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NATIONAL CHARACTER IN THE THAI NINE VALUES ORIENTATIONS

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Suntaree Komin, Thai Fulbright Scholar of 1991, has conducted a research study in “Psychology of the Thai People : Values and Behavioral Patterns” in 1990. With her kind permission, TUSEF considers it useful to have an excerpt of the study posted on the website for our Fulbrighters and grantees as well as interested individuals to further explore on their own, similarities and differences. Through respective direct exposure to Thai people and culture, they should be able to gain greater understanding about Thais for increased mutual understanding of people across different cultures, so very much needed in a globalized world of heightened mobility and interactions.

Excerpts

The Thai value systems, derived from the empirical data from two national samples conducted by Suntaree Komin, which show a remarkable overall consistency overtime and across groups, have provided some highly consistent and culturally meaningful data, indicating the cognitive dimension underlying the Thai social system. This, consequently, enables her to further identify the nine value clusters, based on the relative correlations among values and through use of inter-subjectivity method from a number of scholars familiar with Thai culture and personality. The nine value clusters according to the priority of importance, representing the dimensions whereby characteristics of individuals (group) and national character can be meaningfully described

Characterizing a national culture, of course, does not mean that every person in the culture has all the characteristic dimensions arranged in the same order of importance. Therefore, in describing the Thai national characteristics, we are referring to the common characteristic elements within the Thai culture - the national norms, or group norms in case of describing particular group. This should be kept in mind when interpreting the 9 value clusters.

Value Clusters According to Their Relative Significant Positions in the Thai Cognitive System:

1. Ego Orientation
2. Grateful Relationship Orientation
3. Smooth Interpersonal Relationship Orientation
4. Flexibility and Adjustment Orientation
5. Religio-Psychical Orientation

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6. Education and Competence Orientation
7. Interdependence Orientation
8. Fun-Pleasure Orientation
9. Achievement-Task Orientation

1. Ego Orientation

The Thai are first and foremost ego oriented, characterized by the highest ego value of being Independent- being oneself (*Pen tua khong tua eng*), and a very high value of Self esteem. Closer inspection reveals that it is constantly ranked top priority, with the exception of farmers who ranked it relatively low (8th) among all Thai groups.

Thai people have a very big ego, a deep sense of independence, pride and dignity. They cannot tolerate any violation of the "ego" self. Despite the cool and calm front, they can be easily provoked to strong emotional reactions, if the "self" or anybody close to the "self" like one's father or mother, is insulted.

There are countless numbers of examples in the media, where people can readily injure or kill another person for seemingly trivial insults. Take of example, at a party in which the host was celebrating his winning the black-market (*Huey tai din*), a guest (guest A) was getting impatient for the delayed local puppet show (*Nang talung*) and started making noises. Angry when he was reprimanded by another guest (guest B), he yelled at guest B to mind his own business. Apparently, guest B's big ego cannot take guest A's remark, he beat A's head with a whisky bottle, and gunned him down right between his eyes.

Basically, it boils down to the question of "face" and "dignity". Violation to the "ego" self cannot be tolerated. Numerous examples can be found everyday to illustrate this important value orientation. Many analyses using Buddhist influence to explain about the Thai being so gentle, ever-smiling, non-aggressive and have high tolerance for uncertainty however fail to explain the sudden emotional outburst of Thai behavior. Incidents of violent actions ranging from breaking up of relations, verbal and physical fights, to killing, can be found both in the less religious urban Thai as well as in the more religious oriented rural Thai, and more so with the hooligan (*Nak-leng*) class who can easily be provoked with just a non-verbal stare.

Since the "ego" of the Thai is so important, it naturally follows that the Thai have the "avoidance mechanism" to fend off unnecessary clashes. And this intricate mechanism is delicately and keenly observed by all parties involved in an interaction. It is only cases where indirect means are not used that interactions will result in negative feelings and emotional outburst if provoked in public. Therefore, using the "Buddhism-explain-all" blanket approach, that Buddhism teaches non-self, avoidance of emotional extremes, detachment, etc., might have missed quite a bit of reality.

This "ego" orientation is the root value underlying various key values of the Thai, such as "face-saving", "criticism-avoidance, and the Kreng jai attitude which roughly means "feeling considerate for another person, not want to impose or cause other person trouble, or hurt his/her feeling".

The "face" is identical with "ego" and is very sensitive. Since the Thai give tremendous emphasis on "face" and "ego", preserving one another's "ego" is the basic rule of all Thai interactions both on the continuum of familiarity-unfamiliarity, and the continuum of superior-inferior, with difference only in degree. Even a superior would also observe not to intrude too much of the subordinate or the inferior's ego. For a Thai, this is not something to be taken for granted. They intuitively observe this root of interpersonal social rules. Each knows his appropriate role, appropriate means to handle interactions when roles come into contact, and how far one can go, and so on.

2. Grateful Relationship Orientation

For a culture in which relationship is also very important besides "ego", it is not surprising to find a number of relationship related values emerged and secure high ranking orders in the cognitive systems of the people. In general, the presentations of most Thai interactions are honest and sincere, and the Thai are bound for sincere and deep reciprocal relationships. And the deepest one is the psychologically invested *Bunkhun* relationship, as opposed to the "etiquettical" or "transactional" relationship. *Bunkhun* (indebted goodness) is a psychological bond between someone who, out of sheer kindness and sincerity, renders another person the needed helps and favors, and the latter's remembering of the goodness done and his ever-readiness to reciprocate the kindness. The *Bunkhun* relationship is thus based on the value of gratitude. Therefore, this value orientation is characterized by the highly valued Grateful quality in a person, and by the patterns of *Bunkhun* or grateful relationship.

Reciprocity of kindness, particularly the value of being grateful is highly valued characteristic trait in Thai society. The Thai have been socialized to value this grateful (*Katanyu*) quality in a person. A person should be grateful to persons who render *Bunkhun* (goodness, helps, favors, etc.) to him. By being Grateful, it implies two aspects:

Roo Bunkhun, which means to know, acknowledge, or constantly conscious and bear in heart of the kindness done.

Tob thaen bunkhun, which means to reciprocate the kindness whenever there are opportunities.

It is an exchange of relation that is not bound by time or distance. Although the person who renders help, kindness, and favors, is usually done without expectation of anything in return, the obligated person must be Grateful. And *Bunkhun* must be returned, often on a continuous basis and in a variety of ways, because *Bunkhun* should not and cannot be measured quantitatively in material terms. It is an ongoing, binding of good reciprocal feelings and lasting relationship.

Therefore, being grateful to *Bunkhun* constitutes the root of any deep, meaningful relationship and friendship - be it grateful bond towards one's parents, or to a relative who supports one through school, or a teacher who provides one with knowledge, or a good friend who helps one out at times of troubles, etc.

Certainly, there are degrees of *Bunghun*, depending largely on the subjective perception of the obligated person, the degree of need, the amount of help, and the degree of concern of the person who renders help. But what is important is the fact that the Thai are brought up to value this process of gratefulness - the process of reciprocity of goodness done, and the ever-readiness to reciprocate. Time and distance are not the factors to diminish the *Bunghun*. It is the important base for Thai relationship.

While Grateful is a dominant value underlying important relationships, there are variations found among different groups, which help to explain certain observable behavioral patterns. Specifically, the rural people value this characteristic trait significantly higher than the urban Bangkokians. In fact, the national rural sample ranked it the most important value of all, while the Bangkokians ranked it 4th. Moreover, inspection across occupational groups reveals that farmers ranked it top significant order, while government officials and students ranked it 4th and 5th respectively. This indeed explains the congenial, warm and sincere relationship and atmosphere one feels once he/she enters the rural area.

3. Smooth Interpersonal Relationship Orientation

Unlike some Western cultures whose top values tend to focus on self-actualization, ambition and achievement, down-playing such values of self-control and politeness, the Thai, after pricing "ego" and "grateful relationship", place high value on a group of 'other-directed' social interaction values - all added up to project a picture of smooth, kind, pleasant, no-conflict interpersonal interactions. This orientation is characterized by the preference for a non-assertive, polite and humble type of personality (expressed through appearance, manners, and interpersonal approach), as well as the preference for a relaxed, and pleasant interaction which accounts for the "smiling" and "friendly" aspects of the Thai people, fascinating most foreign visitors.

This group of 'other-directed' social interaction values is called "social smoothing" values. They are projected by the following values, listed according to their rank order of importance:

- (1) Caring and Considerate
- (2) Kind and Helpful
- (3) Responsive to Situations and Opportunities
- (4) Self-Controlled, Tolerant and Restrained
- (5) Polite and Humble
- (6) Calm and Cautious
- (7) Contented
- (8) Social Relation

The first two values - Caring and Considerate, and Responsive to situations and Opportunities - have never slipped from the high value group and the whole group of "social smoothing" values have consistently shown to have very few variations across groups and over time. Almost no significant differences were found when considering different backgrounds, such as sex, different educational levels,

different occupations, poor and rich, politically conservative and radical, and, religious and non-religious.

This finding is indeed exciting, because it suggests that, more than anything else, the consistency across groups and over time, is due to the uniform perception from the Thai of all walks of life, and that these values are deeply internalized and are actively functional in the everyday life of the Thai. And the Thai are intuitively keen in observing and practicing these subtle social rules.

Thai Cognition of Social Interaction

What constitute the core and essence of this group of "social smoothing" values? As a group, each of these values reflects certain aspect of interpersonal interaction traits or goal. Among them, the core value rests on the value of Caring and Considerate, the highest and thus psychologically more significant value, as it indicates the deepest reason for the surface smooth and pleasant interpersonal interactions. This is obviously a Thai cultural-laden value, and an important means to maintain or preserve one another's feeling and ego (*Raksa nam jai kan*). This value shares the closest meaning with the concept of *Kreng jai* mentioned earlier in relation to "ego" preserving. While *Kreng jai* is a base concept, *Raksa nam jai kan* or Caring and Considerate slightly emphasizes more the interactional aspect of the concept.

The cognition of the Thai social interaction projected by the group of social smoothing values, is as follows: that at all time, one shall be careful not to hurt another person's feeling ("ego"), for example, not to criticize as well as not to reject another person's kindness or good intention, even though it is contrary to one's own feelings. The fact that one disagrees with another person's opinion or is not convenient or comfortable to accept another person's kindness, etc., does not entitle him/her to hurt the other's "ego".

Therefore, being flexible (Responsive to situations and opportunities) in not doggedly forcing and asserting one's own desire at times of potential differences and conflicts, is of prime importance in the Thai society. Besides, showing of Nam jai (literally means 'water from the heart', ie., kindness, considerateness, and sincere concerns) in being Kind and helpful, is something to give out without any expectation in return. The Thai are not calculative in the showing of kindness and help. This is why it has been overtly observed by foreigners that Thai interactions are usually smooth pleasant, and "often accompanied by genuine kindness and an interest in the well-being of the other."

There are countless daily examples to illustrate this Thai social interaction behavioral pattern. This pattern retains even at unusual events, like coup d'état. The coup d'état in Thailand, as often as we have, are not like anywhere else. As expressed by the Japanese ambassador to Thailand in a recent television interview, they are "friendly changing of government leaders" or Palace guards, hardly bloody. The deposed Prime Ministers were often escorted out of the country to live for a period of time, before they were allowed back. Take the latest case as example, where else in the world would one find that the leader of the coup d'état, not only allowed the ousted Prime Minister to leave the country, but saw him off at his residence with an envelop containing US \$2,000, saying "I brought this for you. It's just a little bit that I

can get hold of". Such an act of Nam Jai has impressed the ousted Prime Minister immensely.

Successful personality besides showing positive gestures of sincere kindness and concerns, in order for interaction to go smoothly, it also requires on the part of interactors, such characteristic traits of having certain degree of Self Control, be Tolerant and restrained, and to be Polite and Humble. This polite and humble "front" or polite and humble approach is very important of the Thai, since it soothes one another's "ego". It naturally follows that showing of one's aggressiveness and superiority, even overt self-confidence, more often than not, brings about only negative perception of *Man sai* (feeling indicating a mixture of jealousy and disgust) from the interactor and audience in general. Frequently, this term is used to comment about that person behind his back. Time and again has proved that a successful personality in the Thai cultural context, is often one of competence and substance, but most important of all, has to have a soft and polite appearance, presentation and approach - as best illustrated in the Thai phrase *Orn Nork Khaeng nai* which literally means "soft outward, solid and firm inside".

A number of Western educated highly competent and superiority projected personalities, known for their straightforwardness (*Khid yangrai ko phood yang nan*, meaning 'Speak what one thinks') and integrity in standing-up for what they believe, cannot stay long in the organization, after receiving only indirect, slow and non-cooperative performances for a while.

Even among religious circle, which is supposed to be more liberal, again there are many cases of highly competent, no-nonsense, more outspoken, more principle and achievement oriented intellectuals, who are often blocked from higher-up position.

For interactions to be smoothly processed and without overt conflicts, such characteristics of being Calm and Cautious - Jai yen, the ability to calm oneself as well as calmly control situations by taking a slow, and careful step - is indeed of prime importance. This value is activated when a Thai faces problems or conflicts. And all these "social smoothing" values purport to maintain a good Social Relation.

These "social smoothing" values relatedly project a picture of smooth, kind, pleasant, no conflict, interpersonal interactions - in short, the surface harmony as observed by many. They are the necessary means to function successfully in Thai society. And the Thai are intuitively keen in observing and practicing these subtle implicit social rules.

It is however important to note that behind the smooth, pleasant, and polite interaction, is the respect for one another's ego, dignity, and psychological integrity - the core concern of not to hurt others. It is the balance between the positive "ego" self on the one hand, and on the other hand, keeping the smooth and pleasant interactions as the means to preserve one another's ego as well as an end in itself from which the Thai derive pleasure and genuine enjoyment. It is this element of the positive value of the "ego" self that lies beneath the relaxed personality and the relaxed and Sanuk (fun) interactions, enjoying certain measure of independence by being one's own master without disturbing others, ever adjusting one's equilibrium to environment, while strictly observing all those interpersonal and interactional social rules. This is the core

cognition behind the behavioral pattern of the everyday life social interactions of the Thai. And it is this value of smooth and pleasant interpersonal interaction that gives Thai people the image of being very "friendly" people, and Thailand, the "Land of smile".

4. Flexibility and Adjustment Orientation

Besides ego and smooth interpersonal relations values, the Thai are flexible and situation-oriented. This value in fact consistently scores high in the cognition of Thai people, regardless of different backgrounds and groups.

In general, for the Thai, there is nothing so serious as to be unbendable or unchangeable. When confronted with some breaching or deviation from rules, the common reaction is "*Ca aow arai kan nak kan naa*" (meaning "Don't be too strict or rigid, it's absurd!"). The general attitude towards problems is: "*Pen rueng lek*" (it's a small matter); "*Mai chai rueng kho khaad baad tai*" (it is not a matter of life-and-death); or "*Tuk yang kae khai kan dai*" (Everything can be adjusted). The popular phrase "*Kling wai korn, pho sorn wai*" (Do whatever is called for at the moment, to survive), perhaps adequately depicts the flexible characteristic of the Thai people. This flexibility value orientation is somehow correlated with the laxness in principle, and consequently reflected in certain behavioral pattern like, "decision-shifting" and corruption.

Flexibility over Principle and Ideology

This flexibility value in response to situations and opportunities, manifests itself as a core value regulating a number of conspicuous values and behavioral patterns. Because of this value, it is not surprising to find "decision-shifting" behavioral pattern quite common for the Thai, such as vote-switching, position-switching, or even switching of principles. Those who have observed political behaviors of the Thai Members of the Parliament (MPs) year after year, would understand why many MPs switched their votes at the crucial time, switching their positions, or even switching one's political party, for no reasons of ideology or principles.

Basic to these "switching" behaviors is always the personal conflict based on the "self", the "in-group", and the situation, that are the main motivating forces. It is always the "person" and the "situation" over principles and systems. Hundreds of political reports appeared in the media can testify to this. For example, when the Prime Minister finally resigned to pave way for forming a new coalition government to include one of the Opposition party, those Opposition MPs who previously declared and swore in public repeatedly that they would "never" join the government with General Chatchai as Prime Minister, found themselves grabbing those ministerial posts in no time.

The same pattern moreover occurs in the formation of political parties. At present, Thailand has about two dozens political parties. However their policies and ideological differences can hardly be differentiated. Factions in the Thai political system are indeed not based on ideological or policy differences, rather they are based on personal conflicts and "in-group" interests.

Flexibility and Corruption

Since the Thai are not principle oriented, and with the high value for personal relationship, they also appear not to be strictly law-oriented. In practice, principles and laws are ever-adjustable to fit persons and situations. In other words, laws are rules laid out in papers; but what is wrong or right depends not on the rules, but instead on who the person is or whom the person knows. A prominent Thai businessman ironically described this phenomenon in a seminar:

We Thai are not a society of law; we are a society of relationship.... It is not what a person has done that's wrong; it's who he is.... If he is your cousin, or your friend, then what he has done is not wrong. But if another person does the same thing, and it's somebody you don't like, then what he has done is wrong..

This is the reason why law enforcement in Thailand hardly works. If it does, it is selectively enforced on those who are either nobody or do not know anybody, or who have no money to ease their wrong-doings or buy their way out of problems. Countless examples can be cited. As a society of relationship, it is easy and common for an officer, upon request from even friends of friends, to pull out, cross out or destroy a traffic citation issued. For the sake of smooth relationship, officers would overlook, turn a blind eye, or keep silent, of any law infringement, even large-scale corruption of their friends and those businessmen who regularly offer them money for "a cup of tea", or worse still the wrong-doing of their superiors.

The point here is that, while the basic Thai value system should not be blamed as the major factor for corruption, it definitely does not help to inhibit corruption either.

In general, this characteristic "Flexibility and Adjustment" value orientation has perhaps accounted for varieties of behavioral patterns, ranging from the facilitation of ethnic assimilation process, to the tendency of corruption prone. In addition, it provides a deeper understanding to the various existing interpretations of the Thai being "unpredictable", "non-committing", "irresponsible" or even "selfish" and "opportunistic", by foreigners.

5. Religio-Psychical Orientation

Theravada Buddhism, as the religion of the country and is professed by 95% of the total population, undoubtedly has directly or indirectly exerted a strong influence on the people's everyday life. However to see how much such influence is actually perceived and functioned in the everyday life of the Thai people and thus differentiate them from other cultural group, might not be simple and needs a closer scrutiny.

The findings of value priority show that the value for Religious and Spiritual life has secured a very high and important place in the cognition of Thai people in general. There is no doubt that Buddhism has a conscious significant role in the everyday life of the Thai. The attitudinal data of 1981 shows that most Thai (93.6%) perceived religion as important and has some influence in their life, with more intense

religious influence found in the rural Thai than Bangkokians, and more with the less educated than the highly educated, the poorer than the richer, and so on. It is very interesting to note here that, consistent with the value priority findings that the Thai-Muslims are clearly differentiated from the Thai-Buddhists for their extremely high value of religion. A closer examination of the groups that perceived religion as having extremely significant influence in their lives, revealed that only 35.9% to 55.3% among Thai-Buddhists having such intensity, whereas 74.3% to 85.3% were found among the Thai-Muslims.

With regards to religious activities, likewise, the Thai are constantly engaged in merit-making, and numerous other religious ceremonies. These activities are religious rituals. And as a Buddhist country, there are such activities to perform all year round, at home, at work, and in the community. Such occasions like, merit-makings on one's birthday, a new house, new company, new building, celebrations of anniversaries, etc., not to mention those of festivals, customs, and religious days. It is no wonder that the Thai national samples showed high rate of these ritual religious behaviors and ceremony participation. But to which extent these religious attitudes and activities of Buddhist rites and customs reflect the depth and functions of Buddhism is another matter.

Psychological Function of Some Religious Concepts

The essence of Buddhism characterizes the truth of the phenomenal world of everyday life experiences - that everyday world is caught up in desires and thirst or *Kilet*, which inevitably produce a karmic responses, leading to a cycle of rebirths. And the Buddhist doctrinal religious goal is to escape from the clutches of karma and the cycle of rebirths (*Samsara*), by separating oneself from the world of illusions, and thereby gaining wisdom and insight into the karmically conditioned world, underlying the phenomenal world; and ultimately reach nirvana.

Ideally, all Buddhists more or less believe in this doctrine. However, the more important question is that to what extent this ideal teaching of Buddhism is actually taken and interpreted in everyday life experiences, and under what conditions that those religious concepts are mostly used. Knowing so will surely contribute to a better understanding of the Thai social behavior.

While the Thai are seemingly overwhelmed by their perceived influence of Buddhism in their life, most of them have little deep knowledge about it. In general, the Thai do not make conscious effort to reach niravana, nor do they fully and succinctly believe in it. It is not in the cognition of the general Thai to think of reaching the ultimate state of enlightenment. In fact, Bunnag, in her careful analysis of the social matrices of Thai Buddhism, has drawn attention to the striking fact that none of the Thai monks whom she interviewed "appeared to consider Niravana a relevant goal for which to strive."

A Thai would not be too surprised with the finding, because it is an everyday life reality. However, in spite of such irrelevance of these two "other-worldly" doctrines, Buddhism is still perceived as important at all times.

Karma Among all "other-worldly" doctrines, the doctrine of karma is the most functional one - in the sense that it always finds its place in everyday life interaction. In reality, the concept of karma has almost always been used in "after-event" description or attributions, with the differentiation between "good karma" (*Bun wassana*) and the "bad karma" usually referred to as *Kam*.

The Thai generally believe in the unequal *Bun wassana* of each person. Each person is born with unequal results of predestined goodness (good karma). The Thai always use this concept in situations to attribute to someone else's success, fortune, high status, promotion, or having good family, good children, and so on. It is used to refer to self only as a conversational ploy to humbly refuse any suggestion for higher status or anything associated with success or promotion, etc. And it is always used in a negative form, like "I don't have the *Bun wassana* for...". In cases when it is used to truly reflect one's feeling, it indicates psychological acceptance of one's failure and other's achievement, attributing the cause of one's failure and the cause of other's achievement to something beyond one's ability. Thus, it helps to reduce tremendous psychological pressures on one's inability to measure up to one's achievement goals. The research findings showed that an average of 76.4% of the rural Thai believed in this concept of unequal *Bun wassana*, with the highest believers found among farmers (91.7%), hawker (91.5%), skilled workers (81.5%), government officials (72.3%), down to the lowest believers among university students (49.7%).

With regards to the concept of *Kam* (bad karma), it is found that the Thai usually use this concept in situations that associated with negative events, bad fortunes, tragedies, disfavor, injustice, etc., that happened to oneself or others. Whether or not one is responsible for the mishaps that occurred to oneself, the cause of the mishaps or failure is attributed to one's *Kam*. Illustration of this is the common phrase: "It is my *Kam* to ... (have such and such consequence)", which is often said in a tone of accepting the state of being without ability to change one's lot. The belief of the "bad karma catching up with you" as in the phrase *Kam taam sanong* is evident. It is usually used to refer to the situation when misfortune happened to somebody who has been known to have had done something bad in the past. It is used for self only as a caution not to do anything bad, particularly to others, because the *Kam* will catch up. The research findings showed the average 75.1% Thai, ranging from the lowest of 62.0% (students) to the highest of 96.7% (older people); believed in the concept of *Kam*.

The range of situations to which karma is used to attribute is widespread, covering all kinds of behavioral consequences, including those of one's own doing. In case of those who consciously know the results of their own doings, the use of this scapegoat concept psychologically helps to rid them of their conscience. The more one uses this concept, particularly when consequences of wrong doing is involved, the more one's sense of right and wrong is blurred. Thus, it explains the meaning of such often heard phrases, like "*Kam jing jing thii thook jab*" or "*Duang mai dee thii thook jab*" - meaning "It's my *Kam* (or my predestined bad luck) to be arrested". It is not his wrongdoing that should be blamed, but rather the bad luck of the situation that he is caught that is to be blamed.

Indeed these religious notions have tremendous psychological functions. More often than not, they are "after-action" rationalization or justification. They serve psychologically as a defense mechanism for a whole range of negative experience.

Superstitious Beliefs and Behaviors

Layman Buddhists in general do not have in-depth knowledge about Buddhism, but they have enough general concepts to make use of them to serve one's psychological equilibrium. In practice, they believe in spirits, in astrology, and practice a varieties of magical, superstitious behaviors. Irrespective of group differences, this belief in supernatural power is a dominant characteristic of the Thai. Manifestations of supernatural belief are prevalent in everyday life, through belief in spirits, in predestinated *Duang* (one's personal astrological star), in fortune-telling, in *Bon barn sarn klaw* (making wishes and vows to the spirits), and in black magic and *Sadoa Khroa* (supernatural rituals to stop bad fortune), etc. Behavioral manifestations of such beliefs can be seen everywhere. As a matter of fact, after the death of *Chiang Mai* Governor Pairat Deharin and his wife in the Lauda Air crash in *Suphan Buri* Province, on May 26, 1991, a religious "Thorn Sappakerd" ritual was performed to "exorcise" a jinx which is believed to have cast over the Province.

Apparently, superstitious beliefs and behaviors in various forms are self illustrative of the Thai belief-behavioral systems. As a check of some superstitious beliefs and practices, the results of the Thai value Studies revealed that for certain superstitious behaviors like *Doo mo doo* (fortune-telling) and *Phook duang* (having one's personal star read by fortune-teller), and *Bon baan saan klaw* (making vows to spirits), the urban Bangkokians engaged in such behaviors more often than the rural people; the educated Thai more than the uneducated; the Government officials of various levels as well as the hawkers did more than the farmers, laborers, etc.

The influence of superstitious beliefs is so deep to the extent that even Western educated Ph.D. scientists would refuse to fathom the scientific and religious conflicts, and would never forget to wear their charms and amulets when traveling, for instance.

6. Education and Competence Orientation

With respect to the value for education and its related values, the findings of the Thai Value studies revealed that knowledge-for-knowledge sake value does not receive high value in the cognition of the Thai in general. Education has been perceived more as a "means" of climbing up the social ladder of being higher prestige and higher salary, rather than an end value in itself. This functional value of being label educated is very clear in the everyday life experience, and indicates as well that the Thai people value and give importance to form more than content or substances.

Form over Content Value

The value of "form" more than "content" seems to underlie a number of behavioral pattern, ranging from bribing to get good grades, to get degrees and honorary degrees, to the "MPs' bogus degree" scandals when a number of MPs organized a ceremony at the respectable Parliament House for receiving the Honorary

degrees conferred by a defunct private university in the Philippines, the "Royal Decorations" scandals, including the latest fake religious certificate, etc. These blown-up cases occurred, because basically the Thai value good form appearance - the proper respectable social "front" and all the status and prestige related symbols. Since the Thai people place highest value on the "ego" self, the "face", and social relations, these decorative external labels, degrees, decorations, etc., thus naturally become important. The possession of them would identify the owner with the respected class of the society.

Since values are always used in relative terms, there is no intention to mean that there are no Thai who would value content and work diligently against obstacles to achieve their ideal goals. There are people like "the slum angel" Pratheep Ungsongtham, the Magsaysay awardee, or the most revered Thai monk Phra Phutthathat, who were bestowed the honorary doctoral degrees. But these people do not climb fast. In fact, these two special mentioned cases are recognized only after they are internationally known, not while they were battling their obstacles for their causes. The fact is, while there are Thai who are serious workers and who value competence and substances, there are also those who, not only value the reverse more, but would seek to possess those decorative forms, either by hook or by crook.

The Form and Material Possession Value

Most Thai and foreign observers of the Thai would agree that the Thai value good form and appearance, as well as material possession oriented. They are particular about appearance and dressing, in quantity and quality with designer labels, and brand names of all kinds. This is why imitated merchandises make good business, for they cater to those who really cannot afford them. This appearance conscious value is an everyday life reality. As a matter of fact, Komin's sociolinguistic analysis of conversational topics in Thai social interactions shows that one of the common conversational themes, is appreciating one another's clothing and its accessories at length.

Such "form" and "material possession" oriented behaviors are evident in all levels of social class. People bought what they do not really need, but to show that they also possess them. Frugality is one of the high values of the Thai. "Spending more than one's means" is a common syndrome. One foreigner in Thailand did not understand why his Thai friend decided, much beyond his means, to buy a 3 million baht power Mercedes-Benz. The answer received was that he was the managing director of a company. As for the lower class, this over-spending syndrome has become the core cause of the endless circle of poverty, now that everything can be bought on hire-purchase basis. Take a look at the spending activities of a typical low class civil servant of 2,000 baht (US \$ 78.4) salary, the picture can become clearer. Here is a family of often more than one wife to support, a large number of children to send to school, television, radio-transistors and various household goods to buy, motorcycle, refrigerator, over supply of clothes, big ceremonial functions, illness, etc. Not to mention also the inevitable gambling, lottery both of the government and underground, card or chess games, horse races, and share operations or rather swindles. All add up to put him in debt, through borrowing and very high interest (some are over 100%) shares, which drive him even further in debts.

Form and Perception of Development

The Thai generally value material symbols, as they are seen as "forms" of being "modern" (*Thansamai*) and "developed". Even government officials are stuck with these misleading "forms". "Development" has often been equated with roads, electricity, refrigerators, motorcycles, etc.

The story of a Buddhist monk's work in a poor village in the Northeastern region is quite illustrative. The monk used to think of development in terms of roads and electricity, etc. Determined to fight poverty and backwardness, he convinced the villagers to give up their land to build a new road that would link their homes to the city. "Development" did quickly stream in. Motorcycles started roaring into the village. Refrigerators replaced earthen jars for keeping drinking water. Electric rice cookers, televisions, jeans, lipsticks, shampoo, fragrant soaps and other consumer goods advertised on television became integral part of the villagers' lives, while gambling and drinking become more widespread. And the villagers plunged deeper into debts. Disillusioned, the monk changed his views, and that was when real change began to take place in this small Northeastern village of Surin Province. Through meditation and Buddhist teachings, he got the villagers to analyze and identify the chronic disease of their poverty, to understand that their gambling, drinking and unnecessary expenses have worsened their situations, and to help them think out means to ease their problems. The villagers made religious vow to decrease expenses on unnecessary products, and they revitalized their community spirits, collaborated on a series of projects from the village's Rice Bank, Fertilizer Bank, "Friendship farming", etc. And now the village has retained their self-reliance.

It is fortunate that this village somehow managed to pull through the dilemma. How many more of the country's 55,000 villages are there that are trapped in the misconception and misguided road to "development".

7. Interdependence Orientation

This value orientation reflects more of the community collaboration spirits, and in a sense the value of coexistence and interdependence. The collaborative behavior is a dominant behavioral pattern, particularly in the rural community. Corporation in rice agriculture by members of the village is nothing new in Thailand. They cooperate in maintaining the small irrigation canals that water their fields, and have to agree on plans to share water. They help one another throughout the cycle or rice-growing, from planting to harvesting. In other spheres, they also cooperate in house-building, as well as in the psychologically and culturally important events, like life crises, serious illness, births, ordinations, and funerals.

This is succinctly reflected through the value priorities of the rural Thai, where the two highest discrepancy values that distinguished the rural Thai from the urban Thai are the religious value and the community-oriented value of Brotherhood spirit in helping one another and for being Interdependent and mutually helpful.

These values of interdependence and mutual help enhance the value of coexistence. Coupled with the higher order values of "ego", "smooth interpersonal relationship" and "flexibility", these values help to facilitate the coexistence of

different ethnic groups in Thailand. Better still, they help to make Thailand the rare example of successful assimilation of ethnic groups like Muslims and Chinese, saving Thailand from the painful experiences of ethnic conflicts and scandals. Although interdependence orientation of helping each other is a dominant rural community value which might help stimulate neighbors to participate in different cultural and religious vents, basically it also requires the "flexibility" value orientation of the Thai not to shun off other cultural groups, that make cultural assimilation successful.

8. Fun-Pleasure Orientation

Thailand has been known as the "Land of smile", a stereotyped image that comes along with the much-talked-about myth of the Thai being easy-going, enjoying the everyday routine pleasures of life with a happy carelessness, not letting troubles touch them easily, viewing life as something to be enjoyed not endured, and would not do anything that is not *Sanuk* (to have fun, to enjoy oneself and to have good time). They are easily bored or *Buuu*, and therefore lack of the "stick-to-it-ive-ness" or the serious commitment and sustained level of hard (and often unpleasant) work, which is essentially required for the success of industrial undertakings. They are generally lethargic, lazy, in aggressive, and fond of having fun and leisure.

To which extent that this myth with all these traits are true and understood in the right perspective? Evidently, many writings of this myth are derivations from the primary sources of Ruth Benedict (1943) and Embree's (1950) anthropological observations, and the application and implication of which should be subjected to further verification and analysis.

First of all, the general conclusion of the Thai as being lethargic, lazy, in aggressive, and fun-leisure loving, is meaningless. It is almost the standardized description of any agricultural, non-industrialized society, be it Thai, Indonesian, or Micronesians in the Pacific Islands, etc. They are often general attributes given to the more relaxed way of life of the rural community dwellers, as opposed to the more hectic way of life of the competitive industrialized city dwellers. Culturally, it is meaningless in not being able to help distinguish the Thai cultural traits from other cultures.

Empirical data show that most of the myth are not true. It catches only the outward presentation of the "fun" and the "lightness" approach to things of the Thai. This myth can be looked at and explained this myth from two aspects: the abhorrence of hard-work, and the fun-leisure and "smiling" aspects.

For the issue of abhorrence of hard-work, research data showed that the private sector and the lower class in fact did work hard, and ranked work over fun-loving and pleasure. It is the Bangkokians and particularly the government officials who preferred fun-loving over work, and generally known to be very lax and inefficient in job performance. As for the fun-leisure and "smiling" aspect, it can be explained as the resulting behavioral pattern from keeping a pleasant and smooth face-to-face interpersonal interaction, which is a higher value. In so doing, most Thai social interactions are pleasant, light, might be superficial, yet fun and humorous in nature. Joyful behaviors can be observed in any Thai party, which is usually

characterized by small talks, gossips, jokes, teasing one another, making fun of all kinds of non-personal inconsequential things and events, including playing with words, using puns and *kham phuan* (reverse of syllables for taboo word), etc. in a clever, humorous and amusing fashion. Imitations of Chinese and Indians speaking Thai are always good for a laugh.

Besides these essential mechanisms of the so-called "social cosmetics" which are so deeply rooted that they appear as genuine presentation to project the "smiling" image, it is also a projection of the basic inclination of being kind, generous, sympathetic towards other human beings, strangers and foreigners included. For instance, it is not uncommon to find a Thai traveling with his friend in a tour van, offering sweets or fruits that he is having with his friends, to the foreigners who happened to be sitting nearby, a share of his joy of eating, as if they were from his own community. Some foreigners might feel uneasy with such show of familiarity treatment. For the Thai, it is nothing special, nor having a purpose, but just a friendly gesture, and not expecting anything in return. Definitely, the Thai are not xenophobic, which could possibly due to the fact that they have never been colonized, and thus adding to the friendly interactions with foreigners.

Is this "smiling" and friendly interaction, with lots of fun and joyful behavior, a true indicator of valuing fun and pleasure as an end in itself, or it is a necessary means to function effectively in Thai society? The research findings suggested that this fun-pleasure value functions as the imperative mechanism, as means to support and maintain the more important interpersonal interaction value. When asked "Life is short, so one should enjoy as much as one can", the results show that there are more disagreements to the statement than agreement. Particularly with regards to planning for the future, the majority of the respondents disagreed to the statement that: "Future is uncertain, so there is no need for planning for one's future". The result put doubts to Ayal's statement that the "Thai view life as something to enjoy here and now, with very little thought about the future"

Everyday Life Concerns and Worries

Despite the pleasant, relaxed and joyful behaviors as their everyday life means of interactions, the Thai as human beings do have their concerns and worries. What occupy their minds in their daily existence could be therefore an interesting aspect upon looking at the Thai people.

The sample of the rural Thai were asked to indicate "What topics that they usually talk about, and how often they talk about those topics in a week's time". The results show that, while peasants mainly talked about matters of earning a living, government officials talked more about communist threats (the major concern of the autocratic military government a few years back), one's personal matters, one's debts, and the administrative problems in the offices.

It is even clearer when asked in an open-ended question, about what was worrying them (at that period of data collection). Komin's content analysis of the responses shows that, while government officials and peasants were alike in worrying about economic problems as their first concern, the government officials greatly differed from the peasant in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th major priority of worries. While the

peasants worried about problems in farming and business, problems of security and problems of development; the government officials primarily worried about their personal problems, problems in the offices, and problems of one's debts, in that order.

The data indirectly supported the value data on fun, pleasure and work, showing who is indeed more fun and personal comfort oriented, and who is more concern about developments.

9. Achievement-Task Orientation

This orientation is characterized by the achievement motivation need emphasizing internal drive towards achievement through hard work. According to McClelland (1961), the achievement need within individuals, would promote entrepreneurial achievement or the achievement of professional excellence, which in turn would propel economic growth.

Believing that hard work alone will propel on the road to success, Western work ethic has emphasized on personal achievement - what one has done or "achieved" through one's best ability and hard work. And basic to this is the focus on the inherent value of work itself and work related attitudes for that matter, striving to attain professional excellence. However, to which extent the Thai score in this perspective, and what is the nature of achievement motivation of the Thai?

The research data showed that achievement value of being Ambitious and Hardworking to attain one's goals, has been consistently ranked as the least important value (the 23rd) in relation to the rest, with little variation across groups and over time, with the exception of two groups - Thai businessmen who ranked it the 19th, and highest of all Thai groups was the Thai of Chinese descendants who ranked it the 13th. This finding evidently substantiated certain attributes of Chinese characters that accounted for their success story of "rags-to-riches". However, all Thai, without exception, ranked hardworking achievement value much lower than the group of social relationship values. Furthermore, this value ranking result was highly and consistently substantiated by the work achievement related attitudes and behaviors. For example, in a forced choice statement of choosing the importance between "maintaining good relationship" as opposed to "seriously devoted to work", 61.0% of the total national sample perceived "maintaining good relationships" as more important than "work", with only 15.0% seeing the reverse as more important

A closer look further revealed that 64.9% of the Bangkok Thai and 55.2% of the rural Thai perceived maintenance of good relationships as more important than work. It was interesting to find that government officials valued "work" the least (8.7%), while valuing "maintenance of good relationship" the highest of all groups (65.8%). And vice versa, it was the farmers who preferred "work" the highest. This confirms the accepted reality of the low performance - the *Chao chaam yen chaam* lethargic performance - of government employees who are more keen in paying lip services, taking bribes, seeking good relations with the powerful others, etc. A good relation wins all, not tasks.

However, the bottom 23rd ranking of this achievement value (as opposed to the 3rd ranking of industrial society like the United States), and the overall 61.0%

preference of "relations over work" as opposed to the 15.0% preference of "work over relations", are sufficient to endorse that, according to the Western sense of achievement need which is based on the person's internal drive of hard work, the Thai achievement need score is very low. And this is because it is seen in the cultural context where social relation is of utmost importance.

With regard to this achievement value orientation, many writers both foreign and Thai, have for years talked about the Thai as having low achievement needs to work for economic and material gains, that they abhor hardwork and value only what is *sanuk* and fun.

In fact, data has shown that the Thai are very much material possession oriented. They do spend some money on merit-making according to various appropriate occasions throughout the year, but they spend much more on regular basis, for abundance of material possessions. Besides, they are constantly struggling for more. When the national samples were asked: "When one's life is reasonably comfortable or livable (Pho kin pho chai, meaning having enough to eat and spend), that should be enough, and there is no need to continue struggling for more", more than half (63.7%) of the national samples indicated it is not enough, one should continue to struggle for more.

Examining the break down of various occupational groups from skilled workers, hawkers, farmers, up to government officials and businessmen, the degree of intention to struggle for more increases accordingly. This might indicate an increasing incentive or drive to struggle for more, when they see higher possibility of success as they move higher up the social ladder with higher education, status and money. It seems to be the spiral moving-up of higher education/status - higher possibility, higher drive, higher expectation, etc. This tendency was consistent in the rural and urban Thai, with the exception of the older people of 50 years and above, and the peasants of the North and the Northeast. The slackening drive of these group is understandable. The old age would probably not drive against their decreasing energy. Whereas for the North and the Northeast peasants who are among the poorest regional groups of the country, they have to exhaust their ingenuity against the harsh nature of the most arid region and find themselves survive on such food like small frogs, silkworms, crickets, or the *Kudjii* (beetles) found in the buffalo dung, and the like.

Even so, if to say that these poorest Thai are generally lazy, abhor hardwork, and just want to have fun and *Sanuk*, how can one explain the fact that these poor peasants from the Northeast, despite their inability to speak any foreign language and with little education and skills, dare to go and work as un-skilled or semi-skilled laborers in totally alien countries like, the Middle-East, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Singapore and Brunei, etc. One can hardly see *Sanuk* or fun in their plight. Not only that they do work to survive and to accumulate more monetary and material gains, they are thinking of making money all the time, particularly more than the government officials who sit securely in the life-long employment of the government offices, enjoying their status, and through which in no hurry, they can make easy money along the way.

In actuality, do the Thai really abhor hard work as many foreigners have described? The low achievement value ranking should not lead one to interpret so.

They do work hard, particularly those independent occupations, like small business, shop owners, skilled workers, hawkers, down to farmers. One would realize this fact if he would just take a look at the lower unskilled labor force circles, like laborers at any construction site, peddlers and street vendors, hawkers, shopkeepers, and *Mae khaa* (market women) in the fresh markets, etc. where most of them have minimum education, and 90% of them are women of all ages. A typical picture of the laborers at a construction site will illustrate the hardworking drive of this lower less-educated class, where one can see some male construction workers working on the building, with a good number of children and women sometimes as old as 60s and over, shouldering buckets of water, cements, etc., doing all the details work of mixing and paving the finished mixture. In fact, many from this hard-driving class have turned out to be successful entrepreneur businessmen, for instance, the millionaire "Pata Pinklaw" owner was a hawker when he was young. They are hardworking, and are "this-worldly" material oriented, to struggle for more and to gain more. Data further revealed that the rural peasants showed a higher preference of "material possession" to "fun or *Sanuk*". It revealed that "fun" or "*Sanuk*" is more a characteristic of the Bangkokians, the government officials, students, and the higher educated, definitely not the less advantaged classes. This is consistent with the value ranking of the rural people who ranked Ambitious-hardworking higher than Fun-loving and Pleasure, where the government officials, students, and the Bangkokians ranked the reverse.

Nature of Achievement Motivation of the Thai

The general low achievement value of the Thai should not be misinterpreted as abhorrence of hardwork, but that in the context of Thai social value systems, hardworking alone is not sufficient. What is then the nature of the achievement motivation of the Thai? For other cultures, like the Americans whose culture is characterized by high individualism together with high freedom and equality, achievement means one perseveres aggressively towards one's goal and succeeds in a rags-to-riches, self-made man manner. Understandably, the American achievement value was ranked 2nd and 3rd by the national samples and was positively correlated with competence and assertive values.

While the Americans having task itself and professionalism as achievement goals with self assertive efforts as means, the Thai give prestige and social recognition as goals for success in life, with work and relations as necessary means. With social recognition as an important underlying motive for success, achievement in Thai society is more social in nature. Also it is very rare that work alone would lead one to the Thai sense of achievement. Instead, it has always been the good relationships, with or without work, that guarantees this Thai sense of achievement, exemplified in the majority of government position holders.

In conclusion, for the Thai, task achievement value is usually inhibited by social relationship values. While submissiveness and good relations, with or without work, has always paid-off, task per se or worst still, task which seen as threat or without submissive relations to superior, does not lead to success in life. In the Thai cultural context, achievement in the Western sense indeed would not fit.

CULTURAL RELATIVITY AND MANAGEMENT THEORISERS

The Significant implication of the Thai Value Systems findings lies in its contribution to support the latest theoretical development in the field of Organization Behavior (Handbook of the Organization Behavior, 1987) which introduce the concept of “national culture” and its influences in organization culture and work-related behaviors. As a result of the cultural value study, this chapter will provide some general implications of Thai value systems for the motivation and management of Thai employees. In addition, it would proceed to the issue to cultural relativity in management theories, which is important for inter-cultural management.

The Thai value systems which function like the “cognitive blueprints” of the motivational patterns of the Thai people in general, also display motivational behavioral patterns in organizations particular. Although the contingency philosophy in the field of Organization Behavior is the ultimate dictum for the practitioners, and that there is no instant recipe for management, it is possible to deduce some broad implications for supervisory behaviors that could be directed toward motivating and managing workers, in terms of what would and would not be in congruence with the existing value systems, as follows:

(1) As culture which values “ego” and “face”, straightforward negative performance feedback, strong criticisms, and face-to-face conformation techniques should be avoided. When necessary, indirect means are used. “Face-saving” is a key criterion in handling all person-related decision, particularly negative ones. And compromise is often used as an effective means to save face, and to keep the “surface harmony”, ever at the expenses of some task of organization progress.

(2) As a culture of relatively tight hierarchical social system with accepted existential inequality, which also strongly values “relationships”, Thai employees can be motivated to work devotedly for the leader they like and respect. Reasonable authority and special privileges are accepted. Impersonal, cut-and-dry type of system oriented managerial style is no as effective as the task-oriented benevolent paternalistic management style. Straightforward, ambitious and aggressive personalities similar to the West, although highly capable, are not tolerated and are hardly ever successful. But personalism with a “soft” and polite approach often guarantees cooperations. Participative model of Management should be selectively used where truly appropriate, because although democracy is an attractive legitimate “form”, the substance of democracy is still lacking in the basic value systems of the Thai. Experiences in adopting a truly democratic election system has already proved to have done more harm than good to the organization growth.

(3) As a culture of loosely committed to any ideology, any way system approach or new organizational culture (a system of shared meaning among organization members) can be indoctrinated, but not without a relation oriented leadership style, and not overlooking the above two general guiding implications.

As a result of looking at the motivational process in Thai organizations from a cultural value systems perspective, inevitably one comes to the issue of cultural relativity. To which extent American management theories reflect the American cultural boundary? Or are they truly universally valid as are mostly assumed? As people’s values and belief systems are culturally conditioned, like wise, authors of theories are of no exception: theories reflect to some extent the cultural environment in which they are written. Thus, theories by American theorists would reflect American culture, theories by Italian theorists would reflect Italian culture, and so on.

NATIONAL CULTURE

A large number of research studies, the results of which have provided the empirical bases for theories in the field of organizational behavior and management, have been mostly conducted in the United States with American samples. If people from all countries in the world were similar, then research findings would be generalizable to employees in any country. Unfortunately, there is a growing body of evidence to indicate that national cultures differ widely, and the result is marked differences in behavioral patterns worldwide. By “national culture”, we refer to the “primary values and practices that characterize a particular country” (Robbins, 1989). A comparison between the United States and Japan can illustrate this point.

As a culture that highly values individualism, American children as taught early in their life the values of individuality and uniqueness. In contrast, Japanese culture values group and system oriented values, Japanese children are indoctrinated to be “team players”, to work within the group, and to conform. A significant part of an American student’s education is to learn to think, analyze, and question. Their Japanese counterparts are rewarded for recounting facts. These different socialization practices naturally result in different types of employees. While the average American worker is more competitive and self-focused, a Japanese worker would prefer to and perform better in standardized tasks, as part of work team, with group-based decisions and rewards. Given such fact, American based theories applied to Japanese workers would be off target.

There are cultural differences between countries. And in recent years, there has been considerable progress made in the area of cultural analysis, with various conceptual frames. Among them the best known frame is the illuminating cross-cultural research work of 160,000 employees in 60 countries who all worked for a multinational corporation, conducted by Hofstede (1980) who, as a result, offers a framework for analyzing national cultures, which can be differentiated by four key cultural dimensions. They are:

(1) Individualism vs. collectivism Individualism refers to loosely knit social framework in which people emphasize only the care of themselves and their immediate family. This is made possible because of the large amount of freedom that such society allows individuals. On the contrary, collectivism is characterized by a tight social framework in which people expect others in groups of which they are a part (such as an organization) to look after them and protect them when they are in trouble. In exchange, they feel they owe absolute loyalty to the group. Hofstede found that the degree of individualism in country is closely related to that country’s wealth. United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands are very individualistic, while India and Pakistan are very collectivistic.

(2) Power distance People differ in wealth and power. How does a society deal with these inequalities? Hofstede used the term “power distance” as a measure of the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally. A high power distance society accepts wide differences in power in organizations. Employees show a great deal of respect for those in authority. Titles, rank, and status carry a lot of weight. Countries of high power distance are Philippines, Venezuela, and India. Low power distance societies play down inequalities as much as possible. Superiors still have authority, but employees are not fearful or in awe of the boss. Countries of low power distance scores are Denmark, Israel, and Austria, etc.

(3) Uncertainty avoidance This third national culture attribute refers to the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations and tries to avoid them. A society of high uncertainty avoidance is characterized by a high

level of anxiety among its people, which manifests itself in greater nervousness, stress, and aggressiveness. Because they feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity in the society, so, mechanisms are created to provide security and reduce risk. Organizations are likely to have more formal rules, there are less tolerance for deviant ideas and behaviors, and members will strive to believe in absolute truth. In such societies, employees show relatively low job mobility, and lifetime employment is a widely practiced policy. Countries of high uncertainty avoidance scores are Japan, Portugal, and Greece.

(4) Masculinity vs. Femininity According to Hofstede, societies differ according to the extent to which societies impose rigid differentiation of sex roles. When society makes a sharp division between male and female activities, “the distribution is always such that men take more assertive and dominant roles and women the more service-oriented and caring roles” (Hofstede, 1983). Therefore, by masculinity Hofstede refers to extent to which the dominant societal values are characterized by assertiveness of money and things, and de-emphasizing the caring for others. In contrast, femininity refers to societies that emphasize relationships before money and are concerned with the quality of life, where femininity dominates, members put human relationships before money and are concerned with the quality of life, preserving the environment, and helping others. Hofstede found Japan to be the most masculine country. Japanese women are expected to stay home and take care of children. Countries of high femininity scores are Netherlands and other Scandinavian countries, where husband and wives share all house chores including rearing children. It is understandable why labor law in these countries allow working men paternity leave to take care of newborn children.

CULTURAL INFLUENCE IN MANAGEMENT THEORIES

Geert Hofstede’s study of national culture in four dimensions (Kolb, et. Al., 1984) has shown that, in fact, popular management theories produced in the United States and exported worldwide in the last 60 years, covering such key areas as motivation, leadership and organization, do reflect the cultural values of American Society. The American culture is characterized by (1) extremely high score on “Individualism”, (2) relatively high on “masculinity”, (3) small “power distance”, and (4) medium to weak “uncertainty avoidance”. The ultra-high individualism (as opposed to collectivism) leads to need to explain every act in terms of self-interest; the expectancy theories of motivation (i.e. Vroom’s) do provide this explanation. People perform because they expect results from their every act, for them to be motivated. The high score on “masculinity” which refers to the “go-getter” type of persons, with emphasis on “assertiveness, acquisition of money and things, importance of work, performance, ambition, achievement, and independence, etc., not caring for others or people”, explains why the achievement motive (i.e. McClelland’s, Maslow’s, Herzberg’s) has become so popular for the Americans, because that is the important American means value for the end value of self-interest. Particularly, the concept of self-actualization of Maslow which put “self” in the highest hierarchy, above “social needs” and “security need”, is the value system of the United States middle class to which the author belonged. How applicable these theories are, for countries whose culture give less importance to performance, ambition, and assertiveness, but more to relationships between people and quality of life (indicated by “femininity” scale)? One striking fact about the concept of “achievement” is that the work itself is not translatable in many non-English speaking cultures as in Thai

language; particularly the Thai word for ambition has a negative connotation for Thai personality.

With regard to popular leadership theories developed in the United States, for example, McGregor's Theory X versus Theory Y, Likert's System 4 Management, Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid, what these theories have in common is that they all advocate participant in the manager's decisions by his/her subordinates-participative management. This is understandable as the United States has small "power distance" which means American cultures has a higher degree of equality among its people. Thus, these theories reflect American culture, It is interesting to note that in the management literature of another country with a larger "power distance" like France according to Hofstede's findings, there is little concern with participative management American style, but great concern with who has the power (Hofstede, 1984) Therefore, these American management theories will work with the American subordinates and with those from "small power distance" cultures like Canada, Germany, or Australia, more than with subordinates from "larger power distance" culture like the Thai, in which quite some degree of arbitrariness with regards to authority, hierarchy, special privileges, and power, etc., are accepted facts of life and they are often personalized.

In conclusion, from the perspective of cultural values in organizations or more specifically effective management, cannot implement management theories wholesale from abroad. Effective leaders cannot choose their styles at will; what is feasible depends to large extent on the cultural conditioning of the leader's subordinates. Culturally "unfitted" management theories are of limited use and might to more harm than good. Although from a different framework in studying values, the Thai value systems finding have substantiated the proposition of this latest theoretical development