CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The conclusions arising out of all the aspects studied are given below.

The village Ban Plong is named after "Plong" i.e., plants. In Thai, Ban means village. The Ban Plong means the village of plants. This is a clustered type of village which consists of 225 houses with 190 families. Total population is 1,291 persons. The village is suitably divided into two units - north and south - for the purpose of effective administration. A layout of the village showed clustering of houses in number of pockets. The houses in these pockets range from seven to eight to forty. These pockets of houses are connected by internal village roads running from one end to the other of the village. Most of the houses are built on the raised platforms four to six feet above the ground. The space beneath the houses are used for carrying on number of activities, viz., pounding rice, spinning and weaving, basket-
making, keeping animals and chit-chatting during leisure time. Initially the purpose behind constructing elevated houses was to seek protection from animal intruders and thieves. The villagers view the space beneath house as social centre or interaction centre as the family members and their neighbours recreate themselves beneath the house. The modern houses beautiful in designs are constructed on the grounds. The good quality materials are used for the construction of houses. Therefore, some of the villagers are seen to be change-oriented. The Wat, the School, rice mill, stores, assembly hall, pond and well are the social centres. Here, the interacting people form a functional community.

In Thailand the rural sector accounts for more than two-thirds of the population. The agriculture is the major component of the economy of Thailand. This is because the agriculture generates a substantial part of the exports of the country and generates more than half of the national domestic
product. Mostly, the agricultural enterprise is based on traditional methods and practices.

The rice is the principal crop in Thailand. In different areas of Thailand farms are used extensively for rice cultivation.

The North-East Region in which the village Ban Plong under study is situated has a long dry season and relatively scarce rainfall and hence it is least developed. The communication facilities are also poor in this region.

This region presents considerable challenge to the national economic planners because of low soil fertility and low rainfall. The mountainous topography affect the temperature during the cool season, although the days will be warm, the night temperature considerably falls down. The period from February to May is the period of hot season. The period of rainy season is from June to November and the winter season falls between November and January.
The agriculture year in the village under study follows the rhythm of the monsoon. The peasant's work schedule revolves round one major crop of rice. In the month of July they transplant the young shoots. The months of August and September are the months of tending dikes and weeds in the fields. The harvesting work is undertaken late in November or December and early January.

The hottest period of the year is from March through May. All the farm activities in the village are suspended during these months. Thus the traditional cycle of agricultural activities continues in the village. The threshing season is a time of offering feasts to the relatives, neighbours and friends in the village. At present this occasion is mostly celebrated in the family.

So far as land ownership is concerned it is found that most agricultural land is owned and cultivated by the land owning farm families and most among them operate on a small scale. A very few families own land above 50 Bais or 20 acres. A small number of families are landless. Even
though these families are landless, they cultivate others land on rental basis. They cultivate others lands either on share-cropping basis or on rental basis. The usual term of tenancy is one-year verbal contract renewable every year if the terms and conditions laid down are agreed by the tenants.

The rent is paid either in cash or kind. Fifty per cent of the crop produced is given if the land is cultivated on share-cropping basis.

The occupational pattern discussed showed that the major component of the economy in the village is agriculture. This is because a large number of the heads of the families are engaged in agriculture as principal occupation. A small number of the heads of the families are pursuing principal occupations such as agriculture labour, trade and commerce, watchman, workshop, transport and teaching.

A little less than half of the heads of the families follow subsidiary occupations to supplement the family income. The subsidiary occupations
preferred in order of rank are - raising hens and pigs, agriculture labour, carpentry, spinning and weaving, drilling and playing musical instruments.

The hens and pigs are mostly raised for earning an income by selling them in the market. The villagers are Buddhists and hence their religion forbids them slaughtering of pigs. The religion still influences the behaviour of the villagers. On special occasions if they need pork and eggs, they buy the same in the market. The fishing activity in the village is consumption-oriented. Some of the cultivators pursue carpentry as subsidiary occupation. This is because there is no carpenter family in the village. They carry out repairs to the agricultural implements. The cultivating families purchase new agricultural implements in the market of nearby town or village. Thus there is no change in the traditional occupation pattern in the village.

So far as the annual income of the families are concerned, it has been observed that a little less than half of the total families belong to the
income group between 9,000 and 11,000 bahts and rest of the families are above this income group. The low soil fertility and low rainfall are the major reasons for earning low income.

Besides, rains, the farmers in the village utilize different sources of water for irrigating their fields and home compound gardens. The pond and river are the major sources of irrigation.

The farmers in the village largely use animal manure for fertilizing their fields. This is the traditional manure still in use in the village. Some of the farmers are changing over from traditional fertilizers to modern chemical fertilizers. The process of change in this respect is gradual.

The Government through its machinery attempts to demonstrate the benefits of the use of modern chemical fertilizers by setting up demonstration plots to speed up the use of these fertilizers.

Some of the farmers also use modern pesticides such as D.D.T., Mataron, Fasdrain and Polidol E-605 for protecting crops from insects. Among these
pesticides, Polidol E-605 and Fasdrin E-105 are preferred more in the village. Therefore, change is taking place in this respect. The farmers might have understood the importance of the use of pesticides for protecting the crops.

Besides taking main crop of rice, the farmers also take secondary crops such as tobacco, soyabean, onions, garlic, groundnuts and fruits and vegetables partly for consumption and partly for sale.

The traditional agricultural implements are mostly used for cultivation of fields by the farmers in the village. But it may also be noted that some of the farmers though small in number also use modern agricultural implements for cultivating their fields.

The villagers owned and use the cattles such as bullocks, buffaloes, cows, hens and pigs either for cultivation of fields or milk purpose or for sale in the market. The traditional practice of using buffaloes for farming is seen continued in the village. So the farming families take utmost care of their buffaloes.
Though generally division of labour in the village is based on age and sex but at the time of agricultural season, both men and women work shoulder to shoulder. They reap, thresh and arrange to carry rice to threshing floor. The heavy work is mostly performed by the males while women are assigned light tasks. The small children graze the cattles. The older ones stay at home and look after house and smaller children.

The families mostly contribute their own labour, for carrying out all the activities of farming. The help is also sought from the relatives, neighbours and friends when needed.

Among other characteristics of the family, one significant universal characteristic is that the family members typically live together under one roof. But the Thai rural family slightly differs in this respect. The family members (kin group members) do not exclusively live together in a single dwelling but they also may live in an adjacent dwelling in the house compound. This is because the Thai family norms of residence or dwelling govern the residential
pattern in rural Thailand. Thai rule of residence is that if more than one married son or daughter lives with the parents, the different families reside under separate roofs, within the family compounds since the families of two offsprings of the same household to live in one house or under a single roof is considered unlucky for the family. The traditional rule of residence is still practiced in the village.

There are three family household forms that are typical of rural Thai society. These forms are (1) The nuclear family, (2) the limited extended family, and (3) The extended family. There is also one more category of family i.e., residual category of family type. The nuclear type of family predominates in rural Thailand.

In the village under study also the above three family household forms are found. Among these the nuclear family form predominates in the village. The residual category of family form is not found in the village. This shows that the village adheres to the traditional norms of family forms prevailing
in rural Thailand.

It is observed that the medium size families having 4–6 members predominate in the village under study. If the normal size of family is taken as of 4–6 members, the nuclear family mostly conforms to this size and the joint family mostly above this size. The size and type of family seems to be correlated.

The polygyny, which once was practiced to a small extent in rural Thailand and still in some parts of rural Thailand it is practiced to a small extent by well-to-do peasants, is totally absent in the village. The polygyny lowered down the status of the secondary wives and their children. Only first (primary) wives enjoyed superior status over secondary wives. The absence of polygyny is a welcome trend because the practice of polygyny is against the human value of equality. Hence a significant social change has occurred in the village in this respect.
The extent of literacy is high in the village. The Thai government has made primary educations compulsory in Thailand. Because of this compulsion, most of the heads of the families have taken primary education in the village. The mother tongue of the villagers is Khmer. It is a dialect. The villagers while dealing with each other mostly speak is Khmer language. The official language is the Thai language.

The Thai custom of inheritance of the ancestral property is seen continued in the village. Both the son and the daughter inherit the rice land equally. But the house and its compound is inherited by the daughter and her husband.

The status position of an individual is governed in the family by age and sex of the family members and due respect is shown to the persons senior in age. The traditional practice of the status ranking among the family members is seen continued. So far as the status positions of the families and the persons in the village are concerned, number of criteria are used to determine the status positions.
The most important criteria used for assigning status positions are - religious roles of the persons, knowledge, the governmental roles and power, the teacher and the taught relationships. Here also the method of traditional ranking of the families predominates in the village. A slight change in assigning the status position to the persons in the village has taken place. The Thai society is a democratic society and hence secular criteria are also used for assigning status positions to the persons holding governmental positions and thereby having the power to summon and address the villagers.

The division of labour in the family is generally based on age and sex of the family members. Some of the female tasks fall into a taboo category for males. During difficulties, helps for household work are first of all sought from the females in the neighbourhood. If the efforts of seeking help are failed, then only the males of the families come forward to render their helping hands.

The traditional practice of the consumption of food items is seen continued in the village. Therefore,
there is no change in the basic form of meals in the village. However, the families those who are able to afford the cost eat non-vegetarian food.

The socio-religious and cultural norms generally govern the types of clothes that the persons may wear on different occasions. Generally on the occasions of the religious ceremonies the persons wear traditional clothes. On the occasion other than the religious ceremonies the persons are free to wear western types of clothes. The women above the middle-age still adhere to the practice of wearing the traditional clothings. However, the young girls and boys wear the western style clothings and no restrictions are imposed on them.

The modern articles of day-to-day use are seen available in the village stores for sale. These articles include tooth paste, tooth brush, powder, soaps, cosmetics, lipstick, razor blades, radio, transisters, etc. The families in the village those who can afford to pay the costs of these articles use the same. Likewise some of the families in the village use radio, transisters, T.V., for the purpose
of recreation. Some of the families in the village also use modern labour-saving devices such as mixer-grinder and freezer. The use of wrist-watches is common in the village. The possession of the articles such as television, radio, freezer and mixer-grinder are thought by the village families as prestige items.

Every society has its own institution of marriage with particular norms which govern the behaviour of the individual in general.

In the rural areas of Thailand marriages are almost entirely monogamous. So far as polygyny is concerned it has been known to occur in both rural and urban areas. But it was mainly practiced in urban areas. In some parts of North Thailand trial marriage is permitted. The villages which are not so much economically better off follow this practice. Therefore, the practice of trial marriage is dying out in Thailand.

The traditional practice of mate selection in rural Thailand is as follows -
There are certain occasions and opportunities which provide chances for choosing a mate. Generally the village fairs, temple fairs, feasts, religious ceremonies, schools, festivals, work places, movies provide opportunities for unmarried young men and young women to come together, see each other and may establish hetero-sexual contacts among them through established practice. Generally young men are given freedom in establishing social contacts.

The young women are allowed to establish social contacts but generally they are kept under close watch by their parents. Thai society is more permissive in respect of men than women.

If the courting is successful, the young man generally seeks approval of his parents before marriage takes place. It may be noted that while considering the marriage proposals certain things are considered by the parents of bride and bridegroom. These are family reputation, economic position, bride price, physique, education, job status, etc.
After finalization of the marriage proposals, further steps are taken to fix the marriage. The bargaining between the parents of the bridegroom and bride centres around some of the aspects. These aspects are boy's gift to the girl, girl's gift by the boy, and property arrangements in respect of farming and residence after marriage. Therefore, bargaining aspects mainly centre around financial matters.

After successful bargaining, in consultation with the important persons - Priests, Abbot, Parents of brides and bridegrooms, senior persons, Astrologers, etc., the dates and timings of the betrothal and marriage ceremonies are fixed.

As per the Thai norm a girl is generally considered marriageable at sixteen and men at twentyone.

So far as the forms of marriage is concerned, it has been reported that the marriages in the village under study are entirely monogamous. Polygyny and the trial marriages are entirely absent.
Polygyny and the trial marriages are inhuman and bring lower status to the women. These forms of marriages are an insult of womanhood. Therefore, change in the old practice has occurred in the village under study.

It has been seen that there are certain occasions which have provided opportunities to the unmarried young men and women to come together and establish hetero-social relations further. Among the opportunities available, the village fairs and temple fairs are found to be the best opportunities for young unmarried boys and girls to come together.

While choosing a mate as a life partner, it is seen that certain things have taken into consideration. Of these, the economic status of the families of the brides received due consideration, and the next the family reputation. It is seen that the economic matter is the most important one in this respect.

After first choice of the selection, the proposals of the marriages are taken to the concerned
parties at marriage. At this stage, if the match is approved, further talks are held. The talks seem to have been centered around the economic matters in respect of bride's gift to the girl (khonaman) and the girl's gift (Sin Sond) by the boy. Comparatively other matters are considered secondarily. It can be said that the traditional practice of bargaining at the time of fixation of marriage is still continued in the village.

While fixing the date and time of the betrothal and marriage ceremonies, mostly the Priests and Abbots, i.e., religious leaders are consulted by the villagers. After this, marriages are actually celebrated. So no drastic change has occurred in the institution of marriage in the village. The application of turmeric, the mutual exchange of vermilion by bride and bridegroom, the sprinkling of holy water on the bride and bridegroom give evidence of Brahminical influence among the Thais in the village.

There is also a practice in the village to arrange marriages among certain relatives, close and distant. So there is no change in this respect also.
A significant change has occurred in the age at marriage in the village. The age at marriage has been raised.

The marriages are reported to have been stable in the village.
There is close relationship between Buddhism and Thai nation. This is because the history of Thai nation is also the history of Buddhism. Buddhism is still the State religion of Thailand. The constitution of Thailand provides that the King who is a symbol of the nation and the protector of all religious must be a Buddhist. The Thai rulers have taken the responsibility for the protection and promotion of Buddhism. Therefore, Buddhism has become an integral part of Thai life.

The Brahminism and animism which lie outside Buddhism have also influenced the thinking and behaviour of Thai life. The role of Brahminism is seen in the Brahmanic ceremonies that are ritually observed by the peasant families in Thailand. The role of animism is seen in the propitiation of animistic spirits to seek protection from evil influence.

In the village under study also the impact of Buddhism, Brahminism and animism is seen in the thinking and behaviour of villagers largely.
Some of the State religious and secular ceremonies are held in the village. The King and the Queen of Thailand are at the centre of Thai society eventhough there is constitutional government. The villagers celebrate their birth days with enthusiasm. The villagers treat them as the protector Buddhist religion.

The villagers refer to both the religious (calendar of Lunar cycle of Festivals) and secular (Calendar of National Festivals) calendars for celebrating religious as well as national ceremonies at present.

The national events of significance are observed according to the western calendar. The religious holidays and ceremonies are calculated by the lunar cycle of calendar.

Alongwith other ceremonies Buddhist holy days and the Buddhist New Year are celebrated in the village Wat and the villagers participate in them. This shows the impact of Buddhism of the life of the villagers. The observance of the Sankranti festival
shows the Brahmanic influence on the village life. The performance of the rituals at the time of the observances also show the Brahmanic impact. The performance of the rituals at the time of the celebrations of the festivals and ceremonies have been curtailed now a days. This is because the meaning of the host of ritual observances attached to these ceremonies have been lost during the course of time.

The family centered ceremonies (birth, tenknot, marriage, death, etc,) are held in the village. The Hindu rites provided a place for Brahman priests in Buddhist ceremonies because of Brahmanic influence or opened the way for Buddhist monks to participate in household ceremonies of Brahmanic origin.

The social and religious life of the villagers resolve around the village Wat. The head of the Wat, monks and novices devote there time for spiritual development in the Wat. They also engage themselves in teaching and learning Buddhist doctrine. As a religious duty the villagers bear the cost of maintaining the Wat. Thus the Wat has its own place in the life of the village.
Besides the religious role, the monks render their social services for the cause of community welfare in the village. They are friends, guides, and philosophy of the villagers.

For merit-making the village boys if they themselves and their parents wish because either the temple boy, the novice or the monk, either temporarily or permanently. A large number of the heads of the village families have ordained themselves as the monks once in life. The reasons for their ordaining or becoming monks are to follow tradition, because of their parents desire, for practicing Buddhist doctrine, and to learn Buddha's teachings. The most of them became the monks between the age group of 20 and 25 years. This also shows the influence of Buddhism on their life.

The heads of the families reported that they and their family members generally observe the customary norms of behaviour. For them the norms of behaviour are the guidelines for governing proper behaviour of the persons in Thai society.
The villagers generally believe in astrology and hence they believe in twelve-year life cycle of beliefs. They, therefore, consult the astrologers, priests/monks to find out the good or bad days for performing religious ceremonies and other events.

For storing merit for life in the next world the villagers turn to Buddhism and for protection in the present world the peasants look to the hosts of good and evil spirits that affect their life and hence they propitiate them. The villagers believe in the spirits of the soil and the time of important agricultural activities they propitiate the soil spirits by performing rituals and offerings to ward off evil influence and to obtain good crops. Here also the elusiveness of the rituals are curtailed. Some of the minor soil spirits are not propitiated by the peasants. Likewise, the most of the villagers do not propitiate lesser-order animistic non-animistic spirits.

The foregoing account of the religious life of the villagers show that the process of modernization
has not made much impact on the practice of Buddhism and the influence of the animistic and non-animistic beliefs and practices is not felt much in the life of the villagers. The change is taking in other areas of the village life than the religious sphere.

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