

RELIGION AND THE GOOD SOCIETY.

Some options in the construction of a
theoretical framework for the study of
relations between ideology and religion.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. The purpose.

The concern behind this paper is with formation of political consciousness and formulation of political ideology on the basis of, or in relationship to, religion, in a number of societies sharing certain characteristics.

The concern is primarily with the ways in which systems of meaning serve to sustain relations of domination or motivate for the overthrow of such relations in favour of autonomously conceived preferences in construction of the good society.

The societies of concern in this respect, are generally those undergoing rapid social change, shaped and even dictated by external economic and political interests, and external cultural basis and governed by states that have adopted ideologies in line with such interests and on such politico-cultural basis. Of particular interests are the capitalist societies of Southeast Asia, that are seen to share a number of relevant characteristics.

The concern is with the points, at which, religious conceptions of meaning and values can give birth and legitimacy to political consciousness and ideology among the majority of people, not participating in the political and economic project of the dominant class in the societies in question. The interest behind this paper is in the "why" and "how" of religious orientation becoming political ideology, capable of sustaining social change, as well as with the actual content of such ideology in relation to the society and the religion giving birth to it.

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate certain options in construction of a framework intended to provide vantage points into this field.

The framework discussed, is thought to be useful, with adaptations, for studies within this wide field.

The intention of this paper is to provide an overview and brief analysis of some of the options a student is faced with at the entry point into this general field, rather than to pose, and still less to answer, the actual questions at the base of this interest

It is hoped, that this overview and evaluation will provide a certain basis for asking such questions in a systematic way

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1.2. The field.

This paper is written out of interest in a field vastly more complex and wide, than can even be superficially surveyed in such a paper. As the interest is in the general processes within the field, rather than with particular aspects or manifestations, the paper has been written as an evaluation of selected theoretical approaches to a further study of what is seen as the most important elements within this general field of interest. Due to this nature and background of the paper, it is necessary to look briefly at the wider context.

At the basis of the interest behind this paper, is the assumption, that any view of reality is a product of a certain code. The facts and reality as a whole, are constituted, or at least selected, by such a systematic code, largely shared by a wider, but limited community.

It is the production of such codes, as far as they relate to the organisation of society by way of shaping perceptions and preferences and producing legitimacy for uneven relations of power, that forms the general interest behind this paper.

Without such acquired codes or systems of orientation, man would not only be an incomplete being, but probably a creature with a very limited survivability. Much of the study into the processes at work in this respect would, hence, fall well outside normal concerns of sociology or political science. No attempt will be made, or could be made in this paper to step outside established concerns of these two disciplines. Human need for systems of orientation is simply assumed. The production of such systems on the basis of social reality is the concern behind this paper.

A basic assumption behind the paper, is that the production processes in religious systems of orientation are similar in essence, or of the same root, as production of ideological systems limited to the sanctioning of social reality or preferred social order, as opposed to the wider reference of religion.

The sociological or political study of ideologies is normally centred on the conditions giving rise to them and on the effects they may have. The interest at the root of this paper, would be ultimately concerned with the processes that govern the perception of the conditions, and hence the content of the ideology and the need for it, rather than with the actual conditions themselves, as seen through intended objectivity.

Within sociology, an enquiry, profitable for this concern, is thought to be possible through the study of sociology of religion, ideology and knowledge, while within the references of political science, the study of ideology, the state, class, political consciousness, political organisation, representation of interests and other related themes, is similarly, thought to provide tools and concepts for study in this field.

In broadest terms, this paper will be centred around the concepts of ideology and religion. A large part of the paper will be devoted to attempts at evaluating options in the definition of these concepts and several others and the various approaches to the field made possible with different use of the concepts.

In the most general terms, ideology and religion will be looked at as two systems sharing the purpose of providing orientation, legitimacy, justification and sharing the character of functioning as central templates in the human mind, producing meaning out of the external and the internal world in a highly complex interrelations between internalisation and externalisation. The differences between the two types of systems are recognised, while they are seen to share roots and essence and hence be linked on a fundamental level. It will be argued in this paper, that the differences have more to do with function than nature

Historically there is the basic difference, that whereas religion seems to have existed in all human societies, ideology is a recent phenomenon, it has come into being with capitalism. It is born out of the process of differentiation and the consequent need for integration and meaning in societies that do not produce orientation and meaning.

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It may be noted, that the same processes, that give birth to ideology or the need for it, minimise the role and function of religion. The basic approach of this paper is to look at ideology as a systematic application of beliefs to society and religion as systematic application of beliefs to the cosmos or the ultimate questions in human life. This, of course, is a simplification, but this is stated to underline the basic assumption behind this paper on the fundamental relations between ideology and religion.

The interest in this field is created by attempts at understanding some highly practical aspects of the formation of political consciousness, particularly in countries undergoing rapid and conflictual processes of differentiation.

It is thought, that since man produces reality on the basis of his conception of existing reality, the processes influencing the conception of reality are at least as important as the more observable processes actually changing the observable conditions. The two may well be the same, but then again, they may not. Hence, the approach of studying the formation of templates and doing so by looking at both the observable conditions thought to give rise to prevailing consciousness, and at the same time the process linking the two, insofar as this can be observed by looking at man's recourse to notions of ultimate truths, purpose and meaning.

1.3. The problem.

The paper is focused on Thailand and Buddhism. A more general concern, however, shapes the selection of issues and the approach taken.

The paper is not an attempt at a study of Thailand, nor is it a case study, where general theories would be systematically applied to local reality. Thailand is simply used to focus the discussion and as a general source of examples. The concern is with the theories,

themselves, rather than with a balanced understanding of Thai society. Looked at from a Thai point of view, the concepts, theories and general approach may, and probably will, look somewhat random. The paper is more of an exercise in interrelating concepts and theories on an abstract level, than in applying theories, specifically selected for their local relevance, to the society discussed.

The problem area itself is abstract. What is attempted in the paper, is evaluation of concepts for a structural analysis, in theory applicable to any society, and a limited application of this analysis to Thailand. In addition, it will be argued in the paper, certain further dimensions should be incorporated into such analysis, than those highlighted by a structural treatment of society.

Thailand as a focus.

Having somewhat qualified the particular use made of Thailand in this paper, a few remarks on a case level may serve as an introduction. These are, however, in line with the general approach, mostly on more general concerns as modern Thailand is looked at in the terms provided by two global phenomena.

One is the revival of religion as a force and, maybe more importantly, as a forum in the political domain. The global nature of this phenomenon has not been sufficiently explained and most research on this treats the various manifestations within the contexts of continents or single religions. Buddhism, the religion of Thailand and only two other non-atheistic states, has received limited attention in this respect, probably since it is seen as a force of stability rather than as a challenge to the state. This is indeed the traditional role of all religions and the reverse, an open challenge to the state on the basis of religion, is rare in history, except when state and people do not share one religion.

A search for a global explanation to the simultaneous challenge in Christianity and Islam to various states on four continents is obviously well outside the scope of this paper. The ubiquity of this phenomenon is,

however, seen as one key to its nature and as a possible link to the other global phenomenon providing the initial terms for the study of Thailand. This is state formation and state ideology. The nature of the post colonial state, and Thailand seems more superficially than really different in this respect, has been represented through various general theories, mostly highlighting the external factor in history or in the present and the consequent relative autonomy of the state from the domestic conflict that would generally be assumed to shape the state, as an integrating response to conflicts of differentiation. This is entered into in the paper itself. What suffices at this point as an illustration of the problem area, is the conflict between the the fundamental assumptions and practise of state ideology, founded in an externally shaped state, and the consciousness of the people. The state in Thailand enjoys high levels of legitimacy, not because of its policies or the selection of its rulers, but because of association with religion based monarchy. The ideology of the state is however, something of a contrast to the precepts of that religion.

In the theoretical framework discussed in this paper, this could be represented through the concepts of correspondence and torsion between the religious field and the political field within the social complex and the concepts of legitimacy, consciousness and ideology.

A certain brief historical analysis is attempted with regard to Thailand and Buddhism. A brief analysis of the organisation of Thai Buddhism is also attempted, especially with the need in mind, to include an analysis of actors in the religious field, in any general study of type argued by the paper. Analysis of the political field centres on the lack of representation and the bureaucracy as relevant features of formation of state ideology. One peculiarity of Thailand is also entered into, namely the question of the religious monarchy.

2. THE FRAMEWORK.

The framework to be examined in this section consists of three dimensions.

One of these dimensions is a structural analysis, historical and present. The construction of such analysis is discussed below and this incorporates most of the central concepts proposed for use and defined for the purpose.

A second dimension is an analysis of the actors involved. The structures are clearly sustained by actors, while the constraints of the structures and their conditioning effects on the actors would be a matter of controversy. In this study it is assumed, that direct cause and effect relationship does not exist in the structures, but rather, that actors respond to causes and produce effects. These effects may not be so much determined as influenced by the logic of the structures.

A third dimension to be looked at for incorporation in a general enquiry, is that of the original message of Buddhism. This would normally fall outside sociological interest. In this paper, however, it will be argued, that such a thing as the original message of Buddhism exists independent of any social context. This notion of a religious message independent of the social context is not sociologically orthodox and this may also seem out of line with the rest of the framework and the general reasoning of this paper. It is argued in this paper, that Buddhism, like any other religion has been given shape by social and political demands in different societies and at different times. It is also argued that people adopt religious systems in accordance with certain needs that are highly dependent on the social context. It is, however, also argued, that a distinction can be made between popular religion or practical religion on one hand, and on the other hand, religion as a timeless human wisdom. This wisdom can then be turned any way that may seem profitable at any moment, but that does not exclude its independent existence. Buddhism on this level, as the original teaching of the Buddha, is very different from its daily practise. It is on this level also somewhat different from the most common understanding of other religions and so much so, in fact, that it is

debateable, whether it should be classified as religion or not.

While religion itself, as practised and accepted by people and rulers, is a social phenomenon highly dependent on the social context and even little more than a reflection of the context, certain original message or wisdom does exist, and is in fact in radical opposition to present and past social order. An increase in scripturalism, the going back to the original pure texts, has been observed in Buddhist societies. What people will find through such search, may have a bearing on the type of social preferences and action they choose to adopt.

The type of analysis suggested by this paper, would be an attempt at an overview of the various relationships between Thai Buddhism and ideology in Thailand.

This paper will attempt to represent such a framework through a number of concepts, these being specifically defined for the purpose. An attempt will be made to present some options in such a construction.

2.1. Structural analysis.

The form of structural analysis examined in this paper, is largely based on the writings of Francois Houtart . At certain junctures, however, a clear departure from the framework developed by Houtart will be proposed. Some of the key concepts used will also be defined somewhat differently from what Houtart proposed for his purposes. The structural framework is most clearly spelled out in Religion and Ideology in Sri Lanka (Houtart 1974), especially on pages 1-33 and 457-497 of that book, which is based on a doctoral thesis.

The other works of Houtart used directly or indirectly in formulation of this part of the framework, are; The Great Asiatic Religions and their Social Functions, (Houtart and Lemercinier, 1980), and two articles in the journal, Social Compass. (Houtart, 1977) and (Houtart, 1981).

Houtart himself is much indebted to Karl Marx for his sociology and to a certain extent to Max Weber for insights into the social functions of religion. Among other authors, whose works are relevant to the generalities of this type of analysis are Levi-Strauss with regard to social structures or systems and P. Bourdieu with regard to religion.

This paper will draw on the writings of several other authors and references to these will be given at appropriate times. References to the already mentioned works of Houtart will not be given at every possible juncture in this section of the paper, as this part of the analysis is partly, and when the contrary is not stated, an attempted adaptation of the framework developed by Houtart.

The component parts of the framework and their interrelationships will be discussed in the following sections. Definition of concepts will be attempted at the junctures, where the concepts occur as central tools of analysis.

2.1.1. Divisibility of the social complex.

For the purposes of this analysis, society will be seen as a single reality in time and space, and static in this sense, rather than as a dynamic complex of situations or stages in development. A less simplistic picture would be attempted with subsequent incorporation of further dimensions. This approach is taken in this part of the analysis in order to observe relationships, whose nature and general directions seem essentially unchanged over time. For these purposes, society will be seen as divisible into three fields, each of them organised around a central concept. These fields and concepts are; the economic, the political and the religious. Definitions of these concepts and the fields will be given in sub-sections below.

The relationship under study, is primarily, and in terms of the direct purpose of the research, exclusively, the relationship between the political and the religious fields.

The relationship between these two fields and the economic field will be referred to on the basis of a simple hypothesis, which is meant to fix the links rather than to open them for study. This is seen as necessary to simplify the problem and isolate the factors of greatest concern.

The link is, however, not seen as a one way street or as an automatic conduit. The relationships in question are highly controversial and of obvious importance. Two of the extremes in this regard would sometimes be attributed to the two scholars this framework ultimately relies on, Marx and Weber. The approach taken here to this particular problem would be closer to Weber than to orthodox interpretation of Marx. Weber, known for his elaboration of economic ethics derived from religion, nevertheless stressed the circular nature of these relationships. He claimed that "we would lose ourselves in the discussion if we tried to demonstrate all these dependencies" (Weber, 1915), when he discussed the economic and the religious roots of the economic ethic. The hypothesis used here is, that the relationship between the economic and the religious field is circular and inexact. The link from the economic to the

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religious is, however, seen as highly privileged, and this is the second part of the hypothesis used

The third part of the hypothesis is, that the relationships between these fields are not seen to be automatic in any sense but mediated by actors and by structures created and sustained by actors, who sometimes act independently of any observable economic logic, over a long period of time. The primacy of the economic field is in fact not questioned by this approach, but mechanical effects are not seen to exist, even over long periods of time. The actors are seen to react to causes, and then to produce effects that may not be in line with the logic, that can be deciphered solely from material reality, or explained by "false consciousness" of material reality.

The approach to this particular problem is probably quite different in emphasis from that of Houtart, who, while allowing for certain autonomy of actors, would not stress this as substantially important over long periods of time. In discussion on the economic field, the concepts chiefly used will be those of Marxism and these will be used in the most ordinary sense.

2.1.2. The political field.

The concept of a field will be used to denote the totality of groups, institutions, actors and systems standing in interrelationships with one another in the pursuit of social objectives. Field will be understood in a similar way as Gestalt in the sense that the whole is something that is irreducible to its parts, but where the parts are all reacting to one another. This definition is taken from Houtart (1974) The concept of politics will likewise be used in the same way as Houtart uses it in this analysis. A formal definition developed by Houtart and A. Rousseau (in Houtart, 1974) is this: "The complete set of meanings and choices concerning the functioning of the social ensemble which assert themselves as legitimate by justifying, through ideological constructs, the power relationships which ensure their effectiveness" The three key concepts are ideology, legitimacy and meaning.

The concept of ideology.

Several different definitions of ideology are currently in use. Some of the differences result from different emphasis or different purposes in use of the concept, while some fundamental differences in understanding of the concept and approaches to the phenomenon are also evident.

There are at least two basic ways of viewing the roots of ideology or the social demand for it. One is to look at ideology as a distortion of reality, even a camouflage, and as a tool in the battle of interests in society. This would be at the basis of traditional Marxist approach.

The other approach is to look at ideology as born out of disequilibrium in society, created by differentiation, and see it as an attempt at reconciling social strain. This strain would be both between individuals or groups and also within the individuals themselves. These two approaches, however different, can complement one another and are do not have to be mutually exclusive. They would both point to the same historical origin of the need for ideology. For the purposes of the discussed research, both approaches are seen to offer valuable vantage points.

A common Marxist approach, and the general perception of society as a battlefield of basically economic interests, points to the systematic use of ideology as a disguise. Ideology would then be seen as a system of principles, customs and stated values that were used as a camouflage over an ongoing and essentially economic battle for domination. This approach gives an insight into the processes behind legitimation of power relations, a central concern of this paper, and also a basis for systematic method of enquiry.

This approach is not, however, for the purposes of this paper, thought to suffice on its own. Hence, the introduction of the concept of social strain and the vantage point of efforts born out of chronic malintegration and disequilibrium in society.

A study of ideology from this angle will require a parallel look at the meaning and functions of culture in general and a close look at the

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problem represented by the concept of meaning. This will be touched on in a subsequent section.

The definition of ideology employed by Houtart in his structural analysis of Sri Lanka is the following: "A system of explanations bearing on the existence of the social group, its history and its projection into the future, and rationalising a particular type of power relationship." (Houtart, 1974) Houtart also quotes Althusser, who took ideology to mean; "a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." (in Houtart, 1974) These two definitions are thought in this paper to give much insight into the nature of ideology, while being insufficient as total representations of the phenomenon.

One single definition of the concept of ideology is thought to represent its nature and function for the purposes of this paper. This definition is taken from a monumental study of the concept by Martin Seliger. Seliger devotes more than 300 pages in a book to arguing a formal definition of the concept. The short version of his definition is this: "An ideology is a belief system by virtue of being designed to serve on a relatively permanent basis a group of people to justify, in reliance on moral norms and a modicum of factual evidence and self-consciously rational coherence, the legitimacy of the implements and technical prescriptions, which are to ensure concerted action for the preservation, reform, destruction or reconstruction of a given order." (Seliger, 1976)

A belief system is not a factual representation of reality and it is something strongly held. The aspect of ideology emphasised by Althusser and the Marxist tradition is thus included in this definition, although the imaginary and distorting character is not explicitly stressed as definition of ideology, a fruitful omission in the view of this paper. The use of a "group of people" as opposed to "social group" is thought to be appropriate, as the term social group is used for designation of

a group of people sharing certain conditions, while the group may not share an ideology, although it frequently will. One further aspect of Seliger's definition, which will be used throughout this paper, when reference is made to ideology, is its emphasis on the action orientation of ideology, something missing from many definitions, including the one used by Houtart. Action can take the form of preservation or campaign for change. This is seen as useful for this paper, as ideology is on the whole seen to be a system of orientation in the world, without which man would be incapable of any systematic social action or political action. Ideology is in this way seen as a part of the overall cultural template that man seems to need for his very survival and stability, and thus essentially linked to religion at its roots. The building blocks of ideology are also listed as being moral norms, modicum of factual evidence and the self-conscious rational coherence. Finally, this definition highlights better than the others the central function of ideology it shares with religion, that of legitimation. This may further cloud the difference between ideology and religion, as this paper treats the difference in terms of difference in function. The difference will, however, hopefully, become clearer in subsequent sections. The concept of legitimacy is central to this paper and a definition of it will now be attempted.

The concept of Legitimacy.

Legitimation is said by Peter L. Berger to be "the socially accepted knowledge that serves to justify the social order". (Berger, 1967) The purpose of legitimation is in this sense the maintenance of a socially defined reality, as the knowledge referred to is not an absolute knowledge. This would fit in with the emphasis of the simpler forms of Marxism on ideologies as being such systems of partial or distorted knowledge constructed or defined for the benefit of the ruling class.

It is taken as given here, that man has a need for systems of legitimation. This will be briefly entered into in a section on meaning and the actual process of human production of ideology and systems of legitimation.

In traditional societies, a single system of legitimation would be in operation. With differentiation in society, and particularly the central part of that process, the separation of the religious from the secular, as well as with the emergence of multitudes of different interests with role separation in general, no single system of legitimation will suffice the entire social complex. The crisis of legitimacy and emergence of conflicting ideologies and conflicting theologies is therefore very much a part of the process of capitalism or defeudalisation.

An aspect of this is pointed out by P.L. Berger and T. Luckman in their joint effort (Berger and Luckman, 1963), where they refer to a market place of legitimising systems instead of the single-system rule in earlier epochs. The reference is made in connection with religion and the changing status of the individual, who has at least the illusion of freedom when presented as a consumer with a choice of legitimating systems. This will either lead to privatisation of belief or rejection of religion, as recourse to religion is no longer needed for systems of legitimation in highly differentiated societies. Such development is in fact foreseen and pointed out by Houtart in the context of Sri Lanka, within his structural framework, charting evolving demands on religion with change in social structures.

Ideologies will serve as systems of legitimation by giving meaning and coherence to an otherwise incomprehensible social situation and by justifying on a moral basis some power relationships through such notions as property rights, freedom, democracy or any other assortment of partial knowledge that society or sections of it believe to represent reality and the best-attainable human management of it.

2.1.3. The religious field.

There is no generally accepted definition of, or theory on, religion. Several definitions and theories enjoying certain currency are implicitly contradictory, in the sense of not including the same elements rather than in the sense of explicitly excluding elements included in others.

For the purposes of this paper at least, it seems possible to distinguish between two key elements, frequently but not always included in definitions of religion. These elements are the anthropomorphic and the supernatural. These two elements are excluded from the definition of religion used throughout this paper.

Houtart, on the other hand, includes the supernatural element in his definition of religion, which he also used for the study of a Buddhist country. He specifically added this dimension to a definition he adopted from P. Bourdieu. (in Houtart, 1974). It should also be noted that religion has sometimes been defined exclusively as the systematic application of human-like models to non-human as well as human phenomena. This would have currency among anthropologists. An example of this view is Stewart Guthrie (Guthrie, 1980) Another anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, has on the other hand defined religion in terms of its purpose and his definition will be used in this paper with the addition of elements from the definition formulated by P. Bourdieu.

The reasons for excluding the supernatural element from the adopted definition of religion are basically three. The first has specifically to do with Buddhism. On a popular level, Buddhism has like most other forms of religion recourse to the supernatural, and is in fact in Thailand, Burma and elsewhere much preoccupied with spirits, magic and holy beings, while in Tibet it takes the form of the occult or the esoteric. In its original form, however, and in a form developed and widely practised in Japan, China and elsewhere, Buddhism has no recourse to the supernatural and either rejects its existence or claims disinterest. Buddhism in its original form is a scientific enquiry into the human mind and as such, treats the

supernatural either as non-existent or explains it in terms of the mind that created it.

In this way, the term "supernatural" becomes either a non-entity or a created paradoxical opposite to another creation, the perceived reality. This in fact forms the second reason for its exclusion in this paper, the questionable borderline between the natural and supernatural, which will always be culturally and individually drawn, and hence meaningless for purposes of general classification. The third reason for the exclusion of the supernatural dimension, is the purpose and scope of this paper and the further enquiry it attempts to chart some basis for.

The reasons for excluding the anthropomorphic dimension are much the same. Buddhism as a doctrine makes no attempt at personifying the world or shape it into a human like model. On the contrary, it would rather de-personify man. As a system of enquiry it helps man out of his tendency to understand the world in the terms created by his wish to project himself on it.

One criticism of my approach, of excluding the two dimensions largely because of certain features of Buddhism, would be that Buddhism is in fact not a religion. This is a widely accepted notion. It can in fact be convincingly shown, that Buddhism in its original form is not a religion, while, and maybe precisely because of inclusion of the elements excluded in the definition attempted, it is a religion on a popular level.

This debate is partly over a real problem and partly over something that can be solved with precise and to an extent, optional definitions.

For the purposes of the present and proposed enquiry, it seems most profitable to look at religion in terms of its usage and purpose.

C. Geertz has claimed that the purpose of religion is to make people believe in an ultimately reasonable universe on the basis of a particular construct. (see Guthrie, 1980). The full definition given by Geertz is as follows:

"A system of symbols which acts to produce powerful, pervasive, and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a .

general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic." (Geertz in Bocock and Thomson, ed, 1985)

This definition refers to the purpose rather than to the roots or production of religious systems. It also refers more clearly to the effects of religion than to the interaction process as a two way system, which is seen in this paper as essential. This essential aspect is thought to be covered by a definition of religion given by P. Bourdieu and quoted here from Houtart, (Houtart, 1974) Religion is according to Bourdieu: " A symbolic medium, at once structured and structuring, insofar as it is the condition of the possibility of an agreement on the meaning of signs and meaning of the world."

These two definitions are seen to be based on ultimately similar understanding of the phenomenon, while approaching it from different angles and hence emphasising different characteristics. The two will be used together as a single definition, the overlap being unimportant and no contradiction being between the two.

A general criticism of this definition may be, that demarcation between ideology and religion is blurred with the exclusion of supernatural and personification elements. This is not seen to be valid, as the definition explicitly refers to the meaning of the universe as opposed to a more limited social meaning produced by ideology.

The production of religion is not described by this definition although an important aspect of this process is referred to in Bourdieu's definition. The general view expressed in this paper, and made explicit in the structural framework adopted, is that religion is largely a reflection of social reality, although the process is not seen as mechanistic, but as being based on a complex set of interrelations between factors and actors enjoying some autonomy.

The way religion works in attaining its purpose is not described by the adopted definition. This is, however, of much importance for the purposes described here.

In the briefest terms, and this will be added to in a subsequent section, religion is seen to work by reducing opposites to harmony. Religion does this by both affirming and denying observable reality, such as death. Religion can in fact be seen as structured around such opposites, which is reconciles by producing meaning out of paradox.

The frustration and suffering that results from the paradoxes of aspirations and limitations, life and mortality, richness and poverty and so forth, is countered by religion, and at the same time, a certain orientation is provided. This orientation does presumably spill over to the profane plane of life, which in turn links ideology and religion.

Concern here is particularly with the way religion reduces and reconciles conflicts in society. The way to understand this, is however though to lie through the study of the formation of religious and ideological templates in human beings, no less than through the study of the particular roots and consequences of religion and ideology, as these can be observed in society. This framework, however, is limited to the social as opposed to the socio-psychological and metaphysical dimensions that give insight into the actual process between social cause and social effect.

In this paper, concern is therefore primarily with the way religion sacralizes power relationships, the way it legitimises or rejects social order, the way it reconciles people to social conditions or motivates them to reject such conditions, either by denying their validity or campaigning against them and with the way religion forms a source for ideologies by providing sacralised values, reference to ultimate meaning, general orientation and, on a different level, provides forum and organisation for social campaign.

In this way, both the social genesis and the usage of religion can be seen as either the reflection of social reality and social preoccupation, as Durkheim, among others, stressed, or it can be seen as a way of contradicting and ultimately rejecting reality, as the Marxist tradition would tend to emphasise.

Religious demand and supply.

Key concepts in this analysis are those of religious demand and religious supply. These concepts are borrowed from Houtart (1974) and will be used in much the same way as he does in his study of religion in Sri Lanka.

Houtart points out, that religion can be seen to respond to demands, that can be either consciously expressed by social actors or be unconsciously held and only implicitly expressed. Both forms are of interest, while the implicit and unconscious seems of more interest to this study.

The demands on religion are seen by Houtart to be class based and subject to change with developments in the organisation of production.

Houtart uses a dual categorisation of the dominant and the dominated for his study and this seems appropriate, although probably with increasing qualifications with higher levels of differentiation.

The religious demands can be analysed with the help of general theories on the social function of religion and with an analysis of the structures of society and relevant contradictions encountered, as well as with an analysis of the position of the actors involved.

The same religion is seen to fulfill the various demands from the dominant and the dominated, while this becomes increasingly strained with processes of secularisation and differentiation in general.

At this point, a few general remarks on religious demands and supply will suffice to point out the most general character of the concepts and the analysis attempted on this premises.

For the dominant class in a society with low levels of differentiation, religious demands will centre on the legitimation of the social order.

The dominated in such societies, will demand from religion a compensation for the brutality of the reality they are faced with.

In a more differentiated societies, where processes of secularisation have somewhat changed the role and place of religion, the dominant will primarily seek private justification from religion and they will have

processes and the eventual adaptation in the more dependent system, could reveal aspects of the nature of the relationships between the systems and fields and show the nature of some changes to be adaptations to preceding changes in another system.

Secondly, if cohesion in the social complex is to be maintained, the level of divergence between systems is limited. If that limit is exceeded, a loss of meaning and legitimacy within the social complex will result.

Thirdly, the direction and nature of adaptation is not uniform or automatic. It is conditioned by social actors who create and sustain the structured relationships. While the direction from the economic field to the political and religious fields is seen to be the dominant one, it is not seen to be a one way system or an automatic conduit. It is, however, the relationship between the religious and the political field that is for me of primary or to the extent possible, of exclusive concern.

This relationship will be studied with the help of concepts and theories already indicated, namely, religious demand and supply, correspondence and torsion.

The dimension of social actors will be incorporated into the analysis of the relations between the political and the religious fields. A further dimension, the content of the Buddhist message, as deciphered from the forms it has taken in various social contexts, will be added as an autonomous source within the religious field.

2.2. Actors in the political and the religious fields.

The structures and the relationships referred to in the above sections are created and sustained by actors. These actors are clearly constrained and conditioned by the structures that have come into being and their specific places and functions within these structures

As already stated earlier, a direct cause and effect relationship is, however, not thought to exist. The actors would rather respond to causes in a sense and create effects, that may or may not reflect the logic of the structures and relationships in question.. The level of this autonomy is indeterminate. It is absolute in one sense but limited and conditioned in a more practical sense.. This analysis would attempt to look at the actors at every important juncture and try to observe their reactions and their production of effects, instead of looking at the interplay between structures in a mechanical way. This may in fact introduce another problem, that of the effects themselves as in a circular relationship to the actors producing them, as the effects might be transformatory .

The organisation of actors within the structures will be looked at in a section on the organisation of religion and a section on institutional links between the political and the religious fields.

One type of "unorganised" actors, is the group of contributors to religious and political thought. These can be seen as suppliers of religious or political demands inherent in structured relationships. This way of looking at it, may not form the only dimension of this phenomenon. The impact these have, can however, not be seen in isolation from demands created by the structured relationships.

2.3. The original doctrine of Buddhism.

For the sociology of religion, the content of the religious doctrine as such is not seen to be of direct concern. A doctrine or a message is not thought to exist independent of the social conditions giving birth to it and the various developments that it has undergone during implantation in a different social context.

In a short and very limited historical overview following this section, it will in fact be pointed out, how different systems have been legitimised by Buddhism and in turn given it much of its shape.

There is, however, another dimension to this, which, in the context of this paper at least, would be distorted by looking at religion in this way, as in a totally dependent relationship to any social formation.

While it is recognised that religion is in a dependent relationship to human society, this paper assumes, that any religious belief is not necessarily in a dependent relationship to any particular social formation, within which it can exist, and even be of influence.

The essence of Buddhism, and Buddhism is not unique in this, has answered needs expressed in human societies as different as a tribal society couple of thousand years ago and a contemporary western society. On a popular level, Buddhism has been transformed by local cultures to the extent that its practise is frequently in a blatant contradiction to its doctrines. On a political level it has been used as a system of legitimation for different political orders, that all contradict its original message. In this sense it is indistinguishable from the cultural and social context, as it has been reproduced as a religion to meet the demands of each particular social complex.

There is, however, a very distinguishable body of thought or understanding of the human mind, which forms the nucleus of Buddhist doctrines. This is independent of any social formation as it is an explanation of the human mind rather than a representation of the universe. Through Buddhist .

principles it is in fact easy to understand the way religions are created as human representations. Buddhism on this level can be said to be anti-religious and anti-belief and pro-understanding. On this level it is different from other religions.

Buddhist understanding of man is clear and different from that of other religions and exists without reference to the supernatural and without commands, in an ordinary sense, on social conduct. In its essence, it is useless as a legal system or system for coercive control of society, as it turns around, relative to most other religions, the relationship between conduct and understanding. One will, in a sense, behave by understanding and not understand by behaving.. A code of conduct, not based on genuine understanding, is ultimately useless in this sense. Complex codes of conduct and elaborate systems of justification have emerged in every form of Buddhism, but this is not of concern in this particular section, while it would be the preoccupation of orthodox sociological enquiry.

.It will be attempted in subsequent sections to introduce this original message as a potentially independent variable. It is recognised, that this variable has been of limited consequence for the political order of society, but it is seen as potentially important in the political sense that forms the concern of this paper.

It is thought, that a renewed interest in the original doctrines and scriptures of Buddhism, detected in Thailand as well as in several non-Buddhist countries may lead to a production of certain ideologically usable principles. The actual content of what people find in the original message of the religion will be of some importance in this respect. It is also thought, that the importance of the content of religion can be underestimated at junctures where social and religious change is taking place. There will, for example, be an essential difference between a fundamentalist movement based on Buddhism and one based on Islam. Because of the fundamental difference between the natural as opposed to super-natural explanation of the human mind that is the original

contribution of Buddhism to human thought, on one hand, and the theistic . doctrines of Christianity and Islam on the other, it seems justifiable to look at this system of thought as an independent factor with potential for directing concerns and actions of actors.

This part of the analysis is a clear departure from the framework developed by Houtart. While the structural framework discussed in this paper is partly an adaptation of Houtart's framework, or at least much influenced by his approach, this is not seen as a problem in itself. The search for an influence from the doctrinal sources of Buddhism can take place parallel to the structural analysis, that does not take account of such sources.

It is recognised, that this approach is unorthodox and that it will be speculative in practise.

It is also recognised, that religious doctrines do not normally constrain their users in social interpretation or general usage.

It may be possible to see on one hand, religious demands by the dominant and dominated alike as a social phenomenon and as the force almost exclusively shaping what could be termed as practical religion, and on the other hand, the supply as only potentially, rather than mechanically of a particular consequence.

This potential, however, is in this paper, seen to be actual and important.

3. Historical background - the political function of Buddhism in Thailand.

In the present paper, on the research framework, only a brief outline of important concepts and trends in the history of the political function of Thai Buddhism will be attempted. Although my intended research will focus on current trends, a comprehensive analysis of the historical background is indispensable. This will not be attempted here and what follows is only the briefest possible outline of concepts and trends, incorporated in this paper to provide a minimum historical context for the framework proposed. The focus is purely on the dimensions most relevant to this paper and no attempt is made to present a balanced overview.

The original context.

Buddhism came into being in India almost 2600 years ago. In religious terms, it can be understood as a reformation of the then prevailing Bramhin religion, or as a reaction to the decline and decadence of that religion.

In social and political terms, the emergence of Buddhism at this particular time coincided with economic and social transformation.

At the time, much of northern India was divided into numerous small kingdoms or republics, while larger and more powerful monarchies were appearing on the Gangetic plane. In the two centuries preceding the birth of Buddhism, some momentous changes had taken place in economic and social organisation in this part of the world. Discovery of iron and technical advances had improved production and led to population increase and the possibility of sustained surplus. (See J.N. Swaris, 1985) The Indian historian, D. Kosambi, has described the emergence of private property and transition from tribal society in this period (Kosambi, 1975) The new kingdoms were based on private property instead of tribal ownership and the emerging ruling classes demanded kings that ensured protection of property and trade rather than traditional clannic kings. New types of state came into being, administered by

professionals and engaged in production through mining, industry and irrigation. Kosambi(1975), relates some central notions of Buddhism "to the return of the individual to the single undifferentiated state.....

The memory of the classless, undifferentiated society remained as the legend of the golden age... where men had neither property nor greed."

Early Buddhist scriptures describe the state of mankind before private property and greed, as " undifferentiated state of bliss, when people lived according to the dhamma." (quoted from Swaris, 1985).

These scriptures also attribute the emergence of sexual differentiation and oppression of women to the emergence of property and greed. Buddhism is very clear on private property and regards all notions and forms associated with "I" or "mine" as devoid of reality and thus something to be overcome. Political power of one person over another and hoarding of wealth can therefore not be justified in Buddhism.

In the political domain, the withering away of the state can be seen as the ultimate goal. (see E. Sarkisyanz, 1978).

The emergence of Buddhism can in this way be seen in terms of a reaction to the emergence of differentiation and private property. It takes a very negative attitude to the hoarding of wealth and many other basic aspects of the mercantile economy.

In spite of this, it later became a very functional ideology of the new empire of Ashoka, several centuries after the death of Buddha. It was in fact only after the political power adopted it as religion or ideology, that Buddhism spread to the general public. Prior to this political patronage it had not enjoyed mass following. Buddhism then became a unifying force as a common ethic and set of symbols in the empire. The king became the protector of the faith and de facto head of the religious organisation in society. The king, and this has prevailed to the present day in Thailand, presided over religious reforms and, earlier, over establishment and reviews of the accepted doctrinal sources.

It is well possible to understand the emergence of Buddhism in other terms by looking at other dimensions, but for the purpose of this brief historical overview, attention is focused on a single dimension, that of religious ideological response to the development of the state and organisation of production.

It is also possible to say, that the Buddhism that enjoyed royal patronage and mass following was not the pure teaching of the Buddha.

Buddhism emerged as the dominant religion in Thailand only in the thirteenth century, close to 2000 years after it emerged in India. Before that, though, it had coexisted with Hinduism for several centuries.

It seems possible to look at the sudden emergence of Buddhism as the dominant religion in Thailand, after being in existence for two millennia, in terms of social and economic developments

In Thailand, a number of small tributary kingdoms had come into being, mainly through the external impact of Indian mercantile activity. Demographic expansion and growth of cities in particular will have necessitated increased surplus production in agriculture and tighter control at the centre. Before this time, it seems, the tributary system and the king's relations to society, carried sufficient justification in themselves, as not to necessitate divine legitimation of this order. Religion had more to do with man's relations to nature than with power relations and communities enjoyed certain autonomy and self sufficiency. When rural autonomy waned and class society emerged, a new form of religious legitimation will have been needed. Coinciding with these changes in society in Thailand and the neighbouring countries, Buddhism seems to have emerged as the dominant religion and it seems to have successfully neutralised the contradictions arising from this class and state formation. In order to function in this way, however, some important amendments or addenda would have to be introduced. The basic need will have been for legitimation of a strong central government embodied in the king.

The notion of a divine king is contrary to Buddhist teachings. Even Buddha was not divine. Two concepts were developed instead to form a certain

parallel to divine kingship. One was the originally Hindu notion of dhammaraja, rule of the dhamma, (ramajaja, rule of god, in Hinduism) and the other of Bodhisattva, which was originally a Mahayana and not Theravada concept, used to describe individuals who had delayed their Nirvana in order to help others along the way. The Thai kings from the 13th or 14th century was implicitly or explicitly regarded as Bodhisattvas and this is still the case in rural Thailand with regard to the present king. (see B.W.Andaya, 1978) . The main function of the Thai king was then to be the central pinnacle and link between the divine and the human, and the social order was to be shaped around this (see F. Reynolds, 1978). It is maintained by, among others, L. Hanks (1968), that the hierarchial social order with the king as the apex, an order both social and cosmological, still provides the implicit ideological framework within which Thai society and Thai politics function. Evidence in this direction is also supplied by the studies of S.J. Tambiah (1970) and this is discussed by F. Reynolds (1978).

The contradictions of religious opposition to power and wealth and the needs of the emerging classes for central power to enable surplus appropriation and trade, seem to have been reconciled through this notion of the religious monarchy. The Buddhist Sangha, the religious order,, could in turn claim monopoly on salvation, which became a private affair for the individual, and through its prestige and protection from the monarchy, which in turn was legitimised by the Sangha, it could ensure its prosperity. The importance of religion in the political domain of Thai society has continued during modernisation. King Mongkut, who assumed the throne after being a monk for 25 years in 1851, embarked on religious reform parallel to modernisation in society. One of his sons succeeded him as a king, while another son became head of the national ecclesiastical order of the Sangha (see Reynolds, 1978) The kings that followed Mongkut continued religious reformation in a certain parallel to modernisation. The union of the monarchy and the Sangha to a large extent survived the end of absolute monarchy in 1932, although the government increasingly exercised the king's role with

regard to appointments and patronage of the Sangha. The relationships between the political and the religious field in present times is the focus of here.

4. ISSUES FOR RESEARCH.

This section of the paper is intended as an overview of selected issues within the field indicated above. The intention is to look at these issues in the terms provided by the framework discussed in the preceding sections.

The issues are selected for their relevance to the central interest indicated in the introduction to this paper. There is, however, no attempt made at an exhaustive listing of chief issues.

The treatment of the issues raised in this section is also by no means an attempt at a comprehensive coverage.

The main purpose of the discussion is to look for profitable entry points into the various areas within the overall field of interest.

4.1. The Political Field, the State and Religion.

In line with the general framework suggested by this paper, the political field will be examined in terms of its correspondence to the other fields, and with focus on the demands made within it on religion for legitimation, justification and sources of ideology.

4.1.1. State formation.

Thailand is almost unique in Asia, and much of the non-European world, for not having direct experience of colonisation. It will, however, be suggested here, and assumed without much discussion, that in respect of state formation, class formation and economic development, the difference between Thailand and a number of former colonies is more superficial than substantial.

The economy of Thailand came to have the familiar features of a colonial one; export of primary products like rice, tea and tin, an emerging urban elite with strong external ties, while the vast majority of the people remained as peasants on the land. State power became more centralised during the colonial era in Asia, and the primacy of Bangkok and its elite became more pronounced, (see Tambiah, 1978).

In the post colonial period, Thailand seems to belong to a large group of countries with regard to political development and state formation. Some generalisations on this group of countries seem permissible. In the following discussion, generalisations will be seen to apply to Thailand unless the contrary is indicated.

The state.

There is no commonly agreed definition of the state. The state can be seen in terms of its functions, its structures or its formal institutions. For this paper, at least, it seems most profitable to look at the state in terms of its functions and at the structures shaped by these functions, while the formal institutions are in themselves of little concern at this particular point. The complex of institutions would take on its importance at a more detailed stage of enquiry than attempted by this paper.

A definition of the state by T. Skocpol (Randall & Theobald, 1978) sees the state as "a set of administrative, policing and military organisations headed and more or less coordinated by an executive authority." (p.175) The functions of the state, according to Skocpol, are the maintenance of political order and effective dealing with other states. The latter function refers to one aspect of state formation sometimes neglected in theories of the state, the external dimension, that is both shaping the state and at the root of its existence. The present network of states covers every inch of dry land on the globe and the external dimension is the rationale behind much of state power and policies.

The former function, that of maintenance of political order, is expressed variously in theories on the state, but this refers to what is in most theories seen as the central function of the state.

Poulantzas points to this central function as being the maintenance of cohesion in the social complex. For him the state is whatever serves this function rather than a set of specific institutions. For Poulantzas this maintenance of cohesion ensures reproduction of essentially the same relations of power, (See Randall and Theobald, 1985, and Poulantzas, 1972)

The autonomy of the state.

This function of the state, the reproduction of essentially the same relations of power opens the view to what is seen of a central interest to this paper, namely the relative autonomy of the state from the economically dominant classes in society. This is a highly problematic and controversial field. Poulantzas seems to suggest certain autonomy of the state from the ruling class or any particular fraction of it, by pointing out, that the state can not promote the ultimate interests of the ruling class, that is the reproduction of essentially unchanged relations of power, by being an instrument of short term interest of this class or its fractions.

The Marxist origin of this notion of state autonomy is in the Eighteenth Brumaire. Certain similarities have been found between the Bonapartist state, where the bourgeoisie turned to a dictator to protect political order and the essential power relations of property and production, when representative democracy became an unfeasible option with politicisation of the urban poor. Alavi has argued that the post colonial state enjoys relatively high level of autonomy from the ruling class for two reasons. (Alavi, 1973, 1982).

Firstly, he argues, there are three separate economically dominant classes rather than one class with different factions. These three classes have conflicting short term interests, while their interests would converge in the long term and on the question of essential power relations in society. Secondly, Alavi argues, the post colonial state is overdeveloped for its function as it inherited the colonial state, which was designed to control the whole of society from far and in the interest of an external class. This latter point has been contradicted by among others, Colin Leys, (Leys, 1976) who claims that the colonial state was not as strong as Alavi's argument points to, precisely because it formed a part of an empire, where reinforcements could be drawn from, if the state was challenged. It is not clear to me, to what extent the differences between the two are due to the fact, that Alavi writes primarily on the Indian sub-continent, while suggesting wider application of his theories, and Leys writes primarily on Africa.

It seems possible to suggest on the basis of somewhat divergent writings on the state, that the autonomy of the state, such as it may be, is shaped by on the one hand, the short term conflict of interests within or between ruling classes, and on the other, the long term convergence of interests within or between ruling classes in maintaining the essential relations of power, property and production. The question of the overdeveloped state apparatus, seems of less importance in this respect, and it seems possible that this overdevelopment, such as it may be, is also rooted in the post colonial class situation as much as in the colonial past. This is, however, not to dismiss the importance of colonial roots of the state apparatus, and the nature of that type of state, inherited by the post colonial societies, on the contrary, the nature of the post colonial state is of central importance to the theme of this paper.

It is a basic assumption behind the approach suggested in this paper, that the states in question have assumed their character out of domestic cooperation with external interests and a general preoccupation with the external, rather than out of resolution of internal contradictions.

To go deeply into this would raise a number of highly problematic issues, such as those debated around the concepts of "dependency", "enclave economies" and "urban-rural duality", to name a few. It seems, however, possible to state this as an assumption, as the thrust of arguments behind such notions leads in that general direction.

This is of importance to the scope of this paper, as one assumption behind the approach taken, is that a root of the religious challenge to the states in question is to be found in the state representing an ideology, alien to the social complex, while religion can articulate autonomous cultural and political expressions

The states in question, those of capitalist Southeast Asia, do seek legitimacy through manipulation of essentially religious symbols and by appealing to nationalistic sentiments.

This would in fact, probably be much in line with what Gramsci wrote of, when he referred to the consent obtained from the ruled people by way of appeals to national interests and shared values, that supposedly transcended

class interests. In Gramscian terms, this would be an exercise in cultural hegemony. That in turn, is in line with the meaning given in this paper to ideology and its use

The recourse to religion for legitimation of essentially alien ideology is particularly pronounced in Thailand, and also, though somewhat differently, in Indonesia.

The ideologies followed by these states are essentially similar and have been described by various terms, that supposedly indicate their nature. These terms centre on the technical nature of the ideologies, their narrow social base, their low participation levels, the internal and external security obsessions manifested in them, their roots in external interests and dependency and their authoritarian implications.

Much of the recourse to religion takes the form of manipulation of symbols and the Thai system is set apart in this sense with the head of state being the ultimate living symbol of the religion. In spite of extensive manipulation of religious symbols by the state, only a very limited attempt is made to fashion the implicit and explicit state ideology to religion. The manipulative nature of the state's use of religion in Thailand and in fact also in Indonesia and Malaysia is probably becoming increasingly transparent, but at the same time, the private recourse to religion is probably diminishing among the elites that form the presently active part of the political field.

This has been changing recently in Malaysia, where a strong challenge is being made by newly activated sections of the community, particularly by the young and recently urbanised sections. (see analysis by Muzaffar, 1985)

4.1.1. The monarchy.

The sacral monarchy of a dhamma practising king has been the centre of the Thai polity for 750 years. The end of absolute monarchy in 1932 did not spell the end of this central position. Political conflict moved out of the palace and into the bureaucracy and the army, but recourse to the monarch for legitimacy is still of vital importance. The king and the royal family can still exert decisive influence if they choose to do so, which seems to have been the case on a few recent occasions. Among recent examples of royal leverage in politics, two may be mentioned. After the 1973 revolution, when the military regime was overthrown after rebellion of students, the king appointed one of his counsellors, a person acceptable to the students rather than the military, to head a new government. In 1981, the royal family seems to have decided the fate of an unsuccessful coup attempt, which nevertheless had widespread and probably majority support within the armed forces. Direct intervention of the monarchy in politics, which in any case is rare, is however not its most important political function.

The central position of the monarchy in Thai society, the fusion of the temporal and the sacral in the person of the king and the unique and almost totally unchallenged legitimacy of the monarchy, lends a degree of legitimacy to any government that serves under the king and exercises the available rituals for association with the king. The present Prime Minister has for instance let it be known on occasions, that his government should serve long enough to see through the elaborate tributes in preparation for the king's 60th birthday. This is mentioned as an example of the ritualistic opportunities governments are presented with for maintaining legitimacy through the monarchy. The Thai polity is probably unique in this regard among states, otherwise sharing similar characteristics.

There is a difference in perception, in this respect among the urbanised and the rural sections of the population. The rural population largely regards the king as a divine or semi-divine person and in spite of half a century of

constitutional monarchy, many rural people would regard the bureaucracy as essentially the servants of the king. The deep and well publicised involvement of the king in development projects probably acts to sustain this perception. The monarchy enjoys a high degree of legitimacy among the urbanised sections, but perceptions of the bureaucracy, the military and the political arena in general would be rather different from the rural areas. The bureaucracy, however, enjoys much prestige in Thailand, probably more so than in most societies, and it seems possible to attribute this to a transferred legitimacy from the unchallenged monarchy.

4.1.3. The bureaucracy.

A selection of theoretical approaches is available for the study of bureaucracy. The Thai bureaucracy has been extensively studied by among others, Fred Riggs. (Riggs, 1966) His "Sala" model was largely based on his studies of Thai bureaucracy. Riggs maintained that the goal of the 1932 revolution was organisation of a polity that would rule on behalf of the bureaucracy, and consequently, as this goal was reached, the arena of politics and the struggle for wealth and power moved within the bureaucracy. (Riggs, 1966).

Riggs pointed to fusion of the elements of court, home and place of business in the view of the bureaucrats of their offices. The characteristics flowing from this are defined as follows, by P. Suriyamongkol and J. Guyot (Suriyamongkol, 1985). "A functionally specialised state apparatus that is immune to control or direction from extra-bureaucratic forces, and a style of politics that plays across the shifting lines of personal factions rather than through such social structures as formal organisations, classes, or interest groups."

Another characteristic and one that divorces this system from corporatism, is that organs of representation have little importance and society and state interact in a diffuse fashion, rather than through well established

channels of representation. A patron-client relationship is the norm in this form of bureaucratic polity. Factions are patterned on family frameworks, year of graduation from university or military academy or classes and faculties in such institutions or on region of origin. (see Suriyamongkol, 1985).

This clientalism will probably be on the wane with the emergence of better organised interest groups of various sorts, which would be in line with general modernisation paradigms (see J.Girling, 1984.).

The models developed by Riggs for understanding of a bureaucratic polity make no analytical distinction between the civilian bureaucracy and the military bureaucracy. It is not clear at this point, if this is of much importance or not.

The general approach taken by Riggs to the study of bureaucracy may of course be questioned on a fundamental level. Riggs' premises are those of a political system that is based on inputs from its political environment.

The system he sees, seems to be akin in essence to the pluralistic notions of a western democratic system, while its channels of input are paralysed or underdeveloped. It seems that the system Riggs is describing, is a system characterised by a malfunction at the input level due to general underdevelopment. The system works to a certain extent on an elite level, while most of the public is an unorganised apolitical mass, essentially outside the political system that is at the base of the bureaucracy.

While there is no quarrel with this on a certain level of study, it may be more profitable for a study with a wider scope than that of bureaucratic behavior, to construct an approach to this on the basis of wider concerns.

The approach of Riggs is said by K. Hewison (see Hewison in R. Higgott, ed. 1985) to be based on observed contradictions between what is termed by him as "modern" political structures and "traditional" political culture.

Another approach to the study of the bureaucracy, which seems to fall into the same category, as categorised by Hewison, is the one of Karl Jackson, specifically constructed for Indonesia. (see K. Jackson in Jackson, ed, 1978) Jackson, who establishes his theoretical approach in a book

concentrating on communication, integration and institutions in Indonesia, defines a bureaucratic polity in terms of the insulation of decision making from political forces outside the highest elite echelons in the capital city. Jackson, unlike Riggs, (if Riggs is correctly understood), distinguishes clearly between military rule and civilian bureaucracy. Whether this is applicable to Thailand is not clear.

Both Riggs and Jackson, as well as Suriyamongkol, provide features seen as essential or at least very useful for the study of the bureaucracy in the context discussed in this paper. It is, however thought, that an extra dimension is needed to properly connect the bureaucratic polity to the social complex, as it has been shaped by external forces.

The terms for this dimension have already been briefly discussed with regard to state formation. This is essentially the dependent character of state formation and low level of correspondence between domestic class conflict and the state, and hence bureaucracy. An approach to this could be constructed on the basis of some of the existing theories on dependency, dependent development or delayed dependent development. In Marxist terms, the bureaucracy or rather the elite as a whole, would be seen as compradors. Such classification would however, it is thought, not be particularly revealing on its own. It may be possible to see the current domestic capitalist development in terms of and by necessity preceded by a comprador stage, that would continue to shape the polity to some extent.

It seems also possible for the scope and purpose of such research as discussed here, to look at the external dimension shaping the bureaucratic polity in the terms provided by theories on dependent development of the post colonial state, such as those referred to in a preceding section.

4.1.3. Political representation.

Political representation has not attracted much attention among those writing on Thai politics and probably for the reason that channels of representation and participation are highly manipulated by actors in the inter-elite conflicts. Thailand is officially a constitutional monarchy with parliamentary rule. There are normally more than ten political parties represented in parliament. In many of these parties, former members of the military bureaucracy are prominent. The careers of high ranking military officers are sometimes shorter than those of the civilian bureaucracy, as top positions in the military have limited tenure and the leading individuals seem to gravitate to parliament as they are eased out of the bureaucracy.

The cabinet is normally headed by an appointee of the military, or at least by a person well acceptable to the most important factions within the military. Cabinet members are extensively drawn from the bureaucracy. In the sixties and seventies, with one exception, the vast majority of Cabinet members came from the bureaucracy, while in the eighties, a third to a half has been drawn from the business elite.

Participation in elections is low in Thailand by any standards. It is substantially higher in rural areas than in Bangkok and this has been explained by notions of civic duties rather than real interest in participation on the terms offered by Parliamentary elections.

The political parties are non-ideological and tend to be indisciplined amalgams of individuals and factions.

Forms of political participation and representation of interests are of a general concern to this study. Separate sub-sections on the various groups and forms of political articulation are not included in this paper for sake of brevity. Among the areas and groups for research, are the labour unions, the media, student movements, peasant movements, other social movements political parties and special interest groups

These are of interest with regard to their ideology and their potential for participation in alliances formed outside the bureaucratic polity.

In several christian and islamic countries, groups and alliances have been formed within the general forum of religion and oriented by religious ideology. This has not occurred to any significant extent in Thailand as yet, probably for more than one important reason.

The search for these reasons would be one purpose of a research along the lines discussed in this paper. Some of these may be touched on in the the immediately following section on the organisation of religion, and indirectly in a following section on secularisation and demarcation of religious space. The question of participation on the one hand and mobilisation on the other, both being aspects of, or linked to, representation, is central to the interest in the organisation of religion.

4.2. The organisation of religion.

The different ways in which religion is organised have different and important implications. Some of these have direct relevance to this research. Few of the areas of greatest interest in this respect are discussed below. This is not an attempt at an exhaustive list of areas or implications, but more of an introduction to this general area within the field of the proposed research.

The focus is on the way the organisational aspects of religion can have bearing on the formulation of ideology, and on the potential organisational capacity religion may have in relation to the action orientation of such ideology. This will all have to do with participation in one sense or another. That single concept relates to all the aspects, while concepts such as mobilisation, representation, interest articulation and conscientisation would reflect some of the particular aspects.

4.2.1. Hierarchy.

The major religions of the world differ substantially in the organisation of hierarchy and in professionalisation. One end of this spectrum would be occupied by the professionalised and hierarchial Catholic Christianity and the other by the egalitarian and non-professional orthodox Islam. Theravada Buddhism would fall in the middle with regard to hierarchy and professionalisation.

The comparison, however, is hazardous. There is an essential difference between the Buddhist Sangha and either the Christian Church or the Islamic Umma. Donald Smith (Smith 1970, 1971) attempted to categorise the major religions of the world on account of their organisation, participation and hierarchy. He thought Buddhism could be compared with Christianity and termed an organised religion as opposed to the non-organised Islam and Hinduism. This has been criticised by among others, David Laitin (Laitin, 1978), who thinks the differences between the Church and the Sangha are more pronounced

than their similarities. Comparisons are thought to be profitable for the purposes of this study, but the uniqueness of certain features of the Buddhist Sangha in Thailand will have to be established clearly for such comparisons to be of value.

Participation.

Among the indirect implications of hierarchy and professionalisation is the effect religion has on participation in the widest sense.

The impact of democratisation of religion has been much commented on in the Latin American context, by among others P. Berryman (Berryman, 1984) in his extensive study of what he terms "the religious roots of rebellion" in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. Berryman and others have claimed that lay participation in religion has greatly facilitated grass roots mobilisation and participation among the poor in campaigns for social change. This would correspond to theories behind worker's participation and empirical evidence suggesting that participation is something that is learnt only by participation.

Hierarchies and high degrees of professionalisation would seem to deter participation and indirectly legitimise hierarchial societies. The actual content of the religious message may matter little in this respect. Almost all religions are egalitarian in their teachings and the original doctrinal Buddhism, along with Islam, maybe particularly so. Thai society would, however, by any standards be seen as a highly hierarchial society with a low degree of participation.

One aspect of religion and participation is the use of language.

The Buddhist Sangha has throughout the centuries made use of Pali as a language, and this corresponds to Catholic use of Latin, Hindu use of Sanskrit and use of Arabic in non-Arabic, Islamic countries. Pali is extinct as a living language like Latin, but was spoken widely in the time of Buddha. More recently, the Sangha has started using Thai and thus made the doctrines more

easily accessible to the general public in a similar fashion as the doctrines of christianity became available to the Catholic public.

The actual organisation of the Sangha presents a mixed picture in many ways. Its total membership in Thailand stands at more than 300.000 or over 1% of the male population for approximately three months of the year, but falls substantially, possibly by a third, at other times of the year. This is due to the tradition of temporary monkship. Of these monks, some 6-8.000 hold some kind of an office. At the top, there is Supreme Patriarch and a Council of Elders. The patriarch is appointed by the king, probably on government decision. The traditional relations of government patronage and religious legitimation in turn is still prevailing and the ministry of religious affairs has several ways of dispensing patronage within and to the Sangha. One of the laws governing the Sangha explicitly prohibits monks from participating in politics. The tradition and present praxis is more complex than this would suggest.

In spite of the well-defined hierarchy in the Sangha, perception of merit is highly important in determining the actual authority a religious leader possesses. Monks without any office, or abbots, can be accorded much authority on the basis of their scholarship or exemplary conduct and, as such, they can become influential.

Buddhism presents a complicated picture with regard to professionalisation. It is similar to Islam in the sense that no professional can mediate between god and man. Salvation is up to the individual and no organisation is called for like in the Church. On the other hand, and especially in Theravada Buddhism, salvation in this particular life is not possible without a supreme effort of the kind that only the precepts of the monkhood can represent. This places the Sangha in a certain position in relation to the rest of society. The monks represent what all people will eventually aspire to in future lives. Many aspects of this relationship are very subtle and difficult to isolate. Within the Sangha there are various schools and trends based on tradition, new movements or adherence to teachings of certain masters. Certain informal networks exist giving potential for manoeuvrability.

4.3. Secularisation, modernisation and demarcation of religious space.

A global historical process of modernisation is generally seen as a process of secularisation, whereby religion, through a process of differentiation, loses its claim over all spheres of society and human thought. This process of secularisation has been mapped out by such scholars as Marx, Durkheim and Weber and is generally accepted as a process of demystification of society and separation of institutional spheres, where the rationale of each sphere and the logic of function replace religion as the underlying principles. This process, however, is not one-dimensional, and the purposes of this paper require a closer look at the concept of secularisation.

The process of secularisation is often and almost by definition, associated with a general decline in religion. The secular is the opposite of the sacred, which by definition is the domain of religion. For Durkheim, religion was the separation of the profane from the sacred, which in turn reflected the social preoccupation at a given time and place. To look at the two, the sacred and the secular or profane as opposites and the process of secularisation as the decline of religion may however be deceptive.

Decline or resurgence of religion can also be looked at from angles giving different views. Even if looked at in a single dimension, indicating the receding of religion from other spheres of society, this process may in fact enable religion to exert more direct influence in the political field. By a certain insulation from society, religion may gain rather than lose capacity for political influence. (For discussion on related processes in the context of Brazil, see I. Vallier, 1970). For the purposes of this paper, the process of secularisation will be seen to contain at least three important dimensions, that have to be separated at times for analytical purposes. Each of these dimensions will be looked at through a concept. These concepts are those of; disengagement of society from religion, religious involvement and religious change.

The first concept, that of disengagement of religion from society refers to the differentiation process in society and is founded on writings of Durkheim and Weber among others. This is the general process most often referred to with

the concept of secularisation when it is used to describe what happens to society, rather than what happens to religion. For the purposes of this paper, the concept of secularisation is not adequate for analysis when it comes to religion, and hence, for analysis of a possibly changing nature of religious influence from its more traditional roles. Hence, the suggested employment of separate concepts to cover the relevant processes under the general hat of secularisation.

To look at what happens to religion in the process of secularisation, the concepts of involvement and religious change are adopted. These concepts are used by K. Dobbelaere, (Dobbelaere, 1980), for purposes not incompatible with those of their use in this paper.

Religious involvement refers to individual behaviour and degrees of integration in religious bodies. The decline in religious involvement that has been observed in most industrialised societies is often taken to mean decline in religion. Membership in religious organisations, observation of rituals and religious commands, attendance of services and such things are the measurable manifestations of religious involvement. This has been seen to decline in most industrialised and industrialising societies and involvement has been seen to be increasingly confined to the somehow marginal sections of such societies, the minorities, the very poor and the otherwise disadvantaged sections of society.

It should be noted, however, that research on public opinion with regard to religious beliefs, indicates in most western countries a solid majority of believers of some sort over non-believers, while beliefs are increasingly seen as a private matter. The structural framework used in this paper will assume privatisation of beliefs along with modernisation among the dominating groups in society, as religion is less made use of for collective legitimization of social and economic privilege. The dominated will be seen to have different demands on religion.. They are seen to have demands for religion that incorporate the social dimension, either to compensate for society or to motivate action for its change.. The degree to which religion can either control or adapt itself to changing levels of social consciousness among the

dominated, will determine to a degree the extent to which religion will be either discarded or used by the dominated sections. These assertions are largely based on observations of the Latin American context, while it is attempted to translate these observations into the concepts and framework discussed in this paper. Church involvement has been extensively studied in this region with reference to politicisation of religion.

The third concept of secularization in this context, is that of religious change. This refers to change within religion or religious organisations in terms of beliefs, morals, rituals and general political posture.

Such change can influence levels of religious involvement as well as having wider political and religious significance. It has, for instance, be suggested by Peter L. Berger, that the higher degree of church participation in the USA than in Western Europe can be explained by American churches having adapted themselves to secular values widely shared by Americans. (Berger,1967)

Religious change can occur in several forms. In this paper it will be looked at in terms of religious demand, which will condition this change. The change will then be an adaptation to some form of demand, wether that demand coincides with a general trend in society or conflicts with it. Conflicting demands will be present.

The general process of secularisation and modernisation in society can be seen as the source of the change in religious demand and hence in religion. The changes can be both organisational and doctrinal and both can be of political importance. Change in religious organisation with regard to participation and direct and indirect political effects from this have been briefly touched on in a preceeding section.

A change of both organisational and doctrinal nature is the emgergence of new groups and organisations, either within the dominant or established religion, or outside it. This is presently an ubiquitous phenomenon within societies dominated by all major religions and can be observed in Thailand, primarily as sectional conflict within Buddhism, some sects not being officially recognised.

This phenomenon is incorporated in the proposed theoretical framework as an assumption on religious demands in a differentiated society with a high degree of inequality. It is assumed that religious demands for personal and collective justification of social relationships will become diverse and call for different types of theologies. This seems to be supported by among other occurrences, the rapid growth in various types of protestant sects among the growing middle classes in the rapidly industrialising societies of Asia and Latin America.

Something similar seems to be occurring in Thailand, where charismatic sects within Buddhism have recently attracted much following among the emerging middle classes.

One form of religious change that has been observed in several societies of different religious persuasions, is what has been termed scripturalism. This is the going back to the basic texts for reinterpretation free of later social and cultural influence. This form of religious change has been briefly discussed as the reason for incorporating a certain doctrinal analysis in a framework for research of the type under discussion in this paper.

Much of religious change can be studied on the basis of extension of rationality in the economic field to the religious field. In the religious field this takes the form of "entzauberung der Welt", disenchantment of the world in Weberian terms.

In the religious domain this would mean a move from the more magical forms of salvation and tendency or attempts at demystification in general, a process observed in the Christian reformation in Europe, and subsequently in attempts at application of science to religion, parallel to the emergence of science as a worldview. These processes are of interest to this paper only insofar as they relate to the political.

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