

## CHAPTER IV

### TEMPLE ECONOMY AND THE COMMUNITY

In this chapter a closer look is taken at four Thai Buddhist temples. As stated before, these temples were chosen primarily because of social ties created in the course of data collection. With these data, a wat profile was created. As these data are concerned with the economic relationship between the wat and the community, the "community" must be defined as it is related to the Thai Buddhist wat.

"In its purest form, community is a respect for the center and benevolence for the periphery" (O'Connor, 1985, p. 87). In rural Thailand, community has traditionally referred to those who live in close proximity to a Buddhist wat. Every family's lives were closely connected to the wat they "belonged to". Each household that knew its wat also knew what community they belonged to. Their wat served to connect them to the community among other services. Often times, the wat and village shared the same name.

Members of this community built life-long social ties as various life events were held through or with cooperation of the wat. Events including birthdays, marriage, completion of a new home, yearly festivals and daily merit-making activities. One bond in particular was the temporary ordination of young men. This sacred event is respected for a young man's life, and remains so even if he must leave his community. Those men who remain in the monkhood create direct kinship ties between the community and themselves, thereby the wat.

As urbanization began to change Bangkok, so too did the communities change. Initially, urban wats defined communities in much the same way as rural wats. Wats were even established for non-Thai Buddhists. Immigrant communities who came or were brought to Bangkok and shared a basic belief in Buddhism were permitted to have their own temples in some areas. Many wats however, were established by noble or royal households. Along with the wats, these households defined the community. Over time,

urbanization and growth continued, blending ever larger communities together. Elite patronage of the wat did not always provide the necessary resources to meet this growth. Eventually, elite patronage declined, leaving many wats to prosper or perish at the hands of the local community. (O'Connor, 1993).

Using Thai historical wat relations as a guide, community is defined as those who patronize the particular wat in discussion and others who benefit from the wat's economic expenditures.

Before reviewing these data, it was very interesting to note that three of the four wats selected reported annual spending that exceeded their income over the five year period. This defies common sense and modern economics. However, none of the temples reported income from rented land and only one temple reported its capital accounts and assets. Since these data strictly report monetary transactions, it can only be assumed that income from sources aforementioned do exist and were accidentally or intentionally left out.

#### **4.1 Case Study: Selected Wats in Modern Day Thailand**

##### **4.1.1 Wat Pho**

Wat Phra Chetuphon Vimohmangklararm Rajavoramahaviharn, commonly known as Wat Pho, is located in Bangkok. It is a first grade royal temple classified as Rajavoramahaviharn by the Sangha temple classification system, due to King Rama I's personal interest in its restoration. During his reign, King Rama I moved Wat Phodharam, an old monastery from the Ayutthaya period, to the newly developing capital of Bangkok. He chose a 20-acre site south of the Grand Palace for its resting spot. After seven years and six months, the temple was completely restored and renamed Wat Phra Chetuphon Vimohmangklararm.

After King Rama I passed, some of his ashes were placed under the Buddha image known as Phra Buddha Deva Patimakorn, located in the *bot* (main chapel). In recognition of King Rama I, efforts at restoring Wat Pho commenced during the reign of King Rama III. This was the second and only other major restoration of the temple.

Finally, King Rama IV shortened the name of the temple to its current title, Wat Pho. This temple was given high priority and importance by various kings and other members of the royal family. Their efforts were meant to do more than show their own wealth or reinforce the royal position. Wat Pho was specifically meant to be the center of Thai arts and knowledge at a time when the Buddhist temples were the principal centers of higher education. Since then, much of the art has been moved to National museums and archives. Visitors from around the world visit this temple every day to learn about Thai Buddhism, culture, and arts. Wat Pho is now a major tourist attraction (K. Korakod, personal interview, 2007).

This temple is also known as the origin of traditional Thai massage. Students come from various parts of Thailand and around the world to study and receive certification in Thai massage. Visitors to the temple can experience this massage at a small, shaded area on the temple grounds. The masseuses are Thai people who have graduated from a Thai massage training course.

The large numbers of tourists that Wat Pho attracts provide income to the temple and the surrounding community. Wat Pho is able to determine how much revenue is earned from tourists; however, neither the temple nor the community has tried to determine annual revenue the local community gains from tourists coming to visit Wat Pho. Teams of souvenir sellers who sell arts and crafts made by members of the community are located on the temple grounds. It is obvious that money from tourists is spent on local transportation, food, and handicrafts, at minimum. Though this money does not come directly from the temple or other residents of the community, it would not be available without the temple's presence and the community's support. This is a clear example of the unofficial economic exchange that takes place between the wat and the community.

The information provided by the accounting department of Wat Pho is vague, considering that the temple is staffed by professional accountants. More information was requested; however, revenue and expenditure categories were only provided for the year

2003<sup>1</sup>. Ultimately, without an annual report outlining specific information of each fiscal year, this extra information was only useful by showing how Wat Pho categorizes its accounting records.

Wat Pho reported earnings from tourism in a six year period<sup>2</sup> (1999-2004) at 123,102,100 baht. This figure averages at around 20,500,000 baht per year. In addition, the temple received another 18,742,226 baht in the form of donations during the same period. Finally, this temple was the recipient of just over 1,000,000 baht in support from royal family members and presumably the Thai government. In all, Wat Pho had an income of almost 150,000,000 baht during the six year period. Total expenditures in that same time period were reported as just over 55,000,000 baht, of which less than 10,000,000 baht was given to charities. The rest of this figure was spent on salaries, utilities and investments; 30,000,000 baht, 15,000,000 baht, and 2,000,000 baht, respectively.

The finances of Wat Pho are all handled by professional accountants. It is without doubt that the finance officers of Wat Pho are able to account for every single baht that comes and goes through this temple. However, an outsider requesting this information, especially for possible publication will not likely be given full access. The information presented here is what was shared by the temple. As incomplete as it may be, it does give an idea of the finances of the temple. It is unlikely that a temple would withhold accounts of involvement in community development or charity donations.

Wat Pho provides a substantial financial benefit to its neighboring residents. As a tourist attraction, this draws in income from tourists all over the world. This large concentration of tourism brings in revenue to the numerous transportation services, restaurants, and shop houses in the area. Wat Pho provides direct financial contributions to the community in addition to the indirect benefits briefly explained. Over a six year period, gave almost 9 million baht to various charities, organizations, and community development projects. Wat Pho does require a large amount of money to operate, however operating costs include many services that are beneficial to the community.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix D

Most notably is Wat Pho's school specializing in the traditional art of Thai massage. The temple also has its own library, even the murals on many of the walls teach visitors about traditional Thai life or show the story of Ramakian. Some of these "attractions" are national treasures that Wat Pho takes care of and makes available for all to enjoy. Wat Pho's contributions to the community and to Buddhism as a whole may be the single largest among Thai Buddhists wats.

#### **4.1.2 Wat Paknam**

Wat Paknam is another wat that serves a different purpose in modern Thailand. Wat Paknam is a second class royal temple (Rajavoraviharn) located on the south side of Bangkok (Phra Maha Pattanapong, personal interview, 2007). It is a fairly well known temple that is also influential internationally.

When I came to visit Wat Paknam, I was received very kindly. The lay secretaries and a few monks interrupted their normal schedule in order to speak to me and my assistant. Once they learned my intentions, they were very helpful in directing me to a senior monk named Phra Maha Pattanapong.

Phra Maha Pattanapong is fluent in the English language. He went over each question on my list with me and then provided me with some published documents related to the wat's finances and my questions. Before finishing our first meeting I was warmly invited to come at any time I needed to.

Phra Maha Pattanapong also told me about this temple's international locations. Wat Paknam has three other sister temples around the world. One is Wat Paknam Japan, the second is Wat Paknam New Zealand, and the third is Wat Monkhantepmonee in the United States of America. These wats are connected philosophically, but their economic affairs remain autonomous.

This temple has different donation boxes for people who want to donate to specific purposes. The various purposes include food for the monks, land, scholarships for Thai students, utilities expenses, medicine and other health related issues for the monks, construction and restoration of the temple (including chedi building), and

tammakai (a sect of Thai Buddhism that receives much support in and around urban Bangkok).

This means that people who support the wat also support its different causes. Rather than have just one cause, the wat encourages its patrons to continually support all the current temple functions including the projects in which the temple participates to alleviate suffering in the community. Donation boxes are available to donate to numerous causes, ranging from care and control of the street dog population, orphaned children, the sick and elderly, low income students, construction of various facilities including homes, hospitals and more. In assigning different donation boxes, patrons are also aware of how their donations are going to be used. Wat Paknam has associated wats in other countries: Japan, New Zealand, and a third one in the United States. The wats are connected philosophically, but their economic affairs remain autonomous.

Wat Paknam has a transparent system of managing its funds and temple accounts. Each year this wat publishes its earnings and expenditures along with other temple information. These prints are available to anyone who requests them and are sent to regular patrons. Wat Paknam provided its most current issue along with a library of back issues for this research.<sup>3</sup>

This temple is able to meet its needs and fulfill its social responsibility in the surrounding community. In 2000, Wat Paknam invested in two new buildings, restoration of a Buddhist school, and the construction of a new school. Additionally, the wat also purchased and donated a van for Puttamanthan Hospital, and provided scholarships for children of marginalized families totaling 805,000 baht. Of the 11.5 million baht Wat Paknam has declared as income for the year 2000, one-fourth of this amount was used for public benefit while the rest was invested in monks' education, temple renovations, and miscellaneous expenses. This wat has funded all of its financial undertakings solely through the interest gained from capital accounts totaling almost 300 million baht.

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix E

Wat Paknam regularly returns about a quarter of its annual income to the community through various projects. The fact that Wat Paknam publishes an annual public record of its income and expenditures is rare. This temple is surprisingly transparent in its finances. It was clear from the five consecutive years that were focused on, that Wat Paknam accounted for the majority, if not all, of the donations received. In many years, Wat Paknam used more money for its various commitments than was actually given by the people. Additional funds came from the capital account of the temple.

Individual patrons of Wat Paknam pledged about 435,000 baht in donations in 2000; however, nearly twice as much was donated to various charities by the wat itself. This is possible because of the interest gained from patrons' donations. Not included are the donations made directly to collection boxes near the temple, which are reported as being given directly to the organizations represented. Various organizations have asked to keep their donation boxes on temple grounds.

With its comparative generosity in the community and open financial records, it is easy to see that this temple is an economic contributor in the community. What is not clear is how the temple built up a 300 million baht capital account. It appears that the growth of this account comes from the money given to the temple by its patrons. The interest on this money is now being used for the benefit of the community, but without a clear explanation of the source of this capital account, Wat Paknam does leave itself open to some question.

Wat Paknam's annual financial report for the year 2000 details the contributions provided to ease and alleviate the suffering of local communities. This wat regularly deals and works with large amounts of money, including capital in the form of material attachments (land holdings), something that is deeply criticized by staunch Buddhists. Yet it uses this capital to alleviate suffering, thereby adhering to the Buddhist principles of Right Thinking, Choosing and Acting. The wat's motivation seems to stem from a desire to reduce suffering.

Wat Paknam makes very clear how financial donations are put to use. It appears that recorded monetary donations are deposited into a capital account. Over the years this capital account has grown. Currently, Wat Paknam is able to use the interest from this account to take care of the temple's annual expenditures. In five years, Wat Paknam donated over 4 million baht to established charities. Another 6 million baht went towards education of the monks, an indirect benefit to the community, as these monks will be better equipped to serve and lead the people. Finally, more than 20 million baht were used for public benefit. This includes purchasing ambulances for hospitals, providing student scholarships, and one time donations to various organizations and institutions. Depositing financial donations into a capital account initially give the idea that this temple is trying to get rich, however, the temple's true intentions become crystal clear as it is able to use the interest gained to provide long-term financial benefit its community and the neighboring area.

#### **4.1.3 Wat Phuphanudomdham**

I was introduced to Wat Phuphanudomdham by a Thai family located in Bangkok. I was familiar with this family through my studies at Chulalongkorn University. Ging, the primary patron, is the wife of an alumni student at Chulalongkorn. At the time, this wat received patronage from Ging and her family; however, it was not made clear how their social tie was originally formed. Without this accidental relationship, I would not have known or likely been able to make immediate and intimate contact with this wat.

Wat Phuphanudomdham is a temple located in the wooded mountains of Nakhon Phanom, a Northeastern province of Thailand. This temple was built in 1985 by its current abbot, Phra Khru Udomdhammanukul. Eight years later, the Thai government claimed this mountain and the surrounding forest as the Phuphan National Park in an attempt to protect the area from loggers and other forms of environmental degradation. This particular wat is a forest wat which serves as a guardian to the surrounding forests.



The temple houses only ten monks and five *mae ji* (females devoted to Buddhism similar to monks, but without official recognition by the Sangha). This wat is considered to be a small wat. Phra Khru Udomdhammanukul, who has focused on the meditation aspect of Buddhism as is common with forest dwelling monks, was trained by a monk, and went on to receive much recognition for studying the academic aspects of Buddhism. As an abbot he encourages and invites people to come and use the temple grounds as a place to practice meditation. His Buddhist education and recognition as a teacher have led him to develop various community programs such as a summer school for children, and adult meditation and right thinking training classes. These programs are aimed at sharing the wisdom Buddhism has to offer (Phra Khru Udomdhammanukul, personal interview, 2007).

At times this wat has had to face local skepticism, since the abbot is not a native of the temple community. There was initial hesitation on community members' parts to visit the temple due to its inconvenient location. This fact still makes visitors scarce. For the same reason, this community skepticism has minimal effect on the wat's ability to function and prosper. Despite these problems stemming from its location, this wat is generally well received by the nearby community. The wat and its grounds are used for religious and recreational purposes. Families often visit to make merit and enjoy the beautiful surroundings. The natural resources in the surrounding area are protected and forest trails are kept in good condition to encourage temple visits.

The size of this temple requires the monks themselves to sometimes deal directly with financial transactions. Accounting is a responsibility that the previous temple abbots had to take on. Since monks are inexperienced and even discouraged from involving themselves in financial matters, small temples' financial records are usually incomplete and problematic at best. There are some instances where these records have been completely neglected or do not even exist.

The temple abbot and Ging were not able to provide exact figures from their accounting records because in most cases the figures did not exist. Instead they gave me approximations that they felt most accurately described the wat's financial standing.

Wat Phuphanudomdham did not have a proper accounts book until less than one year before these data were collected. Temple income was used and saved as needed. Projects and goals were developed and only completed when enough money was raised or manpower was donated. This type of month to month account balancing is common in temples that are without royal patronage and located outside of Bangkok in small to medium sized communities. Despite the lack for written records, the temple abbot did his best to estimate the income and expenses of this temple.<sup>4</sup> The only financial record available was for a recently received grant of 7 million baht. This grant was applied for by a temple patron and given by the Thai military for the purpose of constructing a new road from the temple to the community at the base of the mountain. This 7 million baht was not included in the temple revenue because it was given with the requirement that it only be used for the purpose it was given, infrastructure construction. Many temples rely on the abilities of lay people who donate labor, skills and time without financial compensation. This road is an example of such abilities employed in behalf of the temple.

Wat Phuphanudomdham has hosted a religious summer school for children on their summer break. This program emphasizes to children positive religious and moral behavior. Due to the strong connection between religion and cultural identity, this program also gives insights into cultural norms. The temple also hosts vocational and religious training for adults. Due to the increasing number of participants, the temple grounds are no longer adequate to host these activities. All of this wat's activities are held on the temple grounds.

Like many wats, Wat Phuphanudomdham has a hall for education and meditation. It also has a few simple shelters for visitors who wish to stay overnight. Because of its need for expansion, Wat Phuphanudomdham began construction of a new facility to house and educate visitors. The temple's new account manager, a woman who graduated college in accounting and donates her time and effort to this temple, has helped organize the temple finances and aided the construction of this new facility by successfully

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix F

applying to various branches of the government for financial grants. The rest of the community is also contributing by donating manpower to the actual construction of the facility.

When this project is completed, the temple will be able to increase the income earned from visitors and students of Buddhist teachings. Such income is purely on a voluntary basis and ultimately up to each student. Individuals may not always have something to donate in exchange for teaching received; however, with an improved facility, Wat Phuphanudomdham will be able to attract more groups from local schools, organizations and businesses. In these cases, it is highly unlikely that the temple will not receive some compensation for its service. In the case of Wat Phuphanudomdham and other temples like it, these donations will cover the costs of operations and day-to-day necessities that are not provided by community merit making activities. After that, income is sent back into the community in the form of student scholarships, infrastructure construction and other development projects.

Like most wats in Thailand, Wat Phuphanudomdham does not have a way to ensure a steady income. It relies mainly on the support and generosity of its community. Income is mainly generated through the celebration of religious holidays. The temple also generates income when its resident monks are requested to visit other temples to provide religious teaching. The money received for this is not an expected payment but instead a gift that is accepted. Among other expenses, Wat Phuphanudomdham incurs a larger than normal transportation expense. Because the location is inconvenient, the cost of bringing in specific services or supplies is higher. Transportation is an important line item in its budget.

Over the years, the wat's communal commitments to recreation, as dispensary, as a school, a community center, elderly care, news and information source have changed drastically. In response to modernization, these functions have widened in capacity and deepened in complexity.

The wats do not just give information, they also teach people how to use that information to improve their community lives. In addition to elderly care, the wats

provide care for orphans and those afflicted with disease. They produce herbs for medicines and give them to the community. As a community center, they host activities that encourage community participation whereby its members establish rapport with each other. The biggest change would be the wat's need to be heavily supported to be able to act on all these responsibilities that the community expects them to do.

Wat Phuphanudomdham claims to redistribute nearly all of its financial gain to the community. Given the characteristics of this temple, i.e. its location, function and size, this claim is very likely to be true. It is a fact that the temple offers free summer lessons to hundreds of children, the small number of residing monks means that even just a few patrons making traditional form of merit in the early morning would provide enough food and day-to-day supplies for all the temple residents. Finally, with the help of its patrons, Wat Phuphanudomdham has been able to successfully solicit the Thai government for financial support in developing local infrastructure. Wat Phuphanudomdham is a newly established temple that have been able to contribute more to the community and local area than would otherwise be possible.

#### **4.1.4 Wat Bangjakreang**

My introduction to Wat Bangjakreang was very productive and went smoothly. I was introduced to the abbot by a local family whom I had previously befriended. This family is a long standing patron of Wat Bangjakreang, and over the years has taken a very active role in supporting the temple and the monks who study there. Phra Khru Paladkitja was informed beforehand of my visit and was able to see me as soon as I arrived. Once introductions were completed I was invited to present my purpose of visiting the temple. I presented Phra Khru Paladkitja with a formal letter requesting specific information about the income and expenditures of the temple. Upon learning my particular interest, he invited the assistant abbot, Phra Paladnorongsak, to join our conversation. Phra Khru Paladkitja gladly answered my questions on the temple's background and history, while one of the family members translated. He also gave me a small book that further explained the temple's history.

Wat Bangjakreang is located along the Mae Klong River, three kilometers from the Gulf of Thailand. It is considered a medium sized temple. Initially it was called Wat Intatkhong. Resident monks decided to change the name of the wat to be the same as the local tree species, Bangjakreang. The wat was constructed around a much revered shrine of the Buddha's footprint. It is also widely renowned for its three *bots*, the most famous one constructed of granite. Phra Khru Paladkitja has been the abbot since 1998.

The monks of Wat Bangjakreang constructed their own residences, which increased their capacity to host disciples and visiting guests. The wat also built a primary level school, which serves as the main school in the community. Various structures were also constructed, such as floodwalls, two pavilions, a paved road to the wat, a mortuary, a wall on the perimeter of the temple grounds, and a worship hall. The wat functions mainly as a center of education and training for future monks.

Wat Bangjakreang account books are handled by an accountant and overseen by the temple abbot. This temple does not publish or make public its annual accounts as Wat Paknam does. Initially the temple officials were reluctant to share financial data, as they have never been asked for such information before. However, with the support of one of the patrons of many years, the abbot became open to sharing the records for the purpose of this research. Any questions were freely answered, and it was attempted to include information that was not directly requested. The temple's records were all kept in a single accounting book which was brought out for the interview.<sup>5</sup> Records from the previous years and previous accountant were incomplete, while any records more than 11 years old were thrown out as useless for the purpose of data collection.

Over a five year period, 2001-2006, Wat Bangjakreang had collected 8.2 million baht from the people and the government. This figure represents actual cash coming in directly to the wat. This does not include any income in the form of land holdings the temple may have. This wat's largest source of income apparently comes from ceremonies and small market activities. The wat earns anywhere from 2 to 2.8 million baht from these activities. Most important of these is the annual robe changing

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix G

ceremony, which is a Buddhist tradition of donating new garments to monks, along with other donations in exchange for merit. Donations to the temple box are estimated to be around 4,000 baht every three months. The royal family did make an outstanding contribution of 2 million baht to this temple in 2002.

Expenditures in the same five years exceeded 9.8 million baht. The income discrepancy was not accounted for by the wat. However, in this case it is assumed that this wat has income from existing bank accounts or privately owned land. The resident monks and staff only require around 1,000 baht per month per person. This money is used to buy whatever necessities that are not provided to them by the community. The focus of their expenditures goes towards community and temple development.

Wat Bangjakreang has taken on many responsibilities in its community. Like every wat, it is not uncommon in marginalized communities for people belonging to low income families to periodically come to Wat Bangjakreang looking for temporary residence until the family can get back on its feet. This is a community service that is often not documented and the expense is not exactly measured. Organized community programs are many and varied from year to year. The temple's financial advisor estimated that around 30,000 baht is spent in such activities yearly.

The second biggest destination of Wat Bangjakreang's expenditures is on educational investments. The wat has built a primary school on the grounds for the community. Classes are taught by teachers, and a committee of monks and lay people make up the school's directors. This wat provides grants and scholarship programs for students of all ages, since some community members face difficulty affording their children's education. This temple sponsors a Saturday school and summer school program for children and young monks. The school alone is estimated to cost 30,000 baht per year and student. The temple also spends up to 12,000 baht on each student scholarship, each school year. On Children's Day, Wat Bangjakreang donated 3,000 baht to Wat Chonglomwanaram's primary school. Wat Phetsamut Worawihan receives a 2,000 baht donation from Wat Bangjakreang each year to be used for its student testing center. Another 2,000 baht annual donation goes toward Wat Bangjakreang's religious

school of Bali studies. Every year the temple also has its own list of people to whom it provides educational support. Recipients are decided on by the temple's committee. For example, in 2003, one outstanding student who could not afford to go to school was given 18,000 baht to continue his education into college. It is clear that Wat Bangjakreang is providing many services to the community.

Of the four temples, Wat Bangjakreang is the hardest to profile and show to be a positive economic contributor. This temple has a very simple account book which details monthly income and expenditures only. Such simple data cannot be used to show how a community may economically benefit from the temple. There is no reason to doubt the temple abbot's claim to providing financial assistance to monks, students and the needy. It is recorded fact that the temple built the neighboring primary school and was instrumental in the construction of the flood walls in the nearby river. These activities show that this Wat Bangjakreang is committed to community development, but until an in depth accounting record is kept, a direct analysis of proportion of revenue used in community development will not be possible.

#### **4.2 Analysis of Wat Contributions to their Communities**

In fact, Wats Pho, Paknam, Phuphanudomdham and Bangjakreang are all contributing in various and important ways to their communities. Each makes significant contributions to improvements in their communities. In these cases, one can see that the smaller the wat, the higher the proportion of total revenue is reinvested into the community. There could be various reasons for this observation. It may be because of the general expectation of community contributions placed on all temples requires a minimum level of expenditure, thereby giving the appearance that temples with lower levels of annual income are generously giving larger proportions. Another reason could be that larger temples in this case study are patronized by members of the royal family, therefore are less dependent on the patrons of their communities. This lack of community dependence may consciously or unconsciously diminish the sense of obligation the temple has towards its community.

After compiling available data on each of the four wats, an individual profile showing the financial side of these contributions can be created. Apart from giving general information, this profile also identifies where the major source of patronage originates locally or from outside the immediate area. Finally, included in the profile is a percentage of total income directly reinvested into community development initiatives.

The very different nature of these temples limits comparison. The temples are united by a singular end, their devotion to Buddhism and providing spiritual and moral guidance. However, the means to that end are not necessarily the same.

The profile of Wat Pho deserves special attention. This royal temple's primary function is to serve as an educational institution, both in Buddhism and the traditional arts, specifically Thai massage. This unique Buddhist temple required the category of 'tourism' to be added as a function. Tourism is not an officially recognized category of Thai Buddhist temples. However, Wat Pho is an international tourist attraction drawing people from all over the world daily, as well as from around the nation. Therefore, this temple teaches the principles of Buddhism through its international recognition. People of different cultural backgrounds come to Wat Pho where they experience Thai Buddhism and learn its importance in Thai society, even if only superficially. Tourism is also a large source of income. As discussed before, the relationship between sanctity and patronage of community is a major factor in determining resources available to the temple. In Wat Pho's case, resources come from the royal family and tourism. It is reasonably safe to assume that the physical community within the immediate vicinity of Wat Pho contributes very little to the total resources the temple requires. Furthermore, this same local community receives immeasurable benefit from Wat Pho's presence. As restaurant owners, tour guides, souvenir stands, taxi services, etc., they receive visiting tourists daily. These distinctive characteristics of Wat Pho are uncommon to most wats around the nation, including those in Bangkok.

Wat Pho is a wealthy temple when compared with the other temples included here. Based on the figures provided from the accounting office, it appears that Wat Pho has to use a large proportion of its receipts for supporting the temple



Wat Paknam is another royal temple in Bangkok. Its primary function is as a Buddhists educational institution. It is a fairly large temple that has sister temples located internationally. Despite its international ties, Wat Paknam is primarily patronized by people in the local vicinity. These patrons' support provides the wat the resources it needs to serve its function. Wat Paknam was also open to sharing the income it receives from temple assets. All account records are published annually, along with the family names of contributors who donated 1000 baht or more. All of the financial data provided for this research is regularly made available to any patron or guest of the wat. Such transparent accounting practices are uncommon for many wats, if only because detailed records do not exist in the first place. Patrons must surely feel some additional comfort when making merit, given the fact that they are allowed to see exactly how Wat Paknam puts its financial contributions to work. In actuality, just over 50 per cent of the financial support received from its patrons is redistributed into community development. This excludes donations given to a collection with a specific cause or purpose; many such collections are easily identifiable near the main building. It also excludes morning merit given in the form of food and necessities. Incidentally, during one of the interviews at Wat Paknam, it was shared that extra food is also redistributed to those in need.

The first private temple in this research is Wat Phuphanudomdam. This temple is far removed from Bangkok on the northeastern Thai-Lao border in Nakhom Phanom. As shown, it has very few permanent residents. Although its founding abbot was trained in teaching Buddhism, this wat's primary function is a center of meditation. Again, this wat has a particular characteristic that is uncommon in wat so far removed from a major urban city. Specifically, this wat's primary patronage comes from Bangkok. Through the help of a Bangkok family, this wat was able to become officially recognized by the Thai government. In the year 2004, this same family was instrumental in applying for a 7 million baht grant to improve and construct local roads in and around the wat. Because of such patronage and building social ties to the nearby residents, this wat is experiencing prosperity and growth. It is the host of an annual Buddhist summer school in addition to hosting meditation retreats for any organization which requests it. The temple abbot

claims that both of these services have been growing in popularity since their inception. Currently, the wat is collecting resources to complete a laymen's residential wing for visitors. The temple abbot and its chief lay representative did not have accounting records to support the data given for this study. Instead, the abbot gave what he claimed were approximations for the temple's revenue and expenditures. He also required that I include one previously neglected expenditure; travel. Due to the location of this wat, the abbot reported that travel expenditures are unusually high. Without including the government grant specified to go into local development, Wat Phuphanudomdham returns as little as just under 40 per cent to more than 95 per cent of its revenue back to the community.

The remaining private wat profiled here is Wat Bangjakreang. This average sized temple is just a few hours outside of Bangkok in Samut Songkram. This wat's main function is education, not only in Buddhism, but also education of primary students. As mentioned before, Wat Bangjakreang built a primary school for which a few monks sit on the school board. In addition, to a few regular lessons are conducted by the temple's resident monks. The temple abbot was also very proud to share the many scholarships the temple provides to young monks and lay students who are serious about pursuing higher education. These scholarship requests are proposed by student applicants and then reviewed by a committee of monks and laymen from the wat itself. The style of patronage and control over temple resources closely resemble traditional forms of community-temple relationship. Another example shared with me was of the instances in which people, sometimes families, have come to the temple when experiencing personal financial crisis. Wat Bangjakreang warmly receives such guests with only the expectation that visitors refrain from excessive drinking, violence and similar anti-social behavior. Unfortunately, the temple accountant, also a residing monk, did not keep detailed account books. Instead, this temple has record of total monthly revenue and expenditures. The source and destination of these transactions was not clear even to the residing monks.

Each of these temples in Table 4.2.1 below has a distinct profile and two of the four have particular characteristics that prevent them from being reasonably compared to other temples that may have similar title, function, size or location. When viewed individually, it is possible to see the basic relationship each wat shares with its patrons. The profiles created here give some idea of the difficulty of mapping temples based on economics and community relations. With further research into a random selection of temples, such profiling may lead to patterns of operation and community relationship.

As the profiles show, there are similarities among the temples. Wat Pho and Wat Paknam are large temples inside Bangkok. Wat Bangjakreang also focuses on education, though it's a much smaller temple outside Bangkok. The other temple located outside Bangkok is Wat Phuphanudomdham. Wat Bangjakreang and Wat Phuphanudomdham share very little in common beyond this point. Wat Phuphanudomdham, in fact, has more in common with Wat Pho in the sense that both temples are primarily supported by people from outside the temple's immediate area.

In terms of temple revenue and direct community benefit, Wat Phuphanudomdham was able to almost match Wat Pho's contributions, thanks to a grant given by the Royal Thai Navy. However, when excluding the government's contributions and looking at the percentage of money redistributed to the community for the total revenue, Wat Phuphanudomdham resembles Wat Paknam much more closely. Finally, the lack of available data makes detailed financial analysis of Wat Bangjakreang nearly impossible. Further studies into other similar temples may provide a pattern that can be applied to Wat Bangjakreang; however, the characteristics shown in the four profiles above indicate that many temples that seem the same in title or appearance can actually be very different from one another. It is interesting to see that so many differences exist between just four temples which can officially fit the two classifications of royal and private.

TABLE 4.2.1  
PROFILE OF FOUR WATS

	Wat Pho	Wat Paknam	Wat Phuphanudomdham	Wat Bangjakreang
Within Bangkok	✓	✓		
Outside Bangkok			✓	✓
<15 residents			✓	
15-30 residents				✓
>30 residents	✓	✓		
Function: Meditation		✓	✓	
Function: Teaching	✓	✓		✓
Function: Tourism <sup>6</sup>	✓			
Recognized by ONAB <sup>7</sup>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Unrecognized by ONAB				
Local Patronage		✓		✓
Outside Patronage	✓		✓	
Government Funding	✓		✓	
Dependant on public donations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Self supporting		✓ <sup>8</sup>		
Investments in monks education	✓	✓		✓
>75% Y redistributed to the community			✓	
50-75% Y redistributed to the community		✓	✓	
25-50% Y redistributed to the community			✓	
<25% Y redistributed to the community	✓			

<sup>6</sup> Tourism is not an official temple classification, however its function and economic impact at Wat Pho warrant its distinction in this study.

<sup>7</sup> The Office of National Buddhism, Thailand.

<sup>8</sup> Wat Paknam has the capability to be self-supporting, however, to continue providing the level of financial contribution it currently does it must remain dependent on its patrons.