

THE LAND SYSTEM IN CENTRAL THAILAND*

A Methodological Inquiry Aimed at a Dynamic Grasp of Social Change in a Thai Village

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Although the view that Thai peasants are almost all owner-cultivators is commonly accepted, I demonstrate the fact that in the Chaophraya Delta at least nearly half the peasants are tenants or part-owners. I also suggest that the tendency for owner-cultivators to become tenant-cultivators is increasing remarkably. In the course of discussion the emphasis is placed upon the socio-economic function of landownership in the development of Thai society on the grounds that the clarification of the land system is indispensable for a dynamic analysis of social change in Thailand.

I. THE PROBLEM: THAI STUDIES AND THE LAND SYSTEM

During the post World War II period, research on Thai village society has progressed as just one part of area studies in Thailand. A few village survey monographs have been published beginning with that on Bang Chang conducted by Cornell University.¹ These reports have clarified hitherto obscure conditions of village society, indicating concretely that J. Embree's widely-known characterization of Thai society in general as a "loosely structured social system,"² is valid even for its village society. It has become common to define Thai village society as "loosely structured"; and working with this definition as a premise has meant that research on Thai villages has moved forward along with continuing confirmation of this theory.

However, if one considers precisely to what "loosely structured" refers,

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¹ Lauriston Sharp *et al.*, *Siamese Rice Village: A Preliminary Study of Bang Chan, 1948-1949*, Bangkok, 1953.

² John F. Embree, "Thailand—A Loosely Structured Society System," *American Anthropologist*, LII, 2 (1950), pp. 181-193.

one becomes aware of the fact that the referent of this defining characteristic is not necessarily clear. "Loosely-structured" is certainly an apt impressionistic description of Thai society, but it is not a useful definition from a strict conceptual point of view. Embree's reference to Thai society as "loose" is in contrast with his designation of Japan's society as "closed," and describes the weak nature of social regulation over the behavior of individuals in Thai society. Yet if we ask what loose means, we would find that this defining characteristic is itself loose because Embree's phrase is not a logical construct strictly defined on the basis of the various conditions of Thai society itself.

Moreover, one problem related to this defining characteristic lies in the fact that the definition of Thai society as loose may give the impression that it exists unchanging above the course of history. It is in fact possible to say that in two or three works, there is a sense of this notion that the structure of Thai society is suprahistorical and unchanging. From a historical point of view, however, it is clear that Thai society has indeed changed radically. For example, it is impossible to view as identical modern society and traditional society, which until the 19th century was based upon a system of *corvée* labor. At the present day, it is possible to observe continuing rapid change in village society occurring under influences external to the village. And for the present author, it is important to be able to grasp dynamically the continuing changes in Thai society. When such is the aim of research the definition "loose" is useless.

It is necessary to consider both the meaning of "loose," focusing mainly on the bilateral character of the kinship system or the weakness of communal unity in the village, while paying serious attention to the precise position of village society within Thai society as a whole. That is, it is necessary to consider this phrase in terms of such relationships as exist between village society and the building of the nation, or between village society and the development of the national economy. It is in this sense that a point of departure which, while grounded upon the concept of "loosely structured," also relates village society with Thai society as a whole, is an inevitable requisite.

The land system can be considered the most important among any number of factors which might provide a point of departure. That is to say, as past socio-economic historical studies have made clear, a discussion of the land system is indispensable for any investigation into the kind of influence the development of a national economy has on the economy of village society, whose very basis is the land system. Moreover, because the forms of land ownership, which is the basis of agricultural economy, are historically based on a variety of customs within village society, it is necessary to bring into focus an over-all view of village society for the purpose of clarifying the land-system. Also, one cannot overlook the fact that economic development of village society determines the development of the national economy.

Why is it, then, that in Thai studies the land system has, if anything,

been treated lightly? Any number of explanations are conceivable; however, the most important one lies in the fact that because it is generally accepted that virtually all Thai peasants are self-sufficient landowners and enjoy a fairly high standard of living, landownership has been judged to have little particular value as a research problem. But this generally accepted view is completely in error, as will be shown later in detail. For Thai peasants, and particularly for those in regions in which the commercial economy has penetrated deeply, landownership has certainly become a serious problem.

Here, I wish to raise concretely the question of the actual circumstances of the history of the land system and of landownership, dealing specifically with the Chaophraya Delta, which has been historical center of activity for the Thai people, the granary of Thailand, and now is the area having the highest population density. Therefore the problems of this area illustrate the problems of Thai society as a whole.

II. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LAND SYSTEM

1. *Traditional Society and the Land System*

The social character of the land system which in this article I would like to define briefly as the social relations between person and person centering on land—changes when the structure of the entire society changes. This means that because landownership is the *sine qua non* for peasants, change in landownership brings change to society as a whole, through its mediation in the social and economic transfiguration of the peasant. Viewing historically the reciprocally determining relationship between the two areas of change, I would like to consider here the historical facts in order to grasp the dynamics of the present-day landsystem. For the purpose of understanding the existing land system as something which is changing, it is first necessary to understand Thai society since the 19th century, and the land system within this context. Thus, an understanding of changes in the social character of the land system in the course of which 19th century Thai society changed and reached its present-day form, is related to the core of the discussion concerning the actual nature of contemporary landownership.

Here I would first like to outline briefly the pattern of the fundamental structure of traditional Thai society.⁸ In terms of classes, traditional society

⁸ The description regarding traditional Thai society in general relies mainly upon the following materials:

de La Loubere, *Du Royaume de Siam*, Paris, 1661; Mgr Pallegoix, *Description de Royaume Thai ou Siam*, Tome premier, Paris, 1854; John Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam*, Vol. 1, London, 1857; J. G. D. Campbell, *Siam in the XX Century*, London, Edward Arnold, 1902; Prinz Dilock, *Die Landwirtschaft in Siam*, Tübingen, Druck von H. Laupp Jr., 1907; Robert Lingat, *L'Esclavage privé dans le vieux droit Siamois*, Paris, Domat-Mont Christian, 1931; H. G. Q. Wales, *Ancient Siamese Government and Administration*, New York, Paragon, 1965.

Materials in Siamese are as follows:

Krom Phraya Damrongrachanuphap, *Phrarachaphongsawadan Krunggratanakosin Rachakanthi 2*

was divided into the ruling class, consisting of the king, princes, and the aristocrats and bureaucrats (*phudi*); and the ruled class consisting of peasants (*phrai luang*) owing periodic corvée labor (*khau duan oaook duan*), peasants (*phrai som*) who had escaped enrollment as corvée labor, and people called *that* who consist mainly of servants. Discrimination according to high or low status between the two classes was strict; the ruling class was regarded as master (*chao nai*) while the ruled class was regarded as slaves (*kha*). The social structure of the ruled class was along military lines, since the most important function of the traditional Thai state was war with neighboring countries. At that time there was no standing army aside from mercenaries; in times of war, peasants who owed corvée service were called out. The peoples defeated in battle were captured as slaves (*that chaloai*). Again, in times of peace, peasants who owned corvée service were used as laborers for public engineering and construction of palaces, temples and canals, or else for the private use of bureaucrats. Those who owed corvée service and lived in regions far from the capital were allowed to substitute famous local products as tribute (*suai*) in place of corvée labor. Because the conditions of corvée labor were severe in the extreme, the number of peasants who escaped from the bureaucrat whom they were to serve and became *phrai som* or who hid in bands in the countryside, were many. In particular, after the fall of Ayuthaya, the number of escaped corvée laborers increased. Again, some peasants who feared corvée labor sold themselves into slavery (*that*). In the mid 19th century, this reached about one-third the total population.

As is clear from the description above, the essential nature of traditional Thai society was very close to that of the ancient society. I believe, therefore, that it is appropriate to define Thai society prior to the 19th century as an ancient society. And just like other ancient Asian societies, ancient Thai society was characterized by oriental despotism.

What, then, was the nature of the village which lay at the base of the traditional state? Again, how is the nature of the village related to the mechanism by which peasants were called out for corvée labor? Although these problems are important for the precise definition of "loosely structured social system," historical research is as yet insufficient to reply to these questions. Thus, for the time being, I would like to approach this question limiting myself to a discussion of two or three points relying on some unrelated data, while awaiting the results of forthcoming historical studies.

The basic unit of requisitioning corvée labor was called *mu*. All those subject to corvée had to belong to a *mu*, and had to follow the orders of the

(The Royal Chronicles of the Second Reign of the Bangkok Dynasty), Bangkok, 1916; Sathian Lailak, *Prachum Kotmai Prachamsok 1935-1940* (Collection of Laws by Year), (hereafter cited as *PKPS*); Mahawithayalai Wichathammasat lae Kanmunang, *Pramuan Kotmai Rachakanthi I* (Laws of the First Reign of Bangkok Dynasty), (hereafter cited as *PKR*); Krom Phraya Damrongrachanuphap, *Chumnum Phraniphon* (Collection of Essays), Bangkok 1951; Kachon Sukhaphanit, *Thanandon Phrai* (Affairs of Corvée Laborers), Bangkok, 1962; Luang Wichit Wathakan, *Wichit Anuson* (Recollection on Wichit), Bangkok, 1962.

munnai (or the head of the *mu*). Those people were called *luk mu*. The state controlled the *luk mu* through the *munnai*. It is unclear how many members were in any one *mu*, but it probably consisted of people who were in daily contact with each other.

The word *mu* means herd. What, then, was the internal structure of the *mu*? Let us consider this in terms of the relationship between the *mu* and the family. Ancient law stipulated that in a given family odd-numbered children (first and third born, etc.) must belong to the mother's *mu*, while even-numbered children must belong to the father's.⁴ From this let us hypothesize that even in traditional society kinship relations were bilateral. In Ancient times, before a commercial economy had developed, there was extensive land appropriate for cultivation; and the population was small, a bilateral kinship system was more effective for gathering and managing the labor force needed in undertaking rice-cultivation than either a patrilineal or matrilineal system.

Let us also hypothesize that the proscription against marriage within one blood group (*khrua diaukan*) operated in traditional as well as contemporary society. Granting this, it was not unusual for the *mu* to become differentiated patrilineally and matrilineally; and therefore for this to lead to children of the same parents being separated and included in different *mu*. That is, this means that it was not unusual for those who belonged to the same kinship group to belong to different *mu*, or even those who lived in the same hamlet to belong to different *mu*. (As the ordinary Thai village was formed when a family grew to become a kinship group and then a hamlet.) I would like to suppose that the *mu*, while being based upon bilateral blood relationships, was composed of peasants within a region in which daily contact was feasible.

Next let us consider what provided the concrete motive for unification of *mu*. When one considers that the *mu* was both the basic unit of corvée labor and the organizational unit for military conscription, then originally the motivating factor for organization and restructuring the *mu* lie in military necessity, or the organization of society along military lines in order to cope with the threat of neighboring countries. Even today there are no isolated houses in the countryside for fear of bandits, and peasants always gather in hamlets. In former times as well, kinship groups gathered in hamlets and readied themselves for attacks by bandits. This kinship group became the military unit in the process of formation of the state, and also was the progenitor of the *mu*.

But in addition to the *mu* there was also an informal organization in village society for the mutual support of peasants living in close proximity to each other.⁵ While this informal organization consisted of the gathering of members of the immediate family, it may also have included non-relatives. Agricultural activities, the building of houses, and security measures were undertaken by the cooperative action of this informal group.

⁴ PKR, Vol. I, Banphanaek (List) 3, pp. 282-288, and de La Loubere, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

⁵ Pallegoix, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

The following line of argument may be proposed. Even when the formal politically organized *mu* and the informal organization for mutual support were intimately related, they were not necessarily congruent. This discrepancy was a predominant characteristic of village social structure in traditional Thai society. In particular the discrepancy between the two groups widened over the generations, and became increasingly complicated. No formal political organization could be formed on the basis of a local informal communal unification. Therefore it is conceivable that an autonomous village existing in relative independence of the state could not be formed. This means the factor that would lead to relaxing of control over the peasants by the traditional state was inherent in the control itself; this can be taken as a partial explanation of the rapid increase in renegade peasants (*phrai som*) and the large number of *that* after the war with Burma in 1767. Moreover, the development of a commercial economy after the signing of the Bowring Treaty can be thought of as not only breaking down the self-sufficient village economy but also as weakening this communal unification which has long been serious obstacle against the development of such peasant cooperative organization as credit cooperatives, as will be discussed later. This represents a process of transition from a military society to a "loosely structured" society.

In such a society peasants (*kha*) were viewed as possessions of the king, and private ownership of land by peasants was not recognized. All land was the property of the king.⁶ (Nor did the *mu* possess communal land. This is natural considering that the *mu* was not an autonomous village.) Only the right of peasants to cultivate land was recognized; however, even this right of cultivation was contingent upon actual use (*tham prayot laeu*). In the event that a peasants shifted his area of cultivation to another distant area, he lost the right of cultivation to his previous land.⁷

However, when there was a great increase in the degree to which peasants remained with one piece of land, the right of holding their own fields intensified of its own accord. As a result, state tax-collection procedures led to legalized intensification of these landholding rights, because the title-deed (*chanot*), which the government issued to cultivators for the purpose of levying the land-tax (*kha na*), came to be a proof of the land-holding right of the cultivator.⁸ Again in the later Ayuthaya era, the pledging and transacting of land may be seen to some extent.⁹

The intensification of the private character of landholding was in opposition to the principle of public lands of the traditional state, and together

⁶ PKR, Vol. II, Betset (Miscellaneous) 52, pp. 215-216; R. Lingat, *Prawaisat Kotmai Thidin* (History of Law, Law Concerning Land), 1949, p. 16; Seni Pramat, *Khamathibai Phrarachabanyat Ook Chanot Thidin Chabapthi 6* (Explanation on the 6th Royal Decree Issuing Title-deed), Bangkok, pp. 71-85.

⁷ PKR, Vol. II, Betset 52, p. 216.

⁸ PKR, Vol. II, Betset 62, p. 220; Vol. III, Phrarachakamnot Kao (Old Royal Decree) 59 (p. 302) and 44 (p. 251-253).

⁹ de La Loubere, *op. cit.*, pp. 201, 276. PKR, Vol. II, Betset 61 and 62, pp. 219-220. Lingat, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

with the increase in *that* and *phrai som* means that the traditional society, which did not recognize private ownership, had changed to its very roots. One may see that the symptoms of the dissolution of traditional society, which took decisive form with the signing of the Bowring Treaty, continued to be apparent.

2. *The Dissolution of Traditional Society and the Formation of the System of Landownership*

The Bowring Treaty, which was concluded with England in 1855, provided the decisive opportunity for the dissolution of traditional Thai society.¹⁰ Politically, the supremacy of the European colonial powers over Southeast Asia brought a halt to the wars among neighboring countries which had up to then been the chief function of the state. Therefore, it was inevitable that there be restructuring of the organization of the state. This restructuring was accomplished with the Chakkri Reformation, which undertook reformation of the systems of central and local administration, and extended to liberation of *that* and abolition of the system of corvée labor. It created a state with centralized administration and the relationship of the people to the state became even more direct than before, when the aristocracy and bureaucrats acted as intermediaries. The Reformation was accomplished aimed at the strengthening of national unity in order to avoid becoming a colony of the European powers.

We may look at the Bowring Treaty and the Chakkri Reformation from an economic point of view as follows. Under the terms of the Bowring Treaty, Thailand opened her ports without tariff autonomy to England. This meant that liberalization of trade fundamentally changed the economic structure of traditional society which had been self-sufficient, and brought an unavoidable transition to a commercial economy under pressure from European industrialized countries. Again, the Chakkri Reformation provided the corvée peasants with the conditions necessary for him to devote his entire attention to cultivation. These peasants produced rice demanded by foreign countries and with the money received imported cheap goods, especially clothing. The farm household economy shifted from one of self-sufficiency to a commercial economy. Thus the Bowring Treaty provided the occasion for Thailand to take the form of a nation state, while the Thai economy took the form of a national economy.

Nonetheless, the Thai national economy has come to have strong colonial characteristics because the transition from a self-sufficient to a national economy was promoted at a time when there was an overwhelming disparity in industrial productivity between European countries and Thailand.

Concomitantly, the land system changed dramatically to conform with the new social state of affairs. Concretely speaking from the point of view of the legal system, the significant change in the land system was the introduction of a modern system of title-deeds. As a result of the Bowring Treaty,

¹⁰ Bowring, *op. cit.* p. 262.

Thai rice came to be in constant demand, and because the price of rice rose dramatically,¹¹ the demand for land also increased.¹² The price of land also rose. With the increase in pledging of land and in the number of lawsuits relating to pledges and mortgages, there came to be a need for greater clarification of the relationships concerning land-rights. A series of laws were executed to respond to this contingency, including recognition of the holders of title-deeds as possessing sole rights of holding to their land.¹³ As a result of trial and error, in 1901 a modern system of title-deeds was introduced which clarified the relationships among land-rights.¹⁴ The Department of Land Records was established, and title-deeds with maps attached which were drawn up on the basis of detailed measurements, were kept here. According to the endorsements on the title-deeds, right to land was clearly demonstrated. This meant that private ownership of land could be clearly demonstrated without reference to taxes.

Economically speaking, the legislative process involved in the introduction of a modern system of title deeds brought about the dissolution of land management based on the traditional status relationships such as *corvée* labor and slavery, and corresponded to the formative period of a modern land-lordism which exists solely for the purpose of collecting rents. The royal family, aristocrats and bureaucrats—the great land owners—decided to lease land which was favorable for commerce.¹⁵

A particularly famous example is to be found at Rangsit, located in the northeast section of Bangkok. Until the end of the 19th century, this was swamp and marsh land, but a network of canals was constructed to respond to the foreign demand for Thai rice, and the swampland was converted into cultivated fields. Wealthy residents of Bangkok purchased land from the canal company, and leased it to peasants. These peasants were of a variety of origins, some descending from owner-cultivators who had moved to this region, or from slaves or wage laborers (especially Laotians from the Northeast).¹⁶

¹¹ PKPS, Vol. VII, Prakat Geon Khana Tradaeng Prot Hai Tangkhan 1864 (Proclamation on Paddy (*Tradaeng*) which to Be Allowed Delaying Its Payment, 1864), pp. 120–126.

¹² Jacob T. Chile, *The Pearl of Asia*, 1892, p. 144.

¹³ PKPS, Vol. VII, Prakat Khai Suan Khai Na Fak Kaekan, 1866, (Proclamation on the Selling and Pledging of Paddy and Garden), pp. 226–228; Vol. XV, Pharachabanyat Kankhaifak lae Kanchmnam Thidin R. S. 115 (Royal Decree on Pledge and Mortgage Concerning Land, 1896), pp. 267–270; Vol. XVII, Prakat Ruand Chamnam lae Khaifak Thidin R. S. 118 (Proclamation on Pledge and Mortgage Concerning Land, 1899), pp. 199–201.

¹⁴ PKPS, Vol. XVIII, Prakat Ook Chanot Thidin R. S. 120 (Proclamation on Issuing Title-deeds 901), pp. 89–91.

¹⁵ Dilock, *op. cit.*, S. 96–97; W. H. Graham, *Siam*, Vol. II, London, Alexander Mouring, 1924, p. 15.

¹⁶ H. Warington Smith, *Five Years in Siam, from 1891 to 1896*, Vol. I, New York, 1898, pp. 53–55; Chaophraya Wong Sonuphaphat, *Prawati Krasuang Kasettrathikan* (History of the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce), Bangkok, 1910, p. 38; PKPS, Vol. XI, Sanya Pratachathan Phrabromma Rachanuyat Khut Khlong (Contract on the Royal Permission for Digging Canal), p. 237 and Vol. XII, Nangsu Anuyat Khut Khlong Krasuang Kasettrathikan (Document of the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce on Permission for

We may perceive a transition from the old status society to the formation of a new village society based on landownership. Even after the opening up of Rangsit, wealthy families residing in Bangkok continued to purchase land, and this meant that an absentee landlord stratum came into being. For the wealthy families real estate was the safest and most advantageous means of making money.¹⁷

As seen above, many of the tenants who cultivated the land of these landlords were descended from wage laborers or slaves; but we cannot overlook the fact that others were descended from owner-cultivators, who had lost their land for such reasons as inability to comply with the commercial economy and in particular lack of preparation for the credit system; crop failures deriving from complete dependence upon the monsoon, in which the rainfall differs widely according to region and year. Instances in which the owner-cultivator was overwhelmed by land mortgages were not infrequent.¹⁸ Some of the peasants who were deprived of from their land turned to the newly opened land; others became tenants. By the 1930's little underdeveloped land appropriate for the cultivation of rice remained even in the Chaophraya Delta in which, in the beginning of this century, there had still been extensive underdeveloped land with ample opportunities for landless peasants to become owner-cultivators.¹⁹

There is a lack of evidence to indicate to what extent this landlordism, formed under the conditions of landlord-tenant farming outlined above, developed, but we can guess from the report of a survey on farm household economy conducted in 1930 by Carle C. Zimmerman.²⁰ According to Table 1, in central Thailand an average of 36% of total farm households were tenants. If we limit the central Thai region to the narrow Chaophraya Delta, the percentage becomes even higher. Actually, in the region around Bangkok, which has good transportation facilities, tenancy is extremely frequent, and within Thanyaburi tenancy reaches 94%.

Thus, in regions in which transportation has been convenient and the farm household economy has proceeded towards becoming a commercial economy, or in regions in which as in Rangsit, wild lands have been opened and settlers have gathered, the percentage of tenants to total farm households was already fairly high in prewar years, contrary to the commonly held view. The prevalence of a commercial economy undermined the traditional society

Digging Canal), p. 217.

Among many unpublished materials the documents concerning paddy field (*Na*), the 24th Document of *Na, Kaset* (agriculture) in particular owned by the National Archives are especially important.

¹⁷ Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁸ Ministry of Commerce and Communication, *Siam Nature and Industry*, Bangkok, 1930, pp. 251-262.

¹⁹ The limitation on landholding by one household settled on newly opened land was regulated for the first time by the 6th Act on the Issuing of Land Title-deeds in 1936; the limit was under 25 *rai*.

²⁰ C. C. Zimmerman, *Siam: Rural Economic Survey, 1930-31*, Bangkok, 1931.

Table 1. Average Land Owned, Rented and Farmed per Farm Households in Central Thailand, 1931

Province and Village	Rai Owned and Squattered (rai)	Rented In (rai)	Rented Out (rai)	Total Cultivated (rai)	Proportion Owning No Land (%)	Largest Owned Unit (rai)
Bangkok	8.44	7.20	0.70	15.04	78.00	100.00
Dhanyaburi	13.40	1.62	8.90	6.12	54.00	194.00
Thonburi	4.30	55.16	2.30	57.16	94.00	100.00
Ayuthaya	25.95	11.97	8.40	30.45	42.00	153.00
Lopburi	27.06	4.19	5.94	25.04	12.00	110.00
Saraburi	21.47	1.52	3.62	19.12	36.00	60.00
Pisanulok	28.45	0.50	0.55	25.50	2.00	220.00
Suphanburi	58.88	3.14	19.62	42.15	8.00	302.00
Pechaburi	13.81	6.53	2.38	17.40	46.00	50.00
Chachoensao	33.49	14.12	18.66	28.66	42.00	300.00
Chanthaburi: Muang	10.93	1.46	2.63	8.58	10.00	43.00
Laemsing	16.01	1.44	—	14.43	8.00	65.75
Total Average	28.35	9.07	6.14	24.14	36.00	

Source: Carle C. Zimmerman, *Siam: Rural Economic Survey 1931-1932*, Bangkok, 1931, p. 28.

which had been built on the direct exploitation of peasant labor and pushed this society toward a contemporary society in which private landownership is the most dominant social institution.

III. THE ACTUAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF LANDOWNERSHIP IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANDLORDS AND TENANTS

In this section, I would like to examine the increase in number of tenants after World War II and the relationship between landlords and tenants using a limited number of materials.

The development of the national economy of Thailand was remarkable and commercialization of the farm household economy progressed dramatically as compared with the prewar period. The viewpoint which treats village society through its relationship with total society has become increasingly important. Farm household expenditures increased, and the tendency for farm households to lose their land through indebtedness intensified.²¹ In particular, it is conceivable that the low price of rice for domestic consumption under the rice premium policy lowered the income of peasants,²² and functioned to increase the indebtedness of farm households.

²¹ Cf. the following report in relation to indebtedness of farm household: Uthit Naksawat, *Phawanisin khong Chauna lae Kankha Khau nai Phakklang Pratieth Thai P. S. 2500-2501* (Indebtedness and Rice Trade of Peasants in Central Thailand, 1957-1958), Bangkok, 1958.

²² See the following *re* the rice premium: Chaiyong Chuchart and Sopin Tongpan, *The Determination and Analysis of Policies to Support and Stabilize Agricultural Prices and Income of the Thai Farmers: with Special Reference to Rice Premium*, Bangkok, 1965.

Table 2. Landownership of 104 Rice-Growing Farm Households, Bang Chan 1949

	Number of Farm Households	Land Cultivated (<i>rai</i>)	
		Owned	Rented
Owner Cultivators	24	860.5	
Part-Owner Part-Tenants	34	593.9	861.5
Tenants	46		1,212.25
Total	104	1,454	2,073.75

Source: Lauriston Sharp *et al.*, *Siamese Rice Village: A Preliminary Study of Bang Chan 1948-49*, Bangkok, 1953, p. 147.

Table 3. Different Rental Methods, Bang Chan, 1948

	Rate in Cash (baht/ <i>rai</i>)	Rate in Kind (<i>tang/rai</i>)	Number of Parcels Reported
Payment in Kind			
3 <i>tang</i> per <i>rai</i>	23.58		1
5 <i>tang</i> per <i>rai</i>	39.30		29
5.5 <i>tang</i> per <i>rai</i>	43.23		1
6 <i>tang</i> per <i>rai</i>	47.16		22
7 <i>tang</i> per <i>rai</i>	55.02		15
8 <i>tang</i> per <i>rai</i>	62.88		28
Payment in Cash			
100 baht for 8 <i>rai</i>	12.50	1.6	1
30 baht per 1 <i>rai</i>	30.00	3.8	6
600 baht for 14.5 <i>rai</i>	41.38	5.3	1
300 baht for 6 <i>rai</i>	50.00	6.4	1
Share	—		1
Unspecified	—		1
Total, Average		6.2	105

Source: Same as Table 2.

is fairly low because the average yield is 32 *tang* per *rai*—252.52 bahts. However, there is no instance in which the landlord offers seeds or tools.

Tables 4 and 5 are constructed of materials derived from the follow-up survey of 1952-53.²³ We cannot perceive accurately the change in rate of tenant and owner cultivators because the number of households surveyed differs. The problem is the rapid rise of the farm rent. During a three year period, the average rent rose from 6.2 *tang* to 8.1 *tang*. During this interval, the average yield fell from 32.1 *tang* to 25.2 *tang*. Moreover farming expenditures rose. This implies that the number of peasants wanting to have their own land increased.

Next, let us look at the report on agricultural development for 1952.²⁴

²³ Kamol Odd Janlekha, *A Study of the Economy of Rice Growing Village in Central Thailand*, Bangkok, 1955.

²⁴ United States of America Special Technical and Economic Mission to Thailand, "Report on Land Development in Thailand," prepared by Richard Pringle, Bangkok, 1952.

Table 4. Landownership in Bang Chan, 1953

	Number of Farm Household	Land Cultivated (rai)	
		Owned	Rented
Owner Cultivators	48	1,589	
Part-Owner Part-Tenants	88	1,511	1,583
Tenants	80		1,955
Total	216	3,100	3,538

Source: Kamol Odd Janlekha, *A Study of the Economy of a Rice Growing Village in Central Thailand, Bangkok, 1955*, p. 57.

Table 5. Different Rental Methods, Bang Chan, 1952

	Rate in Kind (tang/rai)	Number of Percels Reported
Payment in Kind		
6 tang per rai		5
7 tang per rai		16
8 tang per rai		39
9 tang per rai		3
10 tang per rai		6
Payment in Cash		
40 baht	4.4	1
50 baht	5.6	3
70 baht	7.8	1
Rent Free		4
Total, Average	8.1	87

Source: Same as Table 4.

Table 6. Landownership and Production Factors in the 5 Villages in Central Thailand, 1952

	Lopburi Province		Sinburi Province	Angthon Province	
	Tanonyai Village	Pokaton Village	Tonpoa Village	Muang Village	Vistetchaichaon Village
Estimated Percent of Tenancy in Terms of Land Rented	20%	30%	30%	50%	40%
Trend in Tenancy Compared with Prewar Period	Increased	Increased	Increased	Increased Rapidly	Increased Rapidly
Yeild Tang per Rai	30-40	25-40	30-40	30-40	25-50
Land Rental	$\frac{1}{8}$ share or 10 tang. Little in cash	$\frac{1}{2}$ share or 80-100 baht per rai	$\frac{1}{2}$ share or 100 baht per rai	$\frac{1}{2}$ share or 100-150 baht or 20 tang per rai	$\frac{1}{2}$ share or 100-150 baht or 15-20 tang per rai
Who Are Landlords	Mostly peasants, few in local town	Mostly peasants, some in local town	Half peasants, half in town	Half peasants, half in town and Bangkok	80% peasants, 20% in town and Bangkok

Source: U.S.A. Special Technical and Economic Mission to Thailand, *Report on Land Development in Thailand, Bangkok, 1952*, p. 52.

This was a survey on credit cooperatives, undertaken for the purpose of studying agricultural development in Thailand. The reliability of the data cannot be ascertained since there is no statement concerning the method of research; but I would like to use this as a means for seeing over-all trends.

Table 6 is a report on Lopburi, Sinburi and Anghong. These three provinces extend from the central to the northeast regions of the Chaophraya Delta; and are areas which were already opened up in the Ayuthaya era. The annual flooding of the rivers provided sufficient water for rice cultivation; and it was a region in which production was relatively stable.²⁵ Looking at landownership of the five regions within the three provinces, we may assume that the percentage of tenant-cultivated land is 20-50%. The owners of tenant-cultivated land are mostly peasants, but according to region there are also areas in which the owners are half peasants and half city dwellers. Also, the forms of tenancy and rents vary according to region, the forms of payment of rent including sharecropping, payment of fixed rent in kind, and payment of fixed cash rent, etc. Generally, rent amounts to one-third to one-half the yield. However, what most draws our attention concerns the tendency toward tenancy. In every region, there is a tendency for tenancy to increase; this is particularly pronounced in Anghong province. Table 7 examines Saraburi and Nakonnayok provinces, which are located in the eastern part of the Chaophraya Delta, and adjacent on the east to Rangsit which is noted for its absentee great landlords, as noted above. According to the surveys on the four regions within those two provinces, the percentage of tenancy ranges from 10-60%, and there are marked changes according to region. The rent is fixed payment in kind, from one-third to one-half the harvest.

Presenting the over-all situation for central Thailand, Table 8 illustrates the fact that it was not unusual for absentee landlordism to exist in central Thailand, in contrast with the region-by-region surveys given above. The

Table 7. Landownership in the 4 Villages in Central Thailand

	Saraburi Province		Nakonnayok Province	
	Nongtalo Village	Nongke Village	Sowhi Village	Banna Village
Average Farm Size (<i>rai</i>)	40	60-70	25-30	30
Estimated Tenancy (%)	50	60	10	50
Tenant Rents (<i>tang/rai</i>)	10	12	10	10-12
Average Paddy Yield (<i>tang/rai</i>)	30	30	25	20-40
Rental Contract Written	No	No	No	No
Absentee Landlord	Very few	5 with 200 <i>rai</i>	Non	Total holdings 20,000 <i>rai</i>

Source: Same as Table 6.

²⁵ For a discussion of the process of the development of the Chaophraya Delta, see Takashi Tomosugi, "Historical Development of Irrigation and Drainage in the Chaophraya Delta," in *Water Resources Utilization in Southeast Asia*, Symposium Series III, The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, Kyoto, 1966.

Table 8. Number of Owner Cultivators with Over 1,000 *rai* of Land by Province, 1952

Province	Number of Owners	Province	Number of Owners
Nakonnayok	33	Samutsongkhram	2
Patumthani	54	Samutsakon	2
Chachoensao	23	Phetchaburi	1
Nakonpathom	6	Chonburi	1
Samutprakan	10	Raburi	2
Saraburi	6	Nakonsawan	4
Ayuthaya	17	Kanchanaburi	1
Total		162	

Source: Same as Table 6.

Table 9. Percentages of Owned Land by Scale of Management, 1953 (%)

	Scale of Management (<i>rai</i>)					Average
	Less than 6	6-15	15-30	30-60	Over 60	
Central Plain	35.05	78.05	70.47	75.70	76.81	74.35
Northeast Districts	95.24	97.78	98.10	98.13	98.60	98.17

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, *Thailand Economic Farm Survey*, 1953, p. 62.**Table 10.** Percentages of Tenant Households Reporting Paying Rent by Scale of Management in Central Thailand, 1953

	Scale of Management (<i>rai</i>)					Average
	Less than 6	6-15	15-30	30-60	Over 60	
Total	28.08	24.91	40.81	51.03	38.94	39.77
Those Paid Rent in Cash	15.76	9.66	10.51	8.35	7.79	9.87
(Average Rate baht/ <i>rai</i>)	(77.44)	(34.98)	(48.57)	(50.48)	(68.63)	(52.79)
Those Paid Rent in Kind	12.32	15.25	30.30	42.68	31.15	29.90
(Average Rate <i>tang/rai</i>)	(10.58)	(12.00)	(11.00)	(12.76)	(16.96)	(12.64)

Source: Same as Table 9, pp. 70-73.

latter table is based on a survey concerning landlords who own more than 1,000 *rai* in central Thailand, drawn from the records of the Department of Land. In Pathumthani there were 54 such landlords; in Nakonnayok, 33; in Chachoensao, 23; in Ayuthaya, 17; in Samutprakan, 6.

The 1953 Survey of farm household economies²⁶ contains materials giving the actual conditions of landownership for all of central Thailand. Table 9 concerns land; while Table 10 concerns peasants. With the exception of those households holding less than 6 *rai*, more than 70% of cultivated land is owner-cultivated, regardless of the household's scale of management; on

²⁶ Ministry of Agriculture, *Thailand Economic Farm Survey*, 1953, Bangkok, 1954.

the average 74.35% of land is owner-cultivated. Although this percentage seems fairly high, it can be said to be low when compared with the 98.17% of owner-cultivated land in the Northeast. In addition, there is one problem remaining concerning the selection of regions for this survey. This is the fact that the region stipulated as central Thailand includes farm villages other than the rice-growing villages of the Chaophraya Delta. In general, in the non-rice growing villages which lie away from the Delta, many of the farm households are owner cultivators. Therefore, from the fact that this kind of owner-cultivator farm village is included in central Thailand, we may presume that the ratio of owner cultivators in central Thailand is higher than that for the rice-growing villages.

Farm households which pay rent in kind or in cash amount to an average of approximately 40%. In particular, we may note that out of farm households of medium scale with 30-60 *rai* more than 50% pay rent. Rent is paid overwhelmingly in kind.

From the discussion above we may examine as follows the actual conditions of landownership in the immediate postwar period. The conditions of landownership differ widely according to region, and sometimes even differ from one village to the next. These differences may be due to differences in the process of land reclamation and settlement; but looked at in general, we may estimate that at the least more than 30% of farm land in the central Thai Delta is tenant-cultivated, and more than 40% of the peasants are tenants. The number of peasant landlords who live near their land is high, but there are also many absentee landlords who live in the cities and, in particular, in the regions near Bangkok, the system of absentee great landlords has developed remarkably.

The payment of rent takes a wide variety of forms, but payment in kind is frequent and ranges from one-fourth to one-half the yield. It is of especially deep interest that much variance may be seen in the form of tenancy even within one village, because it is conceivable that this fact suggests that person-to-person relations between landlord and tenant are operating more strongly than the relationships through land within the village as a whole so long as we ignore such natural conditions as soil fertility, water use, etc. What we must pay particular attention to is the fact that there is a marked tendency for tenancy to increase rapidly according to region. We may also say that the rise in rents is connected to this trend.

Let us next take up the matter of the development of the present conditions of landownership in central Thailand.²⁷ The circumstances of landownership in the twenty rice-cultivating provinces of central Thailand in 1957 are shown in Tables 11, 12, and 13. When we look at landownership according to scale of management, it is clear that the number of part-owner part-tenant cultivators is high regardless of scale of management. On the average, in contrast with 42% for owner cultivators, part-owner part-tenant cultivators rank 28%, while tenants rank 25%. Owner-cultivators do not

²⁷ Naksawat, *op. cit.*

Table 11. Number of Farm Households by Landownership and Scale of Management in the 20 Rice-Growing Provinces in Central Thailand, 1957

Scale of Management (rai)	Total Number of Farm Households (a)	Forms of Landownership							
		Owner Cultivators		Part-Owner Part-Tenants		Tenants		Others*	
		Number (b)	Ratio (b)/(a)	Number (b)	Ratio (b)/(a)	Number (b)	Ratio (b)/(a)	Number (b)	Ratio (b)/(a)
1-20	603	303	50.25	86	14.26	176	29.19	38	6.31
21-40	1,064	437	41.07	271	25.47	315	29.61	41	3.85
41-60	608	236	38.82	199	32.73	143	23.52	30	4.93
61-80	274	98	35.77	130	47.45	38	13.87	8	2.91
81-100	141	53	37.59	57	40.43	24	17.02	7	4.95
Over 101	133	67	50.37	40	30.08	20	15.04	6	4.51
Total	2,823	1,194	42.30	783	27.74	716	25.35	130	4.61

Note: *"Others" includes those who cooperate farms (*Hunsuan*) or who do not pay rent but cultivate land held by others (*Mi khon hai tham plau plau*). Instead of not receiving interest on loans they are allowed to cultivate land for no remuneration.

Source: Uthit Naksawat, *Phawanisin Khong Chawna lae Kankha Khau nai Phakklang Prathet thai*, P. S. 2500-501.

Table 12. Paddy Field by Landownership and Scale of Management in the 20 Provinces in Central Thailand, 1957

Scale of Management (rai)	Total Number of Farm Households	Total Area of Paddy Field		Owner Cultivators		Tenants		Others	
		Area (rai)	Average Scale per Farm Households	Area (rai)	Average Scale per Farm Households	Area (rai)	Average Scale per Farm Households	Area (rai)	Average Scale per Farm Households
1-20	603	9,031	14.98	4,909	8.14	3,700	6.14	422	0.70
21-40	1,064	33,160	31.17	18,328	17.23	14,268	13.41	564	5.53
41-60	608	30,776	50.62	17,730	29.16	12,105	19.91	941	1.55
61-80	274	19,184	70.01	12,315	44.95	6,466	23.60	403	1.55
81-100	141	12,763	90.52	7,896	56.00	4,573	32.43	294	2.09
Over 100	133	19,087	143.51	13,424	100.93	5,209	39.17	454	3.41
Total	2,823	124,001	43.93	74,602	26.42	46,321	16.41	3,078	1.09

Note: Cf. note in Table 11.

Source: Same as Table 11.

amount to one-half of total farm households. If we look at the figures according to cultivated land (paddy fields) the percentage of tenant cultivated land for small-scale management is relatively high, but on the average owner-cultivated land amounts to 60%.

Table 13 examines the conditions of landownership according to region. Because few farm households were surveyed, the percentages of owner/tenant-cultivated land for each province are not very significant. However, we may note a tendency for the provinces near Bangkok to have a higher percentage of tenanted land than owner cultivated land, while in the provinces located

Table 13. Paddy Field by Province and Form of Ownership in the 20 Provinces in Central Thailand, 1957

Province	Total Area Surveyed (rai)	Owner-Cultivated Land (rai)	Tenant-Cultivated Land (rai)	Other (rai)
Phranakon	7,066	2,860	4,033	173
Pathumthani	7,166	2,765	4,243	158
Nonburi	3,042	1,824	1,218	—
Samutprakan	6,903	2,568	4,335	—
Samutsakon	2,564	1,506	1,058	—
Chachoensao	10,535	4,271	6,244	—
Ayuthaya	12,937	6,740	6,098	99
Raburi	3,238	1,880	1,358	—
Kanchanaburi	1,127	856	271	—
Suphanburi	16,048	10,381	4,951	716
Chonburi	4,431	2,946	1,203	282
Augthong	2,992	1,894	1,078	20
Saraburi	5,280	4,110	1,010	160
Lopburi	6,277	3,600	1,924	753
Pranchinburi	7,615	4,956	2,506	144
Chainat	4,820	2,915	1,569	336
Nakonsawan	9,078	7,430	1,607	41
Chanthaburi	1,114	948	80	86
Pichit	10,003	8,438	1,503	62
Pechabun	1,765	1,705	32	28
Total	124,001 (100%)	74,602 (60.1%)	46,321 (37.3%)	3,078 (2.6%)

Source: Same as Table 11.

farther from Bangkok, the number of owner cultivators is far higher than the number of tenants. In regions in which transportation facilities are good and the penetration of the commercial economy has been intense, there has been marked indebtedness of farm households and moreover a noticeable trend for owner cultivators to become tenants.

The 1963 Agricultural Census²⁸ was eagerly awaited in hopes that it would provide more detailed information concerning the actual conditions of landownership. But in its published form, part-owner part-tenant cultivators were classified as owner cultivators. Because, as seen above, the proportion of part-owner part-tenant cultivators is in fact remarkably high, the classification of these cultivators as owner cultivators diminishes the value and utility of the Census.

Industrialization finally got underway with the decade of the 1960's; and the domestic market for industrial products began to become a problem. The strong connection between economic development and agriculture attracted interest; and the improvement of the land system was called for as a precondition for increasing agricultural productivity.

Such was the social atmosphere circa 1964 when a survey on the farm

²⁸ Office of the Prime Minister, *Census of Agriculture, 1963*.

household economy focusing on landownership was administered in five rice-cultivating provinces in central Thailand.²⁹ Doubt may be entertained concerning the method of sampling households used in this survey; but, nonetheless, the evidence concerning conditions of landownership is presented in Table 14. With owner cultivators at 41%, part-owner part-tenants, at 29% and tenants at 27%, the results are similar to those in the 1957 survey. From the data in Table 15 we may examine landownership in terms of the reason leading to tenancy. Seventy-seven percent of tenants reported that they had never owned land; this is in accordance with the fact that the landlord system had already been formed prior to the war. Again, we may note that 19% of tenants had sold their land in order to repay loans, etc. There is no information concerning when the land was sold, but it is conceivable that it was either during the depression of the 1930's or during the postwar period of low rice prices.

Up to now we have examined the conditions of landownership in the postwar era historically, using the limited materials available. On this basis we can make the following statements. The landlord system was established in the central Thai delta before the war; and shortly after the war at least more than 40% of farm households were part-owner part-tenant, and 30% of

Table 14. Percentage of Farm Households by Landownership in the 5 Rice-Growing Provinces in Central Thailand, 1964

Owner Cultivators	41
Part-Owner Part-Tenants	29
Tenants	27
Others	3
Total	100

Source: Krom Phathana Thidin (Department of Land Development), *Khwamsamphan rawang Kanthukhrong Thidin kap Phawakanphalit khong Chawna nai 5 Changwat Phakhleng P. S. 2507* (Interrelationship between Land Tenure and Peasant Production in the 5 Provinces in Central Thailand, 1964), prepared by Chaiyong Chuchart, Bangkok, 1964.

Table 15. Have Tenants ever Possessed Their Land? 1964

Scale of Management (rai)	Never Possessed Land (%)	Sold Land to Repay Loans etc. (%)	Cultivating Other's Land for No Rent, or Public Land (%)
Less than 19	85	15	—
20-39	74	19	7
40-59	73	21	6
60-79	61	22	17
80-99	100	—	—
Over 100	87	13	—
Average	77	19	4

Source: Same as Table 14.

²⁹ Cf. source of Table 14.

the paddy fields were tenant-cultivated. As a result of the penetration of the commercial economy which came with the unfavorable conditions due to the low postwar rice price, the trend for owner cultivators to become tenants was intensified. We may suppose that at present the percentage of owner cultivators has dropped below 50%; also, nearly 50% of paddy fields are now tenant-cultivated. This trend is still continuing at the present day. Such factors as regional crop failures—which are unavoidable due either to natural conditions of the present technological level of agriculture—or personal habits such as gambling or drinking, easily lead to loss of land.

Moreover, the rise in the farm price of unhusked rice over the past two or three years has been remarkable; and the cash expenditures of farm households have continued to increase rapidly. If in the future the price of unhusked rice were to fall suddenly, it would mean the decisive ruin of owner cultivators. The reason for this lies in the fact that because peasants have neither the means nor the organization with which to cope with fluctuations in the price of unhusked rice, they fall into debt soon after a fall in the price of unhusked rice. If we look for an historical example, the fall of the price of unhusked rice in the 1930's brought an increase in the indebtedness of farm households in central Thailand, and forced them off their land. Because at present the diffusion of a commercial economy among farm households is more widespread than in the 1930's, it is inevitable that the influence of a recession be more severe than before.

2. The Relationship between Landlord and Tenant

I would next like to examine the various socio-economic aspects of the relationship between landlord and tenant, centering on landownership. There has been up to now a remarkable lack of material concerning the landlord-tenant relationship, which is only natural since it has been commonly thought that in the first place, the majority of farmers in central Thailand are owner-cultivators, and hence there has been no general interest in landlord-tenant relations. Let us first, then, look at landlord-tenant relations from the economic point of view on the basis of the 1964 Survey.

Table 16 presents data on tenant leases; it is clear that almost 50% of leased land is covered by written contracts. (At present the percentage of written contracts is considerably higher than at the time of the survey.) And the duration of the lease is almost always one year, as seen in Table 17—78% of part-owner part-tenant cultivators have such leases, while for tenants the percentage is 80%. The one-year lease means that the right of cultivation of the tenant is tenuous, and severely obstructs his willingness to improve his land. Thus, it may be said that these written contracts do not function to strengthen the rights of cultivation of the tenant, but rather to place emphasis on recognition of the rights of ownership of the landlords. In cases in which land is cultivated by parents and children, or by relatives, the lease is for an unlimited period of time.

Tables 18 and 19 present figures concerning the forms of rent and per-

Table 16. Status of Tenant Contract in the 5 Rice-Growing Provinces in Central Thailand, 1964 (%)

Scale of Management (rai)	Part-Owner Part-Tenants		Tenants	
	Contract	No Contract	Contract	No Contract
Less than 19	54	46	12	88
20-39	39	61	42	58
40-59	50	50	56	44
60-79	50	50	61	39
80-99	50	50	63	37
Over 100	60	40	63	37
Average	47	53	49	51

Source: Same as Table 14.

Table 17. Duration of Contract in the 5 Rice-Growing Provinces in Central Thailand, 1964 (%)

Scale of Management (rai)	Part-Owner Part-Tenants				Tenants			
	1 year	2 years	3 years	unlimited	1 year	2 years	3 years	unlimited
Less than 19	69	—	8	23	79	—	—	21
20-39	83	—	—	17	83	—	2	15
40-59	78	2	8	12	75	7	5	13
60-79	83	—	4	13	90	—	5	5
80-99	75	—	6	19	75	—	—	25
Over 100	70	—	20	10	67	11	—	22
Average	78	1	6	15	80	2	4	14

Source: Same as Table 14.

Table 18. Forms of Rent by Scale of Management in the 5 Provinces in Central Thailand, 1964 (%)

Scale of Management (rai)	Part-Owner Part-Tenants			Tenants		
	Cash	Kind	Share	Cash	Kind	Share
Less than 19	50	50	—	60	32	8
20-39	33	53	14	32	57	11
40-59	42	53	5	53	44	3
60-79	53	43	4	44	50	—
80-99	39	61	—	62	38	—
Over 100	50	50	—	40	60	—
Average	42	51	7	41	52	7

Source: Same as Table 14.

Table 19. Rate of Rent by Type of Tenant in the 5 Provinces in Central Thailand, 1964 (baht/rai)

	Part-Owner Part-Tenants	Tenants
Cash	52	56
Kind	52	57
Share	89	102

Source: Same as Table 14.

centages thereof. Rents paid in cash account for 40% while rents in kind account for 50%; payment of half the yield in kind to 5%. Tenant rents slightly exceed 50 bahts per *rai* for both cash and payment in kind. In comparison the rate of half-yield payment is extremely high, reaching 89-102 bahts per *rai*. However, we may say that rents of one-third the yield show a tendency to increase when compared with the survey mentioned above.

Since 1964 no report on any survey of the land system including landlord-tenant relations has been issued. Hence I would like to compensate to some extent for this lack by presenting some notes based on my own village survey conducted in 1968.

(1) As I have noted repeatedly above, the differences in the circumstances of landownership in central Thailand are marked according to region.

(i) Generally speaking, in the lower part of the Chaophraya Delta south of Ayuthaya, tenants are very numerous. In particular there are extensive tracts of land owned by absentee landlords in Pathumthani province to the north of Bangkok. It is not unusual for more than 60% of farm households in the villages in this region to be tenant cultivators. The absentee great landlords include the royal families, merchants, officials, etc., living in Bangkok. There are even instances in which one person owns more than 20,000 *rai*. This much land has been accumulated through such means as inheritance, foreclosing on mortgages, and purchase.

The rent, in the case of an absentee great landlord, is usually between 5-10 *tang* per *rai*. It is one-third to one-fourth of the yield. In case of crop failure, there is reduction of or exemption from rent payment. The absentee great landlords are more lenient about rent than are resident landlords. The peasants have their rents collected by their agents (*naikong*) on the estate. There are instances in which village headmen or hamlet headmen act as agents. The agent collects the rent in kind and, converting this into cash, remits it to the landlord. Any profit which accrues from the conversion of unhusked rice to cash through utilization of fluctuations in the price of unhusked rice reverts to the agent. Moreover, 10% of the rent goes to the agent as his handling charge. We may say that the relationship between landlord and agent is not as between ruler and subject, but rather as between a company and its agent. Again, there are no cases in which the landlord demonstrates any social influence on the village via the agent. These landlords have no enthusiasm for improving the land, and only take the rents collected.

(ii) There has been dramatic development of the landlord system in floating-rice region which, centering on Ayuthaya, has long been under cultivation. This is largely because of the tendency for land to concentrate in the hands of money lenders through liquidation of debts since before the war. Even peasants in this region, which has long been noted for its affluence, have recently sunk into debt, and been placed in a situation in which it has been impossible for them to live without taking loans soon after harvesting. Also, even in the rice-planting areas which extend to the coast south of Bangkok, loss of farmland has been remarkable. There are few examples of absentee

landlords who own more than 1,000 *rai* of land, and deal directly with their tenants, not going through an agent. There is a written lease. Productivity in the floating-rice region is high, at 40-50 *tang* per *rai*; and the rent is 20 *tang* or 200 bahts. Payment of half the yield in kind also exists. South of Bangkok the going rent is 100 bahts in cash because the productivity of the region is about a half of that in the floating-rice region.

(iii) There are many tenants in the upper reaches of the delta north of Ayuthaya. At present a pronounced trend toward a transition to tenancy may be noted. Here, there are many resident landlords. This is because peasants who do not own land or who have only a little land will rent land lying near their homes. Before the war it was possible to open up undeveloped land anywhere in order to furnish land sufficient to maintain the family's livelihood. The rent in the case of a resident landlord was 10-12 *tang* per *rai*, or 100-120 bahts per *rai*; amounting to one-third to one-half the yield.

However, a recent trend which is worthy of our attention is the fact that there is a conspicuous transition from payment in kind to prepayment in cash. There has been an increase in peasants who wish to become tenants, wanting just a little more land for cultivation; this has led to prepayment of rent. There are instances in which someone will prepay the next year's rent for a piece of land which up to that time has been cultivated by a certain tenant. The original tenant thus becomes unable to continue tilling this land. If peasants without money do not take loans they cannot prepay rent. Rents show a tendency to increase, often reaching 120-150 bahts per *rai*. The terms of tenancy in the case of a resident landlord are various and the rent is adjusted according to the degree of intimacy with the tenant.

(2) Next let us look at the social relationship between landlord and tenant. Have there been established within village society status relations of social superiority-inferiority based on land ownership? From the point of view of the tenants, the absentee great landlords who live in Bangkok are people in a different world; the only relation the cultivator has with the landlord is through the agent.

The absentee landlords in towns which are the seats of local government have a direct relationship with the tenant which is one between superior and inferior—but in terms of everyday life there is no contact. Because the landlord is related to the tenant solely through the collection of rent, he has almost no ability to influence directly village society. Nor does he try to have such influence. However, when one looks at the wider local society which includes the village, the authority of the absentee landlord looms large. Farm households scattered hither and yon do not have any voice in local society.

The status of resident landlords and tenants is the same and there is no distinction between them in terms of social status: the superior-inferior relationship seen between the absentee landlord and tenant does not exist. The economic relationship between the two is clear-cut and impersonal, in that payment of rent derives from loans. The rise of rents is also a result of

economic competition among tenants.

If we look at village society, neither a ruler-ruled system based on land-ownership nor a system of social stratification have been established. Why is it the case that a system of social stratification has not been established? As yet there has been no discussion of this problem; I would here like to make two or three suggestions.

First, as has been seen above, the history of the development of central Thailand has certainly been brief; south of Ayuthaya, there are many areas which have only been settled in this century. Because at the time these areas were opened most of the peasants were owner-cultivators, there has not been the historical development necessary for the formation of relations of social superiority-inferiority based on landownership. We may also point out the high rate of geographical mobility which accompanied settlement of these areas.

Second, the bilateral kinship system operated strongly in the peasant family; and even in the case of inheritance land was divided equally among survivors. Differing from the situation which pertains with primogeniture, it was difficult for land to be accumulated by a specific family member. For this reason the gap between wealth and poverty in village society never became too large; and wealth has tended to be distributed fairly equitably.

IV. VILLAGE SOCIETY IN TRANSITION

This inquiry is result of an examination of the reciprocally determining relationship among the total society, village society, and the land system. The social conditions which give Thai characteristics to Thai land system may be found first in the so-called "loosely structured" aspect of Thai village society. However, because as has been noted above "loosely structured" is a very vague expression, I wish to use the phrase here in the sense of "the weakness of the communal unity in Thai village society," and bring this up for discussion.

The weakness of both autonomous organizations among peasants and of communal unification indicates the difficulties faced in organizing a communal group which will cope with the commercial economy, which has at times engulfed the farm household economy. An appropriate example can be found in the underdeveloped state of agricultural cooperatives. For the purpose of relieving peasants whose degree of poverty has been intensified owing to insufficient credit institutions, agricultural credit cooperatives were established in 1916.⁸⁰ However, although half a century has already passed since the establishment of the credit cooperatives at the present time, less than 10% of total farm households have been organized into the cooperatives. In other words, cooperatives did not develop despite the extensive efforts by the government through the setting up of a ministry of cooperatives

⁸⁰ Ministry of National Development in Thailand, Office of the Under-Secretary of State, *The Cooperative Movement in Thailand*, Bangkok, 1967.

during this period. This situation is due to the lack of communal autonomous organization among peasants who were expected to comply with the direction of the government. This shows a distinct contrast to the Japanese village in which communal organization was fully developed, as formed under the Tokugawa feudal system. In modern Japan the agricultural cooperatives succeeded in organizing almost all the farm households. In any event, in Thailand the lack of proper cooperative organization of peasants through which they could cope with the commercial economy, makes it necessary for them to act individually. As the final result, there remains the high probability of loss of their land. One of the most important determining factors for the rapidity of the increase of the number of farmers who have no land after the opening up of arable land in the Chaophraya Delta has to lie in the weak communal relationship in Thai village society.

What, then, is the future of the peasants who have lost their land? Some flee the village and then, on newly reclaimed land (cultivating maize, for instance,) engage in public construction works conducted by the government, or stream into Bangkok as wage laborers. Some, who stay in the village, are coming to be tenants or wage laborers. The increase in tenants and wage laborers in village society is causing the worsening of the terms of tenancy, starting with the rise in rents. Again, the increase in wage laborers is intensifying the tendency toward heavy dependence upon these laborers for cultivation, especially for planting and harvesting of rice which up until recently had been undertaken by a form of mutual-support (*au raeng*), long the custom in the village. The reliance upon wage laborers for farming has been thought to be more convenient than mutual-support farming; because in the case of wage laborers farm operations progress much faster than before and supplying meals, which was indispensable for mutual-support work, has become unnecessary, lessening the burden on the peasants. However, a natural result of the increase in wage laborers in village society has been the weakening of communal relationships in village society. That is, the weakness in communal relationships in village society makes it easy for the peasants to lose their land, on the one hand; while on the other, the conversion of farmers into wage laborers results in the weakness of the communal character of village society.

Above, we have discussed the fact that the loss of land by the owner cultivator brings about change in village society. What influences does this change exert on the total society? The increasing poverty of peasants, deriving from this unfavorable situation, functions to prevent the expansion of the domestic market which is indispensable for the development of a national economy. It is for this reason that the necessity for introduction of new institutions of agriculture and of the rise of agricultural productivity have been repeatedly advocated.

Second, there is the problem of the livelihood of the peasants who have lost their land. Peasants who have lost their land have somehow or another found employment elsewhere through settlement on newly opened land which has brought a great increase in the production of maize, or with the pro-

sperity of public construction deriving from the economic boom found jobs in the construction industry. However, we cannot necessarily expect that from now on employment opportunities for farmers without land, who have simply remained in their villages, will continue to exist. This situation becomes all the worse and will grow into a serious social problem when one considers the high rate of population growth among peasants. The question of how the rural labor force can be used most effectively is a great problem.

From the point of view of the land system, I have discussed the relationship between Thai village society and total society, so that we may grasp these in their historic and total context. Because of limitations on space, we have not been able to explore this problem sufficiently. However, I would like to think that the fact that the land system is an indispensable factor in considering social change has been clarified to a certain extent. Hereafter, I hope that area studies will be pursued which will consider the land system in depth.