A Very Short History of Anthropology in Thailand with Special Reference to the North

(สังเขปประวัติศาสตร์ว่าด้วยมานุษยวิทยาในประเทศไทย อ้างอิงโดยเฉพาะภาคเหนือ)

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Abstract

As a historian interested in the history of ideas and intellectual currents, I have learned a great deal from Anan Ganjanapan, an anthropologist who thinks in historical terms. His 1976 MA thesis was concerned with Lanna historiography in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and half of his 1984 PhD thesis on the partial commercialization of rice production was a study of northern Thai agriculture from the late thirteenth century to 1954. Since then, his research has been concentrated on the commercialization of rice production in northern Thailand; spirit cults, matrilineality, and class; northern rituals and their relationship to the authority and power of the central Thai state; land tenure and the peasantry; community management of natural resources (land, forest, water); community rights to land and natural resources; and, last, not least, and most recently, anthropological method and theory. Historians like to account for current conditions by looking at the past, and to do that, they look for similarities between the present and the past. So who are Anan Ganajanapan's antecedents in Thai anthropology? In answering these questions about Anan's intellectual ancestors, in this article, I want to suggest a history of Anan Ganjanapan that perhaps he did not realise he had.

Keywords: Anan Ganjanapan, Thai anthropology, history , intellectual

บทคัดย่อ

ในฐานะนักประวัติศาสตร์ ซึ่งสนใจประวัติศาสตร์ของความคิดและปัญญาชน ข้าพเจ้าได้เรียนรู้หลายอย่างจาก อานันท์ กาญจนพันธุ์ นักมานุษยวิทยาผู้ซึ่งคิดอย่างเป็นประวัติศาสตร์ งานวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาโท ปี 2519 ของอานันท์นั้นเป็นเรื่องเกี่ยวกับประวัติศาสตร์นิพนธ์ของล้านนาในช่วงพุทธศตวรรษที่ 21 และ 22 และราวๆ ครึ่งหนึ่งของงานวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาเอก ปี 2527 เรื่องกระบวนการเปลี่ยนแปลงเข้าสู่ระบบตลาดบางส่วนของการผลิตข้าว ก็เป็นงานศึกษาเชิงประวัติศาสตร์ว่าด้วยการเกษตรกรรมในภาคเหนือของไทยนับจากกลางพุทธศตวรรษที่ 19 เป็นต้นมาจนกระทั่งถึงปี 2497 นับจากนั้นมางานวิจัยของอานันท์ได้มุ่งเน้นให้ความสนใจต่อการศึกษาประเด็นปัญหาเกี่ยวกับเรื่อง กระบวนการเปลี่ยนแปลงเข้าสู่ระบบตลาดของการผลิตข้าวในภาคเหนือของไทย พิธีกรรมไหว้ผี ระบบการสืบทอดเชื้อสายทางฝ่ายแม่ ชนชั้น พิธีกรรมของท้องถิ่นล้านนากับปฏิสัมพันธ์ด้านต่างๆ ที่มีต่อเจ้าหน้าที่รัฐและอำนาจของรัฐไทยส่วนกลาง การถือครองที่ดินและความเป็นชาวนา ชุมชนกับการจัดการทรัพยากรธรรมชาติ (ดิน ป่า น้ำ) สิทธิชุมชนในที่ดินและการเข้าถึงทรัพยากรธรรมชาติ และล่าสุด คือเรื่องเกี่ยวกับ ทฤษฎีและวิธีคิด ในเชิงมานุษยวิทยา นักประวัติศาสตร์เลือกที่จะให้อรรถาธิบายถึงเงื่อนไขต่างๆ ของปัจจุบันด้วยการมองย้อนกลับไปในอดีต และเพื่อให้ภารกิจทางวิชาการดังกล่าวบรรลุผล พวกเขามองหาแบบแผนความคล้ายคลึงต่างๆ ระหว่างอดีตกับปัจจุบัน ดังนั้นต่อคำถามที่ว่า ใครคือสายธารความคิดที่ดำรงอยู่ก่อนหน้า อานันท์ กาญจนพันธุ์ ในบริบทประวัติศาสตร์มานุษยวิทยาไทย เพื่อที่จะตอบคำถามดังกล่าว เกี่ยวกับ ต้นธารทางปัญญาของอานันท์ ในบทความนี้ข้าพเจ้าอยากจะเสนอสังเขปประวัติศาสตร์ว่าด้วย อานันท์ กาญจนพันธุ์ ประวัติศาสตร์ของความคิดซึ่งอานันท์อาจไม่ได้ตระหนักว่าท่านนั้นเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของบริบททางความคิดดังกล่าว

คำสำคัญ: อานันท์ กาญจนพันธุ์ มานุษยวิทยาไทย ประวัติศาสตร์ปัญญาชน

Introduction

As a historian interested in the history of ideas and intellectual currents, I have learned a great deal from Anan Ganjanaphan, an anthropologist who thinks in historical terms. His 1976 MA thesis was concerned with Lanna historiography in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and half of his 1984 PhD thesis on the partial commercialization of rice production was a study of northern Thai agriculture from the late thirteenth century to 1954. Since then, his research has been concentrated on the commercialization of rice production in northern Thailand; spirit cults, matrilineality, and class; northern rituals and their relationship to the authority and power of the central Thai state; land tenure and the peasantry; community management of natural resources (land, forest, water); community rights to land and natural resources; and, last, not least, and most recently, anthropological method and theory. This is a mighty impressive body of work that ranges over many anthropological research fields. At the beginning of his sixth cycle, Ajarn Anan shows no signs of slowing down. We can expect to hear a lot more from him in the years to come.

Historians like to account for current conditions by looking at the past, and to do that, they look for similarities between the present and the past. So who are Anan Ganajanapan's antecedents in Thai anthropology? Prince-Patriarch Vajiranana Varoros (1860-1921)? Phya Anuman Rajadhon (1888-1969)? Does he have anything in common with Samak Burawat (1916-1975)? Boon Chuey Srisavasdi (1917-1973)? Or Jit Poumisak (1930-1966)? In answering these questions about Ajarn Anan's intellectual ancestors I want to suggest a history of Ajarn Anan that perhaps he did not realise he had.

In the following discussion I propose to sketch a history of Thai anthropology, by which I mean anthropology in Thailand. The discipline of anthropology, as it is taught and practiced in the West, undergoes a change when it comes to Thailand even in the hands of Thai anthropologists who have received their doctorates in Western universities. It is the living practice of anthropology and the published research resulting from this practice in Thailand that interests me, rather than the anthropological study of Thailand conducted by Thais and foreign scholars. Perhaps this point should really be in the form of a question. Is there such a thing as Thai anthropology? Is there a distinctive indigenous anthropology as practised by Thai anthropologists? Or must Thai anthropology be seen as a local variation of a discipline that evolved in Western universities and was transferred to Thailand?

This topic has largely escaped notice apart from Charles Keyes's comprehensive literature review thirty years ago (Keyes 1978).[1] Keyes cited research by Thai anthropologists, but he did not really ask questions about how anthropology as a body of knowledge was transported to Thailand to be translated, interpreted, and reworked. It is this activity that I want to discuss briefly here, particularly for Thai anthropology in the north, in the civilization of Lanna, which had its own ruling families, its own writing system, its own special relationship with the Konbaung dynasty in Burma until the period of British rule in Burma, and its own special relationship with Britain. Western Christian missionary activity was also stronger in the north than any other part of Thailand apart from Bangkok, which also made Lanna distinctive. The kingdom of Lanna was but one of many Tai *muang* until it was annexed by the Jakri dynasty in the late nineteenth century.

It is helpful to remember this distinctive history of Lanna and the annexation in order to appreciate the importance of Ajarn Anan's astonishing output.

The Prehistory of Modern Thai Anthropology

Who was the first Thai anthropologist? Was it Prince-Patriarch Vajiranana? His claim to the honour would be that he used the term that is now used for the discipline of anthropology, *manut witthaya* (lit. "the study of human beings"). He published a little essay by that name in 1898 (Wachirayan 1978).[2] The introduction emphasises how human beings differ from other animals – *diratchan* in the Buddhist cosmological order of sentient beings – particularly in terms of knowledge and the transmission from one generation to the next of what has been learned. The essay is really a textbook in two parts with a glossary, and at the end of each part, a short quiz to test what the reader has learned in the preceding pages. The first part discusses human beings as organisms, their distinctive features, their needs and wants. It is a guide to physical and mental well-being with advice on personal hygiene and public sanitation, what to eat, what to drink, and the importance to the human organism of rest and recuperation. The impulse behind writing such a book and the didactic tone in the message reminded me of the policies of Field Marshal Phibun, which some historians link to the world-wide fascination with fascism in the late 1930s, but which actually have very deep roots in the period of the absolute monarchy. The second part is a handbook for good behaviour containing the "dos and don'ts" of civilised conduct. The prince-patriarch stressed personal rectitude, morality, and the obligations and duties for

living peaceably in society. This kind of guide to good behaviour was second-nature to a man who was to wear the yellow robe for his entire adult life and thus required to abide by the Vinaya as a guide to monastic behaviour. Reading through the second part of *Manut witthaya* with its stern set of rules, I was also reminded of *Characteristics of a Properly Behaved Person [Sombat khong phudi]*, which was written in 1913 and soon became a school text for the moral education of Thailand's emerging middle class (Reynolds 2006).

Although *manut witthaya* does not quite mean anthropology in the sense we use it today, a book entitled *Manut Witthaya* in 1898, even in the simple form of a school textbook, was another landmark on a long journey through the nineteenth century as Thai élite consciousness came to understand humankind in new ways. Prince Vajiranana was also the author of a biography of the Buddha, which, as Nidhi Eoseewong has explained, turned the Buddha into a historical figure, (Nidhi 2005:275). No longer was the Buddha's life seen as determined by the Buddhas who preceded him. Instead, in this biographical treatment, the Buddha's life developed historically out of his relationships with other individuals and the society in which he lived.[3] This human biographical perspective of the Buddha affected the study of man and woman generally, a new kind of knowledge that entered the education system by means of textbooks like *Manut Witthaya* which had its origins as "a royal reader."

More broadly, Prince Vajiranana's little book on the study of humankind belonged to a family of studies by officials and the Siamese king himself conducted in the course of inspecting the provinces, marching to remote parts of the kingdom in order to

quell rebellions, collecting taxes, or simply travelling to explore what lay in the interior, though there was no such thing as travel for its own sake, for pleasure, of the kind we are accustomed to today. These studies produced knowledge, which Thongchai calls "ethno-spatial ordering."

> Ethnographic construction, generally speaking, was part of the colonial project to formulate and control the Others of the West. Alongside the colonial enterprise, the Siamese rulers had a parallel project of their own, concerning their own subjects, a project which reaffirmed their superiority, hence justifying their rule, over the rest of the country within the emerging territorial state. (Thongchai 2000:41)

In this view, Siamese ethnographic studies resembled what missionaries and colonial officials, both civilian and military, were doing in Burma, Malaya, and Vietnam over many decades.

Thongchai Winichakul has shown how the indigenous ethnographic studies located and juxtaposed the ethnic peoples spatially into a hierarchy with the Siamese élite at the apex of the social order. Temporally, the human subjects of this ethnographic gaze were placed at the end of the continuum called primitive. The focus of Thongchai's study is an aboriginal boy from the Malay Peninsula who was brought into Chulalongkorn's court as an orphan and treated like an exhibit, rather like the American aboriginal Ishi or the Aleut Minik who served as living evidence for their ethnographic captors of the "primitive" as against the "progressive" societies that adopted them (Reynolds 2003:120). According to another argument by David Streckfuss that accounts for the way the Siamese made up the ethnic categories, the

Bangkok élite learned of French notions of nationality and classifications of races in the course of defending itself against the territorial demands made by the French.[4] The élite then deployed these notions and classifications in their ethnographic studies. Gradually, over many decades, the ethnographic mapping and surveying led to a consciousness of the Siamese national self with all the consequences for marginalisation and discrimination that social scientists continue to study in Thailand today.

The interrogators who collected the data belonged to the ruling class. In "the Others Within," Thongchai points out that the ethnographic mapping produced by these studies reinforced the differences between the ruling class and its subjects in terms of power relations and class (Thongchai 2000:44). The aristocratic authors of the accounts cannot help taking pride in the benevolence that Bangkok rulers show to the people being studied. By highlighting the civilizational bias of what the princes reported, Thongchai tends to dismiss the content of the aristocratic ethnographies. According to this interpretation, the power relations and class biases that shape the accounts taint the ethnographic record. If the Siamese officials were colonial officials, we would be inclined to say that the knowledge produced by these encounters aided and abetted the colonial project. Domination by the centre of the remote provinces, the minority peoples, and the rural people turned them into subjects and, later, citizens. We would say that the knowledge produced by the encounters was complicit with this domination.

This argument is fine as far as it goes, but I think these ethnographic studies deserve more respect. Certainly it cannot now be said, as it was thirty years ago, that "until the 1960s, there was

essentially no tradition of ethnography within Thai scholarship" (Keyes 1978:17). The ethnography was indeed produced under "colonial" conditions, what the Chiang Mai anthropologist Suthep Suthornphesat calls "internal colonialism" (*ana-nikhom phainai*) that gradually became normalised as routine administrative activity. The thesis of "internal colonialism" is contentious in Thai academic research, and for that reason, precise questions about who wrote the accounts and under what conditions, and who read them, and what happened to the ethnographic knowledge that was collected, have never been followed up. I believe the earlier studies have not been taken seriously because of the modern bias about how we define ethnography, particularly in its "pure" or "academic" form.

Among the repositories of this kind of ethnographic knowledge is *Latthi thamniam tangtang, A Miscellany of Beliefs and Traditions.* One of the studies in the *Miscellany* concerns the Phu Thai in the northeast (Phothiwongsajan 1963). It was written in the first decades of the twentieth century by a monk, Phra Phothiwongsajan, who was Sangha head of the Ubon circle of provinces (*monthon*) and a keen student of the various customs, traditions, and peoples of the northeast provinces. A section of Phra Phothiwongsajan's study is devoted to detailed discussion of the oxcart used in Kalasin Province in hunting expeditions for wild cattle. He explains the dimensions of the oxcart and its various uses, how it was built, and what materials were used. Timber is an important construction material, and there is much discussion of different timbers as well as the costs of purchasing an oxcart and the factors that influence the rise and fall of its value. Phra Phothiwong explains the load sizes that the oxcart can carry over

various distances. This exhaustive account of the Kalasin oxcart is an indispensable source not only for the history of agricultural technology, but also, in terms of the detailed information about trees used in those days, for environmental history. Dismissing this kind of knowledge as complicit with power because of the hierarchical and class bias of the person who collected the data would have the result of overlooking valuable insights into local technology and crafts in the northeast.

What I am proposing is along the lines of what Pels and Salemink suggest for anthropology in the colonial encounter, bearing in mind that the "colonial encounter" means something very different in Siam than in Indochina, Burma, and Malaya. Anthropology in the colonial encounter has sometimes been seen as complicit with power, or tainted by power. The ethnographic activities that played a role in the formation of the discipline suffer from being seen as unprofessional – or pre-professional in academic terms – in comparison with "pure" anthropology conducted by professional fieldworkers. Ethnographic practices by non-professionals are thus judged anachronistically, according to Pels and Salemink, who argue that it is necessary to "free" the applied studies produced by the civilian and military officials, treat them as *sui generis*, and not judge them by anachronistic standards (Pels and Salemink 1999:7).[5] To put the point simply, modern anthropology in Thailand has tended to ignore earlier anthropology because of the hierarchical nature of the anthropological encounter. It might be more productive as well as more realistic to think of this anthropological encounter as just as "engaged" and "applied" as the research underway in RCSD (Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development).

Part of the problem in coming to terms with the early anthropology is that it is difficult to follow the pathway that leads from the indigenous anthropology I have been describing to the professional, academic anthropology practiced by Thai anthropologists trained in Western universities. So far as I have been able to discover, there is no history of Thai anthropology beyond the straightforward story of foreign training and the institutional expansion and development of anthropology that occurred after World War II (Anan 1998). The content of pre-modern Thai anthropology has not been of much interest to Thai anthropologists today except as an index of élite bias or amateurism.[6] Modern Thai anthropology has not quite figured out how to draw on the anthropological archive produced by the *jao* and other members of the élite from the late nineteenth through the end of World War II. One way to find the pathway, so to speak, would be to compare the ethnographic studies by Siamese princes, military commanders, and monks with comparable ethnographers in the colonial encounter, paying particular attention to the different colonial contexts. Adjustments must be made for the different times and circumstances in which the data were recorded. By allowing for the different kinds of power relations that existed between ethnographers and their subjects in Siam versus the colonies in neighbouring Burma, Malaya, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, we would be able to assess the anthropological knowledge that "the amateur scholars" collected.

Siam was not colonized by the Western imperial powers, but ethnographic studies were produced in the course of annexation (*phanuak*) by the Bangkok court of parts of the country that had never before been subjected to rule by the Thai monarchy in the

central plains. In the north the annexation was not simple and straightforward. It sometimes resulted from the collaboration of Chulalongkorn's government with British imperial and private interests in the extraction of natural resources. As one of the Chiang Mai historians Chaiyan Rajchagool clearly shows, the princes of Chiang Mai and Lamphun came into conflict with the British government over timber rights by granting concessions to British and Burmese concessionaires who claimed the right of extraterritoriality. The British government then concluded the Anglo-Thai Treaty with the Bangkok Thai government in 1874, which allowed the Bangkok government to adjudicate disputes in the north (Chaiyan 1994:19). In such a case, the Bangkok government and the British government could be seen to be acting jointly as colonial powers. This is an example of the kind of adjustment the historian needs to make to understand the fragmented, shifting, and disputed sovereignty typical of Siam at that time. The peoples in these annexed provinces and tributaries were made subjects of the central Thai monarchy, and were thereby subjected to government from afar – not from London or Paris, as in the cases of formally colonised Southeast Asia, but Bangkok.

The pathway between the indigenous ethnographies and today's professional anthropologists is not continuous. There are a few ravines to traverse, and we need to find a way to cross over the ravines through the work of some "self-taught" anthropologists. Phya Anuman (1888-1969) is a key figure in the transition to the professional anthropologists for several reasons. His life spans the period between the absolute monarchy and the civilian-military rule from 1932 to well after World War II. His experience placed him in good standing with the new government which

needed the kind of expertise he had, and he stayed on good terms with the princes until his death. Prince Damrong, for example, had been one of his patrons who gave him employment and introduced him to élite circles. Phya Anuman did not conduct fieldwork of the kind Phra Phothiwongsajan did, but his perspective on the ethnic peoples who lived in the northern mainland was deeply influential. As he looked across the landscapes of northern Southeast Asia (eastern India, Burma, southern China, Laos, Vietnam), he saw the Tai peoples in the mountains and valleys, and imagined the possibilities of a single Tai empire. Unlike the earlier royal ethnographers, he did not seem particularly interested in the hill peoples, and while some of his pronouncements about human nature are reminiscent of Prince Vajiranana in *Manut witthaya*, he saw culture as dynamic, in constant motion. According to one recent historical assessment, he adjusted his views to the rulers of the day. He was suitably anti-colonial during the Japanese occupation, and then cooperative with the subsequent Thai regimes that came after the Pacific war (Saichon 2007). In his valuable early survey of ethnography and anthropological studies of Thailand, Keyes makes a place for Phya Anuman, but much more could be said about Anuman's place in indigenous Thai anthropology, and not just because of his role in establishing a national culture (Keyes 1978).

Another of the "self-taught" anthropologists was Boon Chuey Srisavasdi, who was born in Chiang Saen in 1917 and served four terms as MP from Chiang Rai. He was an inveterate traveller to Asia and Europe and published books on Japan and Spain on the basis of his experiences there. In 1949 he published a book on the peoples of Chiang Rai, which was reprinted five times and

established his reputation as an ethnographer, and in 1954 *Thais of Sipsongpanna [Thai sipsongpanna]* in two volumes. His most famous work, which first appeared in 1963, was an important study of ethnic groups across mainland Southeast Asia, *The Hill Tribes of Thailand* in Thai (2002).[7] In his detailed survey Boon Chuey included aboriginal peoples such as the Sakai, Semang and Phi Tong Luang as well as the Khmu and the Karen, Lahu, Lisu, Akha, Meo and Yao of the northern mountains. Dr. Banchop Phanthumetha, a Thai dialectologist and linguist who did field research in India, Burma, Vietnam, and China when travel in these countries was difficult and dangerous, also did her important work on Tai languages in the mainland countries about the same time.[8]

Still another "self-taught" from this period anthropologist was Jit Poumisak (1930-1966), the "political poet" who inspired the democracy movement after 14 October 1973. His study of Tai ethnonyms, *Etymology of the Terms Siam, Thai, Lao, and Khom, and the Social Characteristics of Nationalities* (Jit 1976) was published just before the violent regime change on 6 October 1976 and owed a great deal to Boon Chuey's pioneering studies. It took another decade before Jit's important research was taken seriously. The local history movement in the 1980s as well as the opening up of northern Southeast Asia to commerce and tourism and the improved accessibility to Sipsongpanna gradually re-directed academic attention to the very same northern region that had caught the attention of Phya Anuman: the Tailands from Assam through to southwestern China. Possessed of a ruthless intellect, Jit Poumisak displayed his erudition and knowledge of epigraphy with great passion. He had developed his own scientific method of analysis in which evidence supported "proof" for the

hypotheses he wished to test. He discussed problems systematically, and he was scathing of inept judgements, even by famous foreigners, saying, for example, “Finot seems to have been blind.” Was Jit Poumisak an anthropologist? Certainly he was, by practice if not by training. He conducted his fieldwork in jail by reading and interviewing highlanders detained as communist suspects. I wonder if university courses in Chiang Mai on the history of anthropology include Jit’s *Etymology* on the reading list. Is his ethnographic method still taken seriously?

The last scholar I want to discuss is not an anthropologist properly so-called, but his writings mark the beginnings of a new vocabulary and new methods for the social sciences in Thailand. He is Samak Burawas (1916-1975), and he belongs in this brief intellectual genealogy, because his role in the intellectual history of modern Thailand has never been acknowledged. He was not an academic, and he did not teach in the secular university system, so his scholarship has been ignored. After being educated as a mining engineer in Britain, he returned to Thailand and served in the navy. This is probably the reason he used the pseudonym “Sea Captain” when he wrote for Supha Sirimanond left-wing magazine, *Aksornsarn*. He taught philosophy at Mahamakut Buddhist Academy, and he is best known as a philosopher searching for the middle ground between Western scientific method and Buddhism.

My favourite Samak book is *Intellect [Panya]*, first published in 1954, in which he puts forward his own version of Western scientific method. In this thick volume he appears to be writing down everything he has learned from his science courses in Britain, and the result is a masterful survey of evolutionary theory and

scientific method. Samak mentions Lauriston Sharp but not for Sharp's anthropological research in Bang Chan, Minburi, which is how anthropologists of Thailand remember his work today. Before he became interested in Thailand, Sharp did important work on aboriginal culture in northern Australia, and from this research Samak derives ideas about how technology can influence culture and social structure (Sharp 1952). Samak shared a materialist explanation of culture and ideology that was common at the time among Thai socialist thinkers. I believe it is fair to say that the social scientific method exposed in *Intellect* predates the social scientific methods that Thai anthropologists eventually acquired when they went abroad for their higher degrees. Samak is another "self-taught" social scientist who belongs in the genealogy I have been developing.

Postwar Anthropology and the Development Paradigm

The first Thai national to receive a PhD in anthropology was Sanit Smakarakan. The date was 1972, and the doctorate was from the University of Hawaii, but this date is an unreliable indicator of anthropological teaching and research in Thailand. It gives undue emphasis to anthropologists trained in America, because some of the Thai anthropologists were trained in Britain. Pattaya Saihu received an MA in anthropology from Oxford in 1959, and Suthep Sunthornphesat received an MA in anthropology from the University of London in 1963 (Anan 1998:29). I mention Pattaya and Suthep – there were others too – because they both made early contributions to the study of anthropology in Thai language and were pioneers in the discipline.

Thai anthropologists who are relatively new to academic life may not realize it, but in the mid-1960s Thai universities and the academic disciplines were still in their infancy in terms of status, the number of university teachers holding doctorates, and research culture. The beginnings of anthropology in Thailand coincide with the beginnings of the professionalisation of university academic research. Foreign researchers arriving in Thailand to do their fieldwork in the late 1960s were surprised to find that apart from *Warasan sinlapakorn and Borannakhadi*, two journals published by the Department of Fine Arts, there were almost no journals that published academic research. The social science review *Sangkhomsat parithat*, which began publication in 1964, marks the beginning of a change in Thai research culture. It was a lively magazine that carried essays, poetry, short stories, and book reviews. Although it was not really an academic journal, with few footnotes and bibliographies, it published articles in an academic style. *Warasan thammasat [Thammasat University Journal]*, possibly the longest-running academic journal, appeared for a couple of years in 1961-1962 and then ceased publication, to be revived again only in 1971, shortly before 14 October.

These facts are important, because they illustrate the relative youth of Thai academic research and publications. The academic language, which Thai researchers now take for granted, is only about forty years old. The vocabulary of the social sciences - words such as hypothesis, context, analysis, structure, institution, paradigm, and so forth - was not widely used until the 1970s. I can elucidate this point by briefly discussing a little book by Pattaya Saihu, *Social Systems* which has become a classic, reprinted ten times since it first appeared in 1973. Pattaya reported

that the word institution (*sathaban*) was virtually unknown in 1950. It was listed for the first time in 1964 and was given its proper dictionary definition in 1982 (Pattaya 2001:143). This new social scientific language came from the West, but the farang origins of Thai social science have completely disappeared in Pattaya's Thai-language book. There is no bibliography to show these farang origins. The structural-functional theoretical tendencies of the 1960s and 1970s are also prominent in Pattaya's discussion, as they were in other Thai anthropological writings that date from this period. There is a chapter on "Mechanisms of the Social Order" and "The Organization and Maintenance of Social Systems" that reflect the influence of Talcott Parsons, Evans-Pritchard, Radcliffe-Brown, Levi Strauss, and Edmund Leach.

In American anthropological studies on Thailand the emphasis on structuralism at the expense of class persisted well into the 1970s, long after the tumultuous political events in October 1973 and 1976. Lucien Hanks's classic study "Merit and Power in the Thai Social Order," which cast a long shadow on studies of Thai society, was partly responsible for this emphasis (Hanks 1962). As late as 1978 Hanks could sum up anthropological debate on "the plan of the Thai social order" in terms of pyramid, plural society, or entourage and circle (1978:61-62). Class did not figure in his modelling.

It's also worth pointing out that the dissertations of this first generation of Western-trained anthropologists tended to focus on ethnic or religious minorities rather than lowland majority peoples: Lao Phuan (Sanit Smakarakan); Shan and southern Malays (Pattaya Saihu); and Muslims in Chiang Mai (Suthep Sunthornphesat) (Anan 1998:36-37). An earlier study of the Lawa by M. C. Sanidh

Rangsit, who had been trained in Europe, was based on field research conducted in 1937-1938 (Keyes 1978:17).

Another scholar from this first generation of "professional," Western-trained anthropologists was Suthep Sunthornphesat who published *Sangkhom witthaya khong muban phak tawan ok chiang nua [Social Studies of the Northeastern Village]*. The original book that came out in 1968 had chapters by several Western anthropologists, including Biff Keyes, that were dropped when the book was reprinted in 2005 as *Mu ban isan yuk 'songkhram yen' [The Northeastern Village during the Cold War]*. In place of these chapters was a new chapter by Suthep with an extensive discussion of internal colonialism, a term virtually unknown in Thai studies in the 1960s and 1970s. Suthep's inspiration for internal colonialism was Michael Hechter's 1975 study of British national development, research that Suthep presumably encountered during his doctoral work at Berkeley in the mid-1970s.

The argument about internal colonialism is now a familiar one. The reforms under Chulalongkorn in the late nineteenth century gradually extended Bangkok control over the north, northeast, and south, removed the traditional rulers of these areas, and replaced them with court-appointed officials, thus displacing local leadership (Suthep 2005:chap. 4). It is interesting that Keyes in his comprehensive 1978 review of ethnography and anthropological interpretation in the study of Thailand mentions neither Suthep's 1968 study, nor Pattaya's 1973 study, largely because he is focused on studies of Thailand from the outside. He skips over what I am calling the indigenous anthropology, as well as the Western travel accounts which produced anthropological

knowledge, treating them as sources of miscellaneous data rather than as studies acceptable to the Western academy, which of course they are not. As Keyes put it, “they lack that focus on a bounded social entity that has become the hallmark of modern anthropological fieldwork” (Keyes 1978:3). “Modern” here means “as accepted by Western academic standards.”

The dominant paradigm of this period through the mid-1980s was development and modernization. As far as the Thai government and its American ally were concerned, until about 1980 development and modernization had definite strategic and security imperatives because of the U. S. A.’s war effort in Indochina. The Tribal Research Center, founded on the basis of a report written by the American social scientist Hans Manndorff for the Department of Public Welfare, Ministry of Interior, was a key institution for collecting data that had counterinsurgency value. The center also provided training for Thai anthropologists. This and other social science research of the 1960s was shaped by American strategic interests in the region at the height of the Cold War and the early years of the American war in Vietnam. Peter Kunstadter makes clear in his landmark two-volume study of 1967 that all the major players in this strategic game had their eye on northern Thailand: the Untied States Operations Mission in Thailand; the U. S. Department of Defense through its Advance Research Projects Agency (ARPA); the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization; and private organisations such as the Asia Foundation (Kunstadter 1967:385-392). The U. S. Department of Defense supplied equipment for the Mobile Development Units of the Thai Ministry of Defense, and the Americans worked closely with the Thai Border Patrol Police. American funding had been essential to

these programs. All of these departments, agencies, and units on both the Thai and American sides were preoccupied with the threat, imagined or otherwise, of subversion and “infiltration” from Thailand’s neighbours in the north. Kunstadter’s own essay in the first volume assesses the vulnerability of some of these ethnic groups to communist appeals. This is another example of engaged anthropological research.

Parts of the north as far down as Phitsanulok were declared “red,” and Thailand’s northeast was also seen as dangerously exposed to communist campaigns because of its border with Laos. The communist insurgency, announced formally in 1965, ended in 1980 with the amnesty decrees for those who had fled into the jungle after the massacre at Thammasat University on 6 October 1976. But as late as 1980, the year of the amnesty decrees, government officials in rural Thailand were still nervous about communism. When Ajarn Suriya Smutkupt, then a research assistant, wanted to copy a satellite map at a photography shop in Sisaket, he was reported to the local police who apprehended him for interrogation. He had been wearing half-length trousers, a sport shirt, and speaking Lao, and the police thought he might be a Vietnamese spy.[9] The controversial assistance that American and Australian anthropologists gave to American policy and aid programs in Thailand at the beginning of this period is well known. The documented in *Anthropology Goes to War* and in a more recent article by Kathryn Robinson serves to illustrate the interest in the region for purposes of counter-insurgency and the ethical problems raised by academic collaboration with counter-insurgency programs (Wakin 1992; Robinson 2004).

Before turning to Anan's place in this history, I need to mention one other feature of these years of the development paradigm during the Cold War. By the 1980s, towards the end of this period, the concept of community (*chumchon*) became important for NGOs and development people working in rural Thailand. *Chumchon* actually shares a similar history to the discourse on local knowledge (*phumpanya*) in terms of its origins and popularity. *Phumpanya* is also a neologism of very recent coinage that has played a big part in developing a discourse of resistance to the Thai state even as it has been quickly recognized by the state, co-opted, and put to use in the formulation of policy.[10] Part of community's genealogy in Europe lies in its use by socialists. In Thailand *chumchon* came to be the favoured translation of commune, as in the "primitive commune" of Marx's linear progression of social formations. In the Thai development bureaucracy the *Community Development Bulletin* appeared in 1962, published by the Ministry of Interior. The concern for community development at this time was reinforced by American aid programs through the United States Operations Mission, the local office for the American Agency for International Development (Reynolds n. d.). The interest of both Thai and foreign counterinsurgency experts in community development can be documented from the early 1960s. It is at this time that *chumchon* began to replace *thongthin* as the term for community that is with us today, and community culture is well known in the Thai NGO movement.

There have been many hands in the fashioning of community culture: Ajarn Chatthip as well as many others, and if you read Phya Anuman with community culture in mind, you can see

clearly in Phya Anuman's work in the decade after World War II the early seeds of *phumpanya* and community culture (Paritta 2005:6; Saichon 2007:118). Actually, Ajarn Anan himself has cast a sceptical eye over the use, and overuse, of community. Writing in 1999, he wondered what this community thing was all about:

> Is *chumchon* something real that previously existed in Thai society and is now being destroyed? Or is it an academic theoretical concept constructed for the purpose of analyzing society? Or is it an ideological and romantic thing? And if community (*chumchon*) really exists can we not ask to have its distinctive features described? Do these distinctive features still have consequences and the potential to influence social movements today? (Anan 2001a:109-110).

He goes on to trace the career of community in the anthropological literature on Thailand, noting that the views of academic and government development workers in the 1960s were little different from the official attitudes in developing rural societies everywhere, namely, the view that "community life was terrible" and had to be corrected or improved (Anan 2001a:113). This is not the view of community life today, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say it is only partly the view today. NGOs and academic researchers who study communities are more constructive and positive now about local community as a unit not just worthy of preservation but of support and transformation.

Ajarn Anan's Anthropology

Ajarn Anan's research and teaching have helped to shape current concerns in Thai anthropology, in particular, the rights of villagers and security of livelihood through adequate management of community resources. In his 1984 doctoral research he discovered that the monetized economy in Sanpatong district had developed historically out of the economic activities of northern Thai princely families who had acted sometimes in concert and sometimes in competition with British colonial and private interests in the teak forests (Anan 1984b). The orientation and preoccupations of anthropology in northern Thailand can be traced to the resource extraction that has been underway in this part of the country since the nineteenth century. In any case, Anan's thesis was completed at a time when economic anthropology held sway in the West, particularly in the U. S. A. The approach was influenced by Marxist social scientists, to be sure, but not all economic anthropology was Marxist. In any case, while Anan was aware that he was working in this particular paradigm and appreciated its contribution to his research, when he returned to Thailand after completing his degree he quickly tired of the debates among Thai Marxists, which he thought were distracting and not particularly enlightening (Anan 2007).

His work in this early period of his career also included research on spiritual divisions within villages, which he interpreted as symptomatic of conflicts between poor and rich peasants. He published an important article on local spirits (*phi ka'*) in *Mankind* in 1984 (Anan 1984a), and he has continued to do research on rituals from time to time. As late as 1999 he published "Rituals of Homage to the Muang Spirit and State Power in Lanna," which

reworked an earlier paper of 1994 by the same name (Anan 1999). This topic has a lot in common with Tanabe's work on autochthony and the *inthakin* cult of Chiang Mai (Tanabe 2000). I mention these details because they demonstrate the significance of the annexation of Lanna beginning in the late nineteenth century, and they help us understand the preoccupation by Chiang Mai scholars with the imposition of central authority from then to the present day.

Throughout this very same decade and a half, after he completed his thesis in 1984 until the end of the 1990s, Ajarn Anan was working hard on resource management by local communities. This research, sponsored by the Thailand Research Fund, saw the publication of a huge two-volume study in Thai edited by Ajarn Anan and a smaller, but widely read and exceedingly useful précis of his own research over a decade and a half in English (Anan 2000a, 2000b). This attention to resource management was not a departure from his thesis research on the commercialization of agriculture, but a direct spin-off of his studies of land tenure. In 1986 the Thai government began a Land Titling Project in order to make land-holding more secure and to promote more efficient land use for the purposes of agricultural production. The Land Titling Project had a large impact not only on land-holdings but on social life, because the new land titles affected belief systems, customs and other aspects of the rural life (Anan 200a:116). For Anan, this development was yet another instance of the invasiveness of the central government in the lives of rural communities in the north. His work and the work of other Chiang Mai anthropologists became increasingly focused on community rights. Their research was evermore in the nature of "advocacy"

anthropology, or “engaged” anthropology, and stemmed from sympathies with villagers who were caught in the pincers: from one side, government policies which had detrimental effects on a largely agricultural population; and from the other, increasing competition for Thai agricultural products because of exposure to global markets.

But I do not think that the concern for community rights was simply a local response to Thai conditions. Over the decade from 1985 through the mid-1990s leading up to the financial crisis of 1997, developments outside of Thailand motivated and empowered Thai researchers, activists, and NGO workers to speak up for the rights of agriculturalists who were victimized by government policies or by the impact of the commercialisation of agriculture. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was announced by the fledgling United Nations long ago in 1948, but it has taken many decades for the declaration to become part of the language of global governance (Vervoorn 2004:65-68). In June 1993 the World Conference on Human Rights reaffirmed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and I do not think it is a coincidence that from the early 1990s in Thailand what I have called the “development paradigm” was changing from one of national integration and assistance to one that stressed empowerment, rights, and security of livelihood. This emphasis on rights continues through the 1990s, and is still central to anthropological research and NGO activism.[11]

Ajarn Anan himself dates the new thinking to a half decade before 1993, to the Sixth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1987-1991), which sought to involve the population more collaboratively in development planning. Rather than

emphasise economic development exclusively, planners began to pay more attention to quality of life and the human spirit through the policy of *phaendin tham phaendin thong [Land of Virtue, Land of Wealth]*, although Anan dismisses the effectiveness of this policy change as merely an attempt to prettify the economic policies by making them appear more humane (Anan 2001b:12). The deleterious effects of capitalism in the countryside could thus be easily overlooked, he said as early as 1987. But he was also critical of the community culture movement and private NGOs for being one-eyed in their hostility to capitalism. He said,

> It was so fixed ideologically that it seriously failed to pay sufficient attention to the analysis of problems of underdevelopment. Thus, the approach to development stemmed from, on the one hand, the belief that capitalist development had only negative consequences, and the other, the view that the rural sector had a "good" culture which was capable of resisting capitalism. (Anan 2001b:12).

That was twenty years ago, and his view may have changed, but that seems to me a crucial statement by a leading development thinker. If I read him correctly, this argument is an attempt to confront the dichotomy (*khwamkhit baep khu trongkankham*) that leads to unproductive ways of analysing the problems of development. The dichotomy arises from 1) characterising capitalism as necessarily intrusive and detrimental to social life, on the one hand; and 2) idealizing community culture as capable of withstanding the onslaught of capitalism. One can see all of his work in the past twenty years (1987-2007) as resting on this observation he made in 1987.

What stands out distinctively in his most recently published books is Ajarn Anan's attempt to work out ways to deal with this stark contrast that results from idealizing capitalism as a totally negative force and community culture as a force of resistance to capitalism and the state. Ajarn Anan likes to attack such dichotomies. He really, really hates dichotomies, because they constrain and inhibit imaginative solutions to complex social problems, and he doesn't like pre-packaged theory that pretends to have all the answers. Typical of his recent thinking is *Theory and Methodology in Cultural Research: Transcending the Limitations and Pitfalls of Dichotomous Thought [Thritsati lae withiwithaya khong kanwijai watthanatham]*. In this collection of ten essays, most of them previously published, Ajarn Anan puts forward some of his principles of anthropological research. Because he understands the history of anthropological practice in Thailand to which he has contributed, he is able to be critical of research that has produced a distorted picture of uplanders. To rectify the situation he suggests a new paradigm for studying ethnic minorities using the multi-layered thinking that he advocates. He proposes research to develop the group's potential with the aim of creating a plural society. This new research paradigm, he asserts, must involve basic research, research for development, and policy research, and policy research involves study of the law as well as conflict (Anan 2005:chap. 9). Anan suggests that "multi-layered" or "multi-pronged" research will force change, and it will "liberate" villagers from hegemony and control (*kanplotploi manut jak kan khuapkhum lae khropngam*) (Anan 2005:238). It strikes me that this is a political project, because it deals with relationships of power. It is also a civilizational project, in that it assumes that progress leads in certain definable directions. This research

is just as “engaged” or “applied” research as the research of the earlier, self-taught Thai ethnographers who worked before modern anthropology came to Thailand.

Final Remarks

In conclusion, I have some observations and questions that occurred to me as I read Ajarn Anan’s work and tried to put it into historical context. First of all, it seems to me that much of Anan’s work and that of other Chiang Mai anthropologists, as well as the RCSD and other Chiang Mai scholars, for that matter, has been shaped by Lanna history since the annexation of the kingdom by the Jakri court in the late nineteenth century. The modern history of Lanna cannot be told or written without taking into account the resentment that northerners felt towards the centralizing Jakri state. A proud and distinctive culture, deeply influenced by Burma, Lanna civilization was subject to predatory practices by British timber interests as well as by Jakri administrators who gradually pushed to one side the princely families that ruled in the Ping River valley since the thirteenth century. It is no accident that the most important centre for the study of resource management in Thailand is located at this university, Chiang Mai University.

Second, in trying to compare and contrast Anan’s work with the work of farang anthropologists, particularly but not exclusively American anthropologists, I note marked differences in research emphasis. Thai anthropologists since the 1950s have been much less interested in ethnographies of hill tribes, highlanders, or ethnic minorities than have the farang anthropologists. There are of course exceptions to this generalization, such as Ajarn Suthep’s early work on Muslims in Chiang Mai, but work by Ajarn

Yos on the Dehong, for example, underscores the emphasis on Tai peoples rather than non-Tai peoples (Yos 2000). Instead of ethnographic work on highlanders, the modern Chiang Mai anthropologists have been concerned with the impact of globalization and capitalism on highland economies and social life, on the rights of local communities, and adaptation and resistance to globalizing pressures.

Third, on the whole, the modern Chiang Mai anthropologists have taken little interest in premodern anthropology in the north. What I have called the indigenous anthropologists appear to be of little interest to today's anthropologists in the north. They do not take seriously studies by the *jao*, other aristocrats and government officials of the late nineteenth century, or the self-taught or "amateur" anthropologists. For the most part, today's anthropologists dissociate themselves from this indigenous lineage. Although they recognize Jit Poumisak for his contributions, they don't look beyond Jit Poumisak to see that he is in a direct line of succession from Phra Phothiwongsajan, Prince Vajiranana, Phya Anuman, and so forth. And if Jit Poumisak is in a direct line from these self-taught anthropologists, and Chiang Mai anthropologists value his work as they do, then Chiang Mai anthropologists must be in a direct line of succession from the *jao* and the other self-taught anthropologists. In other words, I see a direct link between this indigenous anthropology and the modern anthropologists. This link is presently unrecognized and unstudied. Perhaps this is a challenge for the up and coming generation of Chiang Mai anthropologists.

Does Ajarn Anan have anything in common with these early indigenous anthropologists? Like Prince Vajiranana, he is

a teacher, and his books comprised of his essays written over two decades, can be read as gentle but firm instructions on how to think about anthropological problems. Like Phya Anuman, he reads widely and synthesizes in plain language the knowledge he acquires. He is a very adept academic facilitator, sought after as a speaker and dispenser of up-to-date knowledge about his field. He is not at war with his university, or with the ministries in Bangkok, or with the Thailand Research Fund. He is an academic with diplomatic skills. Like Samak Burawat, he thinks systematically. He is a broker of foreign knowledge - "a knowledge broker" - able to translate what he reads from foreign books. I mean translate in its literal sense, converting anthropological knowledge into comprehensible Thai, but also in the broader sense of interpreting, modifying, and re-orienting into Thai contexts what he learns from abroad. And like Jit Poumisak, he is an advocate for those most affected by unwanted and unsuitable policies and programs. He has a keen sense of social justice and fairness. He is, first and foremost, a scholar and teacher. And he really, really hates dichotomies!

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Endnote

1. Charles Keyes has written again recently on this topic, "The Anthropology of Thailand and the Study of Social Conflict" (English and Thai) in Sun Manutsayawitthaya Sirinthorn (2006).

2. I am grateful to Professor Paritta Chalermpow-Koanantrakul for this reference. This important essay was also published in 1971 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Prince Vajiranana's death (Wachirayan 1971).

3. As Nidhi explains, this new concept of the historical Buddha was promoted by the senior monks of the Dhammayutika Order such as Supreme Patriarch Sa Pussadeva. Before Sa's life of the Buddha was Prince Paramanuchit's biography, which set the Buddha's life apart from traditional "dhammography" (Nidhi 2005:270-275).

4. See Streckfuss 1993, especially p. 141 where he makes this argument most clearly.

5. The book that brought on this debate about the complicity of anthropology with British colonial power was Talal Assad (ed.), *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (London: Ithaca Press, 1973).

6. Although not an anthropologist, Dr. Piriya Krairiksh voiced this typical sentiment about the scholars of yesteryear: "Gone were the amateur scholars, having become irrelevant in a world geared towards professionalism." He was speaking about the post-World War II period. Keynote Speech, 10th International Conference of Thai Studies, Bangkok Post, 11 January 2008.

7. See also Boon Chuey (1963), which is a book of photographs of the peoples described in the Thai book.

8. For a tribute to Dr. Banchop's work by Kanya Lilalai see Kanya (2007) as well as the cremation volume, *Anusorn nai ngang phraratchathan phloeng sop satsatrajan dr khun banjop phanthumetha [In Memory of Professor Dr. Banchop Phanthumetha on the Occasion of her cremation on 28 March 1992].*

9. Ajarn Suriya Smutkupt; personal communication, Chiang Mai, 8 September 2007.

10. For a comprehensive critical analysis and history of *phumpanya* as an invented tradition, see Paritta 2005. The title of Ajarn Paritta's essay in draft was even more explicit about its deconstructive objectives: "The Career and Genealogy of *Phumpanya* in Thailand (*chiwaprawat lae wongsakhanayat khong 'phumpanya' nai prathetthai*). Lately *phumpanya* has become a new metaphor for tradition and even, as it is applied to individuals from top to bottom, for *saksit*.

11. See Anan 2005, chapter 9, especially p. 245.

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