second or give a wai. There was no conversation and the entire act was performed very matter-of-factly (Karma).

4. Merchants buy a bird for one or two baht (five or ten cents) and set it free (Karma).
5. The writer observed that customers sometimes added one more item to their purchase as part of the transaction after having agreed on a price. After a few polite "yes" and "no" type words, the customer would win. Observation indicated that the merchant usually did not retaliate after being taken advantage of (Karma).

6. Information received from procurement personnel indicated that three contractors had particular dates on which they would conduct no business because of superstition concerning spirits (Animism).

7. Response to the query, "did they like doing business with Americans," naturally brought the answer "yes" unanimously. Any other response, in their mind, would have embarrassed the interviewer and caused loss of face. They would not want to jeopardize future business with the interviewer. When asked why they liked Americans, the consensus was: They don't have to give kick-backs; they are sure of getting their money; to do so creates prestige among the villagers (courtesy, face, prestige).

8. Due to lack of telephone communication, business representatives were provided a lounge at the procurement office. It usually contained twelve to fifteen men. The atmosphere was always jovial and friendly. They conducted transactions among themselves. As the air force rotated the business among them, there were no signs of jealousy or envy. Some days there were not enough orders for all of them, but there was no apparent disappointment. When
offered sympathy, the response was always "Mai Pen Rai." To say competition was not keen would be an understatement; it hardly existed. Competitors even had car pools and it was suspected that orders were arranged and priced among them cooperatively after they left the air base (Competition).

9. Rather than developing an intimate friendship with the procurement chief, a sign of weakness to colleagues, Thai businessmen expressed their friendliness through favors and little gifts. This was done openly (Friendliness).

10. The camaraderie among competitors approached that of an informal business association. They would periodically pool resources and have a party for American personnel (Friendly competition).

11. In the operation of the base exchange, stealing was a major problem. Although most of it was done by a very few who were finally caught and fired, the detective work was done solely by the Americans. Thais would not inform on each other. They felt no responsibility to take an active part in reducing thefts. Those queried recognized that the thieves were doing evil, but since THEY were not involved, "Mai Pen Rai" (Passive outlook, right conduct).

12. While serving as base exchange officer, the writer made the following observations: Employees were happy, cheerful and carefree, and there was much socializing during work. There was little interest in figuring out a task
for ease and efficiency. When shown an easier way it didn't seem to matter to them—whatever they were told to do was fine. The workers were quite group-oriented and if a leader was appointed he became ineffective as he lost out as a group member. One man asked to be put back as a worker even with loss of wages so he could maintain his group position. Many quit their job for little reason, such as to visit a sick relative in another town, or to see a friend in Bangkok. There was little concern for the economic consequences. Absences were numerous after payday. The employees felt no responsibility to see that the operation was open and operating. The job was a convenience for them to use when they had the notion to work. (Passive, group-oriented, work attitude; disdain for future.)

13. The situation in observation twelve existed with laborers on construction contracts, but not to the same degree because they earned five cents per hour rather than forty cents an hour as in the BX. It took more hours of work to provide the basic essentials so they did work longer (work attitude).

14. Construction laborers were observed filling a hole as follows: There was a very happy atmosphere with much chatter. One girl scraped her hoe to a basket seventeen times, supposedly to fill it. She and a helper then picked up the basket by the handles and walked four feet to dump it. There was no concern for filling the hole—only for
earning enough for necessities and having sanuk (a good time) (Work attitude, socialize).