ROUGHING IT IN PHUKET, BUT THE JONES' HAVEN'T BEEN THERE (YET): RECONCEPTUALIZING TOURISM AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the contribution made by "alternative" tourism towards community development in the provinces of Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi in southern Thailand. Aside from providing novel, adventurous, and presumably authentic travel experiences, "alternative" tourism promotes forms of community development characterized by equitable distribution of resources, quality of life, and environmental sustainability. Alongside conventional, mass tourism development in southern Thailand, nature-based "alternative" travel activities such as sea kayaking and jungle trekking have grown increasingly popular among foreign tourists and have emerged as measures of diversification within a slowly stagnating regional tourist trade. This study assesses "alternative" tourism along the lines of the tourism industry, tourist, and host perspectives, and addresses three key issues, or themes: "alternative" tourism as a theoretical and practical "alternative" to conventional, mass tourism; the role played by authenticity and ethical concern in distinguishing "alternative travellers" from mass tourists; and "alternative" tourism's contribution to community-based economic, social, and environmental development in southern Thailand.

The results of this study are based upon several types of data, including self-administered surveys, analysis of statistical and other documentary sources, field observations, and interviews with tourists, government officials, company owners, and Thais working in the tourism industry. Three central findings emerge from this research. First, "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand shares many structural and conceptual links with the existing mass tourism industry. Rather than signalling a true departure from conventional, packaged tourism, "alternative" tourism constitutes a regenerative niche in Phuket's mass tourism industry. Second, discrepant expectations of, and levels of desire for, authenticity serve to differentiate categories of "alternative" tourists, many of whom display insensitive behaviour and place inappropriate demands on their Thai hosts. Third, certain forms of "alternative" tourism, such as "mass ecotourism," foster equitable community development, while others, such as backpacking and adventure travel, remain limited as engines of economic development. In addition to discussing theoretical and policy implications, the thesis concludes with a localized model of "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand.

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CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of Study

This is a study about tourism and community development in the Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi provinces of southern Thailand. This dissertation examines the ways in which "alternative" forms of travel such as ecotourism contribute to basic needs, quality of life, environmental sustainability, and equitable distribution of financial resources. Due to its popularity and reputation as a packaged holiday destination, the island of Phuket and the surrounding areas of southern Thailand serve as the regional focus of this study, and embody many of the opportunities and problems associated with tourism in the "Third World." Tourism development in Phuket began in the early-1970s, and grew steadily until the 1980s, when a large number of towering hotel complexes were built in anticipation of growing demand. Due to the Gulf War, domestic political strife, and a general economic slowdown globally, the industry began to stagnate in the early-1990s, but by 1996, foreign arrivals to Phuket had climbed again to 1.5 million.

Tourism in Phuket is concentrated along several extended beaches, the largest resembling a "typical" beach-side resort area with hotels, water sports, touts, and other manifestations of mass, packaged tourism. Like most other renowned resort destination areas, Phuket invokes stereotypical images of wind-swept beaches, five-star hotels, and luxurious swimming pools, but in the past several years, "alternative" travel activities such as ecotourism have multiplied across the island, as indicated by the proliferation of new specialized tour operators. Ecotourism in Phuket spans a wide range of activities, including sea kayaking, diving, elephant riding, cycling, jungle trekking, and overnight stays in "eco-resorts." From its international tourist "discovery" in 1974 (following the shooting in this area of the James Bond film, *Man with the Golden Gun*) to its current reputation as a site for sun, sea, sand, and sex, Phuket exemplifies the ongoing evolution of beach resort destinations, and in recent years has even come to reflect the rising international popularity of nature-oriented and other "alternative" tourism activities.

This chapter outlines the questions and principal objectives of this research, and then reviews how this thesis, and the study of "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand generally,

relate to broader theoretical issues. This chapter also provides a detailed examination of tourism in Thailand and southern Thailand in order to introduce the reader to the topic and preface the discussion in subsequent chapters on the emergence of "alternative" tourism. I survey the historical evolution of Thailand and Phuket as international tourism destinations and follow up with a review of contemporary tourism patterns and trends in Thailand. Finally, in addressing some of the social and environmental problems associated with rapid tourism growth in Phuket, this chapter situates the rising popularity and need for "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand by providing contextual and historical background.

1.2 Research Questions, Rationale, and Objectives

The principal purpose of this research is to achieve a detailed understanding of how global "flows" of "alternative" tourism unfold in specific destinations and communities in southern Thailand. Other than contributing to tourism policy formation in Thailand, this study assesses the validity of "alternative" tourist claims concerning equitable development and environmentally-sustainable tourism in the "Third World." In attempting to understand the relationship between travel motivation, "alternative" tourism and community-based development, this study addresses three questions, based respectively on the perspectives of the tourism industry, tourist, and host. These questions will serve as the three key themes of this thesis. First, *does "alternative" tourism signal a true departure from conventional, mass tourism in southern Thailand*? Many "travellers" and tourism scholars conceive of "alternative" tourism as occupying an exclusive and oppositional domain along such dimensions as consumers, technology, production, and management (Poon, 1993). However, I am interested in determining which connections, if any, between mass tourism and its "alternative" prove necessary for the latter's survival. Second, in the minds of both tourists and their Thai hosts, *what role do authenticity and ethical concern play in distinguishing "alternative travellers" from mass tourists*? The behaviour, motivations, and impacts of tourists play a significant role in shaping the range and scope of "development" in tourism destination communities. Third, *do "alternative" forms of tourism in southern Thailand promote patterns of development fundamentally different than those characterized by conventional, mass tourism*? This question involves not only basic economic indicators of "development," but also

those of a social and environmental nature.

Rationale and broader significance of research

As an academic discipline and topic, tourism has enjoyed a surge in popularity in recent years. However, considering its position as the world's largest industry (WTTC, 1995), it is surprising that many scholars continue to shun international tourism as an intellectual topic of discussion and analysis. The everyday, "taken-for-granted" nature of tourism processes, although serving as the principal reason for its dismissal among some scholars, in practice renders tourism a worthy and compelling subject both for its economic significance to countries, regions and communities, and for its sociological relevance as a global vehicle for interpersonal contact and communication. Other than addressing, at a general level, an influential global force such as tourism, this study's broader significance centres on six areas. First, many "Third World" governments have embraced international tourism as the path to economic salvation, and Thailand provides an ideal case study to examine the relationship between tourism and development. International tourism forms a critical component of Thailand's overall development program, and this focus will only intensify in light of the fiscal crisis caused recently by regional currency devaluations. Second, Thailand's recent shift, in theory at least, towards ecotourism and other specialized, sustainable forms of tourism makes the focus of this study particularly relevant in terms of assessing the theoretical and practical possibilities of new, "alternative" travel patterns in the "Third World." Recent studies (Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Stabler, 1997; Wahab and Pilgram, 1997) have pointed out that issues such as adventure, sustainability, and "Western" lifestyle consumption are increasingly characterizing tourism in the "Third World." Thus, this research represents an empirical testing board for the lofty philosophical claims of an "alternative" tourism discourse.

Third, although "alternative" tourism encompasses a wide range of activities, this study focuses on those which revolve around nature and culture. It also situates the examination and analysis in the "developing" world alone since "alternative" tourism activities in Europe or North America bring about distinct consequences and feature a much different dynamic than those associated with North-South "alternative" tourism. This thesis therefore avoids a blanket assessment of *all* "alternative" tourism activities, concentrating instead on a geographically-specific subset of activities and the wider implications of these activities for "Third World"

development. Fourth, by discussing the ways in which specific southern Thai communities have experienced "alternative" tourism, this research provides clues and draws out lessons for other "developing" tourism destinations on how to maximize the economic, social, and environmental benefits of changing international tourist demands for novelty, adventure, and authenticity. Of course, tourism sites produce patterns unique to those particular localities, but other countries in the region and beyond would certainly benefit from examining the policy options unveiled by southern Thailand's successes and failures with "alternative" tourism. Fifth, the environmental problems caused by the unfettered global expansion of tourism and industrialization have called into question conventional strategies, and the conclusions reached by this study have a great deal to say about not only "alternative" tourism's ability to promote sustainability and environmental responsibility among entrepreneurs, tourists, and hosts, but also tourism's place generally in the long-term environmental outlooks of "developing" countries. Lastly, this research delineates the connections between political and cultural trends in "Western" tourist societies, on the one hand, and community economic, social, and environmental development in southern Thailand, on the other. These connections are interesting in and of themselves, but they also disclose the local-global relationships shaping communities around the world. Thus, at a rudimentary geographical and sociological level, this study confirms the resilience of local circumstances and provides irrefutable evidence of the importance of localities in shaping and interacting dialectically with global forces such as tourism, popular culture, and capitalist development.

Research objectives

At a practical, policy level, this research hopes to bridge the gap between two areas of inquiry: current development theory, which deals extensively with alternative (to neo-classical) paradigms of development, and contemporary trends in global tourism which point heavily to the rise of a new, "alternative," form of tourism. The more specific objectives of this research are summarized below, and grouped according to the three questions, or themes, of the thesis:

Tourism Industry Perspective: "Alternative" Tourism as a Niche Market

- To determine whether "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand represents a fundamentally new form of tourism or instead serves as a branch or market niche of the existing mass industry.

- To evaluate how links and connections between mass and "alternative" tourism relate to the latter's survival in southern Thailand.

- To assess how local circumstances influence the operation and overall complexion of "alternative" tourism in the southern Thai context.

Tourist Perspective: Authenticity, Ethical Concern, and Sensitivity

- To examine how tourist-host interactions within the "alternative" tourism industry promote the mutual education of both tourist and host, and in particular, how these interactions contribute to cross-cultural understanding.

- To compare the relative importance of authenticity and ethical concern to the travel motivations and behavioural patterns of discrete categories of "alternative" tourists.

- To assess how individual and group conceptions of authenticity shape, and are shaped by, the perpetual negotiation of experience between tourist and host.

Host Perspective: "Alternative" Tourism and Community Development

- To explore "alternative" tourism's potential as an agent of economic community-based development based on linkages to indigenous economic networks, as well as on local and democratic control over resource allocation, capital investment, and decision-making power.

- To determine how "alternative" tourism contributes to sustainable development through the alleviation of environmental degradation and the environmental education of tourists and hosts.

- To review how local context moulds the prospects for, and implementation of, tourism-oriented community development.

Having briefly outlined the goals, objectives, and significance of this research, I will devote the remainder of the chapter to reviewing the history, problems, and prospects of both conventional, mass tourism and ecotourism in Thailand.

1.3 Beaches, Temples, and Brothels: Tourism in Thailand

Thailand has long captured the imaginations of international travellers, but despite hosting a steady stream of foreign visitors throughout the past century, it is only quite recently that Thailand has begun to finally emerge as a critical player in the expanding regional tourism

industry of Southeast Asia. From humble origins, the tourism industry in Thailand grew rapidly following the Vietnam War, and has now blossomed into "one of the touristically most developed countries in the Third World" (Cohen, 1996: 1). By 1996, Thailand represented the eleventh largest international tourism earner, and was surpassed among Asian states only by Hong Kong and China (Waters, 1996: 6). Similarly, with over 7 million annual tourism arrivals, Thailand receives the second largest number of tourists in Southeast Asia (after Malaysia), and the fourth largest number in the broad East Asia/Pacific region (WTO, 1997: 11). Aside from its increasingly pertinent role within Asian-Pacific tourism markets, Thailand also provides an ideal case study in which to explore several key tourism issues.

The myriad problems associated with uncontrolled mass tourism development can be found throughout Thailand where overcrowding, pollution, and short-sighted planning have degraded formerly "pristine" coastal resort destinations. Thailand's tourism industry also exemplifies the global travel trend towards enhanced diversity of attractions and activities. The four S's of tourism - sun, sea, sand, and sex - remain significant in Thailand, but face growing competition from tourism based on cultural attractions, natural resources, and urban-based activities such as shopping and entertainment (Dearden and Boonchote, 1989). Finally, the outcome of Thailand's current drive to balance sustainability with continued tourism growth will either corroborate sustainable tourism's regenerative qualities *or* contradict the rhetorical, often euphemistic, claims made in the name of "sustainable development." In any case, assessing Thailand's experience with international tourism unveils numerous research opportunities, and provides both clues and warnings for other emerging Asian tourism destinations. This section examines Thailand's incorporation into the global tourism industry, and discusses the importance of tourism to the local economy of southern Thailand. By exploring local resistance to tourism expansion, I argue that despite its enormous economic significance, tourism remains a site of contestation and conflict as different players attempt to stake a claim on the material and social rewards of tourism development.

Historical growth and incorporation

Government and private agencies market Thailand as a recent arrival on the international tourism scene, but the country has received visitors for much of the twentieth century. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the widespread "modernization" reforms of King

Mongkut (Rama IV) and, then, King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) laid the foundations for international tourism in Thailand (Meyer, 1988). Open-door economic policies led to the construction of Western-oriented hotels and tour activities, and the extensive travels of Chulalongkorn throughout Europe infused tourism with symbolic value and legitimacy within the country. Royal holidays to the seaside resort town of Hua Hin along the Gulf of Siam coast, and the construction of a Royal Palace there in the early-1900s, also provided a boost to the domestic tourism industry as Thai elites began travelling to Hua Hin and elsewhere. Although international tourist arrivals remained low until the 1960s, a steady stream of arrivals nonetheless laid the foundation for future tourism growth. By the 1930s, for example, Bangkok served as a port of call for many round-the-world cruises, playing host to five cruise liners per year, each containing at least 500 passengers (Meyer, 1988: 63). The majority of overseas tourists from the 1930s until the late-1950s were British and French citizens passing through Thailand en route to colonial possessions just beyond Thailand's borders. However, following the devastation brought to Europe during the Second World War, American travellers came eventually to surpass Europeans as the principal source of tourism. Together, British and American tourists in 1957 represented 59 percent of all overseas visitors to Thailand, with Americans making up over half of that figure (TOT, 1961: 8).

The establishment and growth of tourism as a regulated, organized industry began only during the regime of Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat (1957-63). In line with World Bank-inspired development policies, Sarit opened the economy to foreign investment and encouraged tourism growth in order to bolster foreign exchange reserves. In addition to providing tax holidays and other investment incentives to local and foreign tourism operators, the Sarit government invested heavily in infrastructure, resulting in vast improvements in road construction, water and electric power supply, banking, trading, communications, and government services (Meyer, 1988). Infrastructural achievements stimulated the service sector - the fastest growing sector during Sarit's administration - and would later prove crucial to the development of a mass tourism industry. In 1960, Sarit established the Tourist Organization of Thailand (TOT) to oversee tourism advertising and promotion.[1] Having worked to improve access to tourist sites through enhanced infrastructure, Sarit and the TOT hoped to strengthen

[1] The TOT was renamed the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in 1979, and given more autonomy and power over tourism planning.

Thailand's international image by encouraging, through laws and public statements, the safety, cleanliness, and propriety of Thai society. Sarit provided the institutional and organizational framework for international tourism in Thailand. It was the Vietnam War, however, that would forever change the nature and scope of the industry.

The decade from 1965 and 1975 brought enormous social and economic changes to several parts of Thailand due to the large presence of American troops. Besides pumping large amounts of military and economic aid into Thailand, the United States established military bases throughout the country, particularly in northern and northeastern Thailand. The American military presence spurred both a construction boom and a proliferation of restaurants, bars, nightclubs, and other services catering to American GIs. Between 1966 and 1974, 321,800 American GIs were stationed in military bases throughout Thailand (Meyer, 1988: 72). Another 310,392 GIs visited Thailand during this period on Rest and Recreation (R&R) trips taken as diversions from the fighting in Vietnam. Between 1966 and 1970, American GIs on R&R trips spent over 78 million dollars, or 38 percent of the total expenditures of all overseas visitors in Thailand (TOT, 1975).

The American military presence in Thailand brought three major changes to the tourism industry. First, it not only led to a direct increase in foreign visits through R&R trips taken by American soldiers, but it also popularized tourism via international media images, leading indirectly to an increase in visits by (mostly male) travellers from the United States and elsewhere. Second, it provided the stimulus for incipient tourism development. As businesses and services grew to meet the leisure demands of American GIs, the infrastructural foundations for future mass tourism development were laid across the country, especially in Bangkok. Third, as Cohen (1996: 2-3) outlines, tourism activities associated with GIs on R&R vacations, as well as those of the thousands of American troops stationed permanently in Thailand, strongly shaped the international image of Thailand while simultaneously attracting a certain type of tourist from the mid-1960s onwards. Specifically, touristic images of Thailand as a mystical, *exotic* kingdom associated with cultural attractions were, after the 1960s, complemented by images of Thailand as an *erotic* destination associated with more mundane sexual and recreational pursuits. The modern sex trade in Thailand thus blossomed during this period of American military involvement, and was subsequently perpetuated by an expanding tourism industry which successfully filled the void left by the departure of American troops

from Thailand in the mid-1970s (Truong, 1990).[2] Although the Thai government and tourism industry have in recent years tried to steer attention away from sex tourism, large groups of men continue to travel to Bangkok, Pattaya, and Phuket for the services of male and female prostitutes, many of whom are children (Johnson, 1994). Thailand's touristic image was significantly altered as a result of the American military presence during the 1960s and early-1970s, but one should bear in mind that marketing represents merely one of several ways in which the contemporary tourism industry took shape as a result of, and in response to, the Vietnam War.

Patterns and trends

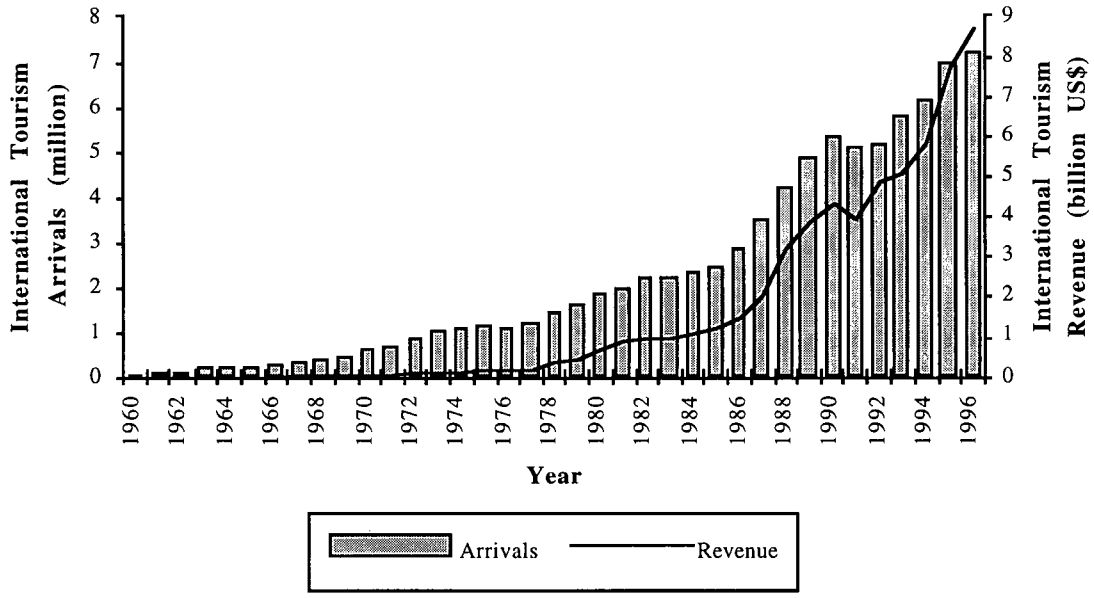
The accelerated growth of tourism in Thailand over the past several decades has occurred within the context of general tourism expansion on the global and regional scales. International tourism has grown globally from 25.3 million tourists and US$2.1 billion in revenue receipts in 1950 to 592 million and US$423 billion in 1996, respectively (WTO, 1997: 2).[3] At the regional level, tourism-receiving countries in East Asia and the Pacific - which includes the Southeast Asian sub-region - accounted in 1996 for 89.8 million international tourist arrivals and US$82.2 billion in international tourism receipts. In Southeast Asia alone, arrivals and revenues grew dramatically from 10.1 million and US$5 billion in 1985, to 30.5 million and US$31.1 billion in 1996 (WTO, 1997: 10). Based on room nights, Thailand is Asia's leading tourism destination (Waters, 1996). International tourism revenues in Thailand have grown from US$8 million in 1960 to US$8.7 billion in 1996, with arrivals increasing from 81,000 to 7,192,145 (Figure 1.1). Tourism development in Thailand has proceeded swiftly in the past twenty years, surpassing even the already high rates experienced by the world in general. Between 1985 and 1995, international tourist arrivals to Thailand increased by 185 percent compared to 72 percent for the world as a whole (WTO, 1997: 3). Similarly, tourism revenues in Thailand have skyrocketed by 503 percent between 1985 and 1995, a rate of increase that is more than double the world rate of 234 percent over the same period.

Contrary to earlier patterns of heavy royal or state guidance, the success of Thailand's

[2] Prostitution is a longstanding tradition in Thailand, and thus tourism is only one of several social and historical factors contributing to Thailand's sex trade.

[3] This figure does not include domestic tourism which represents between 75 and 80 percent of all tourism activity (Murphy, 1985).

Figure 1.1 International Tourism Arrivals and Revenue in Thailand, 1960 to 1996



Source: TAT (1997a: 1).

tourism industry during the past fifteen years has rested largely on the initiative taken by the Thai private sector working in tandem with a supportive, but essentially non-interfering, government. The most recent tourism boom began with the highly successful 1987 promotional campaign "Visit Thailand Year" which marked the auspicious sixtieth birthday of King Bhumibol, and resulted in a 24 percent increase in tourist arrivals (Chon, Singh, and Mikula, 1993: 45). Despite a decline in tourist arrivals in 1991 - caused by the Gulf War as well as several local events[4] - the industry soon recovered and continues to this day to expand rapidly.

Traditionally, travellers from the United States and Western Europe (Britain and France in particular) made up the majority of tourist arrivals in Thailand. This began to change in the mid-1970s, however, as tourists from Japan and "developing" countries in Asia - including South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan - came eventually to form the dominant

[4] These include the crashing of an Austrian airliner on its way to Phuket, the explosion of an overturned truck carrying dynamite through southern Thailand, a tragic fire in Klong Toey (Bangkok's principal port) in which thousands of squatter residents were either killed or exposed to excessive levels of toxic chemicals, and the overthrowing in February 1991 of Chatichai Choonhavan's democratically elected government by a bloodless military coup.

group of tourists in Thailand. By 1996, tourists from Asia represented two-thirds (66.5%) of all arrivals in Thailand, followed distantly by Europe (22.3%), Oceania (3.5%), the Americas (5.3%) and Africa (0.66%) (TAT, 1997a: 2-3). The largest *individual* markets for tourist arrivals in 1996 were Malaysia (14.6% of all tourist arrivals), Japan (13.0%), Korea (6.8%), China (6.4%), and Taiwan (6.2%). Although arrivals from Asia remain much greater than from any other region, the short average length of stay for Asian tourists (5.7 days) lies well below the average (8.2 days), and is below the rate for European tourists (12.9 days). Thus, despite travelling in ever-increasing numbers, the financial impact of Asian tourists, while significant in absolute terms, is proportionally low due to short trip durations.[5]

The economic impact of international tourism in Thailand has been tremendous. Since becoming Thailand's top foreign exchange earner for the first time in 1982, tourism has increasingly outpaced all other export items, earning 32.8 percent more in 1996 than computers and computer parts, the next leading export (TAT, 1997a: 8). The garnering of foreign exchange becomes especially crucial in assuaging the balance of payment deficits found in most developing countries. In the case of Thailand, the economic benefits of tourism appear most obvious when examining tourism's contribution to alleviating the national trade deficit. Thailand's trade balance (total value of exports minus total value of imports) in 1996 was a deficit of 417.6 billion baht (approximately US$16.5 billion), but its balance of international *tourist* trade produced a surplus of 113.7 billion baht (US$4.5 billion), thereby allowing a reduction of the overall balance-of-trade deficit by 27.2 percent (TAT, 1997a: 7-10).[6]

In addition to bolstering a country's foreign exchange reserves, tourism produces enhanced income opportunities for both the government and the host population of a destination area. Government income is generated through hotel, airport and sales taxes paid by tourists. Considering the sheer size of the tourism industry in Thailand, the revenue collected from hotels in the form of business taxes contributes substantially towards overall government revenue (Truong, 1990). The local population of an area, however, has the most to gain from increased tourism-related income. Direct tourist expenditures are successively re-spent on local goods and services, and this also indirectly provides income for that sector of the

[5] I should note however that the average expenditures (per day) of Asian tourists (US$173.49) in 1995 was above average (US$148.39), and greater than the per day expenditures of tourists from any other region (TAT, 1996).

[6] Although the exchange rate has reached (in July 1998) 43 baht per US dollar, all financial figures cited in this thesis (unless otherwise stated) use the 1996 exchange rate of 25.32 baht per one US dollar, since these figures are accurate only for 1996 when the fieldwork for this research took place.

population not involved with initial tourist spending. Each successive round of spending also creates leakages in the form of payments made for goods and services not produced locally. This continual re-spending of tourist-generated income, known as the "multiplier effect," continues until all the money has leaked away (Mathieson and Wall, 1982). The multiplier effect is significant in Thailand where, according to TAT estimates, the average tourist dollar changes hands 3.9 times versus approximately 3.4 times, on average, in Asia (Carver, 1987). Additionally, a large and increasingly affluent population of 60 million provides Thailand with a significant demand base that can sustain a strong domestic economy. The domestic demand for locally produced goods and services ensures, in turn, that each successive round of spending creates additional income by reducing leakages to external factors of production.

Despite the enormously beneficial economic consequences of tourism development in Thailand, tourism incorporation and expansion have also engendered several detrimental changes. Socially, tourism has, along with many other factors, enhanced Thailand's sex trade as well as attracting a wide variety of criminal activities (Cohen, 1987a). Although tourism constitutes merely one of myriad dimensions of change in contemporary Thailand, the inappropriate demands, excessive numbers, and short-sighted planning associated with the tourism industry in Thailand have also contributed to a steadily worsening environmental situation caused primarily by reckless economic growth (Kaosa-ard *et al*, 1995). Competition for natural resources between agriculture, industry, housing and tourism since the mid-1980s has led to several environmental problems: carbon monoxide, particle matter and lead levels in Bangkok are all at least twice the acceptable maximum levels; polluting elements in the Chao Phraya River, 32 percent of which are accounted for by restaurants, markets and hotels, have lowered the dissolved oxygen content to nearly zero; deforestation rates in Thailand, the highest in Asia after Nepal, have reduced forest cover to under 30 percent while creating water shortages around deforested water-sheds; and intense competition for, and extraction of, water has allowed sea water to seep into wells twenty kilometres from the coast (Handley, 1991). Tourism represents only a minor agent in the overall environmental problems of Thailand, but it nonetheless exacerbates problems caused by industrialization and other principal culprits of environmental desecration (GFANC, 1997; McNeely and Somchevita, 1996).

Extensive tourism-related environmental problems in Thailand remain spatially-concentrated. In destinations with high tourist densities, the generation of waste products in

areas ill-equipped to meet the infrastructural requirements of additional visitors has led to tangible tourism-induced pollution. The eastern seaside resort of Pattaya, for example, grew from a fishing village with one hotel in 1970 to an "ecological disaster" area housing 266 hotels in 1990 (Wallace, 1990). Proper sewage treatment and adequate access to fresh water did not receive sufficient attention from planners in the incipient stages of tourism, thus leading to unmonitored tourism growth and an absence of pollution controls. Pattaya continues to suffer from fresh water shortages and infrastructural deficiencies which cause raw sewage to flow directly into the Gulf of Thailand via open storm drains. Water shortages, sewage treatment difficulties, and water pollution also severely afflict other seaside resort areas in southern Thailand such as Hua Hin, Phuket, and Ko Samui (Parnwell, 1993). Specific tourist activities also place heavy pressure on the natural resource base. For example, the increasing popularity of golf recently in Thailand has meant the spread of tourism-induced environmental pollution - formerly confined to mostly the coastline - to more remote parts of the interior (Kelly, 1991). Golf courses damage the environment by poisoning the countryside with fertilizer run-off, diverting desperately needed water from surrounding areas, and driving farmers off scarce agricultural land (Pleumarom, 1994).

Taking a broad look at recent trends in the tourism industry in Thailand, Cohen (1996: 4-14) identifies four directions of change. First, the recent explosion in tourist arrivals has led to the *massification* of the industry, whereby tourist transportation and communication networks were expanded, accommodation facilities were improved and upgraded, and specialized tourism-oriented services multiplied. Second, the *dispersion* of tourism from its highly centralized origins in Bangkok to other parts of the country has created a north-south "tourism-axis" stretching from Phuket in the south to Chiang Mai in the north. From these regional poles, tourism continues to spread into ever more "remote" areas including Chiang Rai and the "Golden Triangle" in the north, and the provinces of Phangnga, Krabi, and Songkhla in the south.[7] Third, tourism in Thailand has experienced *heterogeneization* in several areas, including the national origin of tourists, the variety of tourist attractions and amenities, and the quality and range of touristic facilities and services. Lastly, the past decade has witnessed the *regionalization* of Thailand as a tourism destination. Whereas in previous years Thailand remained remote and isolated within global tourism channels, the TAT and private companies

[7] See Figures 1.3 and 1.4 below for map locations.

have made considerable attempts in recent years to build connections to the tourism industries of neighbouring or nearby countries such as Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam (Cohen, 1996). Thailand thus currently lies at the centre of, and provides the majority of momentum for, the emerging regional tourism industry of mainland Southeast Asia.

Tourism in southern Thailand

The recent expansion of the tourism industry in Thailand has occurred in a spatially-uneven manner, with Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and southern Thailand absorbing the majority of tourist growth (TAT, 1997a). Unstable world commodity prices and the national sectoral transition occurring in Thailand - from an agricultural to a manufacturing and service-based economy - have in recent years endowed tourism with enormous significance and potential as a regenerative force within regional economies. In several provinces of southern Thailand, tourism has stepped into a context where tin mining has all but collapsed as an industry, and where the importance and value of rubber farming continues to decline (Traisawasdichai, 1991). Moreover, other important export items, particularly farmed shrimp, place great stress on the natural environment, and thus will likely prove unsustainable over the long run. Faced with changing economic conditions and necessities, the Thai government has therefore utilized the natural attractions of southern Thailand to implement a national tourism strategy aimed at rapidly increasing international arrivals and foreign exchange earnings.

Tourism development in southern Thailand has traditionally - and continues to be - centred on Phuket, marketed as the "Pearl of the Andaman" by both public agencies and private tourism operators.[8] Although small groups of foreign and (mostly) domestic tourists began to visit Phuket as early as the late-1960s, it was not until 1974 that Phuket was identified as a potential mass tourism destination:

> Our appraisal of the resources of South Thailand has led us to support to TOT's [Tourist Organization of Thailand] conclusion that Phuket should be the primary focus for developing international tourism in the region. It has a wide ranging appeal based on the greatest concentration of attractions and recreational possibilities in the region, including the scenic attractions of its own coasts and neighbouring islands (Huntington Technical Services, 1974: 153).

The mid to late-1970s saw the further development of Phuket as a future site for large-scale tourism investment. In 1976, Phuket was identified as a major tourism resort destination in the

[8] I examine the economic, social, and historical context of Phuket (and surrounding provinces) in Chapter Five.

National Plan of Tourism Development (TOT, 1976). Following a major tourism feasibility study for southern Thailand completed in 1978 (PCI, 1978), the newly revamped Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) drafted, in 1979, a comprehensive tourism development plan for Phuket (TAT, 1979). During the same year, the government built an international airport in Phuket, thereby facilitating the rapid subsequent intensification of tourism in Phuket and surrounding areas.

The myriad planning reports and studies produced during the 1970s began to bear fruit in the following decade as tourism growth accelerated at rates far greater than those envisaged by even the most optimistic projections. It was during the 1980s that Phuket stepped onto the international tourism stage, growing from a little known tin mining and rubber region with a few thousand predominantly hippie, drifter tourists to an internationally renowned tourism destination servicing a thriving and complex mass tourism industry. International tourist arrivals, which stood at approximately 20,000 in 1976, shot up precipitously during the 1980s, reaching 533,545 by 1989 (Ludwig, 1976: 23; TAT, 1997b). Along with encouraging greater transportation and communications connections to the rest of Thailand and beyond, this explosion in tourist arrivals fuelled a tremendous boom in hotel construction. The total number of rooms in 1979 amounted to 1,400, but by 1993, the number of rooms had risen to 17,426 (Cohen, 1982: 198; TAT, 1994: 56).

The quick pace of tourism development, and the short time in which it occurred, greatly altered the physical landscape and socio-economic character of the island. High-rise hotels and condominiums began to dominate the architectural landscape, turning the more popular beaches into small urban areas (Siriphan, 1993). The economic profile of the island also changed dramatically as the economic and social orientation shifted from agriculture and mining towards the service sector. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of Phuket residents employed in the service sector rose from 10,522 to 24,550, an increase of 133 percent (Government of Thailand, 1981: 141; 1991a: 199). Further, the share occupied by service sector employees in the total workforce rose during the same period from 19 to 30 percent. By 1990, hotels and restaurants had become the largest single source of jobs in Phuket, employing 15,968 workers, or nearly one-fifth of the island's *total* workforce (Government of Thailand, 1991a: 199).[9]

[9] It is important to note that restaurants in Phuket cater not only to domestic and international tourists, but to local residents as well. Thus, an increase in restaurant employment is not *necessarily* linked entirely to tourism growth, although the two are often related, particularly in Phuket.

The significance of tourism-related employment lay not only with the sheer extension of available jobs, however, but also with the higher pay associated with service sector employment (Table 1.1). Service sector workers in Thailand possess the highest rates of wealth, as measured by the percentage of all workers belonging to the top income categories, and furthermore feature the lowest rates of poverty. In addition to boosting employment opportunities, tourism also began to produce increasingly substantial amounts of revenue. In 1990 alone, Phuket earned approximately US$245 million from international tourism, and this rose to US$984 million by 1996 (TAT, 1997b). This revenue was, and still is, especially valuable since it produces the foreign exchange necessary to alleviate Thailand's balance-of-payments deficit. At the local scale, tourism had by 1991 completely eclipsed other sectors of Phuket's economy, producing 4.9 times the value of agriculture and 2.6 times the value of secondary sector activities (Phuket PSO, 1995: 73).[10] Overall, tourism revenue as a percentage of Phuket's gross provincial product (GPP) reached 50.2 percent in 1991, and by 1993, tourism was producing nearly twice the value (192 percent) of the entire economy of Phuket (TAT, 1997b; *Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 16).[11]

In the span of just one decade, then, tourism had become an integral component of local life in Phuket, determining, and responding to, the economic, social, and political circumstances of the region through complex relationships. In the late-1980s, recognizing the potential for both opportunities and limitations associated with future tourism growth, the Thai government commissioned the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to produce a

Table 1.1 Income Inequality in Thailand by Economic Sector, 1994

Source of Employment	Below 18,000 Baht (US$714) Annual Income	Above 120,000 Baht (US$4,762) Annual Income
Agriculture, forestry, hunting, and fishing	78.7%	0.6%
Manufacturing	15.2%	5.5%
Commerce	22.9%	8.8%
Services	12.2%	14.5%
Average (all sectors)	49.6%	4.6%

Source: National Statistical Office (1995: 76-77).

[10] Rather than existing as a separate economic sphere or sector, tourism also directly benefits local agriculture, manufacturing, and services, which grow in response to the heightened demand sparked by tourism growth.

[11] Since revenues from tourism are not included in official gross provincial product (GPP) figures in Thailand, I juxtapose the two here in order to compare the value of tourism alone against the value of the entire provincial economy.

comprehensive tourism plan for southern Thailand (JICA, 1989). The study recognizes three tourism "clusters" based in Phuket, Surat Thani, and Songkhla/Hat Yai, and makes several specific recommendations. First, it identifies beaches and cultural/historical sites as the region's key attractions. Second, it recommends the development of historical sites in Phuket to diversify the tourism product and provide variety for beach-based tourists.[12] Third, it calls strongly for a long-term environmental management program for Phuket in order to avoid future environmental degradation, as well as to offset the damage that had already been caused by a decade of frantic tourism growth. Lastly, the report outlines in great detail the transportation links to nearby provinces necessary for the development of a "Greater Phuket" tourism region. Other than the environmental management proposal, the key recommendations of the JICA study critically influenced future tourism development in Phuket, successfully prescribing or forecasting many of the tourism trends and patterns occurring today.

The feverish pace of tourism development has continued well into the 1990s. International tourist arrivals in Phuket between 1990 and 1996 rose by 114 percent from 752,463 to 1,612,635 (TAT, 1997b). Phuket has not only seen a steady and swift increase in tourist arrivals, but has also consistently increased its share of the overall tourism market in Thailand. In 1983, the proportion of all foreign tourists in Thailand who visited Phuket stood at only 4 percent (Thaitakoo, 1994: 141). By 1990, this had increased to 14 percent, climbing even further in subsequent years to reach 22 percent in 1996 (TAT, 1997b). Besides transforming the nature of the island itself, Phuket's burgeoning tourism industry has also ignited a similar magnification of tourism in southern Thailand generally. As mentioned earlier, peripheral regions of Thailand beyond Bangkok and surrounding provinces had received scant tourist attention until only recently. The past two decades have witnessed the reversal of this trend, creating a nationwide north-south tourism corridor. In southern Thailand, this is demonstrated by rapid expansion in the hotel accommodation sector, where, between 1987 and 1996, the number of establishments and rooms expanded by 85 and 131 percent respectively (TAT, 1992: 56; 1997a: 9). The current prominence of southern Thailand in the national tourism industry is reflected in its large, disproportionate share of accommodation establishments. Despite possessing less than 15 percent of Thailand's total

[12] Ecotourism, and other nature-oriented activities, go unmentioned in the report although, as I discuss later in this thesis, they have grown popular in recent years for just that reason (i.e., because they provide "something different" to do).

population and land area, southern Thailand contains over 31 percent of all tourism accommodations (TAT, 1997a: 9). Coupled with the ongoing diffusion of tourism to less developed destinations throughout southern Thailand, the enhanced infrastructural capabilities of well-developed tourism sites such as Phuket have fostered the growing integration of southern Thailand into domestic and global tourism networks.

As we approach the twenty-first century, particular contemporary trends will prove instrumental in shaping the future of tourism in Phuket and the surrounding area. First, the composition of tourists has increasingly favoured international over domestic tourists: between 1991 and 1996, foreign tourists increased their share of the total tourist market in Phuket from 50.6 to 71.4 percent (TAT, 1997b). Although the Thai government is strongly promoting domestic tourism to minimize foreign exchange leakage, it is likely to continue boosting international tourism in Phuket due to its greater income and employment-generating potential.[13] Second, as tourist arrivals continue to climb, the tourism industry in Phuket will sustain the current expansion of tourism into Phangnga and Krabi, the two provinces adjacent to Phuket. While the number of tourists visiting Phangnga and Krabi remains low compared to Phuket, it will inevitably rise as tourism operators seek out new, "untouched" locations in the immediate vicinity. Third, the maturation of Phuket's tourism industry will lead to the further diversification of tourist activities, as well as to the simultaneous development of both natural and "contrived" attractions (Cohen, 1996: 11). The balance between the two will depend chiefly on how quickly the tourist market shifts from Europe, which currently provides over 60 percent of all tourists in Phuket, to Asia, whose tourists generally prefer "contrived" attractions such as shopping, theme parks, open zoos, and entertainment facilities (*Phuket Gazette*, 1996a: 3).[14] Tourism based on the traditional "sun, sea, and sand" formula remains, and *will* remain into the near future, Phuket's top priority, but growing diversity and complexity will inevitably change the context of local tourism development.

[13] The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) estimates that it takes 73 domestic, but only 9 *foreign*, tourists to create one job in Thailand (Hindle, 1987).

[14] "Contrived" attractions are those which are "specifically established for touristic consumption" and which "were established without much regard for "placeness," namely the natural, cultural, or historical characteristics of the context of their site" (Cohen, 1996: 11-12). Although I ultimately dispute the dichotomization of "contrived" versus "authentic" experiences, I use the term here only to distinguish it from "natural" activities based in remote or "untouched" natural environments.

Voices of resistance

Tourism development in Phuket has proceeded rapidly, fostering many economic and social changes for local residents. These changes and dislocations have been, by and large, met with majority approval, but have *not*, however, gone entirely unchallenged. Despite, or rather in addition to, the largely beneficial economic changes related to tourism growth, several detrimental patterns have also emerged during the past two decades of tourism expansion. Foremost among these changes is the significant environmental damage caused by unchecked growth in both tourist numbers and accommodation facilities. Aside from the sheer aesthetic impact of altered visual landscapes, tourism in Phuket has placed enormous stress on a number of specific resources, including fresh water, coral, and land. As a relatively small island, Phuket lacks abundant sources of fresh water. This remains manageable with a small local population, but becomes a severe problem when the *total* population, including tourists, more than doubles within the span of a few years as it did in Phuket during the 1980s. International tourism facilities typically demand rates of water consumption much higher than local usage since upscale tourism often features immense gardens, large numbers of tourists, and activities, such as golfing, that require enormous daily amounts of water (Handley, 1990). Water shortages are further magnified by the timing of the peak tourist season, which corresponds to those months when rainfall is at its lowest, namely November to February.[15] The timing of the tourist season is especially detrimental in times of diminished precipitation, such as the early-1990s when three consecutive years of poor rainfall drained Phuket's principal reservoir to only 6 percent of its capacity (Poetikit, 1992).

Vast tracts of pristine coral once surrounded Phuket and other coastal areas of southern Thailand. Although representing only one of several sources of stress, mass marine tourism has contributed to the destruction of coral, particularly in areas of high tourist concentrations. The proliferation of boats transporting and providing sightseeing for tourists has caused direct damage to coral by increasing the number of anchors falling on the ocean floor. Coupled with anchoring, which damages a square metre of coral each time an anchor is dropped, oil spills, garbage, and snorkellers standing on coral also kill marine creatures living in the calcium structures that form coral (Inchukul, 1997). Land is yet another resource increasingly

[15] Rainfall in Phuket in the four months from November to February is 76 percent below average, and represents only 8 percent of Phuket's total annual rainfall (Phuket PSO, 1995: 82).

threatened by tourism development. Since coastal areas face obvious spatial limitations, land becomes a scarce commodity in the rush to build accommodations and other tourist facilities. As tourism expands, therefore, already-denuded forest and mangrove resources endure further encroachment while hillsides are depleted of their top soil as large amounts of land fill are transferred to tourist projects along the coast (Lertkittisuk, 1992). Further, the sudden increase in Phuket's population in the 1980s soon outpaced local infrastructural capabilities, resulting in raw sewage being pumped into the ocean and piles of garbage being dumped and remaining uncollected in areas beyond the immediate gaze of tourists (DuPont, 1992). The clean, translucent sea water that serves as Phuket's primary touristic resource perpetually suffers from untreated sewage, and most recently has become turbid due to soil erosion from the wide coastal roads that surround Phuket (Eamwiwatkit, 1997). Hence, while tourists directly and indirectly tax the natural resources of Phuket, it is local residents who ultimately carry the greatest burden through higher costs of living and various forms of pollution.

Tourism in Phuket has also carried social consequences. Growing tourist numbers have produced greater crowding and pressure on local residents to cope with ever-increasing numbers of foreigners: by 1990, there were, at any given time, as many foreigners on Phuket as permanent residents, and over the course of the entire year, foreign tourists outnumbered local residents by more than seven times (Thaitakoo, 1994: 141). While the majority of Phuket's population has, in one way or another, benefited from tourism development, the benefits have proven greater for some than for others. Local land-owners, and the urban Sino-Thai elite of the island in particular, have gained the most from tourism's meteoric expansion, and have dominated the industry since the early-1970s by providing the majority of incipient capital for accommodation facilities and tourist services (Cohen, 1982). Conversely, residents with little capital or land holdings find themselves increasingly marginalized as the tourism industry upgrades and expands (Ing K, 1988). The proliferation of brothels, massage parlours, and "girlie bars" in the popular beaches of Phuket has also exacerbated a range of social problems ranging from crime and prostitution to AIDS and child pornography.

The various strains tolerated by local residents have essentially posed a minimal threat to the continued expansion of tourism. However, problems associated with the tourism industry itself as well as with certain characteristics of local life could potentially limit future growth. Along with the numerous environmental changes described above, the overcrowding

that inevitably results from tourism intensification adversely affects the attractiveness of Phuket as a holiday destination. The discrepancy between the touristic image of paradise and the reality of pollution and urbanization of beach towns thus grows wider and undermines the very basis of tourism in the area (Cohen, 1996). In order to preserve an ideal touristic image, tour operators and travel agencies in Phuket have consistently ignored, or at least downplayed, several features of local life that run counter to that image. Just as tourism growth has led to an increase in the number of boats, the sheer volume of vehicular traffic on Phuket's limited roads has created dangerous driving conditions. Between January and April 1996, there were a total of 52 traffic deaths in Phuket (*Phuket Gazette*, 1996b: 5).[16] When extrapolated to an annual death rate per 100,000 people, this figure becomes 72.2; compared to the national rate of 20.1, this figure clearly substantiates Phuket's infamous reputation for traffic accidents (*Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 60).

Traffic accidents are not the only source of violent death for tourists however. Several male tourists involved in the drug or prostitution trade die every year under "mysterious circumstances," and the high number of tourist drownings, reaching up to 100 per year, reflects the dire absence of adequate life-saving facilities in Phuket (Vannisse, 1996a: A5). The morbid underside of tourism in Phuket poses a persistent hazard to Phuket's international image, but remains largely concealed since "persistent rumour has it that anyone raising the matter with the obvious intent of making the scandal public, is likely to incite the wrath of the Phuket 'Mafia', who regard any criticism that could affect their multi-million dollar-a-year business as a serious threat to their profit margins" (Vannisse, 1996b: A5). Finally, although the small, but highly visible, Muslim separatist movement in southern Thailand has by and large avoided tourist targets, *occasional* incidents such as bomb blasts in or near tourist resort areas nevertheless contradict and imperil the idyllic image of southern Thailand marketed to tourists (*Bangkok Post*, 1996b: 1).

Local reactions to the manifold changes brought by unregulated tourism have generally ranged from mild apathy to wild excitement, but not all Thais have embraced tourism development with open arms. A number of local and national groups have rallied against tourism, claiming that it benefits foreigners and wealthy Thais at the expense of disadvantaged

[16] Since this figure is for just one of three districts in Phuket, and is for *reported* accidents only, the actual death rate is likely even greater than this already substantial figure.

locals (Rattachumpoth, 1992). Based in Bangkok, the Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism (ECTWT) represents the most famous of these organizations, and has, since its formation in 1982, published several books and films critical of mass tourism (O'Grady, 1994; Srisang, 1988), as well as a regular newsletter known as *Contours*. Another recently formed organization, the Tourism Investigation and Monitoring Team, produces *new frontiers* (sic), a monthly collection of regional newspaper articles related to tourism, development and environment issues in the Mekong subregion.[17] The adversarial indigenous stance towards tourism is best captured in *Thailand for Sale*, a film produced by Thai writer "Ing K" (1991). The film, which to this day remains banned in Thailand, offers a highly critical examination of tourism in Phuket, arguing that Thais have sold out their natural environment and traditional social values in pursuit of tourism. With shots of "girlie bars" in the background, the film's narrator states:

> As one current saying goes, the Thais are the nicest people money can buy. To the tourists, it does seem that everything and everybody is for sale. Nothing is sacred, not trees, not temples, and certainly not the law, which can be tailor made to suit business needs...As tourists, you can help to keep your paradise and our land intact. Come as a guest in our home, not as a demanding customer. We are real people here. We're not a backdrop for your holiday (Ing K, 1991).

By entirely ignoring the underlying economic incentives driving tourism development, the film betrays its extreme bias and tendency to romanticize "pre-modern" life, but nonetheless, it provides a salient reminder of the high stakes, and polarized positions, associated with tourism in Phuket.

1.4 Ecotourism in Thailand: The Rhetoric of Sustainability

Recognizing the social and environmental limitations of past tourism development, the government of Thailand has in recent years embarked on an extensive and ambitious program of sustainable tourism development and environmental preservation. Despite the heavy emphasis being currently placed in Thailand on ecotourism, and other forms of "sustainable tourism," the concept has only recently entered the national tourism vocabulary. As mentioned earlier, the comprehensive tourism plan produced in the late-1980s by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) on behalf of the Thai government makes no mention of ecotourism

[17] The Mekong subregion consists of Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.

or nature-based activities. Although one of the four recommendations made in the report centres around a long-term environmental management program for Phuket, the concept of environmentally-oriented tourist activities is not addressed in the report. In 1993, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) commissioned the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) to produce a national tourism master plan, but as with earlier assessments and reports, the TDRI plan highlights the need to stem the environmental destruction of key tourism destinations without making any connection to ecotourism, per se. Thus, aside from suggesting that the costs and benefits of "green" or "nature" tourism should be studied, the 1993 national plan ignores the issue of ecotourism as a distinct strategy or activity.

The turning point for the development of ecotourism in Thailand came in 1995, when Paradech Phayakvichien, Deputy Governor for Planning and Development at TAT, commissioned several reports dealing specifically with ecotourism. The most important of these reports came from a team of academics from Kasetsart University in Bangkok who were commissioned by the TAT to identify sites in southern Thailand which feature high potential for ecotourism development. The consequent study identified 16 "high potential" sites, with Khao Sok National Park in Surat Thani province receiving top billing and Ao Phangnga following behind at number five (Phatkul, 1995).[18] The Kasetsart report formed the cornerstone of the TAT Ecotourism Promotion Plan, a strategy aimed at utilizing Khao Sok as the national case study project upon which a national ecotourism plan could be built. Three years after the completion of the Kasetsart report, however, a national tourism plan remains unwritten, and the development of Khao Sok as an ecotourist (or any tourist) destination has thus far failed to materialize, as environmentalists had feared immediately following the publication of the report.

Drawing on this, and other, reports, the TAT published a 39-page booklet entitled *Policies and Guidelines: Development of Ecotourism (1995-1996) of the Tourism Authority of Thailand* (TAT, 1995). Its several sections cover definitions, policies, conservation projects, and management guidelines. In addition, the booklet outlines the broad future direction of ecotourism development in Thailand. Rather than including a detailed inventory of Thailand's natural resources, or a list of concrete environmental measures, the booklet focuses instead on

[18] Ao Phangnga is a bay located to the northeast of Phuket. Other than hosting many of the ecotourism activities of the region, the bay contains islands and coastal communities which produce many of Phuket's tourism workers. I examine Ao Phangnga in greater detail in the final section of Chapter Five.

general - critics would say weak, vague, and meaningless - objectives and guidelines. Its definition of ecotourism, for example, shares many elements common to other approaches, but steers away from geographical remoteness or exclusivity. Ecotourism, according the booklet, "can be defined as a visit to *any particular tourism area* with the purpose to study, enjoy, and appreciate the scenery - natural and social - as well as the lifestyle of the local people, based on the knowledge about and responsibility for the ecological system of the area" (TAT, 1995: 11; emphasis mine). The objectives and policy guidelines listed throughout the document reflect the TAT's desire to incorporate ecotourism into existing networks and national objectives, and it is clear that by calling for continued overseas marketing and the maintenance of popular destinations, the TAT in its early stages of ecotourism promotion chose to pursue ecotourism not as an entirely new approach or form of travel, but rather as a means of both improving existing sites and conserving the natural and cultural resources upon which tourism to these sites depend. Initial TAT prescriptions for ecotourism were therefore essentially "greening" mechanisms for the existing tourism industry.

In light of the sudden interest shown in 1995 by TAT, and Paradech in particular, to ecotourism, momentum quickly gathered for the concept, leading to further institutional and policy support.[19] By the end of 1995, for example, an Institute of Ecotourism was established at Srinakharinwirot University in Bangkok. National development and tourism planning have also in recent years jumped on the ecotourism bandwagon. The degradation of over-developed destinations such as Pattaya and Phuket received considerable attention in the Seventh National Development Plan (1992-96), and the Eighth Plan (1997-2001) calls for the establishment of a "system for the management of natural resources and the environment by setting strict guidelines in promoting development of tourist destinations in the Krabi Bay, Phang-Nga, Phuket areas and the seas around Samui island" (NESDB, 1996: 68). The growth of interest in ecotourism among Thai government planners is clearly evident in the most recent national tourism master plan, released in March 1997. Produced by Mingsarn Kaosa-ard of the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) on behalf of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the plan features an ecotourism budget of over 3 billion baht (US$118.5 million). In addition to allocating funds for the expansion of ecotourism infrastructure, the

[19] One clear indication of this growing emphasis on ecotourism is the prominence given to environmentally-related articles in the monthly TAT travel magazine.

budget seeks to address issues of environmental rehabilitation and protection by setting aside 20 million baht (US$790,000) for each tourist site in crisis. Along with budgetary support, the TAT has in recent years promoted ecotourism through such measures as ecotourism guide certification and the granting in 1996 of its first annual Thailand Tourism Awards awards to environmentally-friendly tourism operators which promote natural and cultural conservation through sustainable tourism projects. With close to one hundred applications in six areas of competition, the Thailand Tourism Awards demonstrate both the swelling popularity of the ecotourism catchword and the tourism industry's enthusiasm over the profit potential of the green label.[20]

Ecotourism in southern Thailand

Tourism-oriented natural and cultural resources abound in every region of Thailand, but ecotourism has primarily thrived in two regions: the north and south (Figure 1.2). In northern Thailand, long a popular destination for jungle treks, nature-based tours have been offered since the early-1970s, although they have only recently been marketed as "ecotourism." Despite its historical association with quintessentially "mass" tourism attractions such as beaches and islands, southern Thailand increasingly competes with the north as a national centre of ecotourism activity. In addition to possessing a wide range of land-based natural attractions, including rainforests, mountains, and wildlife sanctuaries, southern Thailand supports several coastal activities, ranging from diving in coral reef areas to kayaking in coastal mangrove forests. The introduction of nature-based activities has infused much-needed diversification into southern Thailand's tourism industry, but has also occurred in a steadily deteriorating environmental situation in which old tin mines scar the landscape, and more recently, an explosion of farmed shrimp cultivation has caused severe mangrove deforestation and toxic pollution of agricultural land.[21] In light of the ailing state of southern Thailand's environmental health, especially in the tourism and shrimp farming industries - two key sources of revenue - it comes as no surprise that government officials and entrepreneurs in

[20] The six Thailand Tourism Awards categories include ecotourism accommodation, tour program, travel agent, tourism development project, tourism development agency, and tourism promotion documentary or article (*Bangkok Post*, 1996c).

[21] Since shrimp farms require the clearing of large tracts of coastal land, already-denuded mangrove reserves have faced increasing pressure: it is estimated that over half of all mangrove forests destroyed between 1961 and 1993 are now occupied by shrimp farms (Tangwisutijit, 1996a: A2).

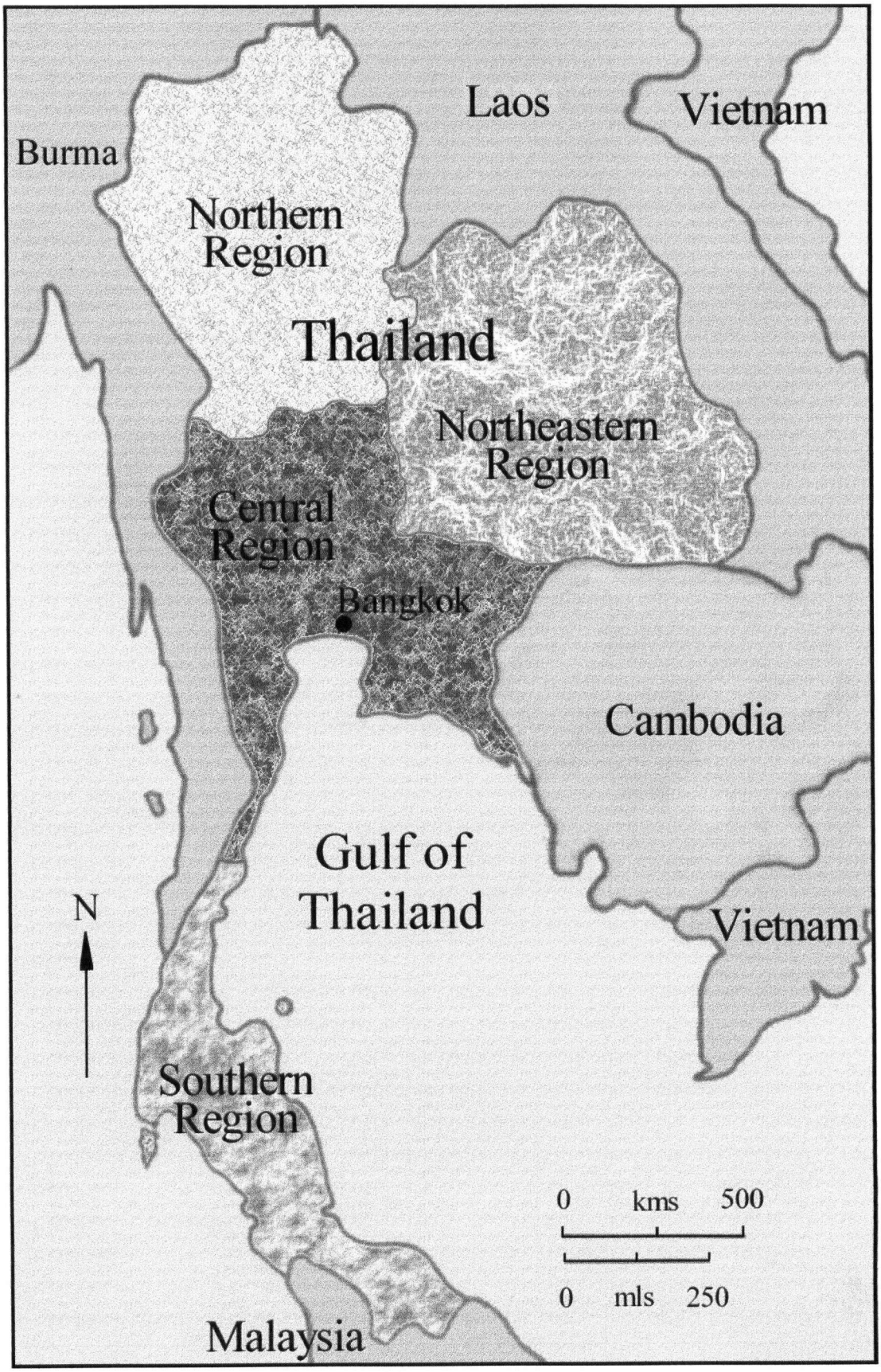


Figure 1.2 Regions of Thailand

southern Thailand have chosen to pursue ecotourism as a path to environmental salvation.

Within southern Thailand, ecotourism activities centre on two pivotal geographical points, one at Khao Sok National Park, and the other at Phuket (Figure 1.3). Located in Surat Thani province, Khao Sok National Park was established in December 1980 and, at 646 square kilometres, is among the largest parks in Thailand. In 1982, a large lake was created adjacent to the park when a valley was flooded to create a reservoir for the Cheo Lan Dam. The lake is surrounded by towering limestone cliffs, and coupled with the aesthetic appeal and recreational opportunities afforded by the lake, the large variety of wildlife attracts visitors on mostly two and three-day camping trips.

In addition to utilizing the existing "mass" tourism infrastructure of the island itself, the Phuket ecotourism "cluster" encompasses the neighbouring provinces of Phangnga and Krabi (Figure 1.4). The Phuket tourism industry is best described as "mass" insofar as scale, orientation, and international connections are concerned. However, beginning in the early-1990s, and particularly in the past four years, the structure of Phuket's industry, while remaining typically oriented towards "mass" forms of tourism, has featured an accelerated move towards more "alternative" patterns of travel, such as ecotourism and "adventure" travel. Aside from the recent efforts of Phuket hotels and resorts to present a more eco-friendly marketing face, scores of small environmentally-oriented companies have emerged in Phuket. As one of Thailand's principal tourism destinations, Phuket currently possesses a huge number and variety of accommodation establishments, tour operators, travel agents, and entertainment facilities.

With over 160 tour agents and operators in Phuket, it of course remains difficult to identify clearly-demarcated "ecotourism" companies, but for the purpose of this research, ecotourism companies are defined as those featuring a combination of the following three sets of characteristics: self-identification as an "alternative" or ecotourism company (this includes companies with such titles as "eco," "nature," "safari," or "trekking" in their company name); a demonstrated concern for environmental or cultural authenticity; and an inclination, expressed through marketing materials and the structure of daily activities, towards those elements of the "alternative" label described later in Chapter Three.[22] Although categorizations often neglect

[22] These include ethical concern towards the host population, a desire to avoid the "beaten path," and a commitment to educational experiences.

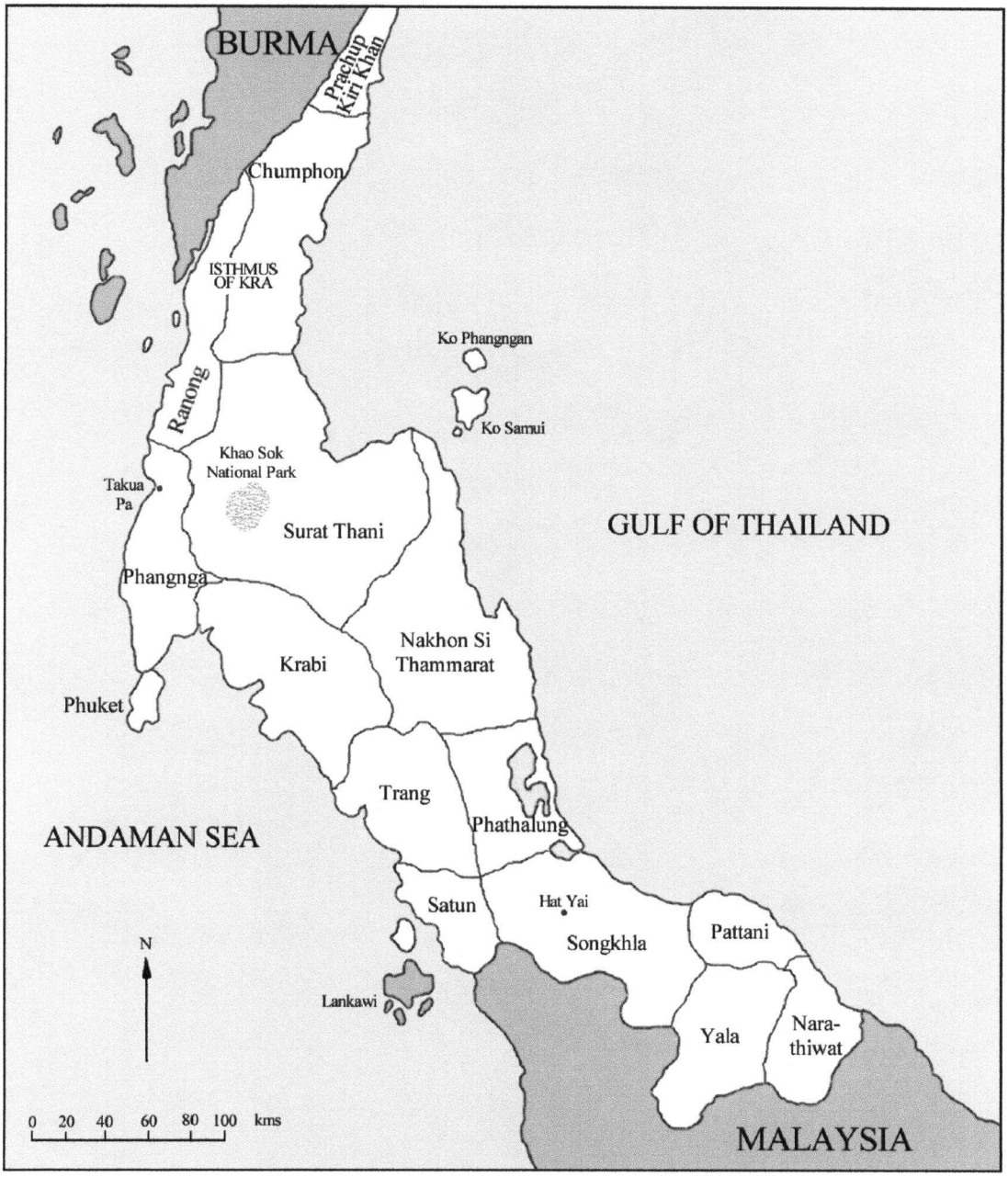


Figure 1.3 Southern Thailand

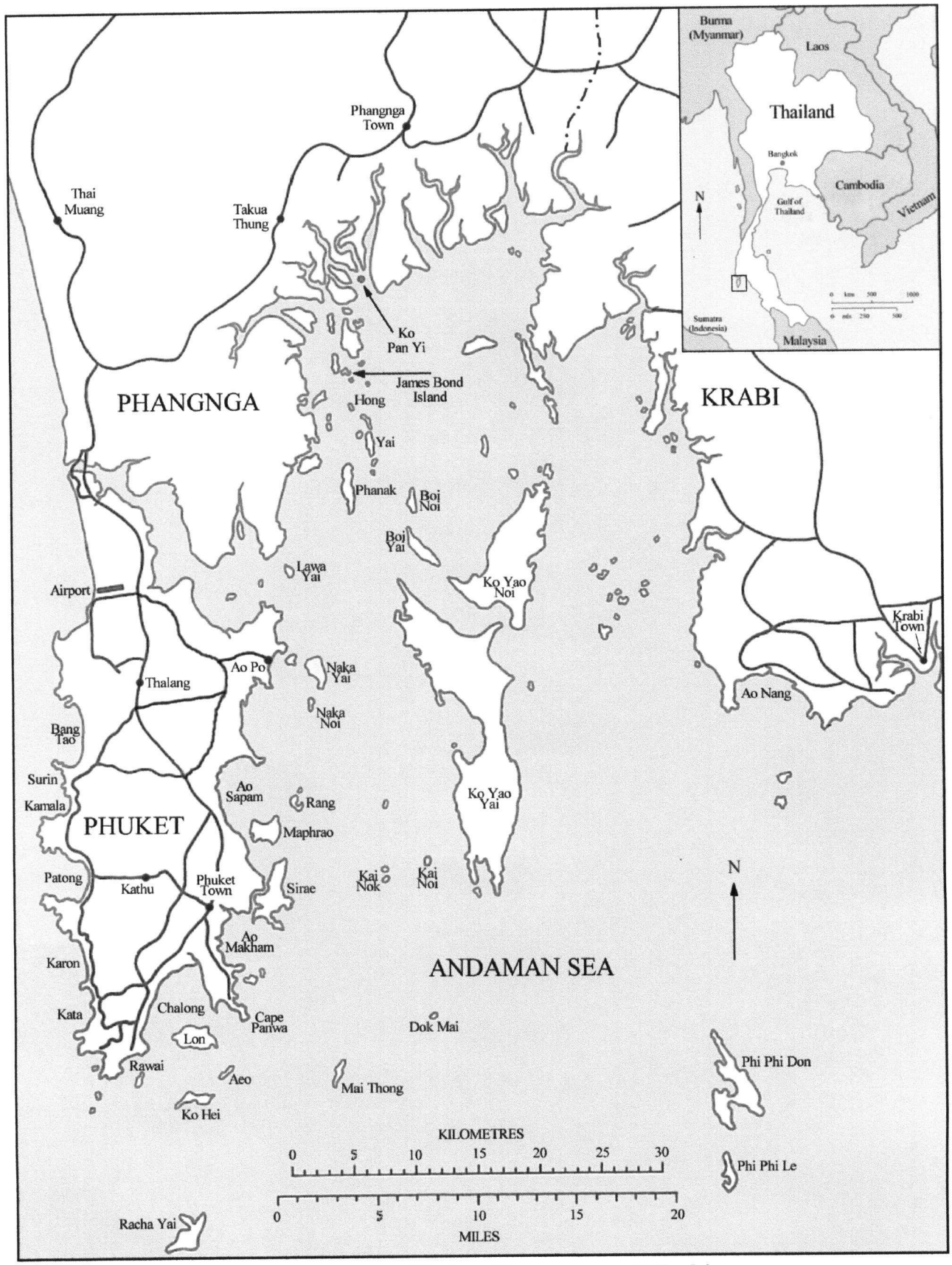


Figure 1.4 Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi

the richness and diversity of the overall tourist experience, the classification of ecotourism companies outlined above provides methodological clarity and allows the analysis in this thesis to focus on specific "ecotourism" companies instead of on the entire recreation and leisure subsets of the tourism industry. Thus, companies engaged in either outdoor activities such as diving, fishing, and sailing or recreational pursuits such as tennis, cycling, and golf are generally not considered "ecotourism," since they almost always lack one or more of the three sets of characteristics described above.[23]

On the basis of this classification, there are twenty ecotourism companies in Phuket, and several others in Phangnga and Krabi.[24] The activities of these companies vary widely, but fall into three broad categories. First, *land-based* companies utilize the natural resources of Phuket and surrounding provinces by offering activities such as mountain biking, trekking, elephant riding, river canoeing and rafting, camping, and birding. All land-based ecotourism companies offer tours ranging from one or two hour adventure trips to more intensive week-long camping and trekking trips to nearby wildlife reserves or national parks throughout southern Thailand (especially Khao Sok National Park). Second, *sea-based* ecotourism companies concentrate their activities on Ao Phangnga, the shallow bay that surrounds the northeast coast of Phuket. By focusing on only sea kayaking and cave exploration within the many limestone islands in Ao Phangnga, sea-based companies remain more limited than their land-based counterparts in the range of activities offered, but similarly feature tours with a wide range in duration, cost, and intensity. Lastly, *accommodation-based* companies operate small-scale "nature resorts" that typically feature the use of local construction materials, the occasional lack of centralized utilities like central sewage treatment or twenty-four hour

[23] The activities of scuba diving companies, although almost never identified by participants, scholars, or planners as "ecotourism," often do feature many elements of "ecotourism" such as a concern for natural authenticity, a desire to avoid commonly-visited sites, and a focus on educational experiences. Notwithstanding the lack of self-identification with "ecotourism" (which disqualifies diving as an ecotourism activity according to my classification), the dilemma of whether or not to include diving companies in the overall ecotourism category reflects the confusion surrounding the term, and it is this dilemma, among many, that necessitates the reconceptualization of ecotourism that I undertake in Chapter Six.

[24] There are many tour companies in Phuket that offer nature-oriented trips, but these trips represent a tiny fraction of the overall product range of these companies. Further, many of these companies subcontract among the twenty ecotourism companies, and do not feature the three sets of characteristics listed earlier. Thus, while many of the 160 tour operators in Phuket participate in some form of nature-based tourism, the list of actual "ecotourism" companies remains small at twenty. I have not compiled a detailed tabulation of these twenty companies for two reasons: this thesis represents a qualitative study based on carefully-selected case studies, and acquiring accurate information on individual companies proves difficult within the acrimonious business climate of Phuket (described in greater detail in the following chapter).

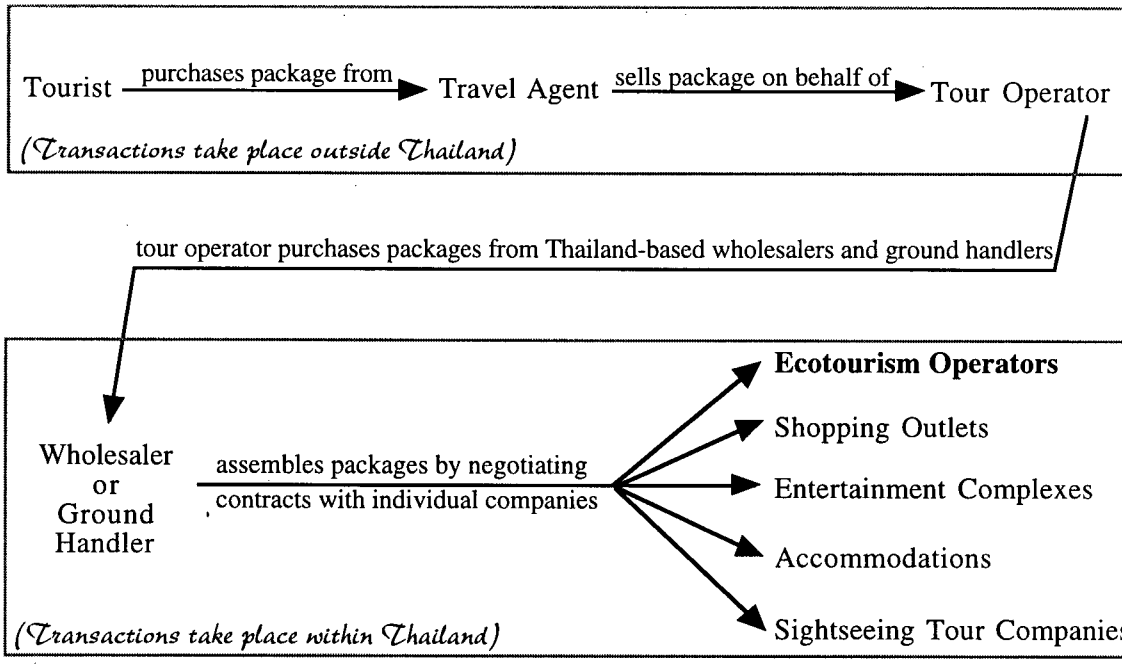
electricity, and the integration of the resort into the surrounding natural and cultural environment. Ecotourism accommodations are rare, existing only in relatively remote regions, such as Phangnga and Krabi, which can support small-scale and inexpensive establishments. The majority of customers participating in both land- and sea-based ecotourism belong to the "mass ecotourist" category discussed in the following chapter, while ecotourism accommodations almost exclusively attract members of the backpacker and adventurer groups.

Of the twenty ecotourism companies operating in Phuket alone, fourteen are land-based, six are sea-based, and none are accommodation-based. The land-based companies feature a high degree of similarity not only in their marketing and structure of operation, but also in the very names of many of the companies: Phuket Trekking Club, Phuket Safari Travel, Phuket Nature Tours, South Nature Company, Sun Nature Company, and Rainforest Safari Eco Nature Tours. Sea-based operators also feature many overlaps in marketing, operations, and nomenclature, but unlike the situation with the land-based companies, this is for a specific reason. Following the success of Jaidee Kayak, the first sea-based ecotourism company in Phuket, as many as four "copy" companies have emerged in the past five years. These copy companies (described in greater detail in Chapter Six) simulate every aspect of Jaidee's trips, and a high degree of corporate espionage permits the continued imitation of Jaidee Kayak. Thus, sea-based ecotourism companies in Phuket remain limited to a relatively small geographical area - where all six companies visit the same three or four islands in Ao Phangnga - and feature virtual replication in the structure of their daytrip operations. Other than Jaidee, and a diving company that has recently branched out into sea kayaking, Phuket's sea-based ecotourism companies are all recently-hatched Jaidee imitations, or "ecopirates" as they are commonly known within local tourism industry circles.

Ecotourism in Phuket relies heavily on two of the three principal mass tourism intermediaries, namely tour operators and travel agents (hotels are the third). Tour operators and *local* travel agents deal with different sectors of the mass tourism market, which provides the bulk of customers for land- and sea-based ecotourism companies. A majority of tourists in Thailand, and Phuket specifically, arrive as part of a package tour purchased through travel agents at home (Airports Authority of Thailand, 1996). There are approximately fifteen

European tour companies operating in the Patong Beach area alone.[25] Packages purchased outside Thailand from multinational tour operators usually include accommodation and air transportation to Thailand, and often come with a small range (5 to 15) of local daytrip options, purchased separately through tour representatives in Phuket.[26] Land- and sea-based ecotourism daytrips serve as simply one branch or niche of these daytrip options, which also include recreational, leisure, entertainment, shopping, and health-related activities. Foreign tour operators purchase their packages from travel wholesalers or "ground handlers" based in Thailand, who in turn, assemble packages by entering into contracts with local tour companies, restaurants, shops, and hotels (Figure 1.5).[27] Foreign tour companies are represented by tour

Figure 1.5 Typical Transaction Flow Between International Tourists and Phuket-Based Ecotourism Operators



Source: Author's data. For a similar diagram in another context, namely foreign tourism investment in Australia, see Dwyer and Forsyth (1994: 517).

[25] Since Europeans represent the vast majority of customers for ecotourism companies in southern Thailand, my research focuses exclusively on European (and one Australian) tour operators, which account for roughly sixty percent of Phuket's packaged tourist arrivals (the remaining arrivals being brought to Phuket by Thai and other Asian tour operators).

[26] Some tour operators even fly tourists to Phuket on their own charter airlines, thereby controlling the entire travel process. In 1995, twenty percent of all international arrivals to Phuket's International Airport arrived on non-scheduled (i.e., charter) flights (Airports Authority of Thailand, 1996).

[27] Ground Handlers essentially serve the same purpose as wholesalers, but unlike wholesalers, generally do not offer accommodations as part of their tour packages.

representatives who live in Phuket and deal directly with tourists. Since customers of any particular tour company have the option of staying at several hotels in the same destination, tour "reps" normally service several hotels each and hold regularly-scheduled meetings with groups of tourists. It is during these meetings that tourists are presented with a range of daytrips available for purchase. Thus, through direct purchasing and marketing links, foreign tour companies, and their representatives, serve as the principal generators of daily business for land- and sea-based ecotourism companies in Phuket.

Although providing a smaller relative share of total business, local travel agents in Phuket represent the second key tourism intermediary that directs "mass" tourists toward ecotourism companies. Unlike foreign travel agents who sell the package holidays of tour operators based abroad, local travel agents sell daytrips, ecotourist or otherwise, to "F.I.T."s (Foreign/Free Independent Travellers). FITs, known also as "walk-ins," purchase their daytrips directly from independently-owned travel agencies, the majority of which operate out of small offices located along the main streets of tourist destinations such as Patong and Karon beaches.[28] These travel agencies, in turn, coordinate the trip directly with ecotourism companies on behalf of FITs who, as both package and non-package ("independent") tourists, carry the option of purchasing daytrips outside the structure of standardized packaged tour options. Just as foreign tour operators possess enormous power in determining the flow of "mass" tourists to individual ecotourism companies, local travel agents, by virtue of their freedom to choose from a range of companies, carry great influence over the travel choices of FITs. For this reason, most ecotourism companies pay hefty commissions of up to 25 percent of the total cost of a trip to travel agents who book FITs with them instead of their competitors. It should be noted, however, that due to the relatively small share occupied by FITs in the overall customer profile of land- and sea-based "mass ecotourism" companies in Phuket, the collective power wielded by individual travel agents remains limited.

Alongside individual ecotourism companies, foreign tour operators, and local travel agencies in the private sector, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) provides public sector support for ecotourism at both the national and regional level. Southern Thailand possesses five of the twenty-two total regional TAT offices located throughout Thailand, and Phuket

[28] Due to the lack of government regulations, standards, and zoning laws, some travel agents are allowed to operate out of tiny, mobile kiosks located on sidewalks.

Town serves as the location for TAT's "Region Four" office which carries responsibility for Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi. At the local scale, the regional TAT office located in Phuket performs several functions. In addition to providing promotional materials for local distribution, the TAT Phuket office collects statistical data, offers training and certification courses, grants licenses to tourism operators and travel agencies, investigates questionable business practices among local tourism companies, coordinates activities with other government ministries such as the Royal Forestry Department (RFD) and the Department of Fisheries, and generally seeks to maintain and monitor the safety standards of the tourism "product."

Niti Kongkrut, a seventeen-year veteran of the TAT, has served since 1993 as the director of the TAT Phuket office. Having attended several international conferences on ecotourism, and having battled with academics and practitioners over the "proper" meaning of ecotourism, Niti stands firm that ecotourism should not mean small-scale travel that fails to generate sufficient local revenue:

> So what is ecotourism? To bring people to enjoy nature and give them knowledge and nobody makes money? No no no...Tourism is business and ecotourism is also business, so it has to make money...In my idea, example going to the jungle, ecotourism has to be something like you bring tourists to that area [jungle], tourists get pleasure or gets knowledge, the local people enjoy benefits and of course the forest will be hurt...The forest will be hurt but up to what level? Depends on how you control it but you must have some stocks, controlled areas, protected areas next to that tourist area, and you must have more than one specific area...you must have two or three, and when you realize that ok, when the nature or animals can't take it anymore, close this area and then this area may be merged or rotated with the protected area...I don't believe in keeping those beautiful nature for nothing, not allowing anybody to enjoy it, or else it's useless (Niti Kongkrut, pers.comm.).[29]

Niti indicates that environmental conservation needs to coexist with the mass tourism industry, and thus, as a TAT regional director, his approach to ecotourism must necessarily promote local economic development rather than "unrealistic" goals centred on the preservation of pristine natural settings for the sake of a handful of foreign ecotourist "explorers."

Despite the common perception among expatriates, tourists, and many local ecotourism company owners that the TAT cares little about environmental issues, Niti not only acknowledges the fundamental environmental dilemma posed by all forms of tourism, but also remains severely limited in his ability to intervene in situations where operators engage in

[29] See Appendix One for a list of dates and locations for all interviews cited as "pers.comm." throughout the thesis, and Appendix Two for interview schedules.

environmentally-suspicious activities. The principal constraint faced by the TAT stems from its lack of authority to formulate government policy or legally prosecute individual companies that break the law. Two recent cases in Phuket involving tourism-related environmental problems illustrate the difficulty faced by Niti in curbing the actions of irresponsible operators. The first case involves the increase in the number of sea canoes (and passengers) travelling through caves and lagoons found within particular limestone islands in Ao Phangnga. Due to the proliferation of sea kayaking companies in the past five years, the small lagoons and extremely narrow caves that lead to them have become packed with tourists. As early as 1993, Niti warned the Ao Phangnga National Park administration about the crowded conditions in Ao Phangnga, but no action was taken (Niti Kongkrut, pers.comm.). Hampered by the TAT's lack of legal authority - only government ministries or the local police can legally shut down tourism operators and prevent tourism operators from entering an area - Niti has "begged" the Royal Forestry Department for years to address the issue of carrying capacity and to enforce strict limits on tourist numbers.[30] Thus, despite accusations made by some ecotourism company owners that Niti and the TAT Phuket office have condoned the congestion of Ao Phangnga (Jim Miller, pers.comm.), the administrative structure of Ao Phangnga has essentially precluded intervention on behalf of the TAT, whose name, ironically, would suggest "authority" in matters related to tourism.

The second case involves the practices of two Thai-owned companies which allow mostly East Asian tourists to walk along the sea floor in areas adjacent to coral tracts. In 1996, a local diving company began offering "seawalking" tours, where tourists pay up to 2,000 baht (US$79) for a chance to walk for 15 minutes amidst striking coral ecosystems. Later in the same year, a local jet-ski operator, realizing the enormous profits to be made, also began bringing tourists on seawalking trips. In addition to the damage caused by walking on coral, tourists from both companies, out of inexperience and ignorance, touch, break, and collect "pristine" tracts of coral.[31] The seawalking issue greatly frustrates Niti, who has had to overcome many bureaucratic and political hurdles in order to solve the problem. With no legal authority, the TAT was forced originally to refer the seawalking dispute to the Phuket Tourism

[30] National parks in Thailand fall under the jurisdiction of the Royal Forestry Department (RFD).

[31] Along with the construction of permanent fixtures such as walking rails along the sea floor, the collection of coral is illegal, and the activities of the seawalking companies have also worried the TAT Phuket office due to the two companies' lack of adequate safety measures.

Committee, which in turn referred the matter to four government departments at the national level: the Office of the National Environment Board (NEB), the Department of Fisheries, the Marine Police branch of the Royal Thai Police Department, and the Harbour Department (of the Ministry of Transport and Communications). The four national departments each stated individually that the matter did not fall within their jurisdiction, and indicated that a *local* authority needed to bring the two companies to court in order to challenge their practices. As Niti hinted, however, the local political setting makes this unlikely, due to the vested interests of "politically-powerful local figures." Eventually, the four national departments decided, after meeting with the TAT Phuket staff and the Phuket Tourism Association (the local tourism business organization), to refer the matter back again to the TAT for further research, thereby unnecessarily prolonging the dispute since the TAT, as indicated above, possesses no "teeth" with which to pursue and prosecute legal violators.

The bureaucratic difficulties faced by Niti and the TAT are exacerbated by his perceived connection to foreign expatriates residing in Phuket. Although foreigners represent fewer than half a percent of Phuket's total population, they completely dominate the local ecotourism industry. The foreigners driving ecotourism in Phuket are a particular subset of foreigners known in Thai as *farang*. *Farangs* are foreigners from Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand; generally speaking, any foreigner with "Caucasian" features is considered a *farang* in Thailand.[32] In 1990, Phuket was officially home to 309 *farangs*, the majority of whom came originally from the United States, England, Italy, and Germany (Government of Thailand, 1991a: 33-43).[33] Due to Thai laws which limit foreign ownership to a maximum of 49 percent, determining the ownership of companies often proves difficult, but based on my research, *at least* fifteen of the twenty land- and sea-based ecotourism companies in Phuket were founded, are co-owned, and/or are currently managed by *farangs*. With links to international conservation and environmental organizations, *farang* ecotourism owners often enjoy access and influence in Thai government agencies and non-governmental organizations, but also complain that the TAT has failed to protect the environment from unscrupulous operators. However, a growing level of trust, and an increasingly cozy relationship, between

[32] The etymological origin of *farang* is *Farangset*, the Thai word for "French."

[33] The actual number of *farangs* living in Phuket on a permanent or semi-permanent basis is much higher, perhaps as high as ten thousand. However, since the vast majority of Phuket's long-term *farang* expatriates remain legally in Thailand by leaving and re-entering Thailand every three months to renew their tourist visas, official government figures for the number of legal permanent residents is misleadingly low.

Niti and resident (*farang*) environmental advocates have reduced these complaints in recent years, but have also attracted the scorn of local Thai tourism industry entrepreneurs, adding again to the criticism levelled at Niti.

The rhetoric of sustainability

This examination of Thailand's recent move towards ecotourism and "sustainable tourism" suggests that national tourism planning is shifting away from the emphasis on growth-oriented "mass" tourism promotion. However, current TAT policy aims not to foster new forms of travel or development, but rather to rehabilitate popular tourism destinations damaged by a decade of reckless growth. As the TAT Governor, Seree Wangpaichit, stated in late-1997, the TAT's short-term target for 1998-2003 is to achieve the "greening of Thai tourism" by facilitating a re-engineering of the existing industry to emphasise respect for the environment, culture, heritage, and traditions. Hence, contrary to many academics and environmental activists who define ecotourism in novel, stringent, or highly-specific terms, the Thai government considers ecotourism a mechanism for spurring environmental improvements to established sites, ultimately in order to both boost overall tourism growth and maintain Thailand's competitiveness on the international tourism market.

Thai tourism planners and industry representatives seem well positioned, and well intentioned, to stem the tide of environmental degradation found in tourism destinations throughout Thailand, but in *practice*, the tourism industry in Thailand continues to develop in an unsustainable manner. When the policies and practices of the Thai government and tourism industry are scrutinized, the recent fascination with sustainable tourism development reveals more the operation of a marketing tool and euphemistic rhetorical device than any serious adherence to the principles of sustainability. During the mid-1980s, the TAT attempted to open up Thailand's national parks to tourism, but retreated in the face of widespread opposition. Despite this controversy, the TAT currently plans to develop ecotourism sites within protected areas, including national parks, by selecting areas with touristic potential and granting tourist licenses to such groups as the Forest Industry Organization, which due to the 1989 logging ban, find itself with shrinking sources of revenue (Hongthong and Tangwisutijit, 1997). Further, the recently-announced "Amazing Thailand" campaign firmly evinces Thailand's lack

of commitment to sustainable tourism.[34] By setting a target of 17 million tourists between 1997 and 1998, the Amazing Thailand campaign seeks to magnify the size and scope of the tourism industry, while at the same time, the Thai government continues to argue paradoxically for the need for carefully-monitored, small-scale, and sustainable tourism development.

By promoting ecotourism while simultaneously leaving the industry status quo largely intact, the Thai government has encouraged the appropriation of the ecotourism label by private operators keen on cashing in on the green label. Other than occasionally rewarding (with Thailand Tourism Awards) large resorts for environmental efforts such as enhanced sewage treatment or recycling facilities, the TAT has for the most part condoned, through its silence, the continual degradation of key tourism sites, including Pattaya, the Phi Phi islands, and Phuket. Thus, in spite of numerous claims made recently hinting at a change in environmental direction for national tourism policy in Thailand, the TAT and the majority of private operators continue to take a "business as usual" approach in their everyday practices. The crucial financial support needed for conservation and rehabilitation projects has diminished due to recent IMF-imposed austerity measures. As part of the 59 billion baht (US$2.3 billion) cut in government spending demanded by the IMF, the TAT has seen its budget for conservation and development of sites cut by over 10 percent (Srivalo and Rawang, 1997: A3). Coupled with the push to rapidly and substantially increase tourist numbers in order to acquire desperately needed foreign exchange, the financial pressures currently faced by the TAT will likely serve only to further compromise efforts at "greening" the tourism industry. Thus, while public rhetoric concerning ecotourism and environmental responsibility perhaps raise, and in some cases reflect,[35] overall environmental awareness in Thai society, the lack of concrete measures on the part of the Thai government raises serious doubts about the future "greening" of tourism in Thailand.

At the local level, the perpetual "passing of the buck" and denial of responsibility on the part of various government departments in Phuket demonstrates the weak institutional

[34] The Amazing Thailand campaign will run from January 1, 1998 to December 31, 1999, and will emphasize shopping, adventure tours, the "Thai Food for the World" exhibition, sporting events, conventions, and cultural demonstrations.

[35] Environmental awareness has grown substantially in the past decade among Thailand's new middle classes, three-quarters of whom, according to a 1995 environmental poll, demonstrated considerable concern for the environment (*The Nation*, 1995: A1, A3). The two English-language newspapers in Thailand, the *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation*, feature a steady supply of environmentally-focused articles, and editorials often discuss environmental issues or reprimand government officials and ministries for neglecting the environment. See also Hirsch (1996) for a thorough discussion of environmentalism in Thailand.

framework in which ecotourism in southern Thailand must operate. In addition, prospects for the future enforcement of environmental laws and regulations on tourist numbers remain gloomy due to a lack of commitment on the part of the Ao Phangnga National Park administration. As a local branch of the National Parks Division of the Royal Forestry Department, the Ao Phangnga administration enjoys legislative and legal authority, but seldom utilizes this power. Claiming that it lacks sufficient manpower, boats, and even gasoline to monitor tourist numbers or chase after illegal tourism operators, the Ao Phangnga administration continues to permit unregulated development in the area. However, the administrative arrangement in Ao Phangnga makes the regulation of tourist arrivals unlikely. Companies who operate in Ao Phangnga must receive official permission from the local National Park office, which then receives ten baht for every tourist brought into the park. With limited resources, and notoriously poor wages, it is of course no surprise that the Ao Phangnga administration lacks the incentive to limit the number of tourists travelling through the park. It is widely speculated among locals that a majority of the total fees collected in Ao Phangnga stays within the local park office, with only a small fraction trickling back to the Royal Forestry Department in Bangkok.[36] Faced with such structural constraints, the TAT Phuket office often finds itself caught between feuding parties, who all separately berate the TAT for not "doing enough." Given the difficulty of pleasing all parties, Niti stated that he would in the future think twice about speaking up on environmental issues since, in his words: "What do I get? Government complains, operators complain, and I lose my image." Considering the poor state of existing regulatory, bureaucratic, and legal frameworks in Phuket and Ao Phangnga, this growing reluctance on the part of the TAT Phuket office to engage in environmental battles promises to exacerbate the lack of ecotourism monitoring, regulation, and standardization in southern Thailand.

1.5 Organization of Dissertation

The flow of this dissertation moves from the general and theoretical to the specific and empirical. Aside from this and the final, concluding chapter, the dissertation contains seven

[36] In addition to having an economic incentive for maintaining high tourist numbers, Ao Phangnga park officials have often neglected the environment in pursuit of private profit. A few years ago, for example, the director of Ao Phangnga National Park was involved in a scandal involving the logging of one of the islands in the bay (an island used, coincidentally, as a "reintegration" site by the Phuket-based Gibbon Rehabilitation Project).

chapters, divided roughly into two parts. The first part deals with methodological, theoretical, and background issues and comprises Chapters Two through Five. Chapter Two immediately follows this introductory chapter and addresses several methodological issues, including definition of research categories, data collection, research sites and subjects, biases, limitations, and the role of the researcher. Although many studies address methodological issues in a casual manner, often confining discussion to a short section within an existing chapter, I have instead devoted an entire chapter to methodological considerations since the *process* of conducting ethnographic fieldwork often proves just as interesting and instructive as actual research results. Chapter Three establishes the theoretical underpinnings of this research, and examines the two bodies of literature, "alternative" tourism and "alternative" development theory (ADT), informing the theoretical direction of this empirical research. The past five decades have featured rapid expansion in both international tourism and global capitalist economic development, and the brisk pace of growth has in turn caused social and environmental problems, the resolution of which has spawned tourism and development "alternatives." In Chapter Four, I explore the history of capitalist development in Thailand, focusing on the historical background, contemporary strategies, and adverse consequences of two decades of frenetic economic growth. In addition to reviewing historical patterns of political incorporation into the central Thai state, Chapter Five surveys the economic and social circumstances of southern Thailand, this dissertation's regional focus, in order to assess the contributions made by "alternative" tourism towards community development. It is only by understanding the economic change, ethnic pluralism, and historical integration taking place in southern Thailand for centuries that we can adequately address the key questions and objectives of this research.

The second half of the dissertation puts forth the results of seven months of fieldwork in southern Thailand, and consists of three empirical chapters based on the three "alternative" tourism perspectives, or themes, explored throughout this thesis: the tourism industry, the international tourist, and the host Thai community. Chapter Six narrows in on the implementation and daily practice of ecotourism in Phuket, and southern Thailand generally. By probing into the structure of the "alternative" tourism niche of Phuket's mass tourism industry, Chapter Six identifies, and describes the activities of, the primary operators shaping ecotourism in the region and beyond. The example of "alternative" tourism in southern

Thailand demonstrates the importance of local circumstances in crafting the outcomes of global forces such as international tourism, and in Chapter Six, I explore the meaning of "alternative" tourism in the specific local context of southern Thailand. Chapter Seven shifts attention to the mostly "Western" tourists participating in "alternative" tourism in and around Phuket, highlighting along the way how differences in the behaviour, motivations, and demands of discrete "alternative" tourist groups generate discrepant patterns of economic, social, and environmental development.

Chapter Eight, the last of the empirical chapters, discloses the practices and policies of "alternative" tourism operators in Phuket, as well as the experiences of individual Thais, in order to evaluate "alternative" tourism's ability to foster community development in southern Thailand. Chapter Eight illustrates the complexities and limitations associated with community development in this particular regional context, and thus stands as evidence of the crucial role played by site-specific conditions in determining the prospects for, and defining the terms of, community development. Chapter Nine draws together empirical lessons from "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand and develops a theoretical critique based on the empirical examples examined throughout the dissertation. After reviewing the ways in which this particular research contributes to our understanding of how "alternative" tourism relates to broader theoretical questions, the concluding chapter discusses the policy implications of this research and provides a localized model of "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand.

CHAPTER TWO. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological approach used to frame and conduct my research. As numerous authors have recently pointed out, conventional ethnographic accounts from the early-twentieth century typically failed to capture the complexities and contradictions of qualitative research.[1] Further, the untenable claims regarding "objectivity" and neutrality made by some researchers led to incomplete, if not misleading, ethnographic analyses since the research process and experience of the researcher colour the final product in fundamental ways. Although, as I concede later in this chapter, the shortcomings of ethnographic research prove insuperable in practice, the benefits outweigh the weaknesses, and it remains imperative for researchers to address the various obstacles and limitations encountered while undertaking qualitative fieldwork. In the process of conducting and completing this research project, I learned above all else that the *research process* invariably shapes the objectives, results, priorities, and interpretations of *all* research, both qualitative and quantitative. This chapter is therefore meant to convey an impression of how the research process informed the choices made, and direction taken, during both the fieldwork and write-up stages of my research.

The content and structure of this chapter are designed to provide a broad methodological backdrop to the research. Rather than merely describe the technical aspects of my research methodology, I choose instead to place the overall research process within the context of more general theoretical questions. I begin by justifying my interest in, and commitment to, the study of "development" which, as the discussion in the following chapter indicates, represents a topic characterized by widespread disagreement and contention. Following a brief examination of ecotourism - one of the key concepts of this thesis - I turn my attention to the individual companies and groups of tourists that served as the subjects and case studies of my research. In a separate section, I then expose the biases and limitations of my research strategy while spelling out how these may have influenced the research process. Among the various complications I encountered, the social and cultural

[1] For a critique of "conventional" ethnographic accounts, see Clifford (1988), England (1994), and Marcus and Fischer (1986).

limitations of conducting research in Thailand proved the most confounding and complex: the more I thought I knew about Thai society, the less I actually understood on a daily basis. In order to truly appreciate how circumstances and personal interactions influenced my research, it is crucial that I reflect upon cultural aspects of fieldwork such as negotiating access within, and drawing conclusions about, a foreign research setting. In the final section, I review the current crisis in ethnographic representation and examine the ways in which I attempt to overcome empirical and theoretical research hurdles. Although this thesis inevitably struggles with the numerous barriers intrinsic to all ethnographic research, the rich data and intricate analysis made possible through qualitative methods warrant and perhaps even justify the prioritization of such a methodology. Along with acknowledging the critical role of the researcher, a qualitative approach that accentuates methodological context yields both a deeper understanding of the overall research process and a better appreciation of the final ethnographic product.

2.2 Definition and Justification of Research Categories

In spite of the growing cynicism and criticism of some scholars, the notion of "development" continues to wield enormous theoretical and empirical influence, and merits attention in an age of globalization and growing integration among the world's regions. This research attempts to examine "development" in terms of economic, social, and environmental change in a local context, especially as it relates to the global "flows" of tourism. Further, the mounting tension in Thailand between top-down, conventional development planning and more "alternative," ethical, and community-based approaches demands serious research consideration, and *necessarily* compels me - as a student of contemporary Thai society - to address and reconcile this tension. In a time of academic ambivalence and uncertainty toward "development studies," ethnographic fieldwork, and textual representations of the "Other," scholars remain obliged to continue asking why there are global "haves" and "have-nots," and further, what can be done to evenly distribute the benefits and costs of human material and technological "progress." Acknowledging the philosophical limitations of "development" does not, therefore, diminish our responsibility as researchers to address issues of human inequality, exploitation, and suffering. Hence, while recognizing its

theoretical and practical weaknesses, I remain committed to the study of "development," both as a body of theory and as an analytical, *empirical*, tool by which to understand local, and global, change. Furthermore, for those hoping to understand economic and social change in Thailand, "development" represents far more than just a discursive device, or a static, academic field of inquiry (Rigg, 1998). It instead permeates and intersects the everyday experiences of Thais, from rice farmers in the central plains, to minority "hill-tribes" in the north, to Muslim fishermen in the south. It has become, in short, a component of Thai society that affects, repels, seduces, or otherwise captures the imagination of virtually every resident of Thailand.

Among the many policy avenues pursued by "Third World" government planners, tourism remains a popular engine of "development." Aside from a few exceptions (Bhutan and Myanmar, for example), "developing" countries have utilized their "comparative advantage" in labour and physical resources (sun, sea, sand, and occasionally sex) to attract tourism-related foreign exchange and investment. Tourism represents a non-visible export industry, and belongs to a larger set of export-oriented industrialization (EOI) "development" strategies. The connection between tourism and development is complex, and its treatment has undergone an interesting progression among scholars from entirely optimistic, economistic assessments to more balanced, politically-informed critiques (see Britton, 1982; Harrison, 1992). In the Thai context, tourism and development are brought together in many spheres, the most important being recent attempts by the government to introduce ecotourism as a strategy for "sustainable," community-based development. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Thailand provides the perfect setting to assess the nature, and strength, of the relationship between tourism and development, and in particular, the potential for more equitable, socially-responsible, and environmentally-sustainable development. Examining the interplay between local circumstances in southern Thailand and global tourist "flows" of people, capital, ideas, and technology allows us to understand the relationship between tourism and "development" in a specific context.

Responding to the perceived drawbacks of conventional, mass tourism - including economic dependency, environmental destruction, social disruption, and cultural "pollution" - the international tourism industry has moved toward purportedly new, "alternative" forms of tourism that feature flexibility, authenticity, sensitivity, and sustainability. Although many

tourisms fall under the rubric of "alternative" tourism, ecotourism is easily the most recognized and visible. Ecotourism is the fastest growing segment of tourism, itself the fastest growing industry in the world. Nature-based tourism currently expands by approximately 10 to 30 percent annually, compared to only 4 percent for tourism overall (Israngkura, 1996: 12). There exists a dizzying array of definitions for ecotourism, some taking what Miller and Kaae (1993) call an "active" approach whereby ecotourists take a proactive role in conservation (Richardson, 1993; Wallace and Pierce, 1996; Ziffer, 1989), and others calling merely, or "passively," for tourists to remain unobtrusive and minimize their environmental impacts (Figgis, 1993; Orams, 1995). Initially, most studies took a "passive" approach, defining ecotourism simply as travel to "relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas" (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1988: 2).

Currently, the most commonly accepted and cited definition of ecotourism takes a more fluid approach, and derives from a set of principles outlined by the Ecotourism Society, an international, non-profit organization dedicated to making tourism a viable tool for conservation and sustainable development: *Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people*. This definition of ecotourism embodies and integrates several principles: ecological sustainability, ethical and responsible tourist behaviour, local community-based development, and nature-based travel experiences. Purposely general, this definition is meant to serve as a guideline for mostly "Western" ecotourists and ecotourism operators hoping to fuse tourist demand for nature-based experiences with a concern for local "development" and conservation. Ecotourism, then, meshes the growing demand for novel, authentic, and adventurous travel with "sustainable development," defined by the Brundtland Commission as "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987: 43).

Some scholars argue that, rather than serving as a narrowly-defined checklist, ecotourism instead represents a set of operational and philosophical principles (Ivanko, 1996, McLaren, 1998). Viewed in this way, ecotourism does not *necessarily* include specific nature-based activities such as bird-watching, wildlife safaris, or other forms of outdoor

recreation since these particular activities constitute "nature tourism," which according to ecotourism "purists" (see Christ, 1996) qualify as ecotourism if, and only if, they feature social and environmental responsibility as well (Dearden, 1997). However, others writing about, or working in the field of, ecotourism dispute this stringent view of ecotourism, and claim instead that ecotourism principles can apply to, and improve, *any* form of tourism (Cohen, 1987b; Weaver, 1993). Needless to say, the majority of scholars and tourism industry representatives conceptualize ecotourism as a discrete, dynamic, and measurable "type" of tourism that avoids the unsustainable and insensitive practices of mass tourism (see Botrill and Pearce, 1995; Honey, 1998).

Within the general ecotourism category, several measures contribute to internal differentiation. Lindberg (1991: 3) categorizes ecotourists according to the intensity of their interest in taking "ecotrips": they range from "hard-core nature tourists" who travel specifically to remove litter, receive conservation training, or participate in other such activities, to "casual nature tourists" who experience nature incidentally, and often accidentally, as part of a larger holiday. In addition to this motivation-based categorization, ecotourists are often divided according to their behaviour and impact, with the more "hard-core" types supposedly featuring low demand for luxury, high cultural and environmental sensitivity, and low impact on local ecosystems and "cultures." The level of involvement with organized tourism also serves as a classificatory device, where ecotourists are divided into individual travellers, individuals in commercial organized tours, individuals in nonprofit organization tours, and travel agent clients (Ashton and Ashton, 1993). Although the existence and utility of ecotourism categories - as with those in "alternative" tourism generally - remain empirically ambiguous, self-identified ecotourists and ecotourism operators nevertheless continue to promote the notion of categorical distinction based on myriad measures of internal differentiation.

In theory, ecotourism represents an ecologically sound, and culturally sensitive, way to enjoy nature-based touristic activities. In practice, however, the term often lacks clarity or cogency. As Cater (1994: 5) points out, both ecotourism and sustainable development "tend to be overworked terms, neatly co-opted by political and business interests to confer an aura of respectability to their activities." Further, as I discuss in greater detail in Chapters Three and Eight, ecotourism, and "sustainable tourism" generally, do not always promote

sustainable development, since the sustained growth of tourism, even through nature-based forms of travel such as ecotourism, often require environmental and social compromises that threaten the long-term, sustainable development of tourism regions (Dearden, 1993; Wall, 1997). Thus, despite ecotourism's emphasis on environmental conservation and awareness, several case studies have illustrated either its failure to foster sustainability (Place, 1995; Steele, 1995) or the difficulty of implementing the principles of ecotourism in practice (Lindberg *et al*, 1996; Wallace and Pierce, 1996).

Definitions of ecotourism also suffer from ambiguity. What is a "natural area" for example? How do you measure "responsible tourism" or determine which "locals" are benefiting from tourism? Furthermore, positing one person as an "ecotourist" and another as something else is extremely difficult in practice, as the scant empirical work on ecotourism has demonstrated (Boo, 1990; Hvenegaard and Dearden, 1998). The biggest dilemma facing ecotourism, however, is not operational ambiguity or political co-option, but rather the rigorous and inflexible nature of the principles underpinning the whole concept. The argument that "true" ecotourism can exist only when strict numeric restrictions are maintained necessitates and even favours a form of exclusion based on the "carrying capacity" concept: in the context of poor government regulation, where strict quotas are not maintained, only enlightened, sensitive, and occasionally wealthy ecotourists can belong to this exclusive club (Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Tisdale, 1995). As I will argue throughout this thesis, ecotourism as a fixed category exists only as a theoretical, or analytical, tool, a Weberian ideal type stripped of any true empirical relevance. For the purpose of this thesis, however, I employ the term only insofar as it is used as a measure of *self-identification* for ecotourism operators; the connection between "mass" and "alternative" is overlapping and co-dependent in Thailand, and thus, I have avoided, wherever possible, treating ecotourism as an exclusive or separate phenomenon. Ultimately, I hope to demonstrate the widespread relevance and applicability of ecological principles to the entire tourism industry, and argue, with Western (1993: 10), that "much as we may want to define ecotourism narrowly, in reality the principles applied to the mass market can do more good for conservation - and

alleviate more harm - than a small elitist market."[2]

For the sake of methodological clarity and efficiency, I divide the tourists interviewed for this research into three groups. Considering the empirical difficulty of separating tourists into discrete categories, I employ a relational approach based on "alternative" characteristics. Before describing the three groups, however, I will outline the theoretical framework that informs my tourist categorization. In this thesis, what makes some tourists more "alternative" than others is based on two measures of classification. First, *self-identification* with the "alternative" label implies numerous things: a concern for authenticity, an ethical concern towards the host population, a desire to avoid the proverbial, and actual, "beaten path," and a commitment to educational experiences. While all the tourists I interviewed possess all or most of these characteristics to varying degrees, some clearly consider themselves "alternative" tourists, while others do not. Second, "alternative" in this thesis is synonymous with "authentic," but not in any objective, reified sense. Rather, "alternative" refers to a greater *subjective* sense of, and especially concern for, authenticity which serves to distinguish one group from another. This relational approach based on authenticity allows us to better understand how "alternative" and "mass" tourism are related. As I argue later in the thesis, mass and alternative forms of tourism represent fundamentally similar concepts, but what exactly determines and characterizes the relationship between the two? Considering the absence of distinct and clear boundaries, their relationship is best conceptualized within the framework of what I will refer to as a mass-alternative tourism continuum (see Figure 2.1 on page 51).

Instead of positing two broad tourism categories, a continuum precludes dichotomous definitions since pluralistic models of tourist typologies greatly reduce the number of anomalous or contradictory cases. People are rarely *only* a mass or alternative tourist: temporal and spatial variation hinder attempts at dichotomous classifications. Hence, virtually every tourist experience involves both "mass" and "alternative" characteristics simultaneously, while the balance between mass and alternative differs across space, time, or both. Since few, if any, forms of tourism ever stand alone as either mass *or* alternative, I

[2] It should be noted, of course, that some tourist sites are more environmentally sensitive than others, and thus environmental policies need to reflect the different conditions and requirements of individual sites. Further, as Dearden (1997) points out, the application of ecotourism principles to the conventional mass tourism industry is a commendable objective, but often proves difficult in practice due to the free-market, profit-driven economics that fuel most forms of tourism.

place specific tourist activities on a tourism continuum based on the one feature intrinsic, in varying degrees, to most forms of tourism: the quest for authenticity (Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1976). I use tourist activities instead of particular forms of tourism or tourists as the unit of classification, since, as mentioned above, most tourists engage in both mass and "alternative" activities, while forms of tourism comprise the collective effect of all individual tourist activities. The desire for authenticity implicit in a tourist activity is measured by a tourist's willingness to forgo comfort, familiarity, money, convenience, or time in their pursuit of, what they perceive to be, an authentic experience. The more concerned a tourist is to achieve authenticity, the greater the sacrifice a tourist is willing to make. The greater the sacrifice, in turn, the more "alternative" a tourist activity becomes. Contrary to most conceptions of tourism classification, therefore, a tourist activity is not defined as mass or "alternative" according to infrastructural scale, numbers of tourists, source of tourist motivations, or nature of impacts on host populations. Instead, the intensity of a tourist's quest for authenticity defines where that tourist's activities fit on the mass-alternative tourism continuum.

Before moving on to my classification of tourist groups, I should at this point clarify the meaning of authenticity employed in this research. The search for authenticity has formed a consistent theme in a number of theoretical works concerning tourism, and a clear evolution and development of the idea can be seen from one major work to the next. Beginning with Boorstin (1964), authenticity was considered a long-lost feature of travel, available only in the golden era of individual "travellers" In the world of the "pseudo-event," tourists demand, are satisfied with, and perpetuate thoroughly inauthentic, contrived touristic experiences. MacCannell (1976) represents the next major contribution to the idea of authenticity in tourism. MacCannell claims that tourists travel due to both their alienation with the fragmentary and disillusioning nature of work in industrial society, and the difficulty of penetrating the "back" (as opposed to "front" - see Goffman, 1959) regions of life where "truth" and authenticity lie. Among those authors developing the notion of authenticity after MacCannell, Erik Cohen has been the most prolific and important. His early work on authenticity (Cohen, 1979) took MacCannell's conception of alienation and authenticity, and extended it beyond the nature of tourist settings to include tourist impressions and perceptions of authenticity.

Discussion of, and debate over, authenticity within the tourism literature have moved well beyond Boorstin's skeptical and pessimistic notions, but it was only with Cohen's later work (1988; 1989) that the idea of a universal, reified, and simplistic authenticity was truly pushed beyond its theoretical and empirical limitations. Cohen questions the notion of a commonly-held, universally-understood authentic entity, and argues instead that authenticity means different things to different people, involving in effect a *negotiation* between tourist and host. Further, while arguing like MacCannell that authenticity is directly linked to one's degree of alienation in modern society, Cohen (1988) introduces the idea of *emergent authenticity*, which entails a conception of authenticity as a perpetually changing and socially constructed phenomenon that not only varies from one individual to the next, but also over time and space. Thus, what is authentic to one tourist (or host) may not be to another, and what may be inauthentic in one historical period may eventually come to be seen as authentic in another.[3] In recent years, most analysts have extended and expanded on Cohen's idea of a socially constructed and emergent authenticity (see Harrison, 1992; Dearden and Harron, 1994; Sharpley, 1994).

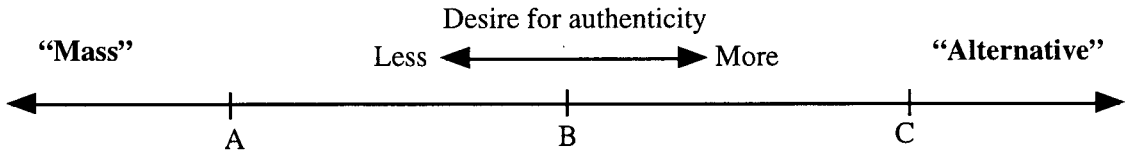
My approach to authenticity, as embodied in the goals, definitions, and empirical results of this research, incorporates three characteristics. First, following the lead of the authors listed above, I treat authenticity as an arbitrary, socially-constructed concept which varies among individuals and features perpetual negotiation in meaning and relevance. Second, I am interested in how notions of authenticity are constructed by both tourists *and* hosts since, contrary to those studies of authenticity which predominantly spotlight host manipulations of touristic expectations of authenticity (see MacCannell, 1989; Silver, 1993; Stanton, 1989), this research also explores the responses of discrepant tourist groups to conditions of authenticity which, in Thailand, remain complex and vary over time and space (Dearden and Harron, 1992). Third, as an elaborate and subjective concept, authenticity incorporates a wide array of "real" experiences, but for the purposes of this research, authenticity comprises what Pearce (1988) and Pearce and Moscardo (1986) call genuine "people and settings." By assessing the importance, role, and tourist expectations of authenticity in both *cultural* and *environmental* terms, I hope to link issues such as tourist lifestyle consumption and authenticity to the implementation of community development in

[3] See Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) for a discussion of the social construction and "invention" of tradition and authenticity.

southern Thailand.

As mentioned earlier, I divide tourists into three broad categories or groups which relate to one another according to their position on the mass-alternative tourism continuum (Figure 2.1). The first group of tourists comprises passengers of Phuket-based "ecotourist" companies. Most people (including the passengers themselves) would characterize these tourists as overwhelmingly "mass" in that they stay in five-star resorts, visit Phuket for less than one week, on average, and choose an "ecotour" as just one of many daily excursions. Most importantly, authenticity is of peripheral concern: fun, clement weather, and memorable experiences represent instead the crucial elements of the trip. These tourists are high-spending passengers who enjoy having something exciting or adventurous to do while on a short, packaged holiday. The companies that offer these daily excursions market themselves, and their trips, as ecotourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism, or any combination thereof. The trips typically feature short trips to areas of natural interest such as a rainforest or a marine national park, and last no longer than six hours from start to finish. Company minivans comb the island every day picking up these passengers from their hotels,

Figure 2.1 Mass-Alternative Tourism Continuum



	Tourist Categories	Desire for authenticity
A	*Mass ecotourist* customers of organized, one-day trips with self-identified ecotourism operators in Phuket	Low; satisfied with fairly "basic" level of authenticity, and primarily interested in sun, sea, and sand, rather than in the cultural or physical landscape of Phuket
B	Customers of organized two or three week *adventure travel* trips, who pay large amounts of money to live and travel "like locals" in areas off the beaten mass tourism track	High; willing to give up comfort, familiarity, and especially money, but not for more than a couple of weeks at a time
C	Independent, *world travellers*, known also as backpackers, who aggressively reject all forms of organized "mass" tourism	Enormous; willing to give up time, comfort, and familiarity for authenticity

Source: Author's data.

transferring them back at the end of the afternoon. The excursions are mostly purchased through travel representatives of packaged tour companies, thereby interweaving short daily ecotourism excursions with the lucrative, and well developed packaged tourism industry in Phuket. Although I wish to illustrate the empirical complexity of such terms, I will follow Pleumarom (1993), among others, and, for the sake of simplicity, refer to this group as *mass ecotourists*.[4]

The second category of tourists comprises customers of "adventure travel" companies, which are proliferating throughout Europe and North America. Originally a niche segment of the student travel market, adventure travel companies have branched out and now make up a visible, and growing, component of the conventional travel industry. Alongside the brochures of corporate mass tourism companies like Contiki, Thomas Cook, and Thomson, one now finds myriad brochures selling small-group adventures and unconventional travel off the beaten track. These companies feature the two crucial elements identified by Cohen (1987b) that underpin "alternative" tourism: ethical concern toward host populations, and a high degree of interest in authentic experiences. A quick scan of some brochures evinces the emphasis on authenticity, exclusivity, adventure, and responsibility:

> The open road means freedom from regimented itineraries, freedom from crowds on the well-worn tourist trail, freedom to stop longer in one place for a colourful festival; freedom to move if wildlife has been spotted elsewhere; freedom to reach places other people haven't even heard of in Africa, Asia, and South America (Exodus Overland Expeditions, 1996/97 Africa, Asia, and South America Brochure).

> Our small group size is very important. It allows us the flexibility to use an incredible variety of local transport and stay in accommodation that would simply be impractical for a bigger group. It means we are more sensitive to fragile local cultures that we come into contact with along the way - we blend in, rather than dominate (Exclusive Explorations, 1997 Brochure).

> Five star hotels are just not suitable for G.A.P. travellers, as it creates a western environment to accommodate arms length travel...What we do offer is clean, simple hotels and hosterias that keep us unintrusive and have a low impact on the surrounding culture - allowing us to come and go without disturbance while leaving behind only footprints (G.A.P. Adventures, 1996/97 South and Central America Brochure).

The customers of these "adventure travel" companies are for the most part urban professionals with a high concern for authenticity and unique positional experiences.

[4] This label derives partly from Cohen's (1989) use of the term "mass alternative" tourism to characterize mass forms of alternative travel activities, such as trekking in northern Thailand.

Adventure travel, ecotourism, and "alternative" tourism in general all appeal to this group of tourists, who as members of the new middle classes, wish to mark distinctions based on modes of consumption and lifestyle. As Ley (1996) points out, authenticity constitutes a central ingredient in the "cultural new class" *habitus*, and is, furthermore, used to mark distinctions in a banal, jaundiced mass consumer market.[5] As part of the adventure, this group of tourists pays a large amount of money - on average US$1,000 for a two week trip with the companies cited above, not including food, airfare, or domestic transportation - simply for the chance to "live like the locals" in very basic accommodation, and physically taxing travelling conditions. Without meaning to sound too facetious, I will refer to this group throughout this thesis as the *adventurers.*

Lastly, the independent "world traveller" category consists of mostly young "travellers" who take prolonged journeys and desperately strive to avoid all manifestations of mass, packaged tourism, including large-scale facilities, "integrated" resort complexes, and modes of travel such as jet aircraft and air-conditioned buses. In Thailand, this group of tourists usually congregates at Khao San Road in Bangkok and then fans out to "unspoiled" destinations. As an area begins to attract people, facilities, and infrastructure, it loses its remote, and of course "alternative," quality, thereby forcing this group to move on to the next paradise, until it too becomes "ruined" as well. In the southern Thai context, Ko Samui was perfect "twenty years ago," then it was Ko Phangngan, and then Ko Tao, etc. Currently, Krabi is the unspoiled destination of choice, but as expected, it too is growing too popular "for its own good." These world travellers feature an almost obsessive fascination with authenticity, and make enormous claims regarding their ability to melt into local Thai life by "living like a local." I will, out of convenience, refer to this group as *backpackers* throughout this thesis, while recognizing that the number of actual tourists travelling with backpacks is large and diverse. Relying on concisely defined categories proves difficult empirically, but nonetheless proves necessary in attempting to frame this research in an analytically coherent and efficient fashion.

[5] Habitus refers to the unconscious dispositions, classificatory schemes, and taken-for-granted preferences of a particular social group (Bourdieu, 1984).

2.3 Data Collection

This research project involved two initial stages. First, a topic was chosen within a broad area of inquiry, and then narrowed down to specific research questions. Second, and just as important, a decision was made concerning the methods for collecting data. Since every project requires different types of data, methodological strategies vary considerably from one project to the next. A balance between qualitative and quantitative research is often sought, but the degree to which each is employed depends on the particular objectives of the research. A major difference between qualitative and quantitative approaches comes in what each hopes to accomplish. Quantitative research relies heavily on "objective" interpretation of numerical data, and strives for reliability, validity, and generalizability. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is "multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 2). What qualitative research loses in reliability, validity, and generalizability, it gains in detail and understanding. Hence, other than a brief survey, my research relies principally on qualitative methods as a means of gaining a deeper understanding of the relationship between tourism and development in southern Thailand. In devising a research strategy, I sought to achieve *triangulation* in two areas: data collection methods and data sources.

As Janesick (1994) indicates, triangulation broadens our understanding of substance and methods, as well as serving as a heuristic tool for the researcher. By combining qualitative methods like participant observation and semi-structured interviews with quantitative survey work and analysis of secondary materials, I utilized as many methodological avenues as possible. Along with methodological triangulation, I achieved *data source* triangulation by relying on several groups of people as sources of information: tourists; ecotourism company owners and managers, who gave me both the "leader" and private sector points of view; ecotourism guides and company employees, who gave me the host point of view; and members of Thai government agencies, who provided the "official" public, institutional view. I conducted the research for this dissertation in two stages, the first from June until August, 1996, and the second, more substantive stage, from May until October, 1997. The first research trip was spent developing ideas and getting a general "feel" for the ecotourism industry in Thailand, while the second was entirely spent collecting

data in specific field sites. My data consist of the following:

- *Taped semi-structured indepth interviews*: I taped a total of 56 formal interviews averaging just over an hour each. Some interviews were conducted with couples or involved group discussions, thus bringing the total number of people interviewed to eighty-three. The taped interviews include the following number of people: 38 "mass ecotourists," 6 divers and dive-shop owners, 8 tour company representatives, 13 "adventurers," 11 "backpackers," 2 officials from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (one in Phuket and one in Bangkok), 3 owners of Phuket-based ecotourism companies, a Royal Forestry volunteer working at Khao Sok National Park in Surat Thani Province, and a Swiss volunteer working at the Gibbon Rehabilitation Project in Phuket (see Appendix Two for interview schedules).

- *Untaped semi-structured indepth interviews*: These interviews were all conducted with ecotourism company guides, and were untaped due to the difficulty of carrying out "natural" conversations with the Thai guides in the presence of a tape recorder. These untaped interviews featured two parts: first, a set of questions which required information of a personal or controversial nature (answers were memorized and recorded later that evening); and second, a more formal set of questions, the answers to which were noted immediately in the presence of the interviewees. In many cases, these interviews (11 in total) were spread out over several days since time restraints and weather (sudden and heavy rainstorms) often precluded uninterrupted interviews on the tour boats.

- *Untaped structured short interviews*: I conducted approximately 20 brief (20 to 30 minutes each) interviews with local travel agents. These interviews were based on an orally-administered structured questionnaire dealing with the business aspects of the tourist industry in Phuket.

- *Self-administered surveys*: In addition to conducting interviews, I collected over 250 self-administered questionnaires completed by "mass ecotourists" on daytrips. The results of these surveys were used to formulate interview schedules for mass ecotourists (see Appendix Three for a copy of the survey).

- *Orally-administered surveys*: Due to frequent downpours on the daytrips, 71 mass ecotourists on daytrips were asked to verbally answer the survey, rather than fill it in themselves (which was often difficult due to wind and rain).

- *Field notes and diary entries*: At the end of each trip or research visit, I entered field notes directly into a laptop computer. In addition, I kept daily journal notes, in

which I recorded personal observations and maintained a written account of research ideas as they developed. My field note and journal entries amount to over 350 pages of text.

❧ *Newspaper articles*: I read both of Thailand's major English-language newspapers (*The Nation* and *Bangkok Post*) on a daily basis. Backdated articles (from 1989 onwards) relating to research themes were gathered at the Thailand Information Centre (TIC) at Chulalongkorn University, which keeps well-organized thematic files of newspaper clippings. Finally, I collected monthly regional publications such as the *Phuket Gazette*, a tourist-oriented, English-language monthly publication.

❧ *Government statistics*: The National Statistical Office in Bangkok provided me with the majority of my statistics, which include data at the national, regional, and provincial scales. I also acquired valuable statistical data from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and the Royal Forestry Department. Through contacts in the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), I also managed to secure an unofficial English translation of the recently-released Eighth National Development Plan (1997-2001).

❧ *Private-sector documents*: Documents from national development agencies (including the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)), academic conferences, and private tourism operators (in the form of advertisement brochures) represent a good source of secondary information. Included in this category are the various (approximately 40 in total) magazine and newspaper articles written about Phuket-based ecotourism companies by authors throughout Southeast Asia, North America, and Europe.

2.4 Research Setting, Sites, and Subjects

The fieldwork for this research took place in three provinces in southern Thailand: Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi (see Figure 1.4 on page 29). While Phuket enjoys international fame as a tourist destination, Phangnga and Krabi remain relatively unknown regions. The tourism industry of southern Thailand increasingly relies on connections between these adjacent provinces, and tourist developers have begun to utilize (perhaps "exploit" is more apposite) the undeveloped natural attractions of Phangnga and Krabi. The short distances and convenient transportation networks between the three provinces have allowed "mass" tourists staying in Phuket to make daytrips to uncrowded and "unspoiled" destinations in Phangnga and Krabi. By marketing Phangnga and Krabi as "Phuket, twenty years ago,"

tourism operators have begun to manipulate successfully tourist nostalgia for "untouched" natural attractions. With the imminent construction of an airport, rapid tourism development in Krabi is likely on the horizon. As of yet, however, tourism in Phangnga and Krabi remains peripheral to the overall industry, and serves predominantly as an outlet or spillover reservoir for the developed mass tourism industry in Phuket.

There are three groups of subjects in my research: tourism industry representatives, tourists, and "hosts." I examine the industry perspective in my research predominantly by interviewing owners and managers of self-identified ecotourism companies based in Phuket. This group varies considerably, however, and also includes dive shop owners, travel agents, tour representatives, small-group "adventure travel" outfits, and government representatives. Second, as outlined above, I divide tourists into three categories based on their degree of self-identification as "alternative tourists" as well as on their varying degrees of concern for authenticity. As I will discuss later in this thesis, these three groups - mass ecotourists, adventurers, and backpackers - were approached and interviewed in different locations, and often under markedly different conditions. Finally, "hosts" include Thais involved directly in the tourism industry in southern Thailand. This group features the most variety, and includes guides, cooks, drivers, receptionists, elephant mahouts, and managers. In selecting "informants" for my research, I chose to employ *maximum variety sampling* (Morse, 1994: 229) which involves "deliberately selecting a heterogeneous sample and observing commonalities in their experiences." This sampling technique not only produces useful case descriptions, but also illuminates shared experiences and general trends. By utilizing a non-probability form of sampling, I am deliberately rejecting quantitative techniques that seek to determine "margin of error" and "confidence level." In this research, recording and analyzing individual experiences thus carried greater significance than achieving such quantitative research measures as replicability, objectivity, or generalizability.

Although my research involved visits to several geographical sites in southern Thailand, five individual companies provided the micro-sites in which my research took place. Whether it was participating in a trip, interviewing customers (tourists), or staying in overnight accommodations, I carried out the vast majority of my research with these companies, albeit to varying degrees. Four of these companies serve as minor case studies, while the fifth represents the principal case study upon which the bulk of my research is

based.[6] First, *Nature Paradise* is a beach resort operation located in Krabi province. Nature Paradise attempts to give tourists a glimpse into everyday Thai life by arranging visits to Buddhist monasteries, Thai homes, and local markets, as well as by offering free language, cooking, and dance lessons. Receiving praise in the most recent *Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit to Thailand* (Cummings, 1995) as an example of successful "alternative" tourism, Nature Paradise has initiated a youth conservation group which uses a percentage of bungalow fees both to finance beach cleaning efforts by local youths and to further tourist and host education on marine ecology and tropical forest conservation. Nature Paradise is one of several projects belonging to *Siam Eco Partnership*, a joint Thai-Canadian venture aimed at promoting environmentally and socially ethical tourism projects. The focus placed on education, conservation, and community control by the Siam Eco Partnership and Nature Paradise renders these ventures good case studies for assessing alternative tourism's role in promoting environmental conservation and equitable community development.

Second, *Trekkers* has offered "eco-nature tours" for nearly ten years, and is generally acknowledged as the first "specialist eco-nature tour company" in Phuket. Trekkers claims to bring the "real natural Thailand" to tourists, and its tours include elephant hill treks, river canoeing, mountain biking, and nature trail walking. Perhaps more than any other operator, Trekkers exemplifies the growing connections between ecotourism and mass, packaged tourism in southern Thailand. By offering short, "three-in-one" adventures, Trekkers purposely draws from the mass tourism market while continuing to adhere to its original ecological principles:

> Eco-tours should help conserve the natural environment. Do not leave any litter-dispose of it in the proper place. Leave all plant and animals undisturbed for others to see. Have proper regard for the people and places you visit. Remember the future of the Natural Environment depends on all of us (from Trekkers 1996/97 Brochure).

Trekkers' efforts have not gone unnoticed. In 1996, they were among numerous recipients of the inaugural Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) ecotourism awards. The founder and manager of Trekkers, Don Strock, finds himself in great demand throughout Thailand, where he presents several lectures a month - in both English and Thai - on setting up locally-oriented, or community-based, ecotourism companies. Unlike most other ecotourism operators in Phuket, Trekkers has established important national connections to government

[6] For the sake of anonymity, I have changed the names of most companies and individuals mentioned in this thesis.

and private tourism organizations, and has begun to assist indigenous Thai ecotourism companies in other parts of the country with establishing, marketing, and expanding their operations. Aside from taking several trips with Trekkers, I spent many days discussing, debating, and developing ideas with Strock at Trekkers' "nature compound" in Phuket. Trekkers effectively illustrates the way in which "mass ecotourism" is currently developing and innovating in Phuket. Trekkers also serves as a useful comparison to the principal case study (discussed further below), which itself also represents a "mass ecotourism" operation.

Finally, I participated in several trips organized by two "adventure travel" companies: *Backdoor Adventures* and *Exclusive Explorations.* Both companies virtually replicate one another in marketing strategy, and in the claims they make concerning authenticity, exclusivity, sensitivity, and adventure. Foreign tour "leaders" currently residing in destination countries also constitute a central element of the holidays offered by these companies; these leaders, or "experts" as they are called, provide the right balance between "Western" familiarity and local knowledge whereby exotic and authentic experiences are made available to tourists. Backdoor Adventures employs nine such tour leaders, while Exclusive Explorations employs nearly thirty. Based in the United States, Backdoor Adventures demonstrates its commitment to "alternative" tourism principles in promotional materials: "We strive to get you off the beaten path and introduce you to the friendly and rich cultures of Southeast Asia...We're small, family-owned, and offer a personalized, customized approach to travel. We have a strong commitment to the preservation of fragile cultures and wildlife, providing direct financial support to several deserving organizations" (from Backdoor Adventures 1996/97 Brochure).

Similarly, Exclusive Explorations, an Australian company, boasts experienced "Western" tour leaders, small group sizes (8 to 12 people), good value for money, and fun, adventurous, authentic experiences for those wishing to "escape the humdrum of mainstream tourism." Both companies operate exclusively in Southeast Asia, offering trips to Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Malaysia, and Papua New Guinea. The companies provide pre-arranged itineraries as well as customized trips to suit individual needs. Backdoor Adventures offers two pre-planned itineraries in Thailand - "Explorer's Thailand -A Budget Adventure" and "A Tropical Adventure" - while Exclusive Explorations offers ten, two of which are based in the south: "Southern Thailand" and "Sandy Escape."

My participation with these two companies involved combining and crossing company sites since Exclusive Explorations brings customers on its "Southern Thailand" itinerary to Nature Paradise for several days, and Backdoor Adventures' "Explorer's Thailand" itinerary includes a three-day component or "module" with the principal case study of my research.

The four companies discussed above helped considerably in providing infrastructural sites for my research. It was *Jaidee Kayak*, however, that provided the most significant research setting and served as the principal case study. Jaidee Kayak was founded in 1983 in Hawaii by Jim Miller, who first brought the Jaidee Kayak idea to Phuket in 1989. Jaidee Kayak currently operates in Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi provinces in southern Thailand, Halong Bay in Vietnam, and Palawan province in the Philippines. Jaidee Kayak's operational principles are spelled out in a company statement of purpose that is invariably featured in every piece of promotional material, including a perpetually evolving web page: *Jaidee Kayak develops sustainable business opportunities with local people that promote environmental conservation by providing high quality recreational adventures specializing in natural history and cross cultural education* (from Jaidee Kayak 1996/97 Brochure). Jaidee Kayak promotes its ecotourism product very successfully, and strives to inform potential customers of the company's commitment to virtually every "alternative," and specifically "eco," tourism principle outlined earlier:

> Jaidee Kayak also is an internationally acclaimed "Ecodevelopment" laboratory applying innovative economic and management principles to conservation-based, locally owned rural development. Our quest is to prove that with creativity and commitment, "quality of life" development and conservation can coexist as long term, sustainable partners...By practising "no compromise" environmental and quality policies, Jaidee Kayak is the leader in tropical open ocean and sea cave explorations. We maintain these standards with a priority to local staff and owners trained to international standards... Please enjoy our unique, dramatic locales that need protection with responsible, small scale "Ecodevelopment" (from Jaidee Kayak 1996/97 Brochure).

Jaidee Kayak has several owners, the majority of which are locally-based Thais. Nearly forty-five Thais work during the entire year for Jaidee Kayak full-time, and several more work indirectly as part-time drivers, boat captains, freelance guides, and chefs. Due to both its commitment to ecological principles, and its skill at self-promotion, Jaidee Kayak has received numerous awards recently: British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Award, Regional Winner, 1995; Pacific Asia Travel Association, Gold Award, 1996; and Green

Globe, Achievement Award, 1996. Jaidee Kayak offers day trips to Ao Phangnga, where tourists are taken into the open-air lagoons (*hongs*) via cave passages that are filled and emptied of water as sea tides ebb and flow. Jaidee Kayak also offers long-range, overnight trips where customers get to paddle for themselves and camp overnight on the beaches of uninhabited islands in Ao Phangnga and Krabi. I participated in two overnight expeditions, as well as over fifty day trips with Jaidee Kayak.

Miller, the founder of Jaidee Kayak, is a Californian conservationist with a long history of environmental activism. As mentioned above, Miller began a sea kayaking company in Hawaii, where he led paddling expeditions along the Molekai coast. In February, 1990, after exploring the caves of Ao Phangnga for nearly a year, Miller launched Jaidee Kayak Phuket with just one inflatable canoe and a couple of Thai partners. Jaidee Kayak's initial passengers were customers of Le Meridien - amongst the most exclusive resorts in Phuket - who paid 90 American dollars to explore the hidden lagoons of Ao Phangnga. It is widely acknowledged that Miller was among the first people ever to enter the caves and lagoons of the area, and prior to his explorations, Thai fishermen would avoid the dark caves for fear of evil spirits, and the far more corporeal threat of crocodiles. Miller is thus credited with "discovering" the *hongs* of Ao Phangnga. Miller has a fairly extensive history of environmental advocacy dating back to his days in Hawaii, where he spent the majority of his time lobbying government officials on environmental issues. He was also instrumental in the movement in Hawaii to halt uncontrolled tourism development. Miller spent some time lecturing part-time at the University of Hawaii (in the marine research centre), and was also directly involved in an Emmy Award winning nature documentary about Hawaii in the early-1980s.

Miller's interest in water sports is substantial, and goes back to his youth where he became SCUBA certified by the age of twelve. Through many government and private connections, Miller has cultivated an almost legendary reputation among ecotourism operators in Thailand. His imposing physical presence is matched by his entertaining and extroverted personality, which serves to endear many people - from government officials, to tourists, to journalists - to his company and his ideas concerning "ecodevelopment." Miller, and Jaidee Kayak generally, have been featured favourably in hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles throughout the world, leading, for example, to the selection of Jaidee

Kayak as *The Sunday Times'* favourite global tour operator of 1996; the bible of "adventure tourism" publications, *Outside* magazine, has even written a feature article about Miller. To understand the principles behind, and daily operation of, Jaidee Kayak, it is crucial to highlight the multiple ways in which Miller's eclectic interests and experiences have contributed to shaping the ecotourism industry in Phuket.

Jaidee Kayak represents, for several reasons, an excellent case study for examining the relationship between ecotourism and community development. First, by winning several "alternative" tourism awards, Jaidee Kayak demonstrates how, on the surface at least, ecotourism can contribute to conservation and community-based development. Second, although initially rejecting the "ecotourism" label, Jaidee Kayak now heavily identifies with the concept, and extends its self-identification and marketing to include issues of community development. Third, Jaidee Kayak's success is paving the way for other ecotourism companies in Thailand, since financial success has spawned many competitors who profess, if not always practice, ecologically-responsible tourism. Finally, the ethical and altruistic underpinnings of "alternative" tourism shine through in Jaidee Kayak's promotional materials, as do other crucial "alternative" tourism features like conservation, education, sensitivity, and responsibility. Since my choice of this particular company stems more from an interest in an external issue than from interest in the case itself, Jaidee Kayak represents what Stake (1994) calls an *instrumental case study*. By comparing the experiences and practices of Jaidee Kayak to those of the other four company case studies, I hope to achieve a well-balanced and rich understanding of how a circumscribed range of global ecotourism flows are negotiated by and adapted to local community development efforts.

2.5 Biases, Benefits, and Limitations

The myth of conventional ethnographic "objectivity" has been exposed and discredited on numerous fronts, including those from the feminist, "postmodern," and postcolonial perspectives (Clifford, 1988; England, 1994; Katz, 1992). Although I believe subjectivity is inescapable in ethnographic research, I feel compelled to outline some particular biases that perhaps shaped the procedures and results of this research. First, the "ritual inversions" associated with tourism, in which normally reserved or unfriendly people

become affable and gregarious, occurred unevenly among different groups of tourists. The spatial and behavioural inversion of normal situations represents a central theme in travel motivation and tourism psychology research. Expanding on traditional "push" and "pull" motivational factors, Graburn (1983) develops the idea of ritual inversion, whereby tourists undergo a set of inversions along several dimensions. These dimensions include environment, class, lifestyle, "civilization," health, and formality. Travel motivation, Graburn claims, involves a set of key inversions, or reversals, in behaviour, and often involves numerous inversions at once. The inversion of formality plays an instrumental role in explaining the apparent contradiction in the behaviour of tourists on vacation versus their behaviour at home, and tourists often invert normal attitudes and behaviour concerning social relationships, clothing, rigid time schedules, and sexual restriction.

The behavioural inversions of adventurers and backpackers occur in the opposite direction of mass ecotourist reversals in "normal" behaviour. Mass ecotourists overwhelmingly sought conversation and in many cases approached *me* out of curiosity and interest in my research, but backpackers generally interacted with only one another, and resented any intrusion on their privacy. This different experience with, and response from, different categories of tourists meant that I was more inclined to interact and interview friendlier mass tourists, perhaps biasing my research towards the views of mass ecotourists. This bias is, however, somewhat intentional since Jaidee Kayak both represents the principal case study of my research, and generally caters to the most significant group of tourists where "development" is concerned.

Second, the majority of my research was conducted with foreign-owned, or founded, ecotourism companies. Thais have recently entered into the ecotourism industry as owners of companies, and although foreigners still own the majority of ecotourism companies in Phuket, this research would have benefited from examining Thai-operated companies as well.[7] Needless to say, better accessibility and a higher profile in the ecotourism industry in Phuket make foreign-run companies a more logical and empirically efficient choice. The third bias results from the national composition of my tourist subjects. Although Asian

[7] According to Thai law, foreigners are prohibited from owning more than 49% of a Thai company. However, most ecotourism operations in Phuket, to my knowledge, are jointly owned by a foreigner and his Thai wife or "girlfriend" (and perhaps a few other minority Thai partners). This serves to give foreigners de facto, if not legal, power over company policy, marketing, and decision-making.

tourists, particularly from Malaysia and Japan, constitute the largest group of tourists in Thailand (TAT, 1997a), they are severely underrepresented in all three categories of "alternative" tourists interviewed for this research. Further, even in cases where I did encounter the small number of Asians travelling as mass ecotourists, "adventure" travellers, or backpackers in southern Thailand, language problems made it difficult to conduct interviews. As with the actual profile of "ecotourists" in Thailand, therefore, my tourist "sample" is biased heavily towards tourists from North America, Australia, and Europe.

Fourth, the tourism industry intersects the lives of virtually every resident of Phuket, but my research only examines the views and experiences of Thais working directly with ecotourism companies. This of course makes sense considering the focus and scope of this thesis, but I would have nevertheless liked to survey a wider range of Thais. I should also note that the Thais with which I communicated and interacted represent the most fortunate of tourism industry workers; working as a guide in an outdoor ecotourism company inevitably engenders atypically favourable experiences when contrasted to those of prostitutes, waiters, chambermaids, and others engaged in less glamorous tourism-related occupations. Fifth, the "mass ecotourists" participating on Jaidee Kayak and other similar trips are perhaps unrepresentative of other "mass" tourists in Phuket, since their very presence on an "ecotrip" suggests, in theory at least, a higher level of environmental interest than is typical among mass tourists generally. Conclusions regarding mass ecotourists therefore remain limited to a small, but growing, segment of the packaged mass tourism market rather than to the broad mass tourism industry as a whole. Sixth, despite developing an intermediate knowledge of spoken Thai, I remain limited to English language secondary materials. Although collecting a large number of English language documents and newspaper articles, I thus recognize that the research remains biased towards the English language press, which in Thailand is largely dominated by members of the foreign-educated middle classes. Ultimately, I acknowledge that my research would have gained a deeper and more balanced understanding had it utilized Thai language materials as well. Finally, the fieldwork for this research was conducted prior to the financial crisis of July 1997 and beyond, and thus this study avoids an indepth discussion of the effect of the crisis on tourism since it would remain, at this point, merely speculative.

There were several benefits associated with conducting research *where* and *when* I

did. The low season for the Thai tourism industry lasts from April until November. Conducting research during the low season meant cheaper prices, more available time for people to speak with you (and agree to interviews), and greater availability of tickets for trips. Jaidee Kayak daytrips tend to sell out completely every day during the high season, and thus, conducting my research during the low season meant that my presence was neither financially detrimental to the company nor socially disruptive to the Jaidee Kayak staff. Additionally, the usual language difficulties associated with cross-cultural research failed to hinder my research due to the nature of the tourism industry. Fortunately, I did not require the assistance of translators since the majority of my research subjects were native English-speaking tourists, while Thais working in the tourist industry generally possess a level of English sufficient to engage in conversation and participate in an interview. As my Thai language skills improved, furthermore, I began to interview in both Thai and English, using Thai wherever possible.

Since the majority of my research was conducted while travelling on daily tours, I was assured a guaranteed sample of research subjects (both Thais and tourists). Thus, in addition to administering surveys and conducting interviews, I had the opportunity to interact, converse with, and generally observe the activities of close to 400 passengers and 150 Thais working directly in the tourism industry. This interaction with tourists, as well as with Thais, was facilitated by the artificially sweetened "tourist bubble" in which holidaymakers tend to drop inhibitions and suspicions. The behavioural inversions discussed above assisted my research since tourists - many of whom likely treat researchers with suspicion and impatience at home - were instead generally approachable, sociable, and curious, while Thai tourist staff members were, by the very nature of their jobs, eager to talk and interact. As a result, in nearly seven total months of research, I had only *two* people decline my offer to participate in the research.

The limitations of this research relate to both the timing of the research and the cultural setting in which it takes place. As outlined above, the relative lack of activity in the low season made my research relatively unobtrusive. At the same time, however, conducting research in the low season meant that the tourism industry was not nearly in full swing, thus producing perhaps a slanted view of what occurs at other times of the year. Tourism operators use the low season lull to finish repairs and take time off, and the Thai staff of

tourism companies tend to be much more laid back and casual about work in the low season. Thus, while low season price reductions helped me financially, I imagine the research situation would have been markedly different during the high season. With the exception of Bangkok, Phuket is the most materially wealthy region in Thailand. Coupled with the large number of tourists, this results in a high relative cost of living in Phuket. As a researcher, a lack of financial resources affected the choices I could make. In many cases, I was forced to rely on the kindness and cooperation of company owners and managers in order to gain access to the trips they offered. At any rate, I would have benefited from participating in trips as "just another" tourist, instead of a pre-identified and officially-sanctioned researcher. While I acknowledge that the presence of an observer inevitably influences that which is being observed, I would have preferred a greater degree of anonymity at times.

The highly competitive business climate in Phuket makes it difficult to do "independent" research because one becomes, as a long-term (i.e., three or more months) foreign resident, known to both the local *and* foreign communities. The major drawback of this situation is that once one becomes associated with one particular company (as I was with Jaidee Kayak), staff members and owners of other companies become reluctant to speak. The tense and acrimonious relationship between the various ecotourism companies in Phuket exacerbated this situation whereby a climate of incessant industrial espionage forced me to keep a low profile and downplay my connection to Jaidee Kayak. This lack of cooperation between companies in the same industry hindered my movement between different companies, but provides interesting, and significant, data for this thesis. Aside from influencing which individuals and companies I could converse with, let alone interview at length, the tense business environment also largely prohibited me from gathering detailed financial figures for some companies since espionage has fostered widespread suspicion among the foreign-owned ecotourism companies towards outsiders. Fortunately, I did manage to collect pertinent financial data from several key companies, which, considering the qualitative nature of my research questions and objectives, prove more than adequate for a thesis of this scope and focus.

While tourist notions of Thai authenticity are important research issues, I also collected data on Thai conceptions of authenticity. Several inter-related patterns emerged. First, the idea of authenticity as a socially-constructed notion of the "Western" mind became

clear soon into the research. Many Thais interviewed for this research had difficulty relating to the very notion of authenticity, and thus expressed surprise when informed (by me or other tourists) of what foreigners consider "authentic Thai culture." Second, the Thai ability to take on global ideas and appropriate them to Thai hybrid forms is impressive. Where authenticity is concerned, the Thais are masters at giving the tourists what they want to see, thus indicating an awareness among Thais (regardless of how they themselves conceptualize their own "authenticity") of what tourists expect and enjoy. Finally, in an area of Sino-Thai and Muslim influence, touristic notions of Thai authenticity vary greatly from how Thais working in the tourist industry see themselves. In other words, there exists a wide discrepancy between touristic and local notions of "Thainess" in a southern Thai context. The concept of "authenticity," therefore, while serving an analytical purpose in framing this research, clearly betrays its Eurocentric roots when put to the empirical test. In addition, having, out of convenience, used ecotourism as a research category, I ultimately challenge the idea of rigid tourist classifications. As mentioned already, some authors consider mass and alternative tourism to be completely different entities, each with exclusive and diametrically opposed characteristics (Honey, 1998; Poon, 1993). Rather than perpetuate this notion of mass-alternative dichotomization, however, I argue that "mass" and "eco" tourism represent ideal types with little or no practical basis for exclusion or opposition. Although my analytical use of clearly defined and delineated categories proves necessary and felicitous, my research data demonstrate that fixed theoretical categories inevitably demand reconciliation with, and grounding in, the practical complexities of everyday life.

An important, but subtle, limitation to any qualitative research conducted in Thailand stems from Thai social attitudes toward distant, non-intimate others; these attitudes serve to discourage personal, spontaneous, or "open" interaction among strangers. As I explore throughout this thesis, the local cultural context in which any research is conducted plays an enormous role in shaping what is both possible and preferable. More specifically, conformity, maintenance of public order, and surface harmony are fundamental components of Thai society:

> [T]he pervasive influence of hierarchy and social place assure a high degree of continuity, conformity, predictability and reliability in Thai behaviour. Well defined hierarchical obligations and responsibilities associated with one's relative position on the ladder of status, power, rank and seniority form the mold

within which Thai behaviour is severely restricted (Klausner, 1982: 325-26).

Thai behavioural restrictions significantly affected my research strategy. I was forced to conduct many interviews informally without note-taking, and recorded interviews were useless since formerly loquacious Thai staff members would suddenly become completely silent or anxious as soon as a tape recorder or notebook were produced. In addition, the burdening of others with deep personal thoughts is generally discouraged in Thai society, and according to many authors, the Thai emphasis on surface harmony makes intimate, personal conversations rare amongst Thais themselves, let alone with "outsiders." In a comprehensive critical analysis of sociological work done by indigenous Thai authors, Mulder (1990: 47-50) notes:

> Thai society values smooth interaction and the avoidance of overt conflict, and when everybody 'knows his place' and behaves accordingly, these ideals can be achieved ... Polite smiles and polite speech facilitate the interaction in which individuals somehow flow past each other without hindrance or obstacle... So, while presentation of self is a primary means to keep interaction kind and pleasant, expressing the Thai ethos, presentation also keeps individuals distanced from each other in the sense that the implicit expectation is that the surface is also the essence of social reality.

Although assigning sweeping cultural traits should be viewed with some apprehension, I often felt that the Thai preference for harmonious and superficial relations considerably precluded the intimate, controversial, or otherwise anomalous views which I sought to gather and incorporate into my research.

In using a wide range of methods and sources, I sought to achieve research triangulation that would facilitate my understanding of how tourism unfolds in a specific destination. Having completed the field research, I can look back retrospectively and identify three ways in which my research strategy and data collection could have been strengthened. First, as Bernard (1994: 215) indicates, "the key to successful interviewing is learning how to probe effectively - that is, to stimulate an informant to produce more information, without interjecting yourself so much in the interjection that you only get a reflection of yourself in the data." Due to inexperience with various types of probes, I found myself filling in parts of interviews where silence loomed. Although this, in and of itself, is not detrimental, it potentially affects the nature and content of subject responses. Second, after conducting research for several months, I realized that I had been perhaps "following

the leaders." The nature of my research, and the difficulty in gaining access, encouraged company owners and managers to actively promote their views and agendas with me. As I discuss in the next section, a persistent and concerted effort was necessary in order for me to see beyond the positive and biased marketing hype produced by ecotourism companies in Phuket. This is a common danger in qualitative fieldwork, since access to a group or organization must often go through those in charge. Nevertheless, I would have benefited from recognizing this bias earlier in my research, especially as the opinions of "leaders" rarely reflect those held by the larger community (Pelto and Pelto, 1978).

The third way in which I could have improved my data collection was through greater "bracketing" of my own assumptions, experience, and sentiments. It is evident in both my field notes and journal entries that my interpretations, particularly those concerning tourist motivations, stem largely from what I had come to expect from certain groups of tourists. While I have taken considerable steps to ensure a balanced approach that incorporates exceptions and irregularities, a greater amount of bracketing would perhaps have reduced the inclination to look for certain patterns that reflect more my own experience than any "objective" evaluation, as far as this is possible at all. Reflexivity and introspection are crucial to successful qualitative research. Further, bracketing off one's assumptions and sentiments proves essential in preventing an *autoethnography* from occurring, whereby the researcher's goals and experience dominate, rather than inform, the research.

2.6 Ethnographic Crisis and the Role of the Researcher

Interest and background

My interest in Thailand dates back to 1991 when I first travelled to Southeast Asia. As a student taking a semester off from school to travel, I very much belonged to the same backpacker crowd that I was to eventually interview for this research. As a student of Southeast Asian geography, I travelled throughout most of the region - the most time being spent in Thailand - hoping to learn about and experience the countries I had heard and read so much about in the previous years. Wishing to look and act like a "traveller," and not a tourist, I strove at every turn to live "like the locals." As a result, I achieved what I thought at the time was an "authentic" and enriching experience, which I translated later the

following year into an undergraduate honour's thesis on the impacts of tourism in Thailand. Although succumbing at the time to the discourse of "alternative" tourism myself, I was immediately struck by the claims of superiority made by fellow "travellers," as well as by the myriad contradictions inherent in those claims. I went to Southeast Asia fully expecting to witness a drastic difference between the "traveller" and the "tourist," but instead encountered a group of posturing backpackers eager to demonstrate their moral superiority over others. This served as my first introduction to the "longstanding touristic attitude, a pronounced dislike, bordering on hatred, for other tourists, an attitude that turns man against man in a *they are the tourists, I am not* equation" (MacCannell, 1976: 107). The jaded and culturally confrontational interactions between backpackers and Thais in such budget travel havens as Khao San Road in Bangkok further weakened, in my mind, the credibility of "alternative" budget travel as an inherently more sensitive or sustainable form of tourism. All the same, I concluded my first trip to Thailand with a pessimistic view towards mass tourism, and as with most authenticity-seeking travellers, I hypocritically and ambivalently deplored something that I myself was guilty of perpetuating. Many authors have commented that tourism destroys itself (Cater and Goodall, 1992; McKercher, 1993), but few, myself at the time included, see the irony of bemoaning tourism and the "destruction" of Thai "culture" while simultaneously and willingly participating in tourism's growth.

I returned to Thailand in the summer of 1993 as a Master's student conducting research on the linkages and leakages associated with the accommodation sectors of Phuket and Ko Samui (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1994). I had, by that time, overcome my strident opposition to tourism, and instead was hoping to examine how tourism leads to economic opportunities for local land owners, managers, employees, and food suppliers. The thesis that grew out of that trip demonstrates that as infrastructural and labour requirements increase with up-market and large-scale tourism development, locals lose their *relative*, if not absolute, advantage in terms of ownership, employment, and management. Despite corroborating the findings of other academic studies (Williamson and Hirsch, 1996), I found the quantitative and economistic approach of my Master's research limiting and frustrating. The most interesting findings of the research were all *qualitative* in nature, but due to the strictly quantitative, statistical nature of the thesis, they remained completely unrecorded in the final product. Following this experience, I hoped to return to Thailand once again and,

over a greater period of time, conduct ethnographic research on the experiences of both Thais and tourists involved in so-called "alternative" tourism. My latest dissertation field trip to Thailand, over the summer of 1996, has allowed me finally to do this.

Upon returning from this latest research trip, I realized that I had undergone and completed a journey of sorts. I started out looking for authenticity along with other "travellers," then returned as a "researcher," and have finally come to terms with being "just another tourist." My expectations, understanding, and interest in the notion of authenticity have thus developed over a period of several years, leading in the end to a cynical and complex set of attitudes concerning the consequences and actual process of tourism. However, my current research interests stem not from a personal quest for authenticity, but from previous experience in Thailand as well as my interest in tourism and development generally. I may have *once* craved "authentic" Thai life, whatever that may be, but achieving some privileged or supposedly "deeper" level of authenticity has little to do with my current research strategies, motivations, or inspirations. I see little difference between the researcher and the tourist. Researchers may (or may not) be more knowledgeable, locally-adjusted, or culturally adept than other tourists, but they are tourists nonetheless. This view contradicts the opinions of most tourism scholars and "intellectuals." As Cohen (1988: 383) points out, "mass tourism does not succeed because it is a colossal deception, but because most tourists entertain concepts of authenticity which are much looser than those entertained by intellectuals and experts, such as curators and anthropologists." MacCannell (1976) documents the longstanding intellectual loathing of the "tourist," whose greatest sin is simply falling for, and demanding, inauthentic experiences. Mark Twain (1911) pokes fun at tourists in *Innocents Abroad,* Thorstein Veblen (1934) critiques the rise of "conspicuous leisure," and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1968: 17) comments in *Tristes Tropiques* that "[t]ravel and travellers are two things I loathe."

In addition to weeping the loudest about the supposed loss of authenticity throughout the "Third World," intellectuals and researchers commonly make the grandest claims concerning the authenticity of their experiences compared to those of crude, vulgar tourists. Van den Berghe (1994: 32) asks, "what is anthropology but the ultimate form of ethnic tourism, the endless quest for self-understanding through the exotic other?" Contrary to most authors, I wish to take a more fluid, less pretentious approach to authenticity by

acknowledging my contribution to a touristic endeavour laced with joys and contradictions. My experiences as a researcher, while perhaps more drawn out and geographically broad, are by no means more "authentic" than those of the tourists I interviewed. I have, therefore, no basis on which to exclude or debase the supposedly inauthentic experience of mass tourist dupes, since I myself am a tourist negotiating and articulating authenticity on a daily basis, and at the level of personal, subjective experience.

The evolving research role

In addition to adapting my methodological approach and research questions to meet specific research concerns, I had to choose which position, or combination of positions, along the participant-observer continuum would best suit my research. The four naturalized modes of data collection include complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, and, finally, complete observer (Gold, 1958). Since I actively and necessarily participated in tourist trips, the complete, and supposedly "objective," observer role proved unfavourable, let alone impossible. Similarly, by rejecting the complete participant role, I strove to maintain a certain level of detachment in order to avoid "going native." I sought, therefore, to straddle the two intermediate roles, which I hoped would "balance involvement with detachment, familiarity with strangeness, closeness with distance" (Adler and Adler, 1994: 379). Throughout the research, I felt very much a member of the wider tourist community from which I selected research subjects. Having travelled throughout Thailand on numerous occasions, I related extremely well to tourists, despite standing out from "regular" passengers due to conspicuous research activities (such as note-taking and interviewing). While I assumed an involved and inclusionary participant-observer role with tourists, I remained a more distanced observer-participant among the Thai staff of ecotourism companies. The Jaidee Kayak staff, with whom I had the most contact during my fieldwork, considered me just another passenger during the initial stages of the research, but soon thereafter began treating me as a peripheral member of staff, eventually even soliciting my help during trips with serving food, unloading canoes into the water, and explaining various aspects of the trip to tourists. Eating with the staff below the main deck bolstered my inclusion, particularly as my Thai improved to a conversational level. I purposely avoided becoming a *de facto* member of staff, however, since I needed to devote equal amounts of

time and energy to both staff and tourists. Occasionally, I found it difficult or awkward having to mingle with tourists while simultaneously "hanging out" and joking with the Thai staff: the more I mixed with the passengers, the less I blended in with the staff. Fortunately, I encountered this problem rarely, and more often than not, I effectively reconciled and consolidated my dual roles as part tourist, part staff.

In the course of conducting research, I had to deal with a broad range of people, from tourists to local workers to government officials. Each group necessitated particular research strategies, which in turn dictated the role(s) I could, and in the interests of successful research, *should* assume. First and foremost, I was a researcher. At every stage, and with every encounter, I fully disclosed the purpose of my participation and involvement, thereby precluding any misunderstandings or ethical dilemmas concerning my identity or intentions. This is not to say, however, that I fully divulged all personal beliefs or thoughts, for "all research is secret in some ways and to some degree - we never tell the subjects everything" (Roth, 1962: 283). Thus, despite making continued and conscientious efforts to fully reveal my research role, I agree with Thorne (1980: 287) that in research, generally, "self-introductions are bound up with efforts to gain access, and that practical motive, weighted heavily by investments of time, money and career, tends to squeeze honesty to the side." At any rate, I never presented myself as anything other than a researcher, regardless of how many other roles I would adapt during the course of the research.

The second role was that of collaborator. Whether it was sharing ideas, or making recommendations, I grew into a collaborative role as my relationship with the ecotourism companies developed. After several months of conducting research with Jaidee Kayak and Trekkers in Phuket, I felt somewhat sympathetic to their stated causes of environmental conservation. In addition to sharing ideas concerning ecotourism and the overall tourism industry in Thailand, I also collaborated on specific projects: I co-wrote, with the principal Thai partner of Jaidee Kayak, a paper for an ecotourism conference in Bangkok, while also assisting the management of Trekkers with an eventually successful Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) ecotourism award application. Third, as mentioned above, I often served as a part-time member of staff on Jaidee Kayak, sharing in some of the duties and giving many impromptu English lessons on board to the staff. On a few occasions, I was even asked to paddle passengers around the narrow caves and lagoons due to staff shortages. Aside from

earning me the respect of the guides, this daunting experience convinced me of the enormous skill required for a seemingly menial task, while probably also frightening some unfortunate tourists who learned only afterwards that it had been my first solo cavernous paddling experience. Fourth, in the process of interviewing and collecting useful information from government officials, I found myself lobbying for certain ecotourism principles such as industry standards, conservation law enforcement, and maintenance of tourist limits. By making a case for what I, and especially the ecotourism companies, believed was necessary to promote ecologically responsible tourism, I transcended my role as a disinterested outsider, and took on an activist stance, albeit in a marginal and temporary way. Finally, my role as a tourist was as pervasive as that of researcher, and spending several months participating in "ecotrips" was, despite the performance of necessary research duties, admittedly a pleasurable and memorable touristic experience.

Considering my close involvement with several companies, most notably Jaidee Kayak, it became imperative, yet difficult at times, to distance myself adequately. Jaidee Kayak has enjoyed enormous marketing success with journalists, politicians, researchers, and most importantly, tourists. Jaidee Kayak's marketing pitch is highly persuasive, and the overwhelming praise lavished upon the company both within and outside Thailand demonstrates the degree to which the Jaidee Kayak image and rhetoric have seduced otherwise cynical critics. Virtually every single presenter at the second annual ecotourism conference in Bangkok, for example, cited Jaidee Kayak as *the* model of successful ecotourism development; not coincidentally, each of these speakers had participated on a complimentary trip with the company just prior to the conference. The danger of assuming a wholly collaborative, overly-involved role forced frequent circumspection on my part as I attempted to stand back from the intensely competitive and consuming atmosphere surrounding the ecotourism industry in Phuket. On a personal level, the enormous assistance I received from Jaidee Kayak in terms of access to records and customers made (and makes) it somewhat difficult for me to take an overtly critical position since doing so, in my mind, felt - and more importantly, would *appear* to Jaidee Kayak - as an act of betrayal. Advocates of "new" experiential ethnography encourage building, and feeding off, friendships with "subjects," but divorcing myself from the alluring ecotourism discourse promoted by Jaidee Kayak proved difficult due to the charismatic and passionate personality of its founder, Jim

Miller. Hence, while focusing exclusively on the "official," institutional discourses of ecotourism would surely have yielded interesting and valuable results, I have attempted instead to take the position of the "professional stranger" (Agar, 1980) in order to achieve a more balanced and critically effective approach.

The crisis in ethnographic representation

Ethnographic representation, once a seemingly straightforward and unproblematic endeavour, has in recent years faced scathing criticism. A "pervasive postcolonial crisis of ethnographic authority" currently raises several questions: "Who has the authority to speak for another group's identity or authenticity? What are the essential elements and boundaries of culture? How do self and other clash and converse in the encounters of ethnography, travel, modern interethnic relations?" (Clifford, 1988: 8). The cross-disciplinary critique of ethnography encompasses a multitude of specific issues, but generally speaking, the more significant and persuasive centre around epistemology, methodology, and ethics. I wish to conclude this chapter by briefly outlining the issues raised by these critiques of ethnographic representation, as well as discussing the ways in which I attempt(ed) to work through these problems.

The epistemological limitations of ethnographic representation comprise two problems: the nature of ethnographic knowledge, and the positionality of the researcher. Rorty (1979) questions the notion that knowledge somehow reflects, or mirrors, an objective truth and reality. Arguing that truth is discursively and conversationally based, Rorty disputes the claim that one can penetrate deeper and more "meaningful" levels of truth through scientific methods of "collecting" incremental pieces of knowledge. Recognizing that an "objective" reality may not necessarily exist beyond our social constructions, furthermore, exposes ethnographic truths as "inherently *partial* - committed and incomplete" (Clifford and Marcus, 1986: 7). The epistemological belief that ethnography can somehow "capture" the truth (and *only* truth) about the objects of description is disputed by those researchers who wish instead to demonstrate the historical contingency, cultural bias, and analytical limitations inherent in all ethnographic representations. A recognition of the possibility of multiple interpretations, rather than any one "correct" view, thus characterizes the principal response to the epistemological limitations of conventional ethnographic

representations.

The second facet of the epistemological crisis, the positionality of the researcher, encompasses two problems. First, the issue of conventional ethnographic authority, by which the ethnographer establishes omniscient and omnipotent control over the research subject and research process, has allowed researchers to unproblematically construct representations of others while convincing readers of the accuracy and irrefutability of those representations (England, 1994). Second, through various means of establishing authority (see Clifford, 1988: 54), the ethnographer tends to fuse many voices into one controlling mode of authority, thereby projecting the empirically inaccurate image of an ethnographer in full control of the research product and process.

The methodological constraints of inflexibility and linearity affect all stages of research, but they also constrain and condition the final, unavoidable act of writing. Capturing all the intricacies, subtleties, and complexities of subjective field experience in a flat, two-dimensional text proves difficult for ethnographers to accomplish. This difficulty in bringing to life the multiple components of experience is inevitable, and by now well recognized; the crisis in representation stems not from this fact, however, but rather from the ignorance, or arrogance, of ethnographers whose accounts thoroughly lack *any* effort at combating this inflexibility and linearity. As mentioned above, ethnography tends to collapse many divergent, and potentially resistant, voices into the single overarching authority of the ethnographer. Hence, while polyphony characterizes their field experience, ethnographers nevertheless produce *monological* interpretations, "the dialogical, situational aspects" of which" tend to be banished from the final representative text" (Clifford, 1988: 40). Contours of experience thus become flattened by ethnographic texts in the process of transferring richly textured thought to the pages of inflexible and restrictive written text.

In addition to accepting, or even encouraging, monological inflexibility, many ethnographers also rely on static, simplistic, and normative conceptions of "culture" and "language." Considering the centrality of these concepts in anthropological inquiry, it comes perhaps as no surprise that experimental ethnographers display a diligent commitment to reconceptualizing these terms. Perceiving culture and language as bounded entities with little internal variation or resistance collapses enormous diversity and complexity. Consequently, "culture" is often posited as a unitary and homogeneous system of values and

beliefs, while the complexity of language is virtually ignored altogether. Demonstrating the contested, historical and contingent nature of "culture," on the other hand, constitutes a crucial element of new, experimental ethnographic approaches, which conceptualize culture as temporal and emergent: it is "an open-ended, creative dialogue of subcultures, of insiders and outsiders, of diverse factions" (Clifford, 1988: 46). Unbounded, and inextricably linked to the global systems that encompass them, "cultures" are thus dynamic and floating: they do not, in other words, "hold still for their portraits" (Clifford and Marcus, 1986: 10).

Finally, the power of the researcher in ethnographic relationships has led many to address the ethical dilemmas of representing others. The presentation of self, and representation of "other," remains a complex, dialectical process, and "although many aspects of the ethnographic encounter revolve around these everyday issues of the social construction of identity, it is also a peculiar relationship - unequally initiated, situationally lopsided, spatially dislocated, temporally isolated, extrinsic in purpose - it oozes with power" (Katz, 1992: 496). The necessities of qualitative fieldwork serve to perpetuate what some authors refer to as the "violence" of ethnographic fieldwork. Qualitative research, by nature, demands that researchers invade the privacy of subjects, who are exposed to seemingly irrelevant and bizarre questioning, obtrusive disruption, and incessant observation. The ethnographic encounter is deliberately manufactured by researchers for their own purposes, and despite efforts by "new" experimental ethnographers to make the relationship mutually beneficial, the research is rarely, if ever, initiated by the research subjects. Further, Thorne (1980: 291), asks "if the observed forget about the research activity - for example, if they give information with the understanding they are talking *only* to a friend or co-worker and the information then goes into the field notes - is that ethical behaviour?" For instance, gossip, and other such informal statements made "off the record" by subjects, frequently yield productive research "leads," but also involve thorny ethical decisions. Researchers intentionally befriend subjects, develop friendships, and then take advantage of (in some case, irresponsibly) these relationships to suit personal research agendas. This deliberate manipulation of informants to extract "data" resembles Paul Rabinow's (1977) concept of "symbolic violence," whereby the unequal power and position of the researcher serves to coerce, even blackmail, informants into explaining personal, passionately guarded aspects of their lives.

Bearing in mind the myriad shortcomings of conventional ethnographic representations, I have attempted in my own research to address these issues as far as possible or preferable. Academic responses to the epistemological challenges have encompassed a wide array of strategies. For example, some authors are beginning to deconstruct the self/other dichotomy by emphasizing the dialectical relationship between the two. Similarly, reflexivity, defined as "self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious *analytical* scrutiny of the self as researcher" (England, 1994: 82) serves as a key strategic innovation of new ethnography in that it allows researchers to place, or more accurately "situate," themselves in the research. The modes of establishing authority in "classic" ethnographic texts are also challenged by authors who accomplish authority by *acknowledging* their visibility and self-interest instead of denying and concealing it (Wellman, 1994). Not only have I sought to situate my background, interests, and biases in this chapter, but I have also demonstrated, and continue to acknowledge, that I myself belong to the tourist group under observation.

Ethnographic innovations in the past two decades have gone a long way in addressing the epistemological barriers responsible for the crisis of representation. They often fall short, however, in their efforts to accurately and honestly portray the complex, ongoing relationship between subject and object. Further, reflexivity does not *necessarily* guarantee a situated ethnographic account, and at its very worst, can actually serve to mask an insidious attempt to maintain authority over the text (Marcus and Fischer, 1986). Thus, while I question the notion of invisible, omnipotent authority, I believe that the practical limitations of writing a truly situated or "reflexive" ethnographic account often outweigh well-intentioned philosophical or moral considerations. Ultimately, the thesis is not about *me*: it is about trying to understand and conceptualize tourism's role in community-based development.

Reacting against the proclivity of ethnographic texts toward closure, monologue, and context-free interpretation, experimental ethnographers utilize concepts of heteroglossia, dialogue, reflexivity, and polyvocality as strategies to overcome the moral and practical difficulties of representing the "other." Although these experimental ethnographic innovations speak to the methodological assumptions and shortcomings of conventional ethnography, they still face serious limitations. Dialogue, polyphony, and situated knowledge may seem plausible as goals, but when implemented, they still suffer from the

inescapable fact that authorial presence and control still colour the representation (Stacey, 1988). In the final analysis, the author must make choices concerning analysis, interpretation, and description of "data," and it is the ethnographer who must filter and initiate the inclusion of informant voices. Including the direct and literally recorded words of others in ethnographic production does open up more dialogical opportunities for interpretation, but even direct quotations betray a subtle mark of authorial control: who gets quoted, which words are chosen for inclusion, and how the transcriptions are framed and presented all indicate an authoritative editorial stance on the part of the ethnographer. Hence, despite including the direct words of informants in this thesis, I recognize the inescapable facts that certain words are privileged over others, direct quotations are managed (as I believe they should be) to build on an argument, and the author has complete control in representing, twisting, and manipulating the words of others. Since direct quotations should, after all, make a *point*, lamenting the inherently filtered nature of multivocality proves both pointless and unproductive. Polyphony and textual experimentation may promote flexibility and complexity, but, as most of the "new" ethnographers themselves admit, ethnographic representations remain inherently partial and contingent.

Hoping to counter the "violence" and selfishness of ethnographic work, many authors have begun to argue that researchers are morally obliged to give something back to the subjects (or "objects") of ethnographic research (see Jackson, 1983; Katz, 1994; Stacey, 1988). Mascia-Lees *et al* (1989: 31) contend that "anthropologists may be better able to overcome these power relations by framing research questions according to the desires of the oppressed group, by choosing to do work that "others" want and need, by being clear for whom they are writing, and by adopting a feminist political framework that is suspicious of relationships with "others" that do not include a close and honest scrutiny of the motivations for the research." In a similar vein, Edwards (1989) proposes participatory action research (PAR) as a means to reverse the typically unilateral nature of research. Although I admit that my research benefits my academic career more than anything else, this is not to say that the subjects - tourists, Thais, and ecotourism companies - stood to gain nothing. A bilateral flow of ideas with tourists and tour leaders allowed both parties to go away from the ethnographic encounter with perhaps a more balanced and critical awareness of certain issues. Aside from sharing travel advice and information with tourists, I often divulged pertinent research

results, which interested tourists and often provoked thought and even contemplation concerning tourist motivations, behaviour, and attitudes. As mentioned already, I served as a *de facto* employee of several ecotourism companies, particularly Jaidee Kayak, and in exchange for access and cooperation, I shared field notes with, and lobbied local tourism officials on behalf of, these companies.

Due to the nature of my research, the unequal power dynamic between researcher and subject common to some ethnographic work did not present a problem. I found myself in an inferior material position to virtually every tourist I encountered, and my perpetual anxiety concerning research participation meant that I, not the tourist subject, assumed a position of insecurity and uncertainty. The same also held true for the owners and managers of ecotourism companies, who had the power to deny me access at any time, and for any reason. The Thai guides, on the other hand, presented a unique problem. With few exceptions, the Thai ecotourism guides I encountered were in comparison younger, far less educated, and involved in much lower status occupations (in their minds at least). Mulder (1990: 48) notes:

> It takes but little time observing Thai behaviour to become adept at perceiving who is superior and who is inferior. The representation of self tends to include displaying the whole set of one's social arsenal, and such assets should not be hidden. Even in the most casual encounters, people probe to discover the other person's social rank and, consequently, their relative social distance. What [sic] does he work? To what groups does he belong? What rank does he hold? Is he rich or poor? Has he studied and where? His age, his relatives, his group, and his income: all that should be known so that both parties can place each other according to rank and position.

Under normal circumstances, then, I would have occupied a fairly high status position vis-a-vis my Thai subjects. A precarious research position, however, in which the success of my project depended on the acceptance and accommodation of Thai guides, essentially reversed the power dynamic between researcher and researched. As other foreign researchers in Thailand have found (Yasmeen, 1996), a lack of Thai fluency also serves to displace the normally unilateral flow of power from ethnographer to research subject. This violation of standard Thai norms of hierarchy and status often created awkward situations for the guides, who felt slightly uneasy by my efforts to ingratiate myself.[8] Rather than finding pleasure in this rejection of fixed status roles, therefore, the guides found my willing (and necessary)

[8] The importance of maintaining one's place in the social hierarchy became obvious to me on the rare occasions when upper or middle class Thais from Bangkok travelled with Jaidee Kayak. In particular, they generally displayed a dismissive and superior attitude toward guides, who they perceived as uneducated, poor fishermen (at least according to what was later communicated to me in candid conversations with the guides).

insistence on relational "equality" both unusual and unsettling. Finally, I have taken steps to ensure that my research does not perpetuate what Siddaway (1992) calls colonial research, in which "Western" researchers neither leave behind knowledge in the host country, nor initiate collaborative and mutually co-operative research. I conducted my research under the auspices of the Thai National Commission for UNESCO, who established, on my behalf, a cooperative relationship with Srinakharinwirot University in Bangkok. Further, I applied for, and received, a National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) foreign researcher permit and remain obliged, by contract, to submit three official thesis copies to the NRCT for placement into the national research archives of Thailand.

In light of the epistemological, methodological, and ethical shortcomings of conventional ethnographic representation, I have endeavoured to address, and where possible, reconcile problematic issues or techniques. I feel strongly, however, that despite calling attention to several important issues, the various experimental strategies mentioned above remain limited in their "attempt to get round the un-get-roundable fact that all ethnographical descriptions are homemade" (Geertz, 1988: 144-45). I believe that in order to achieve clarity and empirical merit, researchers must accept and, wherever feasible, improve upon the inescapable, inherent, and, in many cases, necessary limitations of *all* ethnographic texts. Reflexivity, dialogue, and dispersed authority may indeed represent worthy goals, but an argument can be made that textual strategies employed by the "new" ethnographers are neither entirely "new" nor innovative in recognizing the difficulty of reconciling subjective experience and objective textual production. Geertz (1988: 1), for example, launches a scathing attack against the "new" ethnographers, stating that "[e]excessive concern...with how ethnographic texts are constructed seems like an unhealthy self-absorption - time-wasting at best, hypochondriac at worst." Calling anxieties over subjectivities excessive, Geertz bemoans the "diary disease" currently endemic to anthropological writing. This view is perhaps overly harsh, but I agree with Geertz (1988: 1) when he writes:

> What a proper ethnographer ought properly to be doing is going out to places, coming back with information about how people live there, and making that information available to the professional community in practical form, not lounging about in libraries reflecting on literary questions.

2.7 Conclusions

I have emphasized repeatedly throughout this chapter the critical function performed by methodology in defining the underlying priorities and approaches of this research. The methodological considerations discussed in this chapter relate most pertinently to my own particular research project, but they also reveal important implications for the general study of "alternative" tourism. Further, decisions regarding methodological approaches and techniques involve trade-offs: what I lose in one area, I gain in another. For example, although the nature of my research precludes intricate quantitative analysis based on detailed financial data, it allows for a nuanced *qualitative* account. The personal insights and sentiments incorporated into this thesis thus make it possible to escape the confines of abstract statistical analysis, and instead bring complex concepts like development and "alternative" tourism down to level of subjective human experience.

As I mentioned earlier, financial constraints and an acrimonious local business environment meant that I could only focus on a small number of ecotourism companies. However, this methodological restriction also proved beneficial due to the rich detail that case study research often affords. I believe that many studies of tourism suffer from their refusal, or sheer inability, to relate broad theoretical ideas to specific cases. By evaluating the empirical applicability, and compatibility, of general concepts such as ecotourism or alternative development, it is possible not only to build more solidly grounded theory, but also to strengthen analysis by identifying theoretical inconsistencies, omissions, and contradictions. The separation of tourists into three discrete groups also carries implications for our understanding of "alternative" tourism. In addition to ignoring empirical exceptions to general theoretical rules, many assessments of "alternative" tourism fail to recognize internal differentiation and diversity. Thus, in choosing to identify motivational and behavioural differences among "alternative" tourists, I hope to highlight differences *within* the broad "alternative" tourism category.

Coupled with the intense competition and espionage associated with the tourism industry in Thailand, the difficulty of maintaining "neutrality" and professional distance throughout the research process demonstrates the often contentious nature of tourism-related research. Although minimal, the unanticipated controversy surrounding my research implies

that the study of tourism, notably in countries or regions dependent on tourism revenues, often occurs in disputatious environments marred by betrayal, mistrust, and misinformation. The politically sensitive aspects of conducting tourism-related research may certainly remain peripheral to the final research product, but the peculiar tone they set to fieldwork should not go entirely undocumented. Lastly, many authors have investigated tourism's connection to both authenticity and community-based development, but few, if any, have attempted to link the two. Throughout the research process, I have tied my interest in the touristic quest for authenticity to the fields of ecotourism and alternative development, thereby integrating the authenticity issue into the overall goals of the thesis. Although I focus on the developmental consequences of different attitudes toward authenticity in Chapter Seven, the merging of the two concerns starts at the methodological level where research questions are formulated and data collection methods are utilized. In the next chapter, I will explore the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis, and devote specific attention to the intersections between authenticity, "alternative" tourism, and community-based development.

CHAPTER THREE. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical foundations of this thesis span two bodies of literature. First, I am centrally concerned with regional economic *development*, particularly the ways in which it is theoretically conceptualized and practically deployed. As one of the twentieth century's most enduring ideas, the notion of development wields enormous influence throughout the world, sparking intense debate and controversy regarding not only the philosophical premises underlying theories of development, but also the political and economic implications of discrepant approaches to implementation. Second, although the study of development embraces countless dimensions, I choose *tourism* as the entry point into my examination of development in southern Thailand. International tourism occupies a central role in the development strategies of many "Third World" countries, and has especially shaped the recent economic history of Thailand. This chapter discusses the various theoretical issues that inform this research, an undertaking which proves critical to our understanding of how this particular thesis relates to more universal questions. By framing the theoretical parameters of my research, this chapter allows me to bridge the analytical gap between theory and practice, local and global. Research conclusions regarding the connection between tourism and development in southern Thailand are interesting in and of themselves, but without linking empirical interpretations and conclusions to general theoretical debates, they remain self-referential and limited in both scope and intellectual relevance.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the relationship between development and tourism, paying special attention to both conventional connections and the articulation of development and tourism "alternatives." The second section looks at development theory, and specifically, the impasse in development studies that has generated a wide variety of responses, recommendations, and proposed solutions. Within the broad development category, "alternative" development theory (ADT) incorporates most of these post-impasse solutions, bringing together a large array of theoretical and empirical principles. In this second section, I outline the reasons for, and responses to, the crisis in development theory since these speak directly to the pertinence and timing of ADT and community-based

development. The final section of this chapter explores the emergence of "alternative" forms of tourism which attempt to avoid the detrimental consequences of large-scale mass tourism. Although I briefly described the various meanings of ecotourism in the previous chapter, assessing their wider theoretical and practical implications is impossible without first evaluating the tenets, and legitimacy, of the "alternative" tourism concept. While numerous caveats serve to complicate the issue, examining community-based development and "alternative" tourism from a theoretical perspective enriches our understanding of economic and social change in southern Thailand, and more importantly, reveals the broader implications and universal significance of specific empirical examples.

3.2 Tourism and Development: Connections, Conventions, and Alternatives

The relationship between tourism and development

International tourism to "developing" countries has largely received praise as a strategy for economic development. The particular economic benefits that accrue to "Third World" destinations are numerous and well-documented (see Mathieson and Wall, 1982). While early tourism studies focused exclusively on the "positive" economic nature of tourism development (Diamond, 1977; Gray, 1974; Peters, 1969), more recent analyses have highlighted the economic drawbacks of global tourist incorporation: foreign exchange leakages, lack of backward linkages, opportunity costs in labour and capital, and an increased propensity to import foreign products, to name just a few (Hong, 1985; Lea, 1988; Pattullo, 1996). The most scathing critiques place tourism within the context of imperialism, and claim that the "developing" countries of the world suffer as international tourism grows (Nash, 1989). Some tourism scholars argue that by controlling most aspects of the global tourist industry, the wealthy, "advanced" countries of the "developed" world determine the flow of tourists to, and the nature of tourism development in, "developing" countries. A division of labour, furthermore, relegates developing countries to the position of tourist recipient, and developed countries to that of tourist generator.[1] The low cost of international travel and the relative poverty of many destination areas mean that although wealthy tourists travelling to poor "sunspot" destinations purchase the tourist product in developing countries, they nevertheless

[1] This situation is changing in Thailand, where a rapidly growing middle class is increasingly participating in inter-regional and international tourism.

assist tourist intermediaries in their own countries. This skewed flow of tourists and tourism revenues translates to a lack of "Third World" control over the international tourism industry.

Harrison (1992) indicates that the debate surrounding tourism and development has largely revolved around two competing perspectives: modernization theory and underdevelopment theory. Modernization theory focuses on the "Westernization" process whereby "developing" societies increasingly resemble the social and economic patterns associated with the "developed" or "advanced" areas of the world. Proponents of this view focus their attention on the micro- and macroeconomic benefits of tourism in "developing" countries (Mathieson and Wall, 1982). Modernization-oriented assessments claim that aside from the obvious contributions to economic multipliers such as foreign exchange earnings, tourism encourages economic growth through agricultural stimulus, industrial demand, entrepreneurial activity, increased income, and product diversification (Hulme and Turner, 1990; Little, 1982).

Although, as discussed later in this chapter, underdevelopment theory suffers from an economistic approach which downplays local agency, the state, and culture, it nonetheless contributes to our understanding of tourism and development in the "Third World." Underdevelopment theory posits that the "development" of certain parts of the world (known as the "core") occurs at the expense of other, *under*developed, areas (the "periphery") due to a mechanism of unequal exchange and the structurally subordinate position of underdeveloped societies within the global capitalist system (Harrison, 1992). As an explicit challenge to the neoclassical tenets of modernization theory, underdevelopment theory relies heavily on a *political economy* approach to tourism and development (Britton, 1982; Lea, 1988). This approach views tourism as an extension of former colonial conditions in the developing world (Britton, 1981a). Based on the notion of a global economic core and periphery, this approach expands on the Marxist concept of international capitalist incorporation and division of labour. The periphery in colonial economic systems functioned as the core's market, producer of raw materials, and recipient of investment. Similarly, tourism, according to the political economy approach, involves the transfer of capital from developing to developed countries. Further, developing countries suffer from economic dependency due to the domination of the global tourism industry by wealthy tourist-generating countries.

International tourism mirrors colonial relationships in that developing country

destinations represent the periphery of an international tourism industry (Britton, 1981a). Tourism destinations in the "Third World," by virtue of their geographical location, physical and cultural attributes, and relative poverty, assume the position of international tourism *recipient*. Conversely, rising incomes, increased leisure time, and improved transportation have turned developed nations into the principal *source*, or producer, of international tourists (de Kadt, 1979). Put simply, the low cost of travelling to, and within, developing countries gives the latter a "comparative advantage" in tourism while economic abundance ensures that the developed world remains the primary source of international tourists. Tourism, therefore, reflects the "new international economic order" insofar as the global division of labour is concerned. Furthermore, in addition to maintaining the international discrepancy between tourism generators and recipients, wealthy countries use their economic and political advantage to expand and develop tourism in less developed countries for the former's *own* leisure needs, thereby rendering tourism a globally unequal phenomenon.

On a general level, imperialism suggests a flow of economic, political, and social power from wealthy developed core areas to less developed countries on the "periphery" of an international capitalist system. Metropolitan countries in a colonial system dictate the pace and nature of economic growth in developing countries, the political and social institutions of which develop largely as a response to pressure from the metropoles. Tourism, like colonialism, represents a primary determinant of, and impetus for, change in much of the developing world. Since most international tourism owes its existence to the changing leisure requirements of developed, or metropolitan, societies, control over the international tourism industry lies almost exclusively in the hands of transnational corporations based in wealthy metropolitan countries (Britton, 1991).

It is due to the need for close and cost-efficient links between the various sectors of the travel industry that international tourism favours the creation of transnational tourism corporations based in developed countries (Britton, 1981b). Foreign-owned transnational corporations boast large capital resources and strong international links, thus severely limiting the ability of local travel companies based in developing countries to compete for tourism revenues. Since most international tourists originate in developed countries, transnational corporations control international tourism flows thereby usurping control of the tourism industry from the very developing countries to which international tourists travel. The

importance of the package holiday, in which all travel arrangements are made prior to travelling, serves as an example of how western transnational tourism intermediaries - hotels, airlines, and tour operators - co-operate to retain principal control of the tourism industry. For example, international hotel chains, through agreements with transnational tour operators and airlines, offer discounted rates for tourists on package holidays (Varley, 1978). Since transnational travel suppliers utilize their international connections to lower the cost of an economically-elastic touristic product, dominance of the global tourism industry is consequently established by tourist intermediaries based in wealthy metropolitan countries.

Despite the efforts of locally-based, small-scale travel suppliers, inevitable international integration among the tourism intermediaries strengthens the hold of transnational travel corporations over the tourism industries of developing country destinations. As Britton (1981a: 98-100) points out, the transnational nature of international tourist organization manifests itself in three ways: foreign companies retain a high proportion of tourism revenues in "Third World" destinations where the predominant form of travel is through package or group tours; tourists visiting developing countries tend to congregate in spatially-concentrated enclaves; and foreign control over tourist marketing, transportation, and accommodation diminishes the ability of developing country destinations to establish and maintain control of their own tourism industries. Tourism, according to the political economy approach, therefore resembles imperialism in that economic and political power, while stemming from the developed metropolitan core, ultimately unfolds in economically disadvantaged peripheral destinations whose tourism industries develop according to the needs and impulses of foreign interests.

An examination of international tourist statistics demonstrates the degree to which wealthy, developed tourist-generating countries dominate the tourism industry. Over 75 percent of international (as opposed to domestic) tourism receipts were, in 1991, received by the 25 industrialized countries which form the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (WTTC, 1995). Furthermore, nationals of just five wealthy, industrialized countries - the United States, Germany, Britain, Japan, and France - account for more than half of all tourism spending. The enormous and disproportionate share of international tourism receipts that accrue to developed, core countries encourages the latter to introduce, develop, and perpetuate tourism in both developed and developing economies

(Senior, 1983). The intricate involvement of transnational corporations (TNCs) in "Third World" tourism reflects the metropolitan desire to expand international tourist activities (Gonsalves, 1995).[2] Participation by TNCs in the hotel sectors of developing countries takes on several forms, including ownership or equity investment, management contracts (which account for 74 percent of TNC involvement), hotel-leasing agreements, franchise agreements, and technical service agreements (Hong, 1985). By the late-1980s, developing countries provided the location for 59 percent of all TNC-associated hotel chains with links to airlines, 44 percent of all hotels chains independent of airline connections, and 93 percent of all TNC "hotel development and management consultants" (Pearce, 1989: 38). Conversely, TNC tour operators and travel agents in developing, rather than developed, metropolitan, economies accounted for a mere 11 percent of all TNC operators and agents.

By keeping the travel agents at home (in developed countries) and locating tourism infrastructure - particularly hotels - in developing countries, TNCs manipulate the flow of tourists from the core while simultaneously retaining a large proportion of the expenditures made by tourists in peripheral destination markets. Hence, international tourism favours developed core countries which, by virtue of their economic domination of the international tourism industry, enjoy unchallenged financial hegemony over peripheral destination areas. Despite suffering from many of the same weaknesses of underdevelopment theory generally, the political economy approach to tourism and development has nevertheless contributed to our understanding of the global connections, and dimensions, of international tourism. It is indeed not surprising that the growing number of "alternative" tourism critics have utilized many of the original arguments of these theorists who encouraged a healthy and necessary suspicion of an adaptive and often manipulative international tourism industry.

Globalization and the role of the state

As numerous authors have demonstrated, the accelerated pace of global economic and cultural integration has meant the collapse of time and space (see Harvey, 1989). The globalization thesis, which posits, among other things, the erosion of state power and local cultural differences, intersects the study of development and tourism in crucial ways. Aside

[2] Although some developing, or "Third World," countries like India, Thailand, and China possess transnational corporations, the majority of TNCs exist in developed, and, with the exception of Japan, "Western" countries. Thus, most discussions of TNC involvement in the international tourism industry implies a close and direct association between the developed world and transnational tourism intermediaries (see Britton, 1991).

from facilitating the global movement of people, capital, and ideas, technological and political changes during the past few decades have changed the way development and tourism are conceptualized, both as separate entities and together as interconnected globalized movements. Broadly speaking, two prevailing views dominate academic and political discussions of globalization. First, champions of the neoliberal "counter-revolution" claim that economic globalization has rendered the nation-state futile in stopping the global movement of transnational capital (Ohmae, 1992). These authors argue that states have lost their power and legitimacy in implementing policies in a climate increasingly characterized by powerful, and inexorable, global flows. At a cultural level, the belief in the overwhelming power and inevitability of globalization translates into the conviction that global forces erase local differences and peculiarities. In addition to assuming that this cultural homogenization emanates from the United States and other "Western" powers, proponents of cultural globalization downplay the importance of localities, even claiming in some cases that globalization signifies the "end of geography" (O'Brien, 1992).

A second predominant approach towards globalization entails either opposition to global integration or outright denial of globalization's novelty and inevitability. Arguing that globalization is more myth than fact, Hirst and Thompson (1996) point out that the internationalization of the world economy had occurred as far back as the late-nineteenth century, and further, that the global movement of capital and trade commodities through transnational corporations (TNCs) continues to be firmly rooted in distinct national bases. Others, meanwhile, acknowledge the power of globalization, but contend that delinking from the world capitalist system represents the best option for developing countries since globalization fosters unjust and unsustainable global relationships (Korten, 1996). Summarizing the various positions within the camp of globalization opponents, Pieterse (1997: 371) identifies three possible streams of opposition, centred around "stopping globalization, slowing it down, and reshaping it." Although much less drastic, opponents of globalization mirror former dependency and world systems theorists who argued that underdevelopment was an inherent feature of global capitalism, a system from which decoupling proves the most efficient means of promoting true local development.

Despite the different angles taken by each, I believe that theories, or more accurately viewpoints, concerning neoliberal market triumphalism, cultural homogenization, and

globalization "denial" rely on untenable premises and assumptions, and thus completely misread the nature and consequences of globalization. Claims regarding the sheer inability of states to monitor or control transnational flows of capital demonstrate confusion over the complicity of most states in global capitalism, and also reify the state in such a way as to deny the agency of individual politicians and bureaucrats. The choice to regulate or reject foreign investment may in practical terms represent an unrealistic proposition, but it should be clear nonetheless that the flexibility and mobility of global capital reflect, and in many ways reinforce, the fact that individuals who collectively comprise "the state" *choose* to defer political power to domestic and transnational capitalists. Belief in the omnipotent nature of capital is also reflected in many discussions of weak "Third World" states unable to stem the tide of unstoppable tourism growth. However, as the case of Bhutan, among others, demonstrates, states with sufficient political will can and do make difficult economic choices.[3] Ultimately, the swift global movements of people and capital that increasingly characterize tourism and development are regulated (or not) at the national level, regardless of how "incapable" - *unwilling* - states may be to stop them.

The crucial role played by the state is evident throughout the "Third World," where vastly different experiences with development can be directly traced to distinct government policies or failures. Several scholars have contradicted World Bank rhetoric concerning the free market "miracles" of East Asia, pointing out that rapid industrialization and economic growth resulted because, not in spite, of careful government regulation and control over financing, investment, and production (Bienefeld, 1988; Wade, 1990). Although specific historical circumstances may perhaps limit the replicability of East Asian development in other "Third World" countries, the experiences of Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan highlight the overarching importance of the state in "Third World" development. As the discussion in the following chapter indicates, Thailand's integration into global tourist and capitalist networks has occurred largely at the behest of a national government working closely with domestic capitalists and foreign investors (Hirsch, 1995). The recent collapse of the Thai economy also demonstrates the financial ramifications of state policy, and in Thailand's case, inefficiency. While the discourse of "inevitable" economic globalization may pose a threat to the unchallenged legitimacy and autonomy of some "Third World" states, changing

[3] Bhutan limits arrivals to only a few thousand tourists, who must pay an enormous sum for entry visas.

international circumstances are reshaping, not eliminating, the role of the nation-state (McMichael, 1993). Geographers concerned with both tourism and development must therefore take the initiative in challenging unfounded assumptions concerning the supposed demise of the "Third World" state (Glassman and Samatar, 1997).

Along with neoliberal proclamations of the "end of the nation-state" (Ohmae, 1995), proponents of the cultural homogenization thesis argue that the local cultural traditions, social norms, and political values that contribute to global diversity face an insurmountable threat from globalization. Again, however, this view betrays a patronizing view of "weak" cultures in need of protection. In addition, it reifies and exaggerates the process of globalization, granting it unwarranted privilege as a unilateral cause of "modernization" and "Westernization" in tremendously disparate societies (Slater, 1993). Prioritizing global flows over local circumstances ignores the intricacy of ground-level relationships and processes, and even worse, simplistically reduces the nuanced, complex process of globalization to some sort of global "steamroller" flattening the contours of local difference and deviation (Linge and Walmsley, 1995). The arguments of those who believe that increasing global financial and cultural integration denote the "end of geography" come up short on both empirical and philosophical grounds, since local communities continue to wield enormous influence in forging unique local responses to globalization. More than anything, intensifying patterns of globalization illustrate the *need* for geographic *place knowledge* (Brown, 1988).

An integral component of building this "place knowledge" rests on coming to terms with the ways in which the local-global dialectic produces distinct spaces (McGee, 1995). This dialectical relationship between the local and the global proves especially vital in our comprehension of tourism and development since both represent global flows that are embraced, negotiated, articulated, and resisted at the local scale throughout the world. Among the several dimensions, or "scapes," of global cultural flow outlined by Appadurai (1990: 297), "ethnoscapes" describe the "landscapes of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, guestworkers, and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world." Tourism represents not only a massive flow of people, but also an equally significant flow of technology, capital, media images, and ideas: contributing to ethnoscapes, tourism also intersects technoscapes, finanscapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes as well. Tourism embodies the "complex, overlapping,

disjunctive order" characteristic of the new global cultural economy (Appadurai, 1990: 296). Perhaps more than any other global "flow," tourism demonstrates the importance of *multiple* centres of globalization, from which people, ideas, and capital disseminate across the globe and interact dialectically with local circumstances. Hoping to move beyond crude assessments that associate tourism with global cultural homogenization, McKean (1989) and Picard (1993), among others, argue that "local" culture is adaptive, resilient, and perpetually changing. Touristic culture is a product of dialogic construction, whereby global tourism and local "culture" mutually reinforce and determine one another. Rather than unilaterally acting upon a static local "culture," then, international tourism is bound up in an ongoing process of cultural invention in which "Westernization" stands among *many* directions of cultural change (Wood, 1993).

"Alternatives" and the limitations of analysis

Just as "alternative" development theory is a reaction to the perceived crisis in conventional development thinking, so too is "alternative" tourism a consumer and industry response to the failures of conventional mass tourism. The two "alternatives" are linked in another, more fundamental, way however. Among the many supposed features of "alternative" tourism is a commitment to the qualitative, ethical, equitable, and sustainable "development" of host communities (Brandon, 1993; Crick, 1994). One path to "alternative" development, in other words, is through "alternative" tourism. Considering the importance of both of these "alternatives" to my research, I feel it is necessary to note, albeit briefly, the limitations of assessing the tourism-development relationship. Aside from the criticisms of the two "alternatives" outlined throughout this thesis, Dearden (1993) points out the need to distinguish between "sustainable tourism" and tourism's role *in* "sustainable development." In particular, sustainable tourism, which literally means the continued success of tourism, does not *necessarily* foster sustainable development (Wall, 1997). More often than not, in fact, the two are related antagonistically.

The relationship between tourism and development is complex. In addition to inadequately addressing this complexity, however, conventional tourism-development analyses have also failed to overcome methodological weaknesses. Wood (1980, 1993) claims that the study of tourism, development, and cultural change in Southeast Asia has suffered from an

overreliance on Eurocentric, normative categories, which simplify and romanticize such concepts as culture, tradition, and authenticity. Despite challenging the cultural homogenization thesis prevalent in early tourism and development studies, authors continue to ask not how culture is evolving and interacting dialectically with tourism, but whether culture is being "spoiled, demeaned, preserved, or strengthened" (Wood, 1980: 564). Recently, however, there has been a shift in the tourism and development literature away from a normative approach. This shift has been rooted in three trends within tourism, development, and cultural studies. First, people are beginning to treat culture, development, and authenticity as symbolic and socially constructed entities. As Wood (1993: 58) points out, "there is no objective, bounded thing that we can call 'traditional culture' against which to measure and judge change." Second, there is a growing realization that tourism enters a dynamic cultural context rather than "impacting" upon an inert, passive, and unitary "traditional culture." In addition, tourism plays a role in local struggles over symbolic representations of a community or nation. Third, the work of "new ethnographers" has led to the questioning of the notion of an organic and essentialized "culture." As Clifford (1988), among others, has demonstrated, cultural identity is always mixed and relational; instead of being enduring, structural, and traditional, culture is contingent, syncretic, and historical.

Although I firmly believe there is still a moral and academic obligation to study tourism's relationship to "development," I acknowledge the fact that assessing this relationship depends to a large degree on the theoretical assumptions concerning development generally, and thus remains subjective and ambiguous. This unclear connection between tourism and development becomes especially pronounced when considering the difficulty in establishing what exactly "development" entails. In short, establishing a clear and incontestable link between tourism and development proves difficult due to both problems of definition, and the methodological limitations outlined above. Since my research is centrally concerned with this relationship between tourism and development, I believe it is important to recognize and work through (as I have attempted to do throughout the research process) the potential limitations of *any* tourism-development analysis. The remainder of this chapter takes a closer look at alternative development theory and "alternative" tourism, paying specific attention to the central tenets and assumptions of both approaches.

3.3 Development Theory: Crises, Responses, and Alternatives

Although the term has existed since the nineteenth century, many argue that the modern era of "development" began on 20 January 1949, when President Truman announced the need for "fair dealing" to promote the development and growth of the world's "underdeveloped areas." Henceforth, a global campaign emerged to convert three-quarters of the world to the "Western" way of life (Slater, 1993). The belief in the value, and inevitability, of "Third World" development grew swiftly in the decades following Truman's proclamation. Especially dominant was modernization theory, which stated that with time, the "Third World" would eventually progress from a traditional state of backwardness and ignorance to a state of modernity, economic prosperity, and scientific rationality. Modernization theorists moved beyond the economic realm, however, and began to deal with all areas of life, including political systems and social values. The hegemonic discourse of modernization eventually met resistance in the late-1960s and early-1970s as "Third World" scholars known as *dependistas* began to "theorize back," claiming that global capitalist expansion proved detrimental, not emancipatory, to most of the "Third World" (see Amin, 1976; Frank, 1970, 1978; Rimmer and Forbes, 1982). Furthermore, the *dependistas* argued that "Western" capitalist development occurred only as a result, and at the expense, of the *under*development of the rest of the world.

Although it displaced the unquestioned role of post-war modernization theory, the dependency school shared many of the shortcomings of its modernization anathema. What it did manage to do, however, was provide a different conception of change in the "Third World," and this in itself represented an "alternative" to the prevailing modernization paradigm of development. While acknowledging the counter-hegemonic potential of Marxist and neo-Marxist "radical" geographical approaches to development, however, many development scholars have begun to question the validity of "development" itself, and have attempted to respond to, and transcend, the perceived crisis or impasse in development theory (Escobar, 1995; Esteva, 1992). Among the various reactions to this impasse, alternative development theory (ADT) has provided the most multi-faceted response to the shortcomings of conventional development theory and practice (Friedmann, 1992). Further, as an alternative to *all* conventional development theories of a "grand" theoretical nature - be they modernization, dependency, world systems, or modes of production - ADT stands as the emancipatory,

oppositional mirror image of the general crisis in development theory. To fully understand ADT, therefore, we must first come to terms with the development crisis. Before discussing the features, and weaknesses, of ADT, therefore, I will to outline the contours of the crisis in development theory, and discuss the myriad responses to this crisis.

Malaise and crisis in development theory

In assessing the purported crisis in theories of development, one must first acknowledge that although the crisis is multi-faceted in nature, agreement on the exact state of this crisis, or dilemma, in development thinking and practice is by no means unanimous. Put another way, asking whether or not "development" is in crisis will yield vastly different responses. The neo-liberal champions of the developmental "counter-revolution" (Toye, 1987) would surely state that while development has been far from perfect, there remains little wrong with the idea itself (World Bank, 1989; 1997). Conversely, neo-Marxist and (some) Marxist authors have fully exposed the limitations of development theory, and the crisis of developmentalism has largely remained within the neo-Marxist camp. Taking an oppositional stance to the counter-revolutionary proponents of neo-modernization, I argue, with Booth (1985) and Corbridge (1990a), that there does indeed exist a crisis in development thinking, and, furthermore, that this crisis will be resolved only when untenable theoretical assumptions and simplistic empirical interventions are exposed and reconciled.

As Schuurman (1993) points out, the development crisis is linked to several social and geopolitical changes. First, the collapse of "actually existing socialisms" in Eastern Europe and the (former) Soviet Union has signalled to some the end of the principal alternative to capitalist world development. Second, forty years of official "development" has done little to ameliorate the continuing destitution of much of the "Third World." Rather than bringing "modernization" or material wealth to the "developing world," development has often introduced its own problems, including environmental devastation, social disruption, and economic dislocation. Third, the "postmodern turn" in Western academic circles has meant a theoretical questioning of the purportedly modernist principles underpinning "totalizing" metanarratives of development. Finally, the confusion surrounding the meaning and scope of the term "development" has caused uncertainty, despondency, and ambivalence within "development studies." In describing the various angles of the development crisis, I employ Sklair's (1988)

three-tiered framework comprising empirical, theoretical, and meta-theoretical levels of analysis. After mapping out the contours of the crisis, I examine various attempts to transcend the development impasse, itself an interesting issue considering proposed solutions to the crisis number as high, if not higher, than descriptions of the crisis itself.

The empirical and theoretical dimensions of the development crisis

As an euphemistic and ambiguous term, "development" has long enjoyed discursive and political hegemony throughout the world. Critique of the concept has also existed as long as "development" itself, but it was not until the the mid-1960s that scholars and practitioners - not to mention the human "targets" of development - began to explicitly reject, and take direct political action against, the all-encompassing "development" principle. As many authors have since pointed out, "development" has brought chaos everywhere it has gone (Crush, 1995; Esteva, 1992; Pieterse, 1991; Yapa, 1991). On a practical level, both the material promises of development and the various "network landscapes" of globalization (see Appadurai, 1990) have failed to reach the vast majority of the world's population (McGee, 1995). Paradigmatic development theory has also failed miserably in explaining ground-level realities of "Third World" societies. Brown (1988) elucidates the need for development theory that avoids falling into paradigmatic traps whereby theory is built "top-down." By focusing predominantly on macro, structural processes, conventional development theory overlooks the complex and dynamic intricacies occurring at the empirical level, thereby relying on overly abstract constructions that are divorced from the very subjects they claim to describe.

Among the most tangible and politically-charged consequences of development at the ground level have centred on the environmental destruction caused by rapid global industrialization (Newell, 1997; Sachs, 1993). As many studies have documented (Dearden and Mitchell, 1997; Oldfield and Acorn, 1991; Redclift, 1994), the earth's environmental resources have suffered steady deterioration caused by both the industrialization of "advanced" countries and the *lack* of development causing poverty throughout the "Third World." Environmental problems span several areas. First, the depletion of stratospheric ozone caused by certain chemicals such as halons and cholorofluorocarbons (CFCs) has exacerbated other problems, including air pollution and global warming, which stem from the production of excess carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and other "greenhouse gases" (IDRC, 1993).

Second, rapid global deforestation, especially in tropical countries, has led to diminished agricultural productivity, desertification, heightened soil erosion, and the loss of biodiversity. Third, marine pollution and the scarcity of water for agriculture afflict the majority of the world's developing countries, and nearly one billion people lack access to a safe and adequate water supply (Redclift and Sage, 1994: 187). Fourth, persistent threats to ecosystems and natural habitats have compromised the global biodiversity so crucial to human survival. As Dasmann (1991: 8) comments, "the life-insurance value of biological diversity is potentially enormous, particularly as we go into a period where rapid climactic change or other severe planetary stresses are likely." Fifth, the production of toxic chemicals and radioactive waste, coupled with the creation of between one and two thousand commercial chemicals each year, has impaired human health, reproductive capacity, and genetic structures, not to mention the damage caused by the disposal of such materials (IDRC, 1993). At a basic human level, therefore, development has either caused considerable harm in its own right, or exacerbated forms of pollution, such as water contamination, which kill over three million people annually due to diarrheal, and other infectious, diseases (Platt, 1996: 115).

At the theoretical level, the majority of development thinking remains limited to its own particular vision of social change. In addition to insisting that internal logical coherence allows for generalizations, development theories commonly assume the ability to explain processes in vastly different and often unrelated realms. This pretension to "grand theoretical" explanatory and predictive power has led these metanarratives to ignore one another through continuous theoretical exclusionism and dogmatism. In short, the lack of theoretical cross-fertilization between development theories has meant that potentially fruitful explanations of development processes have been lost to the iron hand of inflexibility. Contrary to those authors who insist on theoretical purity (Geras, 1987; Watts, 1988), Corbridge (1988) argues that the "blender theory of truth" proves crucial in deepening theoretical analysis so that particular arguments (in this case, those of the counter-revolutionary neo-liberals) may themselves be refuted on their own grounds. As Corbridge (1988: 243) clearly illustrates, cross-theoretical dialogue does not imply shallow analysis, but rather the opposite: "An open mind is not the same thing as an empty mind."

The meta-theoretical crisis in development

Recent postmodern and post-structural challenges have highlighted the problems inherent to development theories from an epistemological, or philosophical, point of view. While Booth (1985) and Sklair (1988) examined and substantiated the development crisis among Marxist and neo-Marxist theorists, Corbridge (1990a) extends the critique to *all* development theory, demonstrating how, at an epistemological level, they commit the same sins. Development theories are heavily economistic, claiming that the processes of development are reducible to economic relations, rather than existing as a combination of economic *and* non-economic factors such as religion, culture, and politics. They also tend to embody similar meta-theoretical principles: *linearity* in that social change is assumed to occur according to a pre-established pattern, logic, and direction; *organicism*, in that the development idea has its origins in nineteenth century biological theories on the birth and growth of organisms; *teleology*, in that the end-point of development is always assumed to be known; *universalism*, whereby the same development process is thought to occur throughout the world regardless of specific location; and *essentialism* which involves "the intellectual presumption that complex realities of any sort are ultimately reducible to simpler, or essential, realities" (Graham, 1990: 54).

Development ideology emanates from Enlightenment dichotomies and, as such, collapses diversity into binary, but more importantly, hierarchically-ordered, oppositions. Hence, a basic division between "developed" and "*un*developed" underlies other dichotomies which, much like the fundamental developed/undeveloped opposition, have little basis in empirical reality: white/black, modern/traditional, subject/object, and science/superstition. Manzo (1991) extends this idea to include the parent/child dichotomy which, when taken to its logical conclusion, implies a colonial relationship in which a benevolent and missionary parent (development) saves an irresponsible and needy child (the "Third World" subject) from inevitable poverty and despair.[4] As most development theory revolves around basic binary distinctions, the privileging of Western-based notions of scientific rationality has meant the neglect of, and even epistemological violence against, local "Third World" knowledges and worldviews (Banuri, 1990; Marglin, 1992). Further, the linguistic, epistemological, and cultural hegemony of development has created a situation of crisis typified by "the widespread

[4] See also Slater (1993) and Taussig (1992) for a discussion on development's missionary and magical personality.

poor (*underdeveloped*) knowledge that "Third World" intellectuals and scientists of Western educational background have of their own civilization and culture's past contributions to the fields of science and knowledge" (Dhaouadi, 1995: 152). Thus, the epistemological dominance that has engendered cultural and psychological underdevelopment has led to a crisis of confidence, a crisis exacerbated by the growing realization by theorists and "victims" of development that despite (seemingly) promoting material choice and comfort, development simultaneously denies the vitality and value of different conceptualizations of knowledge and social change.

The World Bank and other international institutions of "development" have variously, for nearly fifty years, advised, assisted, intervened in, or reproached virtually every independent "Third World" state. The right assumed by the World Bank to demand direct involvement in independent economies betrays a philosophical view common to most development theories, namely that intervention and postures of superiority are warranted in the name of bringing "development" to areas with the misfortune of not having it already, whatever exactly "it" may be (see Corbridge, 1992). Coevalness is consistently denied and deplored, as areas defined as "undeveloped" are told that their particular societies - which often represent hundreds or thousands of years of adaptation and resistance - do not, in fact, operate as efficiently, rationally, or scientifically as they could. Capital-intensive development projects, inappropriate technologies, and trickle down economics continue to largely characterize the physical manifestations of a patronizing and self-righteous developmental philosophy that is, according to post-structuralist authors at least, predicated on untenable binary distinctions.

The final element of the meta-theoretical crisis in development theory that I wish to examine centres around the role of structure and agency, on the one hand, and of the local and the global, on the other. By casting the "Third World" subject as either a passive recipient of development intervention or as a truly free and independent maximizer of rational economic choice, development theory mishandles the infinitely complex interplay of individual agency and structural constraint. Individuals constitute, but are also constituted by, structural processes often beyond their control or comprehension (Giddens, 1976). Development theory faces empirical hurdles when privileging one over the other, but more importantly, will remain in crisis so long as it continues to foster completely irrelevant or misleading conceptualizations of structure and agency (Mouzelis, 1988; Rimmer and Forbes, 1982). Similarly, positing local

and global processes as separate and opposed entities denies the dialectical relationship between the two, whereby locally-specific, endogenous characteristics act as "agents that condition (or channel) the local articulation of external, or exogenous, forces" (Brown, 1988: 267). At the very least, then, a solution to the impasse in development thinking must acknowledge the world's complexity by fundamentally reconsidering how micro and macro processes interact and mutually construct one another.

Transcending the development impasse

Having briefly touched upon some of the reasons for the development crisis, I will now discuss more fully the underlying principles that both challenge conventional development thinking and serve generally as the foundation for alternative development theory (ADT). Working backwards this time from meta-theory to empirical work, I hope to demonstrate the variation and richness of "post-impasse" development analyses. As a broad meta-theoretical approach, or guiding philosophical principle, the work of post-Marxists like Laclau and Mouffe (1987), Slater (1992), and Corbridge (1990a) has done much to rescue orthodox Marxist analysis from economism, essentialism and reductionism.[5] Post-Marxists recognize the importance of class contradictions, but refuse to grant economic processes a privileged role in determining cultural and political processes found at a non-economic "superstructure." Arguing that the many realms constituting human experience cannot be reduced to an economic base, post-Marxists are interested both in demonstrating that "necessary laws" and "inevitable forces" simply do not exist, and in refuting the deterministic notion that causation can be diagrammatically sketched. Discourse theory also informs the work of some post-Marxists, who counter essentialist conceptualizations by asserting that all knowledge is socially constructed; in the words of Laclau and Mouffe (1987: 85), "outside of any discursive context, objects *do not have* being; they have only *existence.*" While not all post-Marxists believe in this "sordid relativism" (Corbridge, 1988: 240), post-Marxism stands at any rate as one prominent example of how a concern for class can still inform development theory without struggling under the same meta-theoretical constraints.

[5] I have set up a straw Marxism to knock down in order to simplify and summarize the arguments of post-Marxists. As Geras (1987), Watts (1988), and Peet (1990) point out, there is a rich tradition within Marxism of internal debate and flexibility, and the brand of Marxism scorned by the post-Marxists is a highly scientific and economistic version. Post-Marxists would, needless to say, surely acknowledge that Marxists have greatly contributed to development theory by emphasizing inequality and poverty, among other things.

In a similar vein, the ideas of overdetermination Marxists like Graham (1992), and Resnick and Wolff (1992), attempt to counter the essentialistic and deterministic tendencies of orthodox Marxism, which assume that influences on social life and change can be hierarchically organized. Instead, they argue that "every aspect of reality participates in constituting the world and, more specifically, in constituting every other aspect" (Graham, 1992: 142). The overdetermination position states that only *partial* knowledges are possible since examining how "every aspect of reality" affects everything else proves empirically incomplete and epistemologically dishonest. Overdetermination Marxists are Marxists nonetheless, and class still constitutes the "entry point" for their discussions, albeit in a way that does not posit class, or anything else for that matter, as *the* single most important causal factor. Avoiding grand claims based on "totalizing" metanarratives might prove difficult for some development theorists, but the move toward more antiessentialist and methodologically "honest" analyses, as exemplified in the approach espoused by the overdetermination scholars, allows development theory, for some at least, to move beyond the paralyzing meta-theoretical crisis.

Many of the responses to the development crisis, at least at the meta-theoretical level, revolve around particular features of "postmodern" thought. Slater (1992) emphasizes the value of employing those "enabling" aspects of postmodernism which encourage iconoclastic questioning rather than predetermination, openness rather than pre-emptive closure, and plurality rather than essentialism. Postmodernism involves the decentering of the subject, and acknowledges that "in each individual there exist multiple subject positions corresponding both to the different social relations in which the individual is inserted...and to the discourses that constitute these relations" (Slater, 1992: 301). Extending this notion of multiple subjectivities, development theorists are beginning to recognize that the multifaceted nature of oppression requires a variegated strategy based not on a unified privileged class subject, but on a series of "local resistances" embodied in new social movements throughout the "Third World" (see Escobar, 1992a; Laclau and Mouffe, 1987). As Slater (1992) and Corbridge (1988) admit, however, postmodern reflection slips easily into relativism and particularism: development theorists, while bearing in mind the "enabling" aspects of *all* theory, including that of a postmodern persuasion, must pay heed to the very "real" problems of human inequality and

suffering too often neglected by abstract postmodern theorizing.[6]

Armed with these various meta-theoretical, or philosophical, "post-impasse" weapons, development theorists and practitioners are beginning to employ specific theoretical strategies to cope with the crisis. First, the "Regulationist School," of which Lipietz (1984) is most representative, receives praise from many quarters as a truly "post-Marxist" approach. The Regulationists argue that processes of accumulation and crisis formation under capitalism are best understood by examining the connection between a regime of accumulation (like Fordism and post-Fordism) and its mode of regulation ("the set of internalized rules and social procedures which ensure the unity of a given regime of accumulation" (Corbridge, 1990a: 630)). Second, the post-imperialist approach advanced by Becker and Sklar (1987) operates under the assumption that capitalism is not *necessarily* expansionist or coercive between nation states. By examining the integration of diverse national interests and the rise of a national corporate bourgeoisie, the post-imperialism school avoids treating economic class interests in an essentialistic or teleological manner. Lastly, the study of "sustainable development" (discussed further below) and gender in development (GID) have infused environmental concerns and gender into mainstream development theory. However, as Parpart (1995) rightly notes, examining development from a gender perspective has suffered from essentialism as well since Western feminists have appropriated the voices of their "Third World" female "others," while claiming to universally represent the diverse experience of women globally. Nevertheless, it is clear that despite the crisis in development thinking, gender, and other theories mentioned above, are beginning to initiate the painstaking task of pushing development theory in innovative and methodologically sound directions.

Philosophical and theoretical responses to the development crisis have been important in transcending the crisis. However, it is precisely at the *empirical* level that true changes in development thinking manifest themselves, both in the approaches of researchers and the practical interventions that affect people's lives. Assuming an actor-oriented approach allows us to examine what is actually happening in "Third" - or any other - World settings without the inhibiting influence of abstract "grand theory" divorced from empirical reality. In celebrating the world's difference and homogeneity, development theorists must strive to combine emic and etic viewpoints while coming to terms with how structural and global forces affect ground-

[6] See Yapa (1996; 1997) and Shrestha (1997) for an interesting debate within the field of geography on the relevance of postmodernism to such development issues as poverty.

level agency and local practices. Building "bottom-up" development theory (Stöhr and Taylor, 1981) thus requires "place knowledge" so that theorists and practitioners can begin to understand the local articulation of global development interventions. By delving deeper into understanding *change*, rather than some predetermined path of universal and linear "development," we can begin to overcome the empirical crisis plaguing development thinking.

As a discipline, geography has much to contribute to the post-impasse endeavour: "the geographer's sense of place whether gained from field experience or secondary sources, is an exceptionally valuable tool, useful for both evaluating paradigmatic constructs (such as development) and guiding research into new avenues" (Brown, 1988: 261). As a body of theory, "alternative development" incorporates many, if not most, of the aforementioned responses to the crisis in conventional development theory. By integrating philosophical, or meta-theoretical, innovations with more actor-oriented and holistic empirical approaches, alternative development theory has largely stepped in to fill the void created by the current crisis in development theory. I now turn to a more detailed examination of alternative development, and follow up with a critique of the assumptions behind, and weaknesses of, the alternative development paradigm.

Alternative development: the personal versus the impersonal

Alternative development, known also as "authentic" or "human" development, is best considered as an oppositional stance and response to the linear, organic, economistic, teleological, and reductionistic assumptions of post-war development theory. It is also, according to Chant (1991), more concerned with practical questions like "what do we do now" than with more theoretical concerns like "why is there global inequality." As a general framework, Tariq Banuri's (1990) discussion of personal and impersonal cultural elements serves to illustrate the fundamental differences between alternative and conventional approaches to development. Banuri accuses modernization and other post-war development theories of practising an "impersonality posture" which fosters a detached and "rational" view of the world. Whether one looks at ontology, epistemology, or cosmology, personal and impersonal worldviews differ diametrically. The personal is characterized by spontaneity, fluidity, dynamic evolution, flexibility, continuous notions of time, and a concern for the connectedness of human relations, whereas the impersonal features organization, rationality, linearity, control,

stasis, rigidity, and a frozen definition of terms. Enlightenment dichotomies and concern for order and truth inform the impersonal worldview, and while these two "ideal types" are never completely isolated within any one cultural system, Banuri notes that "modern" culture, or "the Western sensibility" in his words, is unique in its exclusion and prioritization of one (the impersonal) over the other (the personal). The creation of a hierarchical dichotomy between the two stances also characterizes the underlying approach of "conventional" development theory and practice. As a basic principle, then, alternative development strives to maintain a balance between personal and impersonal worldviews, while acknowledging that one is not *necessarily* better for, or more useful to, any particular society.

As mentioned above, enormous development projects - funded primarily by the World Bank - represent the principal means of development deployment throughout the "Third World" (Black, 1991; English and Mule, 1996). By pumping huge amounts of financial capital into projects, the development "experts" of the "developed" world assumed in the immediate post-war era that economic benefits would trickle down to other regions and individuals. Pole-centred growth, it was thought, would help improve the lives of un- or underemployed workers and peasants, while also encouraging the infusion of technological innovation into "backward" areas of the world (see World Bank, 1981). This technocratic myth has been questioned by many groups - even partly by the World Bank itself after the mid-1970s - and in its place, concepts like the "poorest of the poor" and "basic needs" have served to redefine development priorities (Chambers, 1983). Instead of promoting the welfare of the already-wealthy, or maintaining the optimistic and naive assumption that wealth will somehow trickle down to those who "need" it, alternative development emphasizes decentralization and pays attention to the priorities of the mass majority who, despite the rhetoric of post-war development theory, have little to gain from inappropriate and environmentally-destructive development projects.

Unlike capital-intensive development schemes, "basic needs" approaches deal with more than just the economic aspects of life (Goulet, 1992). The ethos behind this cornerstone of alternative development philosophy is the elimination of dire poverty and the provision of basic needs, including food, clothing, and shelter. Development then becomes a vehicle for realizing these goals and not a mechanism for the perpetuation of regional and individual inequalities. The notion of "human development" thus plays a prominent role in alternative

development, whereas the economistic motivations behind traditional development theory encourage neglect of the non-economic aspects of human well-being. Accounting for the cultural, political, and spiritual health of a society makes "development" a much more complex and holistic process than traditionally assumed. Expanding on this idea, Goulet (1992: 469) notes that "authentic" development entails a "qualitative improvement in any society's provision of life-sustaining goods, esteem, and freedom to all its citizens." While these measures of development remain culturally contingent, and thus prone to external definition, alternative development benefits from approaching the issue of social change and "development" from an ethical, philosophical *and* materialist vantage point (Crocker, 1991). In short, alternative conceptions of development generally tackle the issue of what constitutes "the good life" from a broad perspective, and to paraphrase Erich Fromm (1976), they are centrally concerned with the question of "being" versus "having."

Participation, democracy, and multiple subjectivity

As the discussion above has intimated, alternative development is concerned with making the development process equitable and ethical. A key component of this need for democratic participation is the empowerment of the marginal "Third World" subject (Friedmann, 1992). Empowerment involves turning the objects of education and intervention into the *subjects* of their own development (Freire, 1970). In addition, empowerment and democracy allow the poorest members of society to gain some control and autonomy over decision-making processes, while also giving the marginalized a stake in "development" (Edwards, 1989). Alternative development strategies privilege the local knowledges of "Third World" subjects who are acknowledged as having something to teach "us," rather than the other way around. The epistemological arrogance and violence associated with "Western" science and rationality thus become repudiated tropes of oppression to be avoided wherever possible by more modest and culturally-sensitive alternative development approaches.

Reacting to Orientalist tendencies in post-war development theories that treat "Third World" populations as weak, passive receptors of development expertise and financial aid, alternative approaches to development grant agency to the "targets" of development by recognizing the ability of people to interpret, manipulate, adapt to, or resist external impulses in creative and innovative ways that are difficult, if not impossible, to predict in advance (Scott,

1985). This realization not only opens up new ways of examining how development processes work at the ground level, but also asserts that indigenous models of development are possible, thus indicating the existence of many "paths" to development (Wiarda, 1983). Recognizing human agency refutes the untenable "cultural homogenization" thesis, which sees development as an international steamroller flattening all localities in the name of global homogenization.[7] Instead, alternative development aims to uncover local variations and hybridizations in order to assess how the local and the global interact and mutually determine one another in a perpetual and dialectical relationship. By throwing off the conceptual blinders of paradigmatic thinking, alternative development theory strives to build on the "place knowledge" mentioned earlier in order for both insiders and outsiders to fully understanding the relationship between local and global, structure and agency.

Finally, in denying agency, conventional development practitioners and theorists ascribe a simple, unified, and static subjectivity to "Third World" subjects. As discussed earlier, subjectivity is conceived as being centred around one basic feature that determines all action and thought; this is evident in virtually all traditional conceptions of development, from modernization ("homo economicus") to Marxist approaches (the privileged class subject). As Escobar (1992a), Laclau and Mouffe (1987), and Schuurman (1993) indicate, the rise of new social movements in the "Third World" signals the end of a unified and single subject. In its place, alternative development posits the existence of multiple subjectivities that comprise the basis of a multi-pronged attack on various axes of oppression: these "local resistances," as Foucault (1972) calls them, serve to counter the multiple sites of oppression at work simultaneously in "Third World" societies. The end of the privileged and unidimensional subject thus underlies alternative development's awareness of human diversity while serving to illuminate the need for a multifarious strategy towards the improvement of the human condition.

Alternative development and sustainability

Perhaps the most important, and pragmatic, component of the alternative development paradigm centres on the concept of *sustainable development.* Though the term "sustainability" first came into official usage as late as the early-1970s, the origins of the concept go back as far

[7] See McGee (1995) for a critique of the cultural homogenization thesis.

as the nineteenth century. As Kidd (1992) outlines, sustainability is grounded in six historical roots, or strains of thought. First, the ecological/carrying capacity concept serves as a key principle of contemporary notions of sustainability. The ecological approach posits that any given ecosystem can only support a certain number of species or activities, and in cases where this limit (defined as the carrying capacity) is exceeded, a chain of events is set in motion which threatens the long-term survival of that ecosystem's human and (other) animal population (Riddell, 1981). Second, the resource/environment root deals with Malthusian concerns over the inherent limits of expanding resources in order to meet the needs of a growing population. Many early studies on the environment (Brown, 1954; Osbourne, 1948) addressed the resource problems facing the earth by illustrating how humans consume more resource capital than technology can create. Third, early geographers such as Marsh (1864) indicated that local environmental changes have global consequences both for the biosphere, and also for future generations who could suffer as a result of the irresponsible actions of their ancestors.

The fourth "root of sustainability" outlined by Kidd (1992) involves the critique of technology. The view that much of the technology created by "Western" industrialization is dehumanizing and environmentally-destructive has led to calls for appropriate forms of technology which accurately reflect the circumstances of developing countries (see Schumacher, 1973). Fifth, the "no growth-slow growth" philosophy questions the true value of material possessions and decries perpetual economic growth for its own sake. The key text in this strand of (pre)sustainability is *The Limits of Growth* by Meadows *et al* (1972) which argues that population growth, pollution, resource depletion, and overall environmental degradation will combine in a matter of decades to create severe global ecological crises. Lastly, the concept of "ecodevelopment" formed the cornerstone of early reports on sustainability (UNEP, 1978), and continues to influence contemporary strategies for sustainable development. Ignacy Sachs, the term's inventor, defines ecodevelopment along the following dimensions: *social sustainability*, aimed at fostering equity in asset and income distribution, as well as reducing the gap between rich and poor; *economic sustainability*, made possible by the efficient allocation and management of resources in order to relieve the debt burden of the developing world; *ecological sustainability*, which requires, among other things, the expansion of "Spaceship Earth's" carrying capacity, the controlled consumption of fossil fuels, the promotion of self-restraint in consumption patterns, and the search for and discovery

of alternative sources of energy; *spatial sustainability*, directed at achieving more equitable urban-rural relationships and configurations; and *cultural sustainability*, which encourages endogenous sources of modernization and translates "the normative concept of ecodevelopment into a plurality of local, ecosystem-specific, culture-specific, and site-specific solutions." (Sachs (I.), 1992: 7-8).

As a concrete term, sustainability was introduced into the official environmental and developmental vocabulary in 1972, when *The Ecologist* published "Blueprint for Survival" and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) used the word in its annual yearbook (Kidd, 1992). The next step in the term's evolution came in the same year during the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm. The conference raised international awareness of impending global environmental problems, and resulted in the formation of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP). By 1980, the connections between conventional economic and social development and environmental degradation were increasingly receiving attention, shaping in subsequent years the language and tone of international documents dealing with the environment (Redclift and Sage, 1994). The concept of sustainable *development*, as opposed simply to sustainability, underpinned the *World Commission Strategy*, published in 1980 by the IUCN (IUCN, 1980). The Strategy addresses the issue of resource conservation through topics such as securing the food supply, saving forests, learning to live "on planet sea," coming to terms with other species, and overcoming the various obstacles to conservation, including a lack of environmental planning, poor legislation, a lack of conservation-based rural development, and the absence of conservation at the policy-making level (Allen, 1980).

The most pivotal moment in the evolution and popularization of sustainable development came in 1987, when the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland, published *Our Common Future* (WCED, 1987). The report tackles environmental problems from a comprehensive perspective, and in drawing explicit links between poverty, development, and environmental sustainability, it argues, unlike many previous studies, that sustained economic growth and environmental conservation are not necessarily mutually exclusive. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Brundtland Commission defines sustainable development as "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

(WCED, 1987: 43). The report also emphasizes the need for human management of the environment:

> The concept of sustainable development does imply limits - not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organization can be both managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth (WCED, 1987: 8).

The compatibility of development and conservation is taken up again in *Caring for the Earth* - the follow-up to the World Conservation Strategy - which aims to promote a "kind of development that provides real improvements in the quality of human life and at the same time conserves the vitality and diversity of the Earth" (IUCN, 1991: 8). Other than defining sustainable development as "improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems," the report lists several principles necessary for a achieving a "sustainable society": respect and care for the community of life, improvement of the quality of human life, conservation of the Earth's vitality and diversity, minimized depletion of non-renewable resources, respect for the Earth's carrying capacity, alteration of personal attitudes and practices, environmental assistance to communities, integration of development and conservation, and the creation of a global alliance (IUCN, 1991: 9-11).

Despite the various problems (discussed below) associated with the sustainability concept, the enormous role played by sustainable development in promoting the overall alternative development paradigm was punctuated in 1992 when 178 government delegations, 50,000 non-governmental representatives, and thousands of press members and civil servants met in Rio for the "Earth Summit," the largest gathering of heads of government in history (Lindner, 1997). The principal aim of the Rio Summit revolved around the ratification of *Agenda 21*, a blueprint for environmental action and sustainable development into the next century. Agenda 21 contains forty chapters grouped into seven "social themes": the prospering world (revitalizing growth with sustainability), the just world (sustainable living), the habitable world (human settlements), the fertile world (efficient resource use), the shared world (global and regional resources), the clean world (managing chemicals and waste), and the peoples' world (people participation and responsibility) (UNCED, 1992). In addition to discussing Agenda 21, the delegates of the Earth Summit unanimously accepted the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, a statement of twenty-seven environmental principles ranging

from the entitlement of humans to a healthy a productive life in harmony with nature, to the need for partnership, good faith, and international law in furthering the cause of sustainable development (Sands, 1997). As Panjabi (1997) illustrates, the neglect of key issues, the absence of a pledge to commit new funds to conservation, and a schism between developed and developing countries tainted the positive moral and philosophical achievements of Agenda 21, and the Rio Summit generally, but insofar as alternative development is concerned, the growing international recognition of, and adherence to, sustainable development, represents the clearest response to the shortcomings of conventional development theory and practice.

A critique of alternative development

In discussing alternative development, one notices that "descriptions" of alternative development read more like normative statements that positive ones: discussion of what *should* happen often dominates analysis of what actually *does* happen. It is certainly difficult to argue against the supposed features of alternative development, since few people would, in principle, argue against ending poverty and hunger through more culturally-sensitive and appropriate ways. Needless to say, there are many problems with the notion of alternative development. First, its most popular manifestation, sustainable development, remains a term shrouded in confusion, contradictory interpretations, and conflicting meanings (Shiva, 1992). By legitimizing interminable economic expansion, proponents of sustainable development (IUCN, 1991; WCED, 1987) not only call unproblematically for the management of ecological resources for the principal purpose of boosting economic opportunities, but also blame the environmental problems of the developing world on poverty, thereby implicitly suggesting the need for poverty alleviation through sustained economic growth (Sachs (W.), 1992). Second, criticisms levelled against conventional development apply in many cases to alternative development theory as well. For example, the teleological nature of such theories as modernization, world systems, and dependency, are just as evident in "alternative" theories whose end points (material well-being based on the "Western" way of life) are also assumed to be known. With the possible exception of the new social movements literature - which claims that the result of social struggles cannot be predicted - alternative development approaches are still committed to the notion of "development," albeit by following "different paths." Third, alternative development has become a confusing term because, following the World Bank's

sudden interest in the world's poor during the 1970s, the populist language of international capital has rendered alternative development ideas like basic needs and "poorest of the poor" key rhetorical and ideological tools of the development "counter-revolution" (Toye, 1987). The neo-liberal resurgence of the 1980s and 1990s has, in short, made alternative development's critique of global development agencies confusing, at best, and hypocritical, at worst.[8]

Whether development efforts are "alternative" or conventional, all Western-based ideas, including basic needs and "authentic" development, are culturally-specific and historically-contingent. They are all exogenously-defined and initiated endeavours, hatched in the institutions and universities of the "developed" world. The dominance of Northern non-governmental organizations (NGOs), furthermore, ensures that the priorities of the "developed" world suddenly become those of the "developing," betraying an inclination towards "discourse imperialism" (Schuurman, 1993). The continued reliance on *measures* of development also belies the claims of alternative development advocates concerning the departure from objective, scientific, and quantifiable measures of human "progress." Whether one relies on the crude gross national product (GNP) or the more refined, complex human development index (HDI), the fallacy of measurement remains.

Many of the goals of alternative development are laudable in theory, but unfeasible, and perhaps naively optimistic, in practice. Shifting the emphasis onto the poorest of the poor does not, in and of itself, do anything to combat the global, national, and local relations of power and domination that make it difficult for the marginalized to speak and fulfil their roles as social actors in the first place. Ascribing "Western" normative characteristics like freedom, independence, and resistance to others misses the point since one cannot make marginalized groups rise up against (externally-defined) forces of oppression simply by wishing for it (Rigg, 1991a). The ground-level aspirations of "Third World" populations for the material trappings of Western-style "modernization" should not be curtly dismissed as false consciousness. Alternative development theorists must accept this discrepancy between theory (the critique against modernization) and practice (the attempts to "modernize" by most "Third World" governments) as an indication of the empirical complexity of such issues as community

[8] I should note that rather than inadvertently promoting the reactionary and counter-revolutionary agenda of the New Right and the World Bank, most alternative development practitioners and theorists work against the appropriation of their ideas by international capitalists, and actively dispute the "market triumphalism" and populist rhetoric of these institutions (see Corbridge, 1990b; Peet and Watts, 1993; Slater, 1993; and especially Watts, 1993).

empowerment and indigenous paths to development.

Recently, development scholars concerned with the "discourse of development" have also argued that instead of quibbling over details concerning the various "paths" to development, development theorists and practitioners - "alternative" or otherwise - should rethink and question the very trope of "development" itself. These development theorists, who have begun to probe the discursive nature of the "development" idea (Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1985, 1992b, and 1995; Pieterse, 1991; and Slater, 1994), share a disillusionment with "development," as exemplified in Esteva's (1992) tongue-in-cheek comment that "development stinks." Alternative conceptions of development thus give way to alternatives *to* development. Broadly defined, "development discourse" refers to the following:

> [T]he texts and words of development - on the ways that development is written, narrated, and spoken; on the vocabularies deployed in development texts to construct the world as an unruly terrain requiring management and intervention; on their stylized and repetitive form and content, their spatial imagery and symbolism, their use (and abuse) of history, their modes of establishing expertise and authority and silencing alternative voices; on the forms of knowledge that development produces and assumes; and on the power relations it underwrites and reproduces" (Crush, 1995: 3).

In short, development discourse shapes the way we think (and do not think), as well as the way the "targets" of development see themselves. It represents a regime of truth and reason which legitimates certain forms of intervention while silencing others. Most importantly, it allows the deployment of development to take place throughout the world as power and knowledge unfold in a discursive field that first identifies "abnormalities" like illiteracy, poverty, and hunger and then treats them through specific and strategic interventions.

Escobar (1995) argues that, if we are to assess critically the potential of alternative development, we must first realize the difficulty, and necessity, of freeing ourselves from the discursive limitations of development thinking. "Alternative development," seen in this light, stands merely as a variation of the broad, and ageless, discursive developmental theme. "Development" is strategically reinventive and adaptive when faced with a challenge: the neo-liberal revival in the midst of widespread development critique serves as a blunt reminder of this. Alternative development may in theory represent a more appropriate and ethical approach to issues of human concern, but it nonetheless operates within the same discursive field as other development discourses. Deconstructing "developmentalism" thus entails a wholesale reconsideration of how to approach social change in "Third World" settings, and in order to

move forward, "development studies" must begin, according to these theorists, the process of extricating thought from the stifling and ideologically corrupt constraints of development discourse, while also continuing to work towards understanding the problems that plague humans worldwide. Although the work of these, and other like-minded post-structuralists, remains limited in analyzing change in contemporary Southeast Asia, I believe that bearing in mind - however minimally - a discursive approach to development allows us to frame government policies and individual responses to "development" in a manner more balanced than measuring social and economic change *only* in terms of a specifically-defined and delineated development "paradigm."

3.4 "Alternative" Tourism: Ethics, Sustainability, and Authenticity

Stemming originally from post-war economic, social, political, and technological conditions, the international tourism industry, built around conventional mass forms of travel, currently faces limits to its growth. International tourism constitutes the world's largest industry, providing employment for 212 million people worldwide and generating in 1995 US$3.4 trillion in consumer spending (World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), 1995). Government and business planners in "Third World" countries heavily encourage the development of tourism since immediate and significant foreign exchange gains serve to strengthen structurally inferior "Third World" trading positions. Aside from economic benefits - including foreign exchange accumulation, generation of income, creation of employment, and proliferation of entrepreneurial activity - mass tourism has been considerably offset by concomitant environmental damage, cultural denigration and social change. In response to both deleterious aspects of mass tourism and changing tourist demands, the tourism industry has responded by introducing "new" or "alternative" modes of travel that directly contradict the mass production, inflexibility, standardization, and insensitivity toward host populations associated with more conventional forms of tourism.

This section examines the claims of "alternative" tourism advocates that posit the birth of a new and innovative form of tourism. Addressing the perspectives of the tourism industry, tourist, and host, I hope to use this section's theoretical outline of "alternative" tourism in order to determine later in the thesis whether such claims to tourism distinction represent, in practice,

more rhetoric than fact in southern Thailand. Key elementary characteristics of tourism, including self-oriented tourist motivations, profit-driven planning, and global economic incorporation, are clearly evident, to varying degrees, in both mass and "alternative" forms of tourism. As mentioned in the previous chapter, therefore, mass and "alternative" tourism stand at respective ends of a tourist continuum based, for the purposes of this research, on the tourist quest for authenticity. Especially relevant to this thesis is the claim, and fairly widespread belief, that "alternative" tourism fosters a more equitable and ethical form of "development" based on community empowerment and local control over decision-making and capital investment. Discussing, critiquing, and coming to terms with all features of the "alternative" tourism discourse is vital in assessing "alternative" tourism's potential, and *actual*, contribution to community-based development in southern Thailand.

Definitions: alternative to what?

Establishing a precise definition of "alternative" tourism proves difficult. Despite its frequent use in contemporary tourism literature, the term remains shrouded in confusion and ambiguity. Known synonymously in myriad forms - active, experiential, responsible, ethical, appropriate, special interest, integrated, secondary, and sustainable tourism - *"alternative"* tourism represents an oppositional challenge to *mass* or conventional tourism. As I hope to demonstrate later in this thesis, a purely "mass" form of tourism does not exist in practice. An adequate understanding of how mass and "alternative" tourism are discursively demarcated, however, necessitates the establishment, in theory at least, of certain key characteristics of "mass" tourism. On a general level, those features associated with the international tourism industry from the early-1960s to the late-1980s, have come to collectively define mass tourism. Poon (1993: 32) links several conditions to the existence of mass tourism. First, mass tourism implies rigidly packaged, inflexible, and standardized holidays; all alterations in holiday itineraries thus entail a cost. Second, mass replication of identical units serve to produce mass tourist holidays through economies of scale. Third, mass tourism entails undifferentiated and standardized marketing of tourist experiences and destinations. Fourth, mass tourist holidays are consumed *en masse*, while involving little consideration or concern for the cultures, norms, or environments of tourism destinations.

The birth and expansion of conventional, mass tourism have occurred within a context

framed by several specific conditions: *consumers* who generally form an undifferentiated, inexperienced, and "sun-lust" mass; *technology* which features jet aircraft, automobiles, computer reservations and accounting systems, and credit cards; mass *production* which relies on cheap oil, packaged tours, over-construction of hotels, and standardized travel; forms of *management* that operate on economies of scale, hotel and holiday branding, and mass marketing; and specific *frame conditions* including post-war peace and prosperity, paid holiday time, air transportation regulation, and "Third World" incentives to attract multinational hotel operations (Poon, 1993: 5). In continuously seeking new, "untouched" destinations, mass tourism has fostered a great number of unforeseen negative consequences for destinations in "developing" countries. Along with fundamental shifts in the nature of consumers, technology, production, management, and frame conditions, heightened concern for these deleterious consequences has paved the way for a purportedly "new" form of tourism which serves as an alternative to mass tourism.

By definition, "alternative" tourism implies the existence of a (theoretically) discrete "mass" form of tourism with precise and fixed characteristics. Supposing for a moment that a "pure" form of mass tourism exists, any systematic examination of "alternative" tourism begs the following question: upon which premises does "alternative" tourism discourse rely to establish a measure of differentiation from and opposition to mass tourism? Although discussion of "alternative" tourism depends on how its antithesis, mass tourism, is defined, several clear measures of distinction serve to posit a different, and by implication, *better*, form of tourism. "Alternative" tourism represents a multifaceted challenge from the three key perspectives examined in this thesis: the tourism industry, the tourist, and the host. I will now use the remainder of this chapter to examine in detail how mass and "alternative" tourism vary across these three perspectives, or discursive themes.

The "alternative" tourism product

Standing between the tourist and the host, tourism intermediaries manage the relationship between tourist demand and supply. These intermediaries include tour operators, hotel chains, airline companies, and travel agencies. Whereas conventional tourism features standardized, mass marketed, and rigidly packaged travel, providers of "alternative" tourism holidays boast enormous flexibility and specialization (Poon, 1993). The marketers and

producers of "alternative" tourism make two principal claims. First, a distinction from mass tourist marketing rests on the individualized and personalized nature of "alternative" tourism, which encourages tourist intermediaries to treat tourists in a more sensitive and differentiated manner. Second, "alternative" tourist intermediaries state a genuine interest in "protecting" host populations and environments from the evils of mass tourism development. The health and sustainability of tourism destinations have thus emerged as major concerns of the "alternative" tourism industry. As discussed later, while uncertainty surrounds the sincerity of this claim for true concern, the "alternative" tourism industry nevertheless attempts to counter the blunt, insensitive methods employed by conventional tourism intermediaries by offering flexibility, specialization, and quality to both tourist and host.

The combination of "seek"-based tourist motivations and sophisticated marketing techniques has produced a distinctly "alternative" tourism product. The typical mass tourism experience of "Western" travellers, characterized by sun-lust activities and hedonistic lifestyles, has given way in many cases to travel experiences based on education, novelty, and authenticity. The "alternative" tourism product derives from a trend towards "serious" recreation, where the search for "personal fulfilment, identity enhancement, self-expression, and the like" are best satisfied by "engaging in serious [alternative] rather than casual or unserious [mass] leisure" (Stebbins, 1982: 253). The notions of authenticity and novelty prove most important in defining "alternative" tourism experiences. It is argued by "alternative" tourism agents and tour operators that the trite and "stale" experiences offered by mass tourism lack novelty and fail to deliver the authenticity, creativity, and physical challenges typical of alternative travel. Made possible by enhanced involvement in the cultural and social life of the tourism destination, "alternative" tourism ensures an authentic and "meaningful" holiday in which the tourist truly "experiences," and learns from, different cultures and environments. As Read (1980: 202) indicates, the "alternative" tourism product constitutes "REAL" travel which offers "Rewarding, Enriching, Adventuresome, and Learning" experiences.

Since "alternative" tour companies and travel agencies promise a specialized and custom-designed tourism product, the marketing of destinations moves beyond the inclination, so prevalent in mass tourism, to collapse diverse populations and physical settings into broad destination categories. For example, mass tourism intermediaries market all Caribbean

destinations in the same way (sun, sea, and sand), and often present Africa as a demographically and physically homogeneous continent. Conversely, the pressing concern for authenticity common to "alternative" tourism has inevitably obliged tourism marketing intermediaries to highlight differences among both tourism destinations *and* tourist-related activities. Education of the tourist before and during travel proves crucial to a marketing process which privileges specialized cultural and geographical knowledge. By emphasizing and "selling" the particular human and physical attributes of a destination, the "alternative" tourism industry thus endeavors to compensate for the lack of spatial and cultural distinction so predominant in mass marketing. In doing so, furthermore, the "alternative" tourism product is rendered more novel, authentic, and individualized for the discriminating tastes of educated and socially-concerned "alternative" tourists.

The tourist/traveller debate

The brunt of many jokes and caricatures, the tourist has increasingly assumed a stereotypically negative identity (see Krippendorf, 1987). The raucous, uninhibited, and disrespectful behaviour of some tourists lends credence to this unfavourable image. "Alternative" tourists have reacted to this internationally-prevalent image of the tourist by simply identifying themselves as "travellers." Largely a semantic difference, this oppositional relationship between traveller and tourist proves insufficient in ensuring any actual or meaningful difference. As Munt (1994a) demonstrates, "alternative" tourists employ a variety of means to ensure their distinction from mass tourists, "intellectualization" and "professionalization" being the most prominent. Tourists most interested in establishing a contrary style of travel have attempted to intellectualize new areas of activity, and hence create a specialized group of "expert" travellers who possess the required skills and knowledge to engage in this new form of tourism.

Similarly, "alternative" tourists promote an ethos of professionalism, which entails several claims: the "existence of a specialized body of knowledge, accessible only by lengthy training; the existence of ethical standards which conclude a commitment to public service; and a measure of autonomy from outside interference in the practice of the profession (e.g., only members of the profession can judge the value of a fellow professional's work)" (Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich, 1979: 26). "Alternative" tour leaders, for example, often advertise

professional "qualifications," including academic training, regional expertise, or extensive travel experience (Munt, 1994a). The delineation of ethical standards and the autonomy afforded to "alternative" tourists to judge the value of fellow tourists' activities have collectively contributed to the growing proliferation of ethical tourist "codes of conduct." The earliest and most renowned of these guidelines for responsible tourism is the *Code of Ethics for Tourists* established in the early-1980s by the Bangkok-based Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism (ECTWT). Expanding on this code of ethics, several tourist organizations and tour agencies have produced their own guidelines and handbooks instructing the "alternative" tourist how to best meet the standards established by other "professional" "alternative" tourists (Lea, 1993). Hence, contrary to mass tourists, whose behaviour escapes assessment based on fixed criteria of evaluation, "alternative" tourists strive to abide by clearly defined guidelines that serve as "*ethical* yardsticks against which the activities and tourists can be measured and classified" (Munt, 1994a: 113).

Aside from establishing distinction through intellectualization and professionalization, "alternative" tourists claim to travel for reasons vastly different than those impelling mass tourists to flock to packaged, overdeveloped destinations. Without oversimplifying the complex processes involved in determining travel motivations, discrete travel market segments derive from a particular set of motivations. The *work-oriented* market segment stems from the desire and need to simply rest and recover from the rigours of work (Krippendorf, 1987). Freedom from responsibilities allows tourists with these motivations to enjoy free time away from work *and* home, both of which are highly polarized in the lives of most individuals. The *hedonistic* market segment also stems from a polarization between work and home, but unlike the work-oriented segment, it produces motivations based on varying degrees of interest in the cultural and physical landscapes of tourism destinations. The third category of travel motivations has developed from prevailing social and economic conditions which serve to diminish the polarity between work and leisure. This "*new-unity-of-everyday-life*" places great pressure on tourism to deliver pleasurable, novel, and, above all, authentic experiences (Krippendorf, 1987).[9] The differences between this set of motivations and those related to work recuperation and hedonism essentially boil down to the basic discrepancy between tourists who "seek," and those who "escape" (Iso-Ahola, 1982). Unlike mass tourists who

[9] Krippendorf (1987) estimates that 20 to 30 percent of the "Western" tourist market falls into the "*new-unity-of-everyday-life*" (i.e., "alternative") category.

experience travel mostly as an escape from both home and work, "alternative" tourists travel in *search* of authenticity, novelty, creativity, self-discovery, and self-fulfilment. By claiming a particular set of motivations, then, "alternative" tourists attempt to mark their distinction from mass tourists who are uncategorically accused of travelling as a means of escape.

Behavioural patterns also serve, in the minds of "alternative" tourists, to distinguish travellers from tourists. The insensitive and patronizing attitudes displayed by some tourists toward host populations foster relationships characterized by servility, subservience, and subjugation (Crick, 1989; Matthews, 1978). "Alternative" tourists, on the other hand, claim to possess a greater sensitivity toward, concern for, and awareness of the needs, desires, and problems of hosts (Zurick, 1995). Rather than behaving in a crass or irresponsible way, "alternative" tourists endeavor to meet their travel needs in a way that least disrupts local "culture" (Deming, 1996). Further, "alternative" tourists allege that an overriding respect for local conditions informs and shapes their travel demands (Cazes, 1987; Kutay, 1989). By expressing a willingness to make tourist demands appropriate to local needs and conditions, "alternative" tourists challenge conventional tourist situations in which local norms, values, or priorities are compromised for the selfish and hedonistic demands of mass tourists (Wood and House, 1991). Hence, through greater cultural sensitivity and communication, "alternative" tourists claim to display forms of behaviour markedly different than those associated with the "ugly" mass tourist.

"Alternative" tourism and community-based development

At the root of all tourist encounters rests the basic relationship between the tourist and the host. The host societies of tourism destinations find themselves obliged to deal with the presence of tourists who, more often than not, arrive with inappropriate, or simply different, expectations and needs. The scale, degree of foreign control, and sheer number of tourists associated with mass tourism have collectively engendered economic, social, and environmental change in "Third World" sites serving as hosts to affluent international tourists. Although assessing the impact of mass tourism alone - in isolation from other external, global influences - often proves difficult, several, mostly negative, consequences of mass tourism have received extensive attention and analysis from tourism scholars (Harrison, 1992; Krippendorf, 1987; Turner and Ash, 1975). The principal value of mass tourism to host

populations unquestionably stems from the visible economic advantages of attracting large numbers of relatively wealthy tourists. However, bolstered foreign exchange reserves, enhanced local income, and diversified economic production fail to fully assuage the deleterious, and often hidden, economic costs of mass tourism: dependency on foreign sources of capital and tourists, exacerbated regional and personal inequities, high rates of foreign exchange leakage, and instability of seasonal, unskilled employment (Mathieson and Wall, 1982). The excessive stress placed on the environment by mass tourist facilities has also caused extensive environmental damage, particularly in countries or regions lacking the necessary political will or infrastructure to manage environmental crises (Lea, 1988).[10] The most contentious category of tourism impacts relates to the social and cultural change fostered by mass tourism. While at times difficult to demonstrate conclusively, mass tourism is accused of denigrating local traditions by commodifying cultural attributes and artifacts (Chambers, 1997; Greenwood, 1989). Additionally, critics accuse tourism of disrupting the social "fabric" of host societies (Brooks, 1990; Krotz, 1996). Through a "demonstration effect," hosts begin to emulate the consumption and social habits of mass tourists who, by virtue of being on vacation, behave in an uninhibited manner often incompatible with the norms and values of a host society (de Kadt, 1979).

Advocates of "alternative" tourism posit the beneficial and unobtrusive nature of newer, more appropriate, forms of tourism. Reacting against the harmful consequences of conventional, mass tourism, "alternative" tourists present themselves as champions of more reasonable and sensitive *community-based* approaches to "Third World" development in which local communities assume a high degree of autonomy and control (Drake, 1991; Horwich *et al*, 1993). The professed claims of "alternative" tourists largely reflect the debate surrounding contemporary development policy and theory. As discussed in the previous section, scholars and policy-makers have responded to the limitations of Western-conceived and implemented development policies by looking increasingly to alternative paradigms of development which challenge the central assumptions of neoclassical, economistic, and growth-oriented approaches. In a similar vein to "alternative" tourists, critics of conventional models of development point to several problems: the perpetuation of existing regional and individual

[10] The environmental consequences of mass tourism have received attention from many authors. See, for example, Burns and Holden (1995), Butler (1991), Cater (1995), English Tourist Board (1991), OECD (1980), Ryan (1991), and Wong (1993).

inequalities; the reliance on foreign expertise, capital investment, and technology; and the failure to recognize the importance of *local* conditions in determining the feasibility and appropriateness of externally-devised development schemes (Schuurman, 1993; Ullrich, 1992). A key feature of most "alternative" notions of development is a concern for grassroots participation in the development process (Friedmann, 1992).

Social justice, empowerment, and democracy constitute key goals within grassroots approaches to development (McLaren, 1998). As a key component of "alternative development," community-based development strives towards spreading the purported benefits and costs of development more evenly throughout the community (McLeod, 1997; Robinson, 1994). In this way, economic and decision-making power becomes more equitably distributed among members *within* a local community (Whelan, 1991). Community-based economic development attempts to increase a community's economic independence, which translates to political independence and autonomy (Lane, 1988). Most importantly, community-based economic development implies a "bottom-up" strategy whereby the communities affected by development provide the impetus and dictate the nature of development processes within their communities (Stöhr and Taylor, 1981). Put simply, communities avoid having development handed down to them from exogenous agencies carrying out their own particular agendas.

Since community-based tourism "development" allows, in theory, communities to determine for themselves what sort of "development" *and* tourism strategies, if any, they wish to pursue, the linear and ecological assumptions of conventional policies are inverted. The linearity in "development" is evident in that "development" assumes a progression on a linear path to prosperity (Pieterse, 1991; Rostow, 1960). At one end of the "development" measuring stick are the "advanced," "modern" countries of the industrialized world, while at the other end are the impoverished "developing" nations trying to catch up to the leaders. According to this linear mode of thinking, certain steps prove necessary in order to reach a stage of "development," and rigid enforcement of economic "development" policies precludes more flexible alternatives. Case studies from "developing" countries, however, have indicated that indigenous, non-western, and non-economic methods can often provide better, more practical solutions to social and economic problems than the broad-scale, technocratic, and economically-biased programs hatched in western institutions and universities (Lansing, 1991). Community-based tourism and economic development both operate on notions of

mutual aid, communal responsibility, and local control over the nature and pace of economic and social change (Brandon, 1993). Unlike conventional paradigms, therefore, community-based approaches encourage local autonomy and democracy and, furthermore, leave local communities to determine for themselves how to best deal with issues of pressing concern.

"Alternative" tourist claims regarding beneficial impacts on hosts do not remain confined to the economic sphere alone. Since, as discussed above, "alternative" tourism ostensibly implies smaller scale, greater cultural sensitivity, and better distribution of tourism revenues, claims to distinction and moral superiority extend to social change as well (see Butler, 1990). Contrary to the social disruptions associated with mass tourism, including prostitution, crime, and altered local norms and values, "alternative" tourism involves extensive and less commercialized contact between tourist and host (Culler, 1988). Since "alternative" tourists, for the most part, travel in small numbers and seek "meaningful" contact with "natives," it is assumed that the social adaptation required by hosts to meet the needs of tourists remains minimal (Jenkins, 1982; Zurick, 1995). Another prevalent claim made by "alternative" tourists concerns the degree of cultural "pollution" introduced by tourist demands (Brooks, 1990). By trivializing and commodifying "exotic" cultural performances or material objects, mass tourism engenders detrimental change whereby the cultural traditions and values of host societies lose their original meaning (Smith, 1989). Since "alternative" tourists presumably demonstrate a high level of cultural respect for and sensitivity toward host populations, a "deeper" and more meaningful assimilation develops. As a result, profound cultural changes, especially those of an unfavourable nature, fail according to "alternative" tourists to occur among host populations (Deming, 1996).

Tourism encourages certain changes in both the human and physical environment. Large-scale, capital-intensive mass tourism infrastructure necessarily requires alteration of the physical landscape as well as enormous facilities to deal with the discharge produced at these sites. Meeting the environmental needs of mass tourists becomes complicated as increasingly large numbers flock to hitherto marginal or scarcely populated areas. Particular variants of "alternative" tourism such as nature-based, or eco, tourism especially obviate the need for extensive accommodation or transportation facilities since they imply, by their very definition, a preference for the actual facilities and services used by locals. Thus, in addition to encouraging "softer," less environmentally-intensive forms of tourism, "alternative" tourism

Figure 3.1 Mass and "Alternative" Tourism Compared

Conventional Mass Tourism	"Alternative" Tourism
Tourism Industry Perspective	
❖ High volume	❖ Small scale
❖ Rigid, standardized, and packaged	❖ Flexible and specialized
❖ Uncontrolled planning	❖ Careful monitoring and growth
❖ Producer-driven	❖ Consumer-driven
❖ Contrived and trite experiences	❖ Authentic and novel experiences
Tourist Perspective	
❖ Mass interests, simple expectations	❖ Specialized interests, realistic expectations
❖ Inexperienced and culturally unprepared	❖ Aware of local cultural conventions
❖ Sun, sea, sand, and sex motivations	❖ Cultural motivations
❖ Noisy, loud, and insensitive	❖ Quiet, tactful, and understanding
❖ Travel to confirm stereotypes	❖ Travel with an open mind
Host Perspective	
❖ Foreign control over development	❖ Local, community-based control
❖ High external leakages and import requirements	❖ Few leakages or imports
❖ Foreign-oriented ideas, resources, and personnel	❖ Indigenous, locally-initiated projects
❖ Socially destructive	❖ Socially unobtrusive to community
❖ Environmentally destructive	❖ Environmentally sustainable

Source: Adapted from Butler (1992), Poon (1993), and Weaver (1993).

facilitates local control in "choosing to become involved in tourism, in selecting the type of tourism development, in determining the scale and rate of development, and particularly in choosing which tourists will be encouraged to visit" (Weiler and Hall, 1992: 202). In short, the assertion that host populations experience "alternative" tourism in vastly different, and *better*, ways provides a salient measure of distinction between alternative and mass tourism. The theoretical differences between mass and "alternative" tourism are summarized in Figure 3.1 along the lines of the three themes examined in this thesis.

3.5 Conclusions

This chapter has illustrated the confusion and conflict surrounding the study and implementation of development. Most government officials and planners throughout the world conceptualize development in strictly economic, quantitative terms, using "Western" models of late capitalism as ideological and material benchmarks. Rather than limit my analysis to one particular approach to, or meaning of, development, I extend the definition of development

throughout this thesis to encompass overall processes of economic and social change. Further, due to its fluid boundaries, non-economic principles, and holistic goals, "alternative" development theory provides an ideal theoretical lens through which to assess the consequences of "alternative" tourism. In short, I am interested not just in economistic measures of living standards, but also in the various ways that "alternative" tourism improves, or otherwise alters, the Thai quality of life, broadly defined.

This chapter's discussion of the key theoretical issues of this thesis raises several questions that I hope to at least partially address in my research. First, do patterns of development change according to the prevailing form(s) of tourism, and if so, are there "types" of tourism that prove more effective than others in promoting "alternative" development? I am interested not only in simply determining whether or not tourism fosters development, but also in assessing the *nature* of the relationship between the two. Second, do "alternative" conceptions of development and tourism represent true departures from traditional strategies, or do they represent more rhetorical, euphemistic devices aimed at deflecting persistent criticism of conventional approaches? By examining the empirical feasibility of theoretical models such as "alternative" development and "alternative" tourism, this thesis strives to distinguish practically relevant theoretical principles from those which remain merely normative or radically divorced from grounded, subjective experience.

The third question relates to the pertinence of abstract theoretical issues to the daily experiences and long-term expectations and goals of Thais. In other words, do philosophical challenges to conventional, top-down development and mass tourism mirror the actual concerns of those most affected by development, or are they more a reflection of the concerns of a small group of scholars and grassroots activists? In addressing this theoretical question, I wish to determine whether the "crises" in both development theory and tourism practice are really crises at all, especially in light of the discrepancy between theoretical debates concerning "post-impasse" solutions and continued government policies of "modernization" and top-down capitalist growth. Finally, how do global forces such as ecotourism shape patterns of development at the regional and community levels? Similarly, how do local circumstances affect the implementation and potential of such purportedly universal concepts as community-based development and equitable, sustainable forms of tourism? By examining the local-global dialectic in southern Thailand, this question touches upon one of the critical objectives of this

thesis, namely the analysis of the ways in which local circumstances shape global processes. Having explored the theoretical underpinnings of my research, I turn in the next chapter to a discussion of the development context in which "alternatives" in Thailand have emerged. In doing so, I hope to link Thailand's experience with capitalist development - notably problematic aspects of this experience - to the theoretical debates reviewed in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THAILAND: SECTORAL TRANSFORMATIONS, DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES, AND THE CRISIS OF INEQUALITY

4.1 Introduction

For much of the past two decades, Thailand has exemplified the rapid economic development and social transformations taking place throughout Southeast Asia. Double-digit economic growth during the late-1980s thrust Thailand onto the international stage and attracted the unqualified praise of international financial institutions determined to prove the feasibility of neoliberal structural adjustment policies. A seemingly bright spot for international financial institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), Thailand simultaneously represents both a successful model of export-oriented capitalist growth in the "Third World," and an example of uneven, iniquitous development based on social and environmental exploitation. Like many other "darlings" of the World Bank and IMF, however, Thailand represents only a *partial* success. Judged strictly according to hard economic figures such as Gross National Product (GNP) and per capita income, Thailand appears highly successful, but behind this glimmering façade of economic progress lies the disadvantaged "other" Thailand beyond Bangkok which perpetually struggles to cope with the social and environmental consequences of rapid development. Echoing the prevailing neoliberal sentiments of international capitalists, Thailand's development strategy justifies the existence of "two Thailands"[1] by arguing that while "necessary" short term adjustments often prove painful, the benefits of rapid growth inevitably trickle-down from the national elite to the rest of the population. After a decade of frenetic growth, however, the recent setbacks facing Thailand's economic "miracle" expose the structural and cyclical limitations of unfettered capitalist growth in Thailand, and discredit those very trickle-down policies that have led directly to patterns of uneven development.[2]

[1] Thailand's experience is quickly becoming a tale of two nations: "one urbanised and wealthy, the other rural and impoverished" (Fairclough and Tasker, 1994: 22).

[2] I should point out that rather than demonstrating *only* the essentialized, universal nature of capitalism, Thailand's experience and problems with development also reflect a specifically Southeast Asian pattern of market-oriented economic development (see Yoshihara (1988) for a discussion on the rise of "ersatz capitalism" in Southeast Asia). Further, since many of the adverse consequences of development in Thailand stem partly from pre- and extra-capitalist factors such as corruption, nepotism, and a lack of democratic accountability, blaming all of Thailand's contemporary problems on the country's engagement with international capitalism would be inaccurate. In any case, this chapter focuses on only those processes of change which relate to recent patterns of economic development.

The currency devaluations of mid-1997 that instigated Thailand's financial collapse also demonstrate the hazards of pursuing capitalist development based on borrowed capital and imported technology. The cyclical and fickle nature of international capital investment was made apparent by the rapid demise of neighbouring Southeast Asian economies as one country after another saw its currency value plummet due to capital flight and withering investor confidence. Within just four months to the day that Thailand "floated" its currency on 2 July 1997, the value of the Thai baht had slipped by 47 percent, while those of the Philippine peso, Malaysian ringgit, and Indonesian rupiah fell by 32, 34, and 59 percent respectively (Keawkumnurdpong and Khanthong, 1997). Although the Thai government has chosen to treat the recent economic crisis as simply a matter of currency speculation and financial mismanagement, several observers have indicated that the current downturn exposes both the structural weaknesses of Thailand's economy and the flaws of a development strategy which deliberately fosters enormous personal and regional disparities. Built-in dependency on foreign capital and latent social unrest stemming from inequitable development policies thus render Thailand less a "tiger" and more a "sheep in wolf's clothing" (Parnwell and Arghiros, 1996: 2).

Recognizing the numerous costs of past development policies, the Thai government has in recent years espoused the virtues of "growth-with-equity" and "sustainable development." However, when measured against the laudable principles of Thai development policy, the concrete actions of Thai government agencies serve to perpetuate an inequitable growth-at-any-cost philosophy, thereby ignoring, in practice, the widening class divisions and dislocations that have come to characterize modern Thai society. The Thai government's reaction to the recent financial crisis clearly demonstrates the iniquity of public policies. Despite facing mounting financial constraints, the government devoted 430 billion baht (US$17 billion) to shore up troubled financial firms while entirely ignoring deep-seated and long-standing rural concerns such as price controls and land ownership among small-scale farmers (Achakulwisut, 1997). The majority of Thailand's population is certainly better off than most others living in the "Third World" when considering concrete measures of development like life expectancy, literacy, and average income, but the question this chapter will address is whether the benefits of unchecked economic growth in Thailand merit, or outweigh, the social and environmental costs of development in terms of diminishing equity, democracy, and sustainability. While

most Thais today enjoy a much higher standard of living than their immediate ancestors in aggregate economic terms, it is becoming increasingly clear that the sacrifices made in the name of industrialization have not only marginalized Thailand's agricultural sector, but have also created an unequal, individualistic, and materialistic society.

The class and sectoral divisions that have emerged over the past thirty years severely vitiate claims concerning Thailand's unmitigated development success. By exposing some of the perilous ramifications of development, this chapter critically assesses the nature and pace of Thailand's headlong rush towards unregulated capitalist expansion and also provides a counterbalance to the biased and partial tone of prevailing accounts of Thailand's experience with development. A thorough examination of Thailand's struggle against certain features of conventional development strategies is crucial in order to adequately understand the economic and social significance of ecotourism as a means of achieving more responsible, equitable forms of community development. In order to properly contextualize the relevance of both ecotourism and community-based development, therefore, this chapter outlines the historical roots and contemporary patterns of economic development in Thailand, illustrating further how the problematic aspects of established strategies feed directly into the intersection of "alternative" perspectives explored throughout this thesis.

4.2 Historical Patterns of Development

Capitalist development in Thailand is a fairly recent phenomenon, confined for the most part as a process, and goal, to the latter half of the twentieth century. Up until the reign of King Rama II (1809-24) foreign trade monopolies provided the Royal Thai government with its main source of revenue (Viraphol, 1977). King Rama III (1824-51) abandoned foreign trade monopolies in favour of more lucrative tax farming concessions in which (mostly) Chinese immigrants collected local taxes on behalf of the monarchy. Market activities and foreign trade remained minimal until well after 1855, when the Bowring Treaty between Thailand and England opened up the Thai economy to free trade, as well as requiring that Thailand keep tariffs at or below 3 percent in addition to limiting export duties (Parnwell and Arghiros, 1996: 10). From the 1850s until the beginning of the twentieth century, exports of rice, which accounted for between 60 and 75 percent of total exports, joined sugar, salt,

pepper, and dried fish as Thailand's principal exports (Manarungsan, 1989). Following Thailand's increasing participation in international trade in the mid-1800s, rice consistently maintained its leading role in the country's export profile, but grew to completely dominate Thailand's economy only in the 1890s when the opening of the Suez Canal, along with other transportation, telecommunications, and production innovations, spurred a rapid expansion in the cultivation and export of rice and other cash crops throughout Southeast Asia (Latham, 1978).

Rice exports continued to drive the Thai economy into the first half of the twentieth century. The production of rice grew by 144 percent between 1890 and 1940, while the value of rice exports grew during the same period by 224 percent (Ingram, 1964: 120-22). Thailand's export base not only relied extensively on rice, but also featured simple diversification whereby four commodities - rice, tin, teak, and rubber - represented 80 to 90 percent of all exports between 1900 and 1945 (Ingram, 1971: 94). This lack of economic complexity translated to low rates of economic growth prior to the 1950s: between 1870 and 1913, Thailand's economy grew annually by 1.3 percent, rising only slightly to 2.2 percent between 1913 and 1950 (Manarungsan, 1989: 28). The foundations of Thailand's modern development program emerged during the 1950s when heightened demand for Thai exports and geopolitical conflicts in Asia boosted Thailand's economy, resulting in a compound annual increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 5 percent over the span of the entire decade. In addition to greater demand for rice and maize, the Korean War (1950-53) stimulated demand for tin and rubber. The government of Thailand also embarked upon a major capital expenditure program in order to improve communications and transportation networks. Finally, the inflow of foreign capital into Thailand beginning in the early-1950s sparked the manufacturing and service sectors, which had traditionally remained insignificant and marginal to the overall Thai economy. Levels of foreign investment and external capital during this time appear minuscule when compared to those of the 1980s and 1990s, but they nevertheless provided the initial impetus for subsequent investment and rapid economic growth.

In addition to the many external factors driving Thailand's capitalist development, the role played by *domestic* Chinese capitalists proved crucial in facilitating the establishment and proliferation of capitalism throughout Thailand (Hewison, 1989). Escaping harsh economic and political conditions in China, immigrants from southern China, particularly the Swatow

area of Guangdong province, flocked to Thailand (known then as Siam) and other destinations throughout Southeast Asia. Between 1882 and 1945, a total of 3.2 million Chinese arrived in Siam; of these, over one-third stayed behind as permanent residents (Wilson, 1983: 55). As Yoshihara (1994: 17) points out, the Thai Royal family, and King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) in particular, considered Chinese immigration economically necessary and beneficial:

> Economic modernization in Thailand required a number of tasks the Thais were not able to do, or if they could, they were reluctant to perform. For instance, when the king wanted to build a railway for reasons of national security, it was the Chinese who supplied the coolie labour for this task. In addition, they were needed as workers in new processing industries such as rice and sawmills; as stevedores in the Bangkok port; as coolies for building canals in the Bangkok area; as tin miners in southern Thailand; as artisans and mechanics; and as traders handling new exports and imports. From the king's point of view, the Chinese who were willing to offer the labour he needed were welcome.

Within decades of Chinese immigration, an ethnic division of labour emerged whereby Thai peasants farmed the land, Thai bureaucrats ran the government, and Chinese labourers and merchants ran the urban economy (Auansakul, 1995). In the economic boom that characterized Thai development in the latter half of the twentieth century, Chinese immigrants and their Sino-Thai descendants played an instrumental part in capitalizing on new opportunities and stimulating domestic investment and industrialization. When European powers retreated from Asia following the Second World War, Chinese and Sino-Thai entrepreneurs stepped in, expanded industrial operations, and diversified production in order to meet the demands of a burgeoning domestic market.

As the dominant group in Bangkok, the Chinese were well positioned to initiate and benefit from industrialization since development in Thailand has always featured - and continues to do so - a heavy urban bias. Further, Chinese merchants bolstered their resources and drove Thai economic development by pursuing several specific strategies. First, Chinese immigrants assimilated well into Thai society, and utilized this secure position to expand economically at rates far greater than those associated with both Chinese and indigenous populations elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Second, in Thailand, as in other countries of the region, the Chinese maintained a tight-knit community, accumulated savings, and cooperated with national rulers in order to create a favourable economic climate. Third, and most recently, Thailand's Chinese business community has seized upon emerging opportunities by cultivating links to powerful forces in the global economy, from the United States' military complex in the

1960s, to the Japanese economic "miracle" of the 1970s and 1980s, and finally to the current trend towards globalization (Phongpaichit and Baker, 1996). Contrary to the ethnic tension found in other Southeast Asian societies, therefore, the Chinese capitalist class in Thailand has enjoyed a relative degree of freedom, and has gradually become as politically influential as the Thai monarchy and military (Yoshihara, 1988).

4.3 Contemporary Development Strategies

The modern era of development in Thailand commenced in the late-1950s under Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat (1957-63). The Sarit government encouraged foreign investment as well as expanding links to international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Thailand was the first Southeast Asian country to borrow money from the World Bank, receiving three loans in 1950 and relying on World Bank funds as its principal source of foreign credit until 1954 (Permtanjit, 1982). Under Sarit's rule, the World Bank deepened its influence in Thailand by extending technical assistance and sending American advisors on comprehensive economic survey missions. International lending constituted only one of two important sources of external credit however, with the United States government representing the other. Following the Second World War, the United States greatly expanded military spending in Asia where several regimes, including South Korea, Taiwan, and the French colonial regime in Indochina, received considerable American financial support. Working closely with American advisors, Sarit, and his successor Thanom Kittikachorn (1963-73), promoted *patthana* (development) as an integral component of an anti-communist national program aimed at crushing Thailand's nascent indigenous communist movement. Internal concerns over communist insurgency, coupled with American fears of "dominoes" falling throughout Southeast Asia, legitimized and necessitated the propping up of Thailand's militaristic government. Due to its geopolitical situation, therefore, Thailand received extensive American economic and military aid amounting to over US$1.13 billion between 1950 and 1970 (Elliot, 1978: 131). Other than stimulating the domestic construction and service industries, American aid penetrated remote parts of Thailand through upgraded transportation and communications infrastructure; these improvements ultimately facilitated greater access to markets, enabled national economic integration, and opened up new

agricultural areas (Dixon, 1996).

The institutional base required to handle Thailand's post-war development program came together in the late-1950s and early-1960s. Supplementing the critical financial role played by the Bank of Thailand - founded in the early-1940s - this development apparatus grew quickly with the assistance of United States expertise. Within a few years, the Sarit government had established a number of development agencies, including the Bureau of the Budget (BOB) to manage government accounts, the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) to draft five-year development plans, and the Board of Investment (BoI) to offer incentives to domestic and foreign investors. By the early-1960s, the foundations of Thailand's development crusade were therefore laid as a "new cadre of technocrats in the Bank of Thailand, the Development Board [NESDB], and the Finance Ministry self-consciously formed a golden triangle to control economic management" (Phongpaichit and Baker, 1996: 58).

Although Thailand's economy grew rapidly after the early-1960s, it remained highly agricultural, and export earnings came almost exclusively from either food commodities like rice, maize, and sugar or from processed agricultural products. Between 1950 and 1980, agricultural exports drove the Thai economy, increasing at an annual average of 12 percent over that time. Following the example of other "developing" countries, Thailand also pursued an industrial policy of import substitution whereby domestic firms received incentives and enjoyed tariff protection. These mostly Sino-Thai firms would later prove instrumental in driving Thailand's push towards industrialization. As important as industry would later become, Thailand's limited import substitution policy lagged far behind agricultural export promotion which, until well into the mid-1980s, fuelled consistently high rates of growth averaging 5 percent in the 1950s, 8 percent in the 1960s, and 7 percent in the 1970s (Bunge, 1981: 122).

By the mid-1980s, Thailand's economy had stalled due to high foreign debt and current account and budget deficits. By borrowing heavily from international and regional credit agencies during the 1970s, Thailand successfully cushioned itself from global inflation and recession sparked by, among other things, the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979. This extensive borrowing - which totalled approximately US$3.1 billion between 1961 and 1979 - eventually crippled Thailand's economy however, especially as falling global commodity prices in the 1970s and early-1980s injured Thailand's agricultural export base (Permtanjit, 1982: 74).

With foreign debt reaching a peak of 39 percent of GDP, Thailand entered a period of seemingly severe recession and consequent political disorder in 1984-5. Economic forecasts grew increasingly sombre, leading a conference of business, government, and academic leaders to conclude that "Thailand's future does not look rosy with the economy in the worst shape it has ever been in, a lack of political and national leadership, a misguided educational system, a stagnant bureaucratic system, and dwindling natural resources" (Hewison, 1987: 61).

Contrary to the pessimistic expectations of most observers, however, Thailand experienced unprecedented economic growth in the decade between 1985 and 1995. Two circumstances combined to create the conditions for this "boom" during which Thailand became the fastest growing economy in the world for several years in the late-1980s (Phongpaichit and Baker, 1996). First, a faltering import-substitution industrialization (ISI) policy, alarming rates of foreign debt and budget deficits, and global economic recession forced Thailand's policymakers to shift the national economic focus towards export-oriented industrialization (EOI). Second, and most importantly, currency realignments in Asia spurred a substantial transformation of regional investment patterns. Following the Plaza Accords of October 1984, the Japanese yen was revalued, resulting in the dramatic shift of Japanese manufacturing firms to either European and American markets or to low-cost locations throughout Asia. Coinciding with both Thailand's nascent EOI policy and a 15 percent devaluation of the Thai baht in November 1984, the yen appreciation immediately encouraged the relocation of manufacturing from Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and later Korea, to the outskirts of Bangkok.

Phongpaichit and Baker (1996) illustrate the various stages of an economic explosion that resulted in a 9.4 percent annual rate of growth between 1985 and 1995. As mentioned above, domestic and foreign currency revaluations forced East Asian manufacturing firms to seek out cheaper production sites: this especially benefited Thailand since low tariff restrictions, ethnic stability, and abundant natural and labour resources made it an attractive investment destination within Southeast Asia. Second, a flood of investment poured into Thailand, principally in and around Bangkok. Between 1986 and 1993, Japanese companies invested US$47 billion in Asia, and the flow of foreign investment in Thailand between 1985 and 1990 multiplied tenfold while investment in just three years, from 1987 to 1990, exceeded

the *total* foreign investment in Thailand during the previous thirty years.

The third stage involved a surge in domestic investment from Thai companies which, using large capital stocks from Thai banks and rising export earnings, joined foreign firms in producing several export-oriented manufactured goods, including textiles, leather goods, electronics, jewellery, wood products, processed food, auto parts, and computer components. Fourth, investment moved quickly from one sector to another as export opportunities developed and as local labour market skills improved. By the late-1980s, textiles and other cheap-labour intensive industries had supplanted rice and other agricultural commodities such as cassava chips as Thailand's principal export earner. By the early-1990s, investment had shifted yet again to computer parts and other electronics, moving even further in recent years toward other medium and high-technology industries. The abundance and diversity of investment opportunities have served to prolong the frenetic pace of economic growth in Thailand, where a new Japanese factory was scheduled to open every three days between 1993 and 1996 (Phongpaichit and Baker, 1996: 34). The most recent stage in Thailand's recent economic "miracle" has centred around the reinvestment of export profits into new areas like property, media, finance, and telecommunications. This has further enhanced the prosperity of an emerging class of wealthy urban Thais, and has allowed domestic capitalists to expand beyond Thailand by investing burgeoning profits in Southeast Asia, China, and even Europe. Accelerated development in such a short period of time has, according to Hewison (1996: 139), resulted in an extensive capitalist revolution, whereby "capitalists, who make up only a small percentage of the population, are firmly in control of the economic base of society, and there is no doubt that the economy and state may be characterized as capitalist."

The frenzied tempo of capitalist development from the mid-1980s onwards has fundamentally transformed the nature of Thai society. Serving as the focal point of investment and growth, Bangkok has sprawled well beyond its limits to the five surrounding provinces, creating an ever-expanding Extended Metropolitan Region home to growing levels of industry and population (McGee and Greenberg, 1992). Bangkok has always dominated Thailand's urban landscape, and has, since 1782, served as the political capital and centre of commerce. However, Thailand's swift development in the past two decades has favoured and further accentuated the ascendancy of Bangkok and other urban locations throughout Thailand, thereby contradicting and undermining the traditionally rural character of Thai society. Capitalist

development has also fostered the political and social emergence of Thailand's urban middle classes, the "new rich," who largely dictate the nature and pace of capitalist development in Asia (Robison and Goodman, 1996).

Quantitative shifts in Thailand's economic structure corroborate the dizzying *qualitative* changes occurring in contemporary Thai society. Until as late as 1985, Thailand's agricultural sector spearheaded national economic growth by producing commodities and processed food items for export. Although agricultural production continued to grow modestly during the late-1980s and early-1990s, industrial expansion and foreign investment in export-oriented manufacturing soon eclipsed all other areas of the economy. Manufactured goods represented 36 percent of total exports in 1980, but climbed to over 72 percent by 1992 (Table 4.1). In terms of sheer production and employment, manufacturing, and industry generally, have

Table 4.1 Composition of Thailand's Exports by Sector, 1980-1994

Unit: % of total

Sector	1980	1985	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Agriculture	48.4	40.4	21.3	19.7	19.5	17.0	16.6
Agro-industry	8.2	14.4	12.5	11.8	11.2	9.1	9.3
Mineral	3.8	2.4	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.3
Manufacturing	35.6	41.6	63.7	65.9	67.0	70.8	72.1
Others	4.0	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.5	0.7
Total exports (billion baht)	**133.2**	**193.4**	**589.8**	**725.4**	**824.6**	**940.9**	**1,129.5**

Source: *Thailand in Figures* (1995: 431).

Table 4.2 Composition of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by Sector, 1960-1993

Unit: % of total

Sector*	1960	1970	1980	1985	1990	1991	1992	1993
Agriculture	39.8	28.5	23.2	15.8	12.7	12.7	12.0	10.0
Industry	18.5	25.2	28.7	31.9	37.2	38.7	38.5	39.3
Manufacturing	4.6	15.9	21.5	21.9	27.2	28.4	28.0	28.5
Trade and Services	41.7	46.2	48.0	52.3	50.0	48.5	49.6	50.8
GDP at current prices (billion baht)	**53.9**	**135.9**	**657.1**	**1,056**	**2,191**	**2,519**	**2,833**	**3,161**

Sources: *Thailand in Figures* (1995: 269-70); Wilson (1983: 334-35).

* Agriculture includes forestry, hunting, and fishing. Industry comprises mining, manufacturing, construction, and electricity and water. Trade and services also include transportation, communications, banking, real estate, public administration, and insurance. Government statistics do not categorize tourism as a discrete sector - tourist activities generally span all sectors of the economy.

Table 4.3 Employment by Sector, 1960-1994

Unit: % of total

Sector*	1960	1970	1980	1985	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Agriculture	82.3	79.3	70.8	68.4	64.0	54.0	53.3	57.0	57.5
Industry	4.2	5.9	10.3	10.9	14.0	19.2	20.1	18.2	17.8
Manufacturing	3.4	4.1	7.9	8.0	10.2	13.2	13.6	12.4	12.3
Trade and Services	13.5	14.8	18.9	20.7	22.0	26.8	26.6	24.8	24.7
Total number of employed (millions)	**13.8**	**16.7**	**22.5**	**25.9**	**30.8**	**28.9**	**29.9**	**31.6**	**32.8**

Sources: ESCAP (1987: 428); Phongpaichit and Chiasakul (1993: 155); *Thailand in Figures* (1995: 106); Wilson (1983: 87).

* Agriculture includes forestry, hunting, and fishing. Industry comprises mining, manufacturing, construction, and electricity and water. Trade and services also include transportation, communications, banking, real estate, public administration, and insurance. Government statistics do not categorize tourism as a discrete sector - tourist activities generally span all sectors of the economy.

essentially mobilized idle labour and capital from a *relatively* declining agricultural sector (Tables 4.2 and 4.3). In *absolute* employment terms, however, agriculture continues to overshadow other sectors of the Thai economy. A discrepancy has therefore developed between the production and export value of various sectors, on the one hand, and their significance as a source of employment, on the other. While agriculture serves as the predominant source of livelihood for the majority of Thais, its traditional role as the "backbone" of Thai society remains uncertain as Thailand aggressively pursues capitalist development through export-oriented industrialization.

Since the inception of its first development plan in 1961, Thailand has promoted a development program best characterized as a mix of fiscal conservatism, social and economic "modernization," and materialist philosophy. For the past 40 years, Thailand's policy approaches and technical interventions have embodied many of the key discursive features of "development" discussed in Chapter Three. As Hirsch (1990: 13) explains:

> Thai rural development programmes have acquired a vocabulary of their own, and this set of lexical items is a reflection of the priority associated with such programmes. Development is often equated with 'prosperity', or 'civilization'. Prosperity and civilization in this case take on urban, material forms of fences, streets, consumer goods, order and tidiness, and reflect the urban orientation of development strategy, whereby villages and villagers are to develop by catching up. Other concepts that reflect this orientation include 'convenience' associated with roads and electricity, and the contraposition of rurality as expressed in the word for forest, *paa*, as backward, wild, dangerous, with civilization as secure, a measure of achievement.

The modernization paradigm of development - which prescribes a political, cultural, and

economic transition from a "traditional" state of backwardness to a "modern" state of development - has enjoyed widespread popularity amongst government bureaucrats, economic advisors, and domestic capitalists. In the early-1980s, Thailand's National Cultural Commission embarked on a spiritual development program which first identified detrimental Thai values, including among others, immorality, a weak work ethic, fatalism and belief in magic, and "acting big or tough," and then listed "Five Basic Values" necessary to bring "development" to Thailand: self-reliance, diligence, and responsibility; frugal spending and saving; discipline and abiding by the law; a religious ethic; and belief in "Nation, Religion, and Monarchy" (Pongsapich, 1995: 16).

The discursive elements of Thailand's development strategy emerge most clearly in the policy guidelines outlined in national five-year plans. Due to a tremendous lack of coordination among development agencies in Thailand, these plans more accurately reflect official development rhetoric than any actual means of implementing policy (Demaine, 1986). Rapid GNP growth, economic efficiency, and top-down policy-making have always epitomized Thailand's development approach. The First and Second Plans (1961-71) focused heavily on public expenditures on infrastructure in order to stimulate private sector growth in power, communications, transport, social and public services, and agriculture (Warr, 1993: 30). The Third Plan (1972-76) signalled a slight change of direction away from pure growth policies divorced from any social context, but it was not until the Fourth Plan (1977-81) that a concerted effort was made, *in theory*, to address issues of social injustice, income inequality, and environmental depletion. In light of Thailand's sustained emphasis, *in practice*, on unchecked capital accumulation and industrial expansion, the Fourth Plan's "growth with equity" outlook says less about ground level policy implementation than it does about the "basic needs" turn in global development thinking/rhetoric in the 1970s (Warr, 1993).

Euphemistic policy directives continued to permeate Thailand's development plans throughout the 1980s and 1990s, most visibly influencing the recently-released Eighth Plan (1997-2001). The Eighth Plan moves well beyond previous plans in its social and environmental scope, but nonetheless perpetuates a developmental discourse that clearly contradicts empirical realities of inequitable economic growth and social transformation. In summarizing development patterns over the past three decades, the Plan highlights deepening personal and regional income disparities, resource degradation, and growing materialism

within Thai society which has "resulted in undesirable social behaviours such as poorer moral values and ethics, lack of discipline, and greed for material wealth" (NESDB, 1996: 2). Sustainable development receives extensive attention throughout the Eighth Plan, but specific measures remain vague and limited. Stating that unbalanced development has fostered "economic success on the one hand, and social problems and threats to sustainable growth on the other," the Plan goes on to list five objectives: increase human potential in terms of physical well-being, health, intellect and vocational skills; develop a stable society by strengthening the family and community, supporting human development, increasing quality of life, and increasing community participation in national development; achieve balanced economic growth and allow people to participate in, and reap the benefits of, growth; utilise, preserve, and rehabilitate natural resources and the environment; and reform the administrative system in order to increase the participation of non-governmental organizations, the private sector, the community, and individuals in national development (NESDB, 1996: 2-3). Although it would appear that Thailand's development strategy is set to move in a more holistic, community-based direction, a significant departure from former growth-oriented approaches remains unlikely and unfeasible, particularly due to the vested interests of wealthy urban capitalists and politicians.

4.4 Symptoms of Development Malaise

Even as Thailand was recording double-digit rates of growth during the late-1980s and early-1990s, several observers offered pessimistic forecasts of future development. Phongpaichit and Baker (1996: 234-35) indicated that "some see Thailand's growth as superficial, based on borrowed cash and technology, with no inner dynamism generated by indigenous technological capacity." Bell (1996) pointed out that the export-oriented growth model pursued by Thailand features a built-in need for imported capital and technology which promotes external debt and balance of payments deficits. He further stated that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) pointed to Thailand as "one of several danger spots for capital flight following the collapse of the Mexican economy in 1994" (Bell, 1996: 55).

In mid-1997, the Thai economy, specifically the banking and financial sectors, finally paid the price for a decade of breakneck economic growth and heavy foreign investment. On July 2, the Thai Finance Ministry decided that market forces would henceforth determine the

value of the baht, which had previously depended on a basket of currencies dominated by the American dollar. With GDP growth slowing from 8.6 percent in 1995 to 6.4 percent in 1996, the Bank of Thailand was left with diminishing reserves with which to bail out failing finance firms and counter intense international baht speculation (Vasikiotis, 1997a: 74). After severely depleting central bank reserves in order to prop up the value of the baht, the government of Thailand finally decided on a "managed float," but immediately saw the precipitous depreciation of the baht from 24.45 to 28 baht per dollar (Vasikiotis, 1997b: 70). The fallout from the baht devaluation in July 1997 has proven severe. By mid-August, the government had suspended 58 (among a total of 91) finance companies, and the high dollar-dominated debt loads of most Thai companies will likely hinder the expeditious recovery of the Thai economy (Tasker, 1997: 52).

The baht devaluation carried immediate consequences and forced the readjustment of economic forecasts. Prior to the float of the baht, GDP growth was estimated at 4 percent for 1997 and 4.9 percent for 1998, but these figures were revised to 0.8 and 2.9 percent, respectively, following the devaluation (Vasikiotis, 1997a: 75). Meanwhile, estimates of the combined current account deficit for 1997 and 1998 grew from 436 to 468.2 billion baht (17.2 to 18.5 billion US dollars). In addition to accelerated capital flight due to lack of investor confidence, falling export revenues and the Bank of Thailand's rescue of debt-ridden finance and property companies threatened to put an enormous strain on central bank reserves. In response to these concerns, Thailand eventually, but reluctantly, agreed on 5 August 1997 to a US$17.2 billion rescue package monitored by the IMF; the bailout package comprises extensive loans from various foreign countries aimed at maintaining Thailand's reserves at US$25 billion (Tasker, 1997: 52). Ironically, the very global financing that fuelled Thailand's economic "miracle" of the past decade has also proven its bane as currency speculation, exploding current account deficits, and foreign debt have begun to ravage national coffers.

International financial salvation may temporarily halt Thailand's slide, but loans from the IMF and World Bank *never* come without a price. In return for the massive IMF loan package, Thailand must implement stringent austerity measures, including such neoliberal standards as curtailed public welfare expenditure, elimination of price controls, and erosion of import tariffs (Srivalo and Rawang, 1997). As small businesses and the majority of Thailand's population become increasingly squeezed in the name of IMF-imposed austerity and structural

adjustment programs, opposition will inevitably grow and build upon the latent discontent accumulated over decades of unbridled capitalist expansion. The remainder of this section deals with the reasons for this discontent, and takes a specific look at the particular problems that combine to form the sombre underside of Thailand's development program.

As the events of July and August 1997 clearly demonstrate, Thailand's development has relied extensively on borrowed capital and substantial levels of foreign investment. In addition to exposing Thailand's economy to mobile and dynamic global flows of capital, development financing has fostered uneven international relationships, leading one observer to comment that "Thailand is an epitome of dependence syndrome" (Permtanjit, 1982: 162). The quick pace of industrialization has also hastened further urbanization, primarily in the Bangkok Extended Metropolitan Region. Bangkok represents the quintessential primate city, containing nearly 10 million people, or 27 times the number found in Nakhon Ratchasima, the next leading city (Ratanokomut *et al*, 1994: 205). Due to a dire absence of effective urban planning in Thailand, the sprawl of Bangkok has engendered numerous problems, including pollution, traffic congestion, overcrowding, and mental stress. Declining agricultural production (relative to other sectors) has forced millions of migrants from rural provinces to seek employment in Bangkok and surrounding provinces. By 1990, one in five rural families - and one in three in the impoverished Northeast region - were receiving an average 1,000 baht (US$39.5) per month from a relative working in Bangkok (Lewis, 1995). The squalor and poverty found in some parts of Bangkok contradict otherwise auspicious economic measures of development, and testify to the growing marginalization of many urban migrants. The nearly two million slum dwellers in Bangkok will likely see life deteriorate even further as idle agricultural workers continue congregating in the streets and factories of Bangkok as informal sector hawkers and industrial labourers.

It is perhaps ironic that the vast urban-rural income discrepancy that pushes migrants to Bangkok in the first place ultimately leads to *greater* poverty for many migrants who are forced to compete for scarce resources. Thailand possesses among the most severe levels of regional and personal inequality in the world. As mentioned already, capitalist development in Thailand has always centred on Bangkok and the central provinces, causing peripheral regions like the south, north, and northeast to lag far behind in both productivity and per capita GDP (Table 4.4). Among provinces of the central region, those in the western and eastern subregions

Table 4.4 Index of Per Capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by Region

									Unit: Index (Whole Kingdom = 1.0)
Region*	**1976**	**1980**	**1985**	**1988**	**1989**	**1990**	**1991**	**1992**	**1993**
Bangkok	2.56	2.80	2.88	3.15	3.45	3.62	3.58	3.72	3.85
Vicinity of Bangkok	-	-	-	-	2.45	2.49	2.44	2.41	2.46
Central**	0.81	0.78	0.94	0.88	0.86	0.81	0.84	0.81	0.78
Eastern	1.29	1.30	1.38	1.30	1.49	1.46	1.53	1.44	1.43
Western	1.37	1.07	0.94	0.81	0.86	0.76	0.75	0.72	0.68
Northeastern	0.41	0.41	0.40	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.31
North	0.76	0.67	0.63	0.58	0.55	0.53	0.52	0.50	0.48
Southern	0.91	0.93	0.63	0.74	0.67	0.65	0.65	0.63	0.60

Sources: Grandstaff (1992: 122); *Thailand in Figures* (1995: 280-81).
* The central region comprises three subregions: *central* (Chai Nat, Phra Nakhon Sri Ayutthaya, Lop Buri, Saraburi, Sing Buri, and Ang Thong), *eastern* (Chantaburi, Chachoengsao, Chon Buri, Trat, Nakhon Nayok, Prachin Buri, Rayong, and Sa Kaeo), and *western* (Kanchanaburi, Prachup Kiri Khan, Phetchaburi, Ratchaburi, Samut Songkhram, and Suphan Buri). The five province that constitute the "Vicinity of Bangkok" region are Nakhon Pathom, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Samut Prakan, and Samut Sakhon. See Appendix Four for provincial map locations.
** Figures between 1976 to 1988 for the central region include the western and eastern subregions.

possess the greatest concentration of wealth, and examined separately, the five provinces in the immediate vicinity of Bangkok feature per capita GDP rates 2.5 times the national average. Although inter-regional income disparities have characterized Thailand for decades, if not centuries, the gap has grown much wider during Thailand's most recent push towards industrialization and export-led growth. Even the relatively wealthy eastern and western regions have seen their comparative share of GDP per capita slip in recent years as investment increasingly concentrates in Bangkok.

Thailand's post-war development program has considerably privileged urban workers over rural labourers, and the agricultural sector generally. By providing cheap industrial labour, rural migrants have allowed Thai companies to sustain artificially low production costs. Expanding agricultural surpluses from the 1950s onwards did little to raise the incomes of farmers since the Rice Premium - levied as a tax on rice exports between 1955 and 1986 - reduced the domestic price of rice to 35 percent below international levels, and served to maintain low living costs for urban inhabitants at the expense of rural incomes. As a consequence of urban-biased government policy, *intra-regional* income differentials between urban and rural households mirror the distortions found among regions (Table 4.5). High-income members of the non-agricultural sector earned in 1995 over twenty times more than the

low-income strata of agricultural workers (Rojanaphruk, 1996a: 71). The gaping incongruity between urban and rural incomes is symptomatic of a general trend towards the greater concentration of wealth, whereby Thailand's capitalist class consolidates its wealth to the detriment of those who inevitably suffer diminishing access to the spoils of economic growth (Table 4.6).

In many ways, the skewed distribution of wealth in Thailand discredits neoliberal "trickle down" theories since significant economic gains in recent years have exacerbated, rather than ameliorated, inequality. Some would argue, however, that regardless

Table 4.5 Distribution of Monthly Household Income, 1990

Unit: % of total population

Monthly Household Income (in baht)*	Nationwide	Bangkok	Urban Upcountry	Rural Villages
Less than 4,000	65.9	13.3	30.8	78.6
4,000-7,999	20.4	29.8	38.7	17.0
8,000-12,499	7.7	23.5	20.5	3.7
12,500-19,999	3.2	16.8	6.0	0.5
Above 20,000	2.8	16.6	4.0	0.2

Source: Hewison (1996: 147).
* The 1990 exchange rate was 25.56 baht to US$1.

Table 4.6 Distribution of Wealth

Unit: % of national income earned by each group

Group	1975	1988	1992
Top 20% of Households	49.3	54.0	59.0
Bottom 20% of Households	6.1	4.6	3.9

Sources: Hewison (1996: 146); NESDB (1996: 1).

Table 4.7 Measures of Poverty and Wealth

	1962	1975	1981	1986	1988	1992
Poverty Incidence (% of population below poverty line	57	33	24	29.5	21.2	13.7

	1960	1970	1980	1985	1990	1994
GDP Per Capita (US$ at current prices)	100	195	688	721	1,200	2,315

Sources: Poverty incidence - Muscat (1994: 243); NESDB (1996: 1). GDP per capita - Muscat (1994: 293); Phongpaichit and Baker (1996: 204).

of poor distribution patterns, the overall *average* impact of industrialization has remained beneficial. Bearing in mind the various limitations of quantitative "measures," it is obvious that many Thais have experienced a dramatic improvement in standard of living, if not necessarily *quality* of life (Table 4.7). The proportion of Thais living below the poverty line has fallen significantly in the post-war era, and rising incomes have coincided with improved access to basic infrastructure, social services, and education. At the same time, the deepening disparity between "haves" and "have-nots" has undermined Thailand's economic achievements, creating poverty and social inequity in the midst of escalating wealth and spectacular growth.

Coupled with the competitive pressures imposed by the discourse of "globalization," the push towards rapid industrialization has caused, but simultaneously necessitated, the creation and perpetuation of a docile, underpaid workforce. Put simply, low labour costs translate to quick, massive profits, as the experiences of the East Asian "Tigers" and, more recently, Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia have demonstrated. Thailand's economic "miracle" has indeed proven decidedly *un*miraculous for those industrial workers who must endure wretched daily conditions and excessively long, stressful hours. Moreover, Thailand's export-oriented development strategy depends heavily on ambiguous and seldom-enforced labour laws, severe limitations on the unionization of labour, and extensive use of of female and child labour (Bell, 1996: 50). Work-related accidents in Thailand represent such an enormous problem that the Eighth Plan (1997-2001) identifies the reduction of work-related accidents as one of its principal development targets (NESDB, 1996: 2). In 1993, as fire consumed the Kader toy factory in Bangkok, management locked exit doors in an attempt to keep workers from leaving their work sites. In the end, 188 people perished, as yet another tragic incident highlighted to the rest of the world the sordid safety standards of Thailand's overstretched industrial sector.

Just as Thailand's development program has privileged industry over agriculture, and urban over rural, it has also required greater sacrifices from women than from men, resulting in substantial gender differentiation and discrimination (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey, 1991). Thailand's export-oriented agricultural strategy based on cash crops has supplanted the prominent position of women in traditional subsistence agriculture since men, more often than not, receive the majority of agricultural training and implements. Despite featuring high rates of industrial labour participation, women continue to struggle with poor wages, minimal

security, and exploitative workplace conditions. It is precisely this insecurity and vulnerability that make female workers so integral in a globalized, competitive climate. Coupled with the widespread view that female employment merely constitutes secondary or marginal family income, the educational constraints faced by Thai women limit opportunities for skilled work and serve to create gender disparity at the management level: while accounting for 46 percent of the total labour force, women represent only one-fifth of administrative, executive, and managerial workers in Thailand (Komin, 1989: 80; Omvedt, 1986). Women in Thailand have disproportionately endured the burdens of rapid economic growth and social change, but due to marginalization in both rural and urban labour markets, they remain excluded from the material and status rewards associated with industrialization.

Thailand's booming economy, especially in export-oriented manufacturing, has typically exploited more than just labour however. Despite the passing in 1992 of an Environmental Act, shoddy factory construction and poorly-implemented safety measures continue to place severe stress on Thailand's natural resources. Contrary to highly optimistic economic assessments based on rising GDP (and other quantitative) figures of development, deforestation, toxic poisoning, and various forms of pollution instead illustrate the essentially unsustainable nature of industrial capitalist growth in Thailand. The Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) estimated in 1989 that 51 percent of *all* factories in Thailand were producing water or air pollution (Kritiporn *et al*, 1990: 13). Environmental problems are most concentrated in the Bangkok area where inadequate sewerage and drainage facilities lead to chronic water pollution and annual flooding. Further, traffic congestion caused by the unregulated proliferation of vehicles in Bangkok has resulted in severe air pollution: at 32 micrograms per cubic metre, carbon monoxide levels vastly exceed the critical level of 20 micrograms, while lead pollution levels of 6.2 micrograms remain at double the minimal standard of 3 micrograms (Pernia, 1991: 129). Along with labour exploitation that targets women, children, rural migrants, and impoverished foreign immigrants, exposure to pollution and environmental hazards affect marginalized groups unevenly. For example, in Klong Toey, the most (in)famous of Bangkok's slum communities, an explosion of a hazardous waste storage facility in May 1991 killed 21 people, left 6,000 more homeless, and caused 2,000 Klong Toey residents to suffer from numerous respiratory and skin ailments that continue to this day (Assavanonda, 1997).

Thailand's rapid capitalist transformation during the past two decades has intensified patterns of social alienation, marginalization, and decay, most notably in urban areas. Although the social consequences of industrialization remain much less quantifiable than economic patterns, they nevertheless provide tangible evidence of the occasionally devastating effects of haphazard development. The dislocations associated with these changes manifest themselves in several ways. First, the incessant expansion of Bangkok, and the privileging of urban over rural society, has accelerated the disintegration of rural lifestyles as the "backbone" of Thai society. As Thailand's urban population continues to grow uncontrollably, the alienation, dislocation, poverty, and depersonalization so often associated with urban life exacerbate this separation from the security and familiarity found in traditional rural communities (Bunnag, 1996). Second, a growing number of Thais are beginning to blame rapid development and excessive materialism for the rising incidence of drug use and prostitution. Although heroin and opium addiction have long represented a problem in Thailand, the recent explosion in the use of amphetamines[3] highlights both the alienation and commercialization of Thai society as upper and middle class youth emulate the behaviour of famous Thai entertainers, who glamorize and popularize Ecstasy-induced all night "rave" parties (*Bangkok Post*, 1996a).

The transformation of Thailand from an agrarian society to one based on capitalist, industrial relations of production translates to complex reorganizations in labour and consumption patterns. It also exacerbates social tension as personal relationships are forced to adapt to the changing circumstances and requirements of a capitalist political economy. The dislocations caused by rural-urban migration have disrupted the traditional structure of rural households, leaving behind instead fragmented families, absentee parents, and thousands of homeless children in Bangkok (Sakboon, 1996). Family fragmentation and disintegration take a severe toll on children, but the swelling legion of aging Thais will also suffer in the absence of the old-age security afforded by the traditional extended family (Win, 1996). Many argue that the ethos of materialism has severely eroded the preeminent role of Buddhism within Thai society, and coupled with the financial pressures of surviving in a cash economy, this will further compound the already soaring rates of mental illness, stress, and suicide (Sharples,

[3] Amphetamines are known as *ya ba* ("crazy drug") in Thailand. In 1993, the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) estimated that there were close to 1.25 million drug addicts in Thailand (Chaicharas, 1996).

1996).[4]

Lastly, Thai society has in recent years experienced a dramatic reorientation toward more materialistic and individualistic social values. Hence, in addition to the widening gap in income and access to resources, a nationwide fixation with ostentatious wealth and status form the social corollary to a broadening discrepancy in economic wealth. As many Thai observers have noted, the cult of individualism has come to dominate Thai society, resulting in both a disparaging attitude towards poverty and a persistent departure from the community as the centre of social and economic life (Ekachai, 1990; Rojanaphruk, 1996b). The Thai preoccupation with status, and proclivity for lavish spending, exacerbate the social implications of materialism and conspicuous mass consumption, as an emerging middle class competes in a "race to consume" (Rojanaphruk and Luenguthai, 1996a: 48).[5] Ironically, it is often the Western-educated elites of this same "middle class"[6] that point out the dangers of excessive materialism by documenting "consumer madness" and stating, for instance, that "as shopping becomes the national pastime, consumers are engaging in some pretty ugly behavior" (Rojanaphruk and Luenguthai, 1996b: 50). While some would argue that the proliferation of material goods has expanded the choice and freedom of Thai consumers, the overspending and escalating debt load of many Thais carries serious implications for future social cohesion and security in a society where a lack of savings and the withering of the extended family will combine to leave many elderly Thais with neither family nor financial assistance. The Thai middle classes will inevitably grow and diversify, but if the accelerated move towards consumerism, materialism, and individualism continues unchallenged and unchecked, the inequities fostered by rapid capitalist development will only multiply and perhaps lead to social conflict as "have-nots" attempt to stake a greater claim on the elusive material and social dividends of economic growth.

4.5 Peasant Resistance and Middle Class Revolution

After over thirty years of official development programs, Thai society has become

[4] According to the Health Ministry, 20 percent of Thailand's population suffers from stress (Santimethaneedol, 1996).

[5] One indication of this rampant consumerism is the expansion of credit cards and ATM cards throughout Thailand, where 20 percent of all consumers own at least one card (Deboonme, 1996: 56).

[6] Although I mention Thailand's "middle class," I should note that the "middle classes" throughout Asia feature enormous heterogeneity and complexity (see Robison and Goodman, 1996: 7-11).

measurably healthier and wealthier, but the skewed distribution of wealth and the steady deterioration of social and environmental life have led to a heightened sense of disillusionment among those Thais who remain outside the small but powerful capitalist class. Reflecting both the alienation associated with capitalist development in Thailand and the overwhelming demand for equitable forms of community development, several groups have begun to challenge the path taken by Thailand's development planners. Thai non-governmental organizations (NGO), for example, grew rapidly in the mid-1970s and flourished during the 1980s: by 1990, there were a total of over 475 "public interest nongovernmental organizations" in Thailand (Pratt, 1993: 9).[7] Among these NGOs, the Forum of the Poor serves as a key example of resistance to industrial development policies which neglect or manipulate an agricultural sector formerly considered integral to Thai conceptions of nationhood. The Forum of the Poor was established in December 1995 following a national meeting with local and foreign NGO representatives. With a broad membership - including activists, students, academics, farmers, impoverished urban residents, and occasionally small business owners - the Forum has staged a series of highly visible protests against the government, which they claim has grossly neglected the economic and social problems of Thailand's majority. In April 1996, the Forum staged a month-long protest in Bangkok, leading eventually to assurances by the Banharn government that it would address the numerous concerns of the Forum. When the subsequent administration of Chavalit Yongchaiyudh stalled, the Forum organized a massive sit-in which saw over 20,000 villagers occupy the immediate vicinity surrounding Thailand's Government House in Bangkok for nearly 100 days between January and May 1997.[8] Following months of confrontation, delays, and frustrating negotiations, the government finally agreed to the demands of the protesters, but the reluctance and antipathy displayed throughout the demonstration by government officials and wealthy urban residents highlighted, more than anything, the profound schisms developing in Thailand along class lines.[9]

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[7] Thai NGOs blossomed from 1973 to 1976 when Thailand experienced an unprecedented, albeit brief, period of political liberalization.

[8] The Forum identified 121 specific problems to be addressed, grouped around six issues: forest and land disputes, alternative agriculture, impact of dam projects, impact of government development projects, occupational hazards, and eviction of slum communities (Ridmontri, 1997a).

[9] In addition to settling all 121 grievances separately within various cabinet committees, the government agreed to pay 1.2 billion baht (US$47.4 million) in compensation to 2,526 families affected by the construction, 29 years ago, of the Sirindhorn Dam in Ubon Ratchasima province (Ridmontri, 1997b). Further, a 2 billion baht (US$79 million) fund was established to assist poor Thais adversely affected by development projects.

Despite the sporadic battles being fought throughout Thailand, the Forum and other NGOs concerned with social justice and community development continue to lose the proverbial war. The Thai NGO movement currently faces severe legal, political, and financial constraints which are intensified by the aversion and apathy of those commanding economic and political power. The absence of widespread support within mainstream Thai society, as well as the growing perception of Thailand as a relatively prosperous country, have undermined the influence of NGOs, particularly as international development aid organizations scale down, or entirely cease, their operations in Thailand. Activists in Thailand face relentless pressure and intimidation from both public authorities and local strongmen with vested interests in such illegal activities as logging, drug smuggling, extortion, gambling, and prostitution. In several cases, this intimidation has even led to the assassinations of key activist leaders.[10] Rather than eliciting support and sympathy, the protests of impoverished farmers and urban squatters more often than not generate irritation and frustration on the part of the middle classes and the "new rich" who accuse the demonstrators of creating social unrest and tainting Thailand's international image. When a group of cassava farmers from Isaan (northeastern Thailand) gathered in Bangkok to stage a peaceful demonstration, Thailand's deputy premier Samak Sundaravaj publicly accosted the leaders, shouting:

> Move up to the footpath. You are not supposed to sit on the road. Only fools sit on the road...What a shame! You all are doing the whole country a disservice acting like brainless people. Are you Thai?" (cited in Bangprapa, 1996).[11]

A social and cultural rift thus increasingly complements the widening disparity in actual income, reflecting the polarization of, and discrepancy in, the priorities, outlooks, and attitudes of different classes within Thai society. Commenting on the incongruous social realities of different classes, one senior Thai NGO official noted with consternation that middle class yuppies "feel pity toward poor elephants, birds, deer, bears, and so on...but they never bothered to pay any attention to their 13 million countrymen who try to exist below the poverty line." (Rojanaphruk, 1996c: 78)

[10] In April 1995, Prawian Boonnak, a prominent leader of the Assembly of Small-Scale Farmers of the Northeast, was gunned down after protesting against the construction of the Pong Khun Phet Dam in Chaiyaphum province. In a similar attack, a police officer killed Joon Boonkhunthod, a leading figure of the Forum of the Poor, in July 1996, sparking several demonstrations against the harassment of NGO activists (see Chaiyasa, 1996).

[11] Around the same time (September 1996), Samak had also insulted poor Thais by suggesting that they could better survive by eating "chicken bones and rice" instead of more lavish meals. Samak's comments to the cassava farmers appear even more scandalous when considering the shame attached to public displays of anger in Thailand.

While millions of Thais struggle to cope with the changing circumstances of an industrializing society, the upper and middle classes compete amongst themselves for larger slices of Thailand's economic pie. This is best exemplified by the events of May 1992 in which thousands took to the streets to protest the military seizure of the government in February 1991. Unlike political demonstrations of the past, in which students and political radicals formed the core of protesters, the May 1992 revolt stemmed largely from the concerns of Thailand's budding urban middle classes.[12] This explosion of dissent revolved *not* around the glaring inequities associated with Thailand's development, however, but around issues of middle class political participation. As middle class protesters challenged armed troops with mobile phones in hand and luxury automobiles parked nearby, issues of poverty, inequality, and injustice were noticeably absent from the agenda. Instead, the Thai middle class and "new rich" engaged in a political protest based strictly on the narrow concerns of a small capitalist elite quibbling over the fruits of Thailand's economic success. The subsequent retreat of the middle class from national political debate suggests that the "business of making money" is ultimately more important to Thailand's powerful classes than complex wider questions surrounding the changing *nature* of Thai society (Chaiyarat and Luenguthai, 1996).

In purely economic terms, Thailand's development program has until very recently enjoyed enormous success. However, this success has involved several fundamental trade-offs. In exchange for bolstered national wealth, Thai society has grown increasingly divisive and iniquitous. In exchange for raised standards of living and health, the sustainability of future development has been sacrificed through unregulated, environmentally-destructive industrial growth. Thai peasants "enjoy" greater freedom to sell their labour in a cash economy, but in return must forfeit autonomy, physical safety, and mental health. As the recent collapse of the Thai economy illustrates, capitalist overaccumulation and speculative investment foster rapid growth, but only in the short term and only in return for considerable social and environmental sacrifices. While it remains naive and simplistic to blame capitalist development exclusively for Thailand's recent social problems, the inequalities, environmental disasters, and exploitation associated with industrialization serve to both tarnish the glitzy

[12] Survey data taken during the demonstrations by the Social Science Association of Thailand revealed that over two-thirds of the demonstrators possessed academic degrees, that 14 percent were entrepreneurs, that 46 percent worked in the private sector, and that half earned over 10,000 baht (approximately US$400) per month (compared to a national average of 1,810 baht (US$71.5) per month) (Chaiyarat and Luenguthai, 1996: 42; Hewison, 1996: 138; National Statistical Office, 1993).

veneer of Thailand's economic "miracle," and call into question the price that most Thais have had to pay in pursuit of growth at any cost. Capitalist development has certainly benefited the elite group of Thais possessing the education, experience, and assets to seize on opportunities in a globalized export economy, but for others,

> The boom has been a mixed blessing - forced out of the village because of insecure land rights, low agricultural prices, deteriorating ecology; limited to the low end of the labour market because of a lack of education and assets; subject to the dangers of factory work and urban pollution; deprived of the social safety net of the village; [and] prey to a social framework which honours money and power over individual rights (Phongpaichit and Baker, 1996: 224).

4.6 Conclusions: Tourism *As* Development in Thailand

Among the various facets of Thailand's export-oriented development strategy, tourism remains among the most aggressively-pursued and financially-rewarding. The particular histories of capitalist, growth-oriented development and mass tourism in Thailand share many parallels. Both were introduced at roughly the same time, both experienced rapid rates of growth, and most importantly, both have recently caused tremendous problems, the consequences of which threaten their viability. In the midst of these crises, sustainable forms of development and tourism have emerged as policy, if not practical, alternatives to harmful strategies of the past. The recent strain on central bank reserves has enhanced tourism's profile even further as the Thai government scrambles to shore up dwindling supplies of foreign exchange. The aforementioned inequities and personal sacrifices associated with Thailand's development program occur at various levels and within specific sectors and regions. As discussed in the introductory chapter, tourism, a labour-intensive industry experiencing steady expansion, shares many of the detrimental environmental and social consequences fostered by rapid economic development.

Although the theme of tourism *as* development is taken up in greater detail in Chapter Eight, it is possible at this point to make some cursory initial observations regarding the intersections between the two. As the discussion in this chapter indicates, calls for sustainable forms of development reflect not just academic concerns, but also stem from the social and environmental changes occurring throughout Thailand on a daily basis. The recent devotion of the Thai government to more equitable and carefully-monitored policies may indeed represent

discursive tactics, but increasing attention is nonetheless being paid to reforming and reorienting tourism plans and development strategies. In short, the relationship between tourism and development remains an important issue from many perspectives and for many people, including scholars interested in theoretical questions, public and private Thai officials hoping to foster national and regional development, and Thai residents directly affected by the material, social, and environmental consequences of tourism and development.

Tourism was originally seen by the Thai government as merely a way to generate scarce foreign exchange. However, the recent integration of tourism into Thailand's development plans has centred around more broadly-defined facets of economic development. Beginning in the Sixth Development Plan (1987-91) tourism was identified as a source of employment, as well as a means of economic decentralization, environmental conservation, and infrastructural investment (NESDB, 1987: 248). Similarly, the Eighth Plan (1997-2001) interweaves tourism with other aspects of development rather than treating it as a separate entity. Due to the export-oriented nature of Thailand's development program, tourism has always proven highly compatible with national development goals and targets. Following the recent economic crisis sparked by the baht devaluation, the Thai government has indicated that it will push tourism growth even harder than in previous years in order to bolster dwindling foreign exchange reserves. Despite the positive effect on tourism of having a weak currency, the imminent "Amazing Thailand" campaign will likely fail in significantly boosting stagnating tourism arrival and revenue figures since IMF-imposed cuts to the Tourism Authority of Thailand's budget, coupled with an overall lack of national tourism planning direction, will certainly undermine Thailand's almost desperate attempts to link unregulated tourism growth to national economic recovery.

Other than their historical affiliation in policy planning, tourism and development in Thailand overlap in other ways as well. The current government and industry fascination with the ecotourism concept - which I examined in the Introduction - indicates a seemingly ideal combination of the principles of both sustainable development and "alternative" tourism. Thai planners have thus moved beyond narrow, simplistic conceptualizations of the tourism-development relationship, and in response to the social and environmental limitations of former strategies, have attempted to integrate and implement more "alternative" perspectives. Heightened environmental awareness, especially among Thailand's budding urban middle

classes, has also contributed to broadening and enhancing debates concerning the consequences and goals of development and tourism decisions. Of course, the wide discrepancy between discourse and action belies the Thai government's true commitment to principles of sustainability, but in theory at least, diversified conceptualizations of tourism and development engender richer analysis and greater opportunities for inclusive, equitable policy formulation. Thus, despite the essentially rhetorical nature of ecotourism and community development planning in Thailand, exploring the intersection of "alternatives" discloses critical research questions and yields intriguing clues regarding the theoretical merits and practical feasibility of "alternative" strategies.

CHAPTER FIVE. SETTING THE SCENE: ECONOMIC CHANGE, ETHNIC PLURALISM, AND HISTORICAL INTEGRATION IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Three, I suggested that to understand the complex interplay between tourism and development adequately, it is vital to incorporate and come to terms with the various circumstances of a particular locality. I also indicated in Chapter Two that assessing the linkages between ecotourism and community-based development requires a careful look at how various local characteristics interact with global tourism flows to create an industry unique to southern Thailand. Since abstract models and prescriptions for success often fail to acknowledge the overarching importance of local context, I feel it is imperative that the peculiarities of a specific tourism site be given priority over universal descriptions and analytical templates. Building "bottom-up" theory from individual cases certainly *is* important, but when normative theory begins to downplay or erase local intricacies, the entire point behind examining specific local sites is defeated. Most importantly, I wish to avoid the amnesia so prevalent in tourism studies and instead use this chapter to develop an appreciation of how international tourism relates to the economic, social, and historical context of southern Thailand. Exploring tourism's position within the local setting not only allows me to frame my research more accurately within the community and region upon which it is based, but also enables me to integrate "place knowledge" into our comprehension of the tourism-development relationship.

Although there exist countless dimensions to the local context(s) of southern Thailand - and the provinces of Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi in particular - three broad categorical areas encompass the salient implications of recent tourism development. First, the magnitude of tourism's influence is most obvious when considering the *economic* context of national sectoral transformations and global commodity exchange fluctuations. International tourism has essentially salvaged a regional economy suffering from the simultaneous collapse of the tin mining industry and the rapid structural shift from agriculture to manufacturing and services. Second, due to the multifarious personal interactions it fosters, tourism has inevitably altered the *social* landscape of southern Thailand. Tourism has not, however, impacted unilaterally

upon a static social or cultural environment. Rather, the manner in which tourism has taken shape has depended largely on pre-existing social patterns of ethnic plurality, tension, and inequality. While tourism can often exacerbate ethnic disparities in income and entrepreneurial opportunities (Bird, 1989; Din, 1982), it has provided, in the case of southern Thailand, attractive employment avenues for traditionally marginalized groups such as the Muslim community. Finally, this chapter delves into the *historical* process of political incorporation of the south into the central Siamese state. Siamese consolidation of its peripheral regions, including the south, began over seven centuries ago, and tourism represents the latest stage in this process. I examine the historical setting in extensive detail because in order to gain an adequate perception of tourism's political utility to the Thai state, we must first trace the complex and contested links developed over centuries. Documenting the historical connections between the central core and its southern periphery also proves crucial in illustrating the political and social connotations of drawing southern Muslims into the mainstream economic life of the Thai state. Contrary to narrow and shortsighted accounts that focus on, or exaggerate, only the most recent consequences of tourism, this chapter demonstrates that tourism is merely the latest stage of several concomitant processes, including national political integration, elaborate local-global interactions, and continuing economic transformations.

5.2 The Geographic and Economic Context

Southern Thailand is the smallest of Thailand's four regions and possesses 14 of the country's 76 provinces, from Chumphon in the north to Narathiwat in the far south (see Figure 1.2 (page 26) and Figure 1.3 (page 28)). The total land area of the southern region is 70,715 square kilometres, which represents 13.8 percent of Thailand's total land area. (This is roughly equivalent in size to the Canadian province of New Brunswick.) Geographically, southern Thailand occupies the northern half of the Malay peninsula, and is bound to the south by Malaysia, to the east by the Gulf of Thailand, and to the west by the Andaman Sea. Incorporation of the south by central Siamese authorities has proven difficult historically due to the geographical circumstances of the region. Southern Thailand's elongated shape, impenetrable forests, lack of navigable rivers, and north-south mountain chains all contributed to the formation of physically-isolated economic and political units which largely developed

separately until the twentieth century when modern communication and transportation networks began to effectively link the south's separate regions to one another as well as to the rest of the country.

Southern Thailand's landscape is dominated by mountainous terrain punctuated by short rivers and narrow valleys. Over 35 percent of southern Thailand's area is found at altitudes higher than 100 metres above sea level (Donner, 1978: 412). Land utilization patterns in southern Thailand also differ from the rest of the country (Table 5.1). Over one-quarter of southern Thailand's total land area was, in 1991, covered by fruit trees and tree crops, and the region accounted for sixty percent of Thailand's total fruit tree and tree crop land utilization.[1] As any visitor to southern Thailand can attest, this translates to large tracts of fruit tree, rubber, palm oil, and coconut land holdings throughout the region. Southern Thailand also possesses more national parks than any other region (26 out of a total of 79), and southern national park territory accounts for 20.3 percent of Thailand's total (*Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 26).

The provinces of Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi lie approximately 800 kilometres to the south of Bangkok. Together, they cover an area of 9,448 square kilometres, which is slightly smaller than Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. At 570 square kilometres, Phuket is the largest island, but the second smallest province, in Thailand. Phuket and Phangnga form an extended peninsula that juts into the Andaman Sea and is separated from Krabi province by Ao Phangnga (see Figure 1.4 on page 29).[2] Phuket's name derives from *bukit*, the Malay word

Table 5.1 Land Utilization in Southern Thailand

Unit: %

	Whole Kingdom		Southern Thailand		Southern Thailand's Share of Thailand's Total	
Type of Land	1965	1991	1965	1991	1965	1991
Forest Land	53.2	27.3	53.0	19.0	13.6	9.8
Farm Holding Land	24.5	41.0	31.7	39.2	17.7	13.0
Paddy Land	12.6	21.6	7.4	8.2	8.0	5.2
Under fruit trees and tree crops	3.2	6.3	17.1	27.4	71.8	60.3
Unclassified Land	21.8	31.9	13.9	41.8	8.6	18.1

Sources: Donner (1978: 477); *Thailand in Figures* (1995: 22-23).

[1] Fruit trees and tree crops include oil palm, bamboo shoots, coconut, rubber, coffee, pepper, cashew nuts, and various fruits (papaya, orange, rambutan, pineapple, etc.).

[2] Ao means bay in the Thai language.

for mountain and was, prior to 1915 or so, known as Junkceylon. The province of Phuket comprises the main island of Phuket itself as well as 39 small islands nearby. Administratively, Phuket is divided into three *ampoe* (districts). Over three-quarters of the island - mostly the southern half - is mountainous terrain, the remainder featuring small inland plains and short plains adjacent to several extended beaches around the island.

Immediately to the north of Phuket, the province of Phangnga is linked to its southern neighbour by the Sarasin Bridge which crosses the narrow Pahk Prah Channel. Phangnga is seven times larger than Phuket (4,170 square kilometres) and contains eight ampoe. The landscape of Phangnga is characterized by flat plains punctuated by dramatic karst mountain topography similar to that found in Guilin province of southern China. Krabi is the largest of the three provinces at 4,708 square kilometres, and is also divided into eight ampoe. Like Phuket and Phangnga, Krabi possesses a large number of small islands off its coast, islands which form part of the same limestone mountain ranges found throughout the mainland in Krabi, Phangnga, and several other provinces in southern Thailand. Phuket and Krabi contain few forest reserves, and forested land accounts for only 9.4 and 7.0 percent of their respective land totals (*Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 22-23). These rates are much lower than both the national rate of 27.3 percent and the rate for southern Thailand of 19 percent (see Table 5.1 above). Although Phuket and Krabi possess low rates of forested land, Phangnga is well above the southern average, and its rate of 30.4 percent remains high due to the smaller *relative* share of farm land in Phangnga compared to Phuket and Krabi. Phangnga's large forest cover also stems from the high number of national parks in the province. Although small in total land area, Phangnga contains seven national parks, the most for any province in Thailand.[3] As tourism intermediaries in Phuket intensify their search for nearby ecotourism sites, Phangnga's comparative advantage in national parks and wildlife reserves will surely lead to even stronger linkages to, and integration within, regional tourism networks.

The populations of Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi are very small compared to other Thai provinces. With respective populations (in 1994) of 199,574, 221,782, and 320,941, Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi are the second, sixth, and twelfth least populated provinces in Thailand. Due to Phuket's small land size however, it possesses the fifth highest population density in Thailand at 367.5 people per square kilometre (*Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 20). Population

[3] Of Phangnga's seven national parks, three are marine-based and four are located on the mainland.

growth has been rapid in this area. Between 1970 and 1994, Thailand's population grew by 72 percent compared to 99.5 percent and 115 percent for Phuket and Krabi.[4] Diverse and plentiful economic opportunities in agriculture and tourism have also brought many migrants to this area. Phuket is the second leading destination in the south, after Songkhla, for migrants from other provinces nationwide seeking employment, and contains the second highest proportion (12.7 percent) of migrants to the total population of any province in southern Thailand (Government of Thailand, 1991b: 44-45).[5]

Southern Thailand possesses the smallest gross regional product (GRP) of any region, but features higher *per capita* GRP than the relatively poor northern and northeastern regions (Table 5.2).[6] GRP per capita in southern Thailand is 40 percent lower than the national average, but the high national average is a result of the extremely inflated per capita rates of Bangkok and surrounding provinces. This discrepancy in regional wealth has existed for most of the twentieth century. As early as 1934-5, for example, household incomes in the north, northeast, and south were 27, 13, and 31 percent lower than incomes in the central region (Wilson, 1983: 99).

As I discussed in the preceding chapter, the employment structure of Thailand's economy has undergone fundamental changes over the past several decades. Between 1980 and 1990, the proportion of labour employed in the primary industry dropped by nearly ten percent while manufacturing's share doubled in relative terms (Table 5.3). This trend has

Table 5.2 Gross Regional Product, 1993

Region	Gross Regional Product (million baht)	GRP Per Capita (baht)
Bangkok	1,348,704	208,455
Central (not incl. Bangkok)	934,181	101,450
Northeastern	337,237	16,818
Northern	288,873	25,920
Southern	259,344	32,532
Whole Kingdom	3,168,339	54,082

Source: *Thailand in Figures* (1995: 272).

[4] Phangnga's population growth rate of 64 percent during this period was below the national rate as well as the southern rate of 78 percent.

[5] The leading province, Ranong, has the highest migrant to population ratio (15 percent) due to both its low total population and the high number of Burmese who cross the border for work.

[6] The average exchange rate between 1987 and 1994 was 25.37 baht for 1 U.S. dollar , and 20.69 baht for 1 Canadian dollar In May 1997, the rate was 25.78 baht per US dollar, and 19.0 baht per Canadian dollar. Following Thailand's economic collapse in July 1997, however, the exchange rate shot up (by July 1998) to 43 baht per US dollar.

Table 5.3 Employment by Industry, 1990

Unit: %

Industry	Entire Kingdom		Southern Thailand	
	1980	1990	1980	1990
Agriculture, forestry, hunting, and fishing	72.2	64.0	74.8	70.6
Mining and quarrying	0.4	0.2	1.3	0.2
Manufacturing	5.6	10.2	4.3	4.8
Construction, repair, and demolition	1.5	3.3	1.6	2.3
Electricity, gas, water, and sanitary services	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.3
Commerce	6.9	9.6	6.9	8.1
Transport, storage, and communication	1.8	2.4	1.9	1.9
Services	8.5	9.9	8.1	5.9
Other	2.8	0.1	0.9	5.9

Sources: Government of Thailand (1981: 131; 1991b: 161-75); *Thailand in Figures* (1995: 106).

continued into the 1990s: by 1994, employment in agriculture, forestry, hunting, and fishing accounted for 57.5 percent of Thailand's total while manufacturing employment had risen to 12.3 percent (*Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 106). The labour structure of southern Thailand has remained more agricultural than the country as a whole throughout both decades, and has generally experienced a slower shift from agricultural to manufacturing employment. Although the sectoral shift from agriculture to manufacturing is evident in labour patterns, the shift becomes most obvious in terms of the contribution made by each sector towards the national gross domestic product (GDP) (Table 5.4). Once the mainstay of the Thai economy, agriculture now contributes only 10 percent to Thailand's GDP, and has dropped rapidly since 1980 when it contributed nearly 25 percent (*Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 270). Conversely, manufacturing's contribution has risen from 21.5 percent in 1980 to 28.5 percent in 1993. As is the case with labour patterns, agriculture occupies a more prominent role in southern Thailand than the rest of the country. Specifically, agriculture contributes to over one-third of southern Thailand's gross regional product (GRP) compared to only 10 percent for Thailand as a whole. Further, crops alone account for 15 percent of southern Thailand's GRP, clearly demonstrating the importance of rubber, oil palm, coconuts, and fruit to the regional economy. A closer look at regional agricultural (and mineral) production reveals the importance of the southern region in several export commodities (Table 5.5). Southern Thailand's share of national production in five export items - coconuts, seafood, oil palm, rubber, and tin - ranges from 62.7 for seafood items to 98.3 percent for oil palm. Together, these five items alone

Table 5.4 Gross Domestic Product by Industry, 1993

Unit: million baht (% of total)

Industrial Origin	Thailand	Southern Thailand
Agriculture	314,974 (10%)	88,532 (34.1%)
Crops	175,623 (5.6%)	41,068 (15.8%)
Livestock	32,921 (1.0%)	3,614 (1.4%)
Fisheries	46,831 (1.5%)	29,368 (11.3%)
Forestry	4,664 (0.1%)	3,225 (1.2%)
Agricultural services	10,768 (0.3%)	488 (0.2%)
Simple agricultural processing products	44,167 (1.4%)	10,769 (4.2%)
Mining and quarrying	46,538 (1.5%)	2,015 (0.8%)
Manufacturing	899,435 (28.5%)	13,550 (5.2%)
Construction	217,159 (6.9%)	16,949 (6.5%)
Wholesale and retail trade	525,726 (16.6%)	40,536 (15.6%)
Services	409,990 (13.0%)	40,945 (15.8%)
Other	747,256 (23.6%)	56,817 (21.9%)
Total	**3,168,339 (100%)**	**259,344 (100%)**

Source: *Thailand in Figures* (1995: 269-75).

Table 5.5 Important Products of Southern Thailand, 1994

Product	National Export Value (million baht)	Southern Thailand's Share of National Production (%)
Coconuts	77	86.4
Fish, Crustaceans, Seafood	67,742	62.7
Oil Palm	226	98.3
Natural Rubber, Rubber Products	54,767	72.7
Tin	552	93.5

Sources: Government of Thailand (1995); Thai Customs Department (1995); *Thailand in Figures* (1995).

earned 123.4 billion baht (US$4.9 billion) in 1994, or 10.9 percent of Thailand's total export earnings (*Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 433). Within this group of commodities, there exists great variation in rates of growth. The seafood industry, for example, has exploded in recent years, and seafood is now southern Thailand's leading export commodity. This boom has largely resulted from growing international demand for Thailand's shrimps and prawns, which together make up over 90 percent of total seafood exports. Throughout Thailand, but especially in the eastern (near Chanthaburi province) and southern regions, shrimp farms have sprung up rapidly to meet growing export demand. Intensive black tiger prawn farming was introduced on a mass scale in 1987, and now accounts for nearly 90 percent of Thailand's

shrimp exports (Tangwisutijit, 1996b). In just five years, from 1986 to 1991, the number of shrimp farms in Thailand more than tripled from 5,534 to 18,998 (*Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 386). The rates of growth were even higher in southern Thailand where the number of farms increased eightfold from 1,300 to 10,269. Meanwhile, shrimp production in the same period grew by over 800 percent nationally, and over 1,380 percent in southern Thailand. On a national scale, fish, crustaceans, and (other) seafood represented, in 1994, the fourth leading export item in Thailand, after electrical equipment parts, mechanical equipment parts, and garment and clothing accessories (*Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 424). Despite this tremendous growth, however, environmental concerns could severely hamper the further expansion of the shrimp industry. Following prolonged pressure and campaigning from local and American environmental groups, the United States imposed on 1 May 1996 a ban on wild shrimp exports from Thailand due to the failure of Thai fishermen to implement turtle excluder devices (TEDs). The ban, and subsequent environmental criticisms of shrimp farms, caused in just three months a 32 percent drop in sea shrimp prices, and a further 25 percent drop for farmed shrimp (de Silva, 1996). High productivity rates and steady global demand have nevertheless allowed the shrimp industry to continue expanding, albeit at slower rates than in previous years.

The tin mining industry, by contrast, has experienced a steep plummet in the last two decades. The steady decline of tin prices from 1980 onwards led to the collapse of the world tin market in 1985, severely damaging Thailand's production and exports. Following this collapse, government tin royalties were cut by two-thirds, and the number of tin mining workers declined by over 50 percent (Thaitakoo, 1994: 140). Since the southern region supplies 93.5 percent of Thailand's total tin production, the collapse of the global tin market has especially affected the economy of southern Thailand. Although tin metal remains the number two mineral export after gypsum, production of tin concentrates plunged by over 80 percent in just two years (1992 to 1994) from 11,484 tons to 2,251 tons (*Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 396). Export earnings from tin have gone from a high of 11.3 billion baht (US$446 million) in 1980 to just over half a billion baht (US$19.7 million) in 1994. As I mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, this has carried enormous implications for the regional economies of Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi, particularly in relation to the development of the tourism industry.

Along with rice, teak, and tin, rubber has long served as one of Thailand's traditional

exports. Thailand supplies 10 percent of the world's rubber, and currently stands as the third largest producer of natural rubber in the world after Malaysia and Indonesia. In 1994, Thailand earned 54.8 billion baht (US$2.2 billion) from exports of natural rubber and rubber products (*Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 433). Due to low imports of rubber, the trade surplus in natural rubber and rubber products was in 1994 the third largest of all products, after garment/clothing accessories and seafood. The south has traditionally produced the bulk of Thailand's rubber, and despite losing its relative share of export earnings to seafood, rubber continues to dominate the landscape in southern Thailand. Rubber plantations in 1991 covered 1.5 million hectares, or over one-fifth of the entire land area of southern Thailand (see Table 5.8 further below). Growing trade in tropical fruits like pineapple, durian, and longans has eroded rubber's importance among fruit trees and tree crops, but rubber continues to increase its share of farm land generally. Rubber plantation workers account for over 35 percent of the *entire* working population of southern Thailand (Government of Thailand, 1991b: 168). More recently, the rising demand for natural rubber due to the global AIDS epidemic has resulted in growing rubber cultivation and export earnings in the 1990s (National Identity Office, 1991: 160).

Due to a broad agricultural base, a growing tourism trade, and small populations, the three provinces of Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi feature relatively high per capita gross regional product (GRP) rates compared to other parts of the south and to the rest of the country (Table 5.6). Phuket's per capita GRP in 1993 was three times the average for southern Thailand and nearly twice the national rate. Further, Phuket and Ranong (another southern province) were the only two provinces in the national top ten not found in the central region. As early as the 1890s, this region featured great wealth due to natural resources such as rubber

Table 5.6 Gross Provincial Product, 1993

Province or Region	Gross Provincial Product (million baht)	GPP Per Capita (baht)	Regional Rank (out of 14 provinces)	National Rank (out of 76 provinces)
Phuket	19,227	93,335	1	8
Phangnga	9,779	41,789	3	16
Krabi	12,102	36,126	5	22
Southern Thailand	259,344	32,532	–	–
Whole Kingdom	3,168,339	54,082	–	–

Source: *Thailand in Figures* (1995: 15-16, 280-81).

and tin ore. In 1909, King Rama VI observed that "there were no other places more highly developed in Siam than Phuket" (Thaitakoo, 1994: 139). Tourism has allowed this wealth to continue and expand over the past several decades despite the declining relative importance of agriculture and mining.

Historical circumstances and the recent boom in the service industry - the most important component of which is tourism - have made Phuket far less agricultural than either Phangnga or Krabi (Table 5.7). Only 15 percent of Phuket's labour force is engaged in agriculture compared to 57 and 75 percent in Phangnga and Krabi respectively. The proportion of gross provincial product (GPP) derived from agriculture is also low in Phuket. While Phangnga and especially Krabi remain agriculturally-based economies, Phuket has moved away from the primary sector, and agriculture now accounts for only 15 percent of GPP. The service sector plays a large role in Phuket, producing nearly 23 percent of Phuket's GPP. Phangnga's service sector is also expanding quickly due to the recent growth of tourism in Ao Phangnga. Finally, Krabi remains the most agricultural of the three provinces in every category, and will likely remain so due to the lack of tourism development in the province.

In addition to producing rubber, tin, fruit, and oil palm, the three provinces have also traditionally exported various rare and exotic commodities including ivory, edible birds nests, and pearls. Much like the entire southern region, Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi feature low rates of rice production. Paddy land accounts for only 5.9 percent of all farm land in Phuket - compared to a national average of 21.6 percent - while rice yields in Krabi and Phangnga are the lowest and sixth lowest amongst all 76 provinces of Thailand (*Thailand in*

Table 5.7 Importance of Agriculture in Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi

Province	Rural	Composition of Labour (%)			GPP by Industry (%)		
or Region	Population (%)	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Services	Agriculture**	Manufacturing	Services
Phuket	70.6	14.5	9.0	10.5	15.0	5.8	22.8
Phangnga	92.2	57.0	4.1	6.6	45.4	4.2	17.7
Krabi	93.8	75.3	2.0	3.8	47.1	6.1	10.3
S. Thailand	87.0	66.4	4.8	5.9	34.1	5.2	15.8
Thailand	82.4	64.0*	10.2	9.9	10.0	28.5	13.0

Sources: Government of Thailand (1991b); Krabi PSO (1995); Phangnga PSO (1996); Phuket PSO (1995); *Thailand in Figures* (1995).

* This includes forestry, hunting, and fishing.

** This comprises crops, livestock, fisheries, forestry, agricultural service, and simple agricultural processing products.

Table 5.8 Rubber Cultivation in Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi

Province or Region	Planted Area (1,000 hectares)	% of Fruit Tree and Tree Crop Land	% of Total Farm Land	% of Total Land
Phuket	17	79.5	68.9	32.7
Phangnga	101	90.1	83.0	24.2
Krabi	114	83.8	68.8	24.3
Southern Thailand				
1965	1,118	93.4	50.2	15.9
1991	1,514	84.8	57.2	21.4

Sources: Donner (1978: 477-82); Government of Thailand (1991b; 1995: 61); Krabi PSO (1995); Phangnga PSO (1996); Phuket PSO (1995); *Thailand in Figures* (1995).

Figures, 1995: 307). Unlike the small role played by rice in Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi, Thailand's other major agricultural product, rubber, remains an important crop in this area (Table 5.8). All three provinces feature large numbers of rubber plantations, which occupy between one-quarter and one-third of the entire land area. Over the past decade or so, the number of hectares under fruit trees and tree crops has expanded rapidly in Phangnga and Krabi. As field crops and rice steadily declined in importance, land under fruit trees and tree crops expanded between 1984 and 1993 by 84 percent in Phangnga and by 89 percent in Krabi. The dramatic increase in fruit tree and tree crop land holdings - whereby cultivated area nearly doubled in just nine years - has been driven by growing rubber cultivation since, as Table 5.8 indicates, rubber accounts for the bulk of fruit trees and tree crops. Despite relatively small land areas and populations, Krabi and Phangnga remain the fifth and ninth leading rubber producing provinces in Thailand.

Other than rubber, there are several other important agricultural commodities in these three provinces. Due to a small, and shrinking, agricultural sector in Phuket, rubber has maintained its preeminent position, challenged only by durian and coconut production valued in 1991 at 49.1 million (US$1.9 million) and 43.4 million baht (US$1.7 million), respectively (*Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 994). Conversely, the greater economic and social significance of agriculture in Phangnga and Krabi has translated to a higher degree of agricultural diversification. Oil palm production, for example, is a key component of Krabi's economy. Krabi produces 40 percent of Thailand's total oil palm, and oil palm earns the province 1.1 billion baht (US$43 million) annually, or over ten times the next leading crop, cashew nuts. Oil palm extraction and rubber processing account for just under half of all industrial workers

and three-quarters of industrial capital in Krabi, thus indicating the enormous significance of agriculture, and specifically rubber and oil palm, to the provincial economy (Krabi PSO, 1995: 25). Although earning less than oil palm or rubber, other agricultural crops in Krabi like coconuts, cashew nuts, and durians all produce over 100 million baht (US$3.9 million) each in farm value. Krabi is Thailand's top producer of cacao, second leading producer of cashew nuts, and ninth largest producer of rambutans. Phangnga also produces over 120 million baht (US$4.7 million) of cashew nuts and was, in 1991, Thailand's leading producer. Aside from rubber and cashew nuts, Phangnga also produces large amounts of fruit, especially durian and rambutan, but remains a smaller and slightly less diversified agricultural economy than Krabi.

As mentioned earlier, shrimp farming and tin mining have experienced dramatic changes throughout southern Thailand, although in opposite directions. The number of shrimp farms in the three provinces has skyrocketed between 1986 and 1991, increasing from 5 to 82 in Phuket, from 0 to 161 in Phangnga, and from 10 to 598 in Krabi (*Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 386). Other than boosting the importance of fishery products in the area's economy, the sudden surge in demand for Thai shrimps and prawns has visibly altered the landscape, creating large numbers of small, square pools of water containing shrimp. Tin mining has also left many visible scars on the landscape, but unlike the situation with shrimp farming, this serves instead as a reminder of the recent collapse of the industry.

For centuries, tin mining and smelting served as the economic foundations of Phuket and Phangnga.[7] Rich tin ore deposits attracted Indian, Arabian, and European traders to this region from as early as the first century. By the sixteenth century, a sizable tin mining industry had developed in Phuket and Phangnga. As tin ore prices rose from the late-1890s onwards, greater investment was made by the Royal Thai government in local tin mining industries, resulting in a rapid increase in production and export (Thaitakoo, 1994). The tin industry grew to completely dominate the economic, social, and political life of this area, a domination that would last well into the twentieth century. The following description of Phuket made by an early traveller to Siam highlights the ascendant position of tin:

> The whole island is a gigantic tin mine. The granite of the hills is full of tin, the soil of the valleys is heavy with it. There is tin under the inland forests, and tin beneath the sea. In search of tin the indefatigable Chinamen have transformed the scenery. The valleys have been turned inside out, the hills have been cut away, the sea has been undermined, and the harbour has disappeared (Smyth,

[7] Krabi contains no tin ore deposits.

1898: 317).

Initially, tin ore concentrates were mined by Chinese coolie labourers and smelted locally in small Chinese blast furnaces known as *relau tongka*. However, following the introduction in 1902 of a modern smelter in Penang (in modern-day Malaysia), the majority of tin ore from Phuket and Phangnga was exported to Penang for processing. In the 1950s, the government of Thailand began to encourage local smelting in order to retain a higher proportion of export profit, and in 1965, the THAISARCO smelting factory was established in Phuket. Despite primitive mining techniques prior to the introduction of modern bucket-dredgers in the early-twentieth century, tin production remained high in the early decades of mining. In 1884, 5,000 tons were produced on Phuket alone, and by 1914, annual production rates for the whole region had reached 8,000 tons (Cushman, 1991: 99). At the height of the tin mining industry, southern Thailand was producing close to 30,000 tons, the vast majority of which came from Phuket and Phangnga. The swift decline of Thailand's tin industry during and after the 1980s has been most evident in Phuket and Phangnga, where production between 1988 and 1993 fell by 63.7 and 90 percent respectively (Phangnga PSO, 1996: 40; Phuket PSO, 1995: 27). Although Phuket and Phangnga still provide 65.6 percent of Thailand's total tin production, overall production continues to plummet. The indispensable position traditionally occupied by tin in Phuket and Phangnga has thus faltered dramatically, thereby creating a void increasingly filled by an expanding tourism industry. This tourism growth has not only further enhanced the region's significance to the national economy, but has also in many ways served to strengthen the political control begun centuries ago by central Siamese rulers.

5.3 Ethnic Pluralism and Religious Diversity

Southern Thailand contained in 1994 a population of 7,603,300, or 12.9 percent of Thailand's total. Almost half of this number reside in just three provinces, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Songkhla, and Surat Thani. While Thailand's population has increased by 72 percent between 1970 and 1994 - from 34.4 million to 59.1 million - the population of the southern region has grown by 78 percent, and it is projected to reach 8,988,000 by the year 2000 (*Thailand in Figures*, 1995: 39). The population of southern Thailand exemplifies the ethnic and religious diversity found throughout Southeast Asia. In addition to the Thai

majority, which represents approximately 73 percent of the population in the south, there exist sizable communities of Chinese, Malays, and various indigenous "tribal" groups. Thais living in the southern region are known as *Chao Pak Thai* and differ from Thais in other parts of the country in language and ethnicity. Intermarriage with Malays has served to distinguish the Chao Pak Thai from central, northern, and northeastern Thais who have mixed with Mons, Khmers, and other *Tai* (but not Siamese) populations.[8] Linguistically, although the southern Thais read and write the same central Thai script as the rest of the country (as well as learning the central Siamese dialect in school), they speak a southern dialect which features many Malay loanwords rather than the Khmer loanwords characteristic of the central Thai dialect (Bunge, 1981).

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the Chinese minority of Thailand has been crucial to the country's economic success. Chinese immigrants have proven instrumental to the regional economy of the south from the late-eighteenth century onwards. Estimates of the number of Chinese in Thailand vary widely from author to author, and it remains virtually impossible to determine the number of people descendant from Chinese immigrants due to high rates of assimilation, poor record-keeping, and the mixed identities of Sino-Thais. Various estimates have placed the proportion of Chinese in Thailand between 8.5 and 15 percent (Rigg, 1991b: 110), which would bring the number to between 5 and 8.9 million nationally. Unlike other countries of the region, Thailand has enjoyed fairly peaceful inter-ethnic relations between Thais and Chinese. Other than brief periods of tension,[9] the Chinese have assimilated relatively well into Thai society due to several factors: high rates of intermarriage between male Chinese immigrants and Siamese women; the adoption of Thai names by many Chinese residents; high rates of Thai citizenship among Chinese immigrants; and conversion to Therevada Buddhism.

Chinese traders had visited Siam well before the first century B.C. Large-scale migration did not occur, however, until the second half of the nineteenth century when political

[8] Tai is the family group to which *Thais* (Siamese) belong. The Tai group includes Siamese, Lao, Shan, upland Tai (Black, White, and Red, Tai), Tai Lü (Yunnan province, China), Tai Yuan (northern Thailand), Ahom (northeastern India), and Chuang (Guangxi and Guizhou provinces, China). Tai speakers number over 70 million, 60 million of whom live in Thailand (Ratanakul and Than, 1990).

[9] These include the reign of Rama VI (1910-25) and the period between 1938 and 1944 when Field Marshall Phibun Songkhram served as prime minister. In 1914, Rama VI wrote an essay entitled "The Jews of the East" in which he argued that the Chinese were unpatriotic and unethical (Rigg, 1991b: 111). Phibun initiated a policy of economic nationalism, consequently forcing Chinese residents to accept Thai citizenship or face expulsion (Burustratanaphand, 1995)

strife and economic hardship forced many immigrants from Guangdong, Fujian, and Guangxi provinces in southeastern China to flee to Southeast Asia. Between 1882 and 1917, the number of Chinese immigrants to Thailand reached 1.4 million, and at the peak of immigration between 1918 and 1931, over 2 million Chinese arrivals were recorded (Wilson, 1983: 55-56). The majority of Chinese immigrants settled in urban areas, particularly in and around Bangkok, where they worked as clerks, wage-labourers in rice mills, porters in the retail sector, boatmen, and agricultural labourers (Wyatt, 1984). Smaller Chinese communities were also established in southern Thailand in association with rubber plantations and tin mining, which continue to feature high rates of ownership by Sino-Thais.

The most important ethnic minority in southern Thailand represents Thailand's largest religious minority as well. Muslims make up only 4.1 percent of Thailand's total population, but account for 25.9 percent of southern Thailand's population (Government of Thailand, 1991b: 25). Roughly 60 percent of Muslims in Thailand consider themselves ethnically Malay, with Muslim Thais, Chinese, Indians, and Pakistanis making up the remaining 40 percent (Che Man, 1990). Since most Muslims in the south are either ethnically Malay or possess some Malay ancestry, the overlap between Muslim and Malay is virtually complete, thereby making the two synonymous in southern Thailand. Over 80 percent of Thailand's Muslims live in the southern region. The proportion of Muslims in the general population varies widely within the region however, increasing steadily the further south one travels in the Malay peninsula. The four southernmost provinces of Thailand - Satun, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat - contain 66 percent of all Muslims in southern Thailand, and 74 percent of the total population in those four provinces profess Islam.

The Muslims of southern Thailand have historically lagged behind the rest of the population in terms of economic success, social status, and educational achievement. Contrary to the high assimilation rates of Chinese settlers, inter-ethnic relations between Malay Muslims, Chinese, and Thais have featured conflict and tension which date back to the outset of Siamese control of the deep south (*Tanah Melayu*) in the early-eighteenth century. By the late-eighteenth century, most areas of southern Thailand had fallen under the direct political control of central Siamese rulers, and by 1901, all of southern Thailand, including the *Tanah Melayu* and various Malay *negeri*, had become integrated into the Siamese state as frontier provinces. A century later, political tension continues to characterize the southermost provinces of this

region. During the 1970s, for example, armed communist insurrection broke out throughout southern Thailand. This period was also the height of activity for underground Malay/Muslim liberation movements, which by 1982 possessed nearly 3000 rebels (Davis, 1982: 35). Although the number of rebels is small today, they continue to commit highly visible terrorist acts against government institutions and non-Muslim Thais throughout southern Thailand. Founded in 1968, the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO) receives aid from Libya, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia, and represents the largest of the four guerrilla movements based in southern Thailand.[10] Growing Muslim resistance to Thai rule has thus developed alongside heightened Muslim fundamentalism in southern Thailand, and as with the revolts of earlier centuries, Malay nationalist claims encompass both political *and* Islamic demands (Pitsuwan, 1985).

In addition to rejecting Siamese political domination, the Muslims of southern Thailand have traditionally resented the conception and symbolism behind the Thai (Buddhist) royalty. In particular, forced worship of Buddha images has proven sacrilegious to Muslims:

> The basic problem...consisted of the demand of the central Thai polity that the Malay Muslims pay homage to the King, as the personified symbol of Thai nationhood, and to Thai national symbols. Given the basically Buddhist nature of the symbolization of the Thai nation, and the Buddhist character of the Thai monarchy, these demands were interpreted by many Malay Muslims as contrary to the precepts of Islam (Cohen, 1991: 119).

Despite assurances of cultural pluralism, the central Thai authorities continue to discourage signs of Malay nationalism or Muslim identity.[11] As Donner (1978: 467) points out, "the Thai policy of assimilating minorities has not succeeded with the Muslims, because they have nothing in common: language, script, religion, way of living, education, and attitude towards the central government are completely different from those of the Thai population." The high proportion of non-Muslim government officials, coupled with low rates of participation in the Thai educational system, has fostered a sense of exclusion amongst Malay Muslims, who in many respects conduct their daily lives beyond the scope of mainstream Thai life (Thomas,

[10] The other movements include the National Liberation Front of Patani (BNPP, founded in 1959), the National Revolutionary Front (BRN, 1963), and the United Fronts of Patani Fighters (BBMP, 1985). In addition to receiving funds from several governments, the various liberation fronts also receive payments from the 15,000 Patani workers living in Saudi Arabia, as well as from Patani workers in other Muslim countries (Che Man, 1990: 104).

[11] Official Thai documents refer to Malay Muslims as "Thai Islam" in an attempt to strip Muslims living in Thailand of Malay nationalist identity. I should note, however, that as a comparatively tolerant society, Thailand treats its Muslim minority far better than most other countries around the world, and has, particularly since the early-1980s, made serious attempts to improve the educational, economic, and political circumstances of Muslim communities.

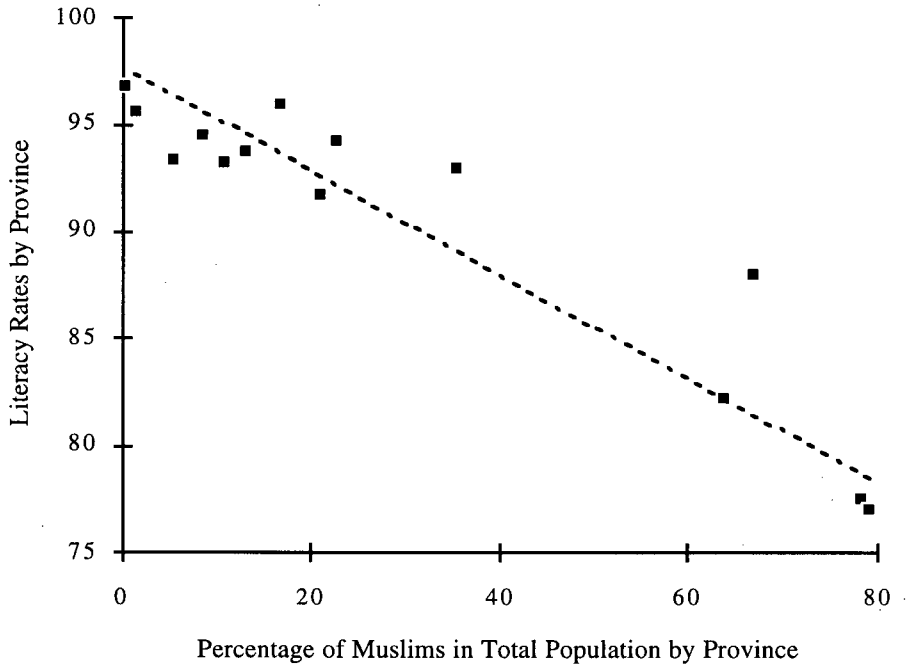
1985).

Economic segregation and differentiation have also served to exacerbate ethnic tension. The majority of Malay Muslims work as rubber tappers and smallholders, fishermen, small-scale farmers, labourers, vendors, and small shopkeepers while most of the tin mines and large rubber and coconut plantations are owned by Thais and Chinese (Che Man, 1990). The recent influx of capital into the southern fishing industry has also discouraged the participation of Malay Muslims, the majority of whom still use small fishing boats called *perahu kolek*. As rice cultivation continues to decline in the south, Malay Muslims are forced to buy rice from Thai and Chinese "middlemen" and traders, who carry great influence in determining the market price of fish, rubber, and coconuts. The rural-urban division between Malay Muslim fishermen and farmers, on the one hand, and Thai and Chinese owners, managers, and bureaucrats, on the other, has sharpened inter-provincial spatial divisions and exacerbated religious and cultural differences. Thus, despite possessing average per capita Gross Provincial Product (GPP) rates, provinces in southern Thailand with large Muslim populations feature poor distribution of wealth among different ethno-religious groups. The strong correlation between the percentage of Muslims in a province and illiteracy rates serves as a clear indication of the educational constraints faced by Malay Muslims (Figure 5.1).

Traditional Muslim schools known as *pondoks* offer both secular and religious instruction but put Muslim students at a disadvantage since pressure to meet minimum Thai educational standards in the face of limited government funding limit Muslim students' ability to compete against their Thai counterparts. Although attendance in pondoks is slowly declining, sixty percent of Muslim families in the four southernmost provinces continue to send their children to these private Islamic schools rather than to free Thai public institutions (Pathan, 1996). Measures such as public funding of private Islamic education and government scholarships for bright Muslim high-school students have thus proven inadequate in redressing low participation rates in post-secondary education amongst Muslims in southern Thailand. As Thailand continues its transformation from an agricultural to an industrial and service-based economy, this lack of education will only intensify the economic obstacles faced already by many Muslims, who will likely find themselves shut out of lucrative industrial employment opportunities due to a lack of proper education and training.

The ethnic and religious composition of Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi mirrors national

Figure 5.1 Relationship Between Literacy and Muslim Populations in Southern Thailand, 1990



Source: Government of Thailand (1991b).

and regional patterns. Malay Muslims represent the largest minority in the three provinces and account for 16.9, 22.8, and 35.5 percent of the total populations of Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi. This number has changed little since 1937 when the corresponding figures stood at 17.9, 18.3, and 37.7 percent, respectively (Government of Thailand, 1945: 60-63). The ethno-religious segregation of labour common throughout southern Thailand is also evident in the three provinces, where the majority of Muslims work as rubber tappers, fruit farmers, and fishermen. These occupations are seasonal in nature, and feature low rates of pay and social status: 80 percent of fishermen in Thailand live below the poverty line (*Bangkok Post*, 1996d). Through command of the retail economy, Sino-Thais have grown to dominate the merchant classes as well as generally bringing wealth to the area throughout the past century. The labour requirements of the tin mining industry during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries brought several thousands of Chinese coolies to the area, principally to Phuket. In many

ways, Phuket represented a Chinese island with the same economic, demographic, and political characteristics of other Chinese-dominated island-ports such as Penang and Singapore. In 1885, for example, the Chinese population of Phuket was 45,000 compared to only 1,000 Siamese (Cushman, 1991: 49).

The vast majority of Phuket's current population derives from, or at least shares ancestry with, these original Chinese immigrants whose influence remains highly visible in Phuket, from ubiquitous Chinese temples to the annual Vegetarian Festival, celebrated annually since 1825 during the first nine days of the ninth lunar month of the Chinese calender. In addition to enjoying economic success, Sino-Thais in Thailand's southwestern provinces, have historically gathered political power by protecting central Siamese interests against British colonial interests in Malaysia. By building political alliances and allowing wealthy Chinese families to exploit the provinces of the south, the Siamese government successfully addressed British criticisms of the Malay peninsula's backwardness (Cushman, 1991). The economic and geo-political leverage afforded by Thai government officials to Sino-Thais in parts of southern Thailand, including Phuket, eventually led to a relatively high standard of living and level of "development," but in provinces such as Phangnga and Krabi where Sino-Thais form a minority, this has also fostered feelings of resentment towards Sino-Thais as well as economic segregation along ethnic and religious lines.

The oldest inhabitants of the Malay peninsula are the various aboriginal "Negrito" groups such as the Semangs and Jakun who settled in this region thousands of years ago and were gradually displaced by migrating Siamese from the north and Malays from the south. Archaeological evidence dating back 27,000 to 37,000 years, and ancient rock paintings in limestone caves, indicate that the earliest inhabitants of southern Thailand lived in present-day Krabi province. Although small in size, one such group, the Mokens, remains quite visible in Phuket. Known in Thai as *Chao Nam* ("water people") and *Chao Leh* ("sea people"), members of this indigenous community speak a distinct form of Malay and until recently lived, worked, and died in boats and buoyant leaf-huts.[12] The tourism industry has identified Chao Leh communities, which are scattered around the coast of Phuket, as "sea gypsy villages" and have marketed them as tourist attractions. Simultaneously, Chao Leh face great discrimination on the part of Thais and have fought a losing battle to preserve their traditional fishing grounds.

[12] "Chao Leh" was officially replaced recently by the more politically correct name, *Thai Mai* ("New Thai").

The Chao Leh are far and away the poorest residents of the area, a fact which becomes obvious to the many tourists who are approached by begging Chao Leh children on the beaches and streets of Phuket.

5.4 Historical Incorporation and Regional Integration

Like many regions of Southeast Asia, southern Thailand has enjoyed a complex history, the products of which include diverse linguistic, ethnic, and religious traditions. Despite hosting several powerful states during the past two centuries, southern Thailand is best characterized as a peripheral region, fulfilling a somewhat marginal role in Southeast Asian history. As mentioned already, southern Thailand geographically bridges the land-based kingdoms of mainland Southeast Asia with the island-based, Malay world to the south. This region has long served as a focal point for rivalry between Thai, Mon, Malay, Burmese, Khmer, and (southern) Indian rulers, who fought over the strategic and economic rewards associated with the Malay peninsula. Standing at the periphery of both the Thai (Siamese) and Malay worlds, southern Thailand has historically remained caught between - and on the fringes of - the major power-centres of Southeast Asia, including the Angkor (Khmer), Pagan (Burmese), Pegu (Mon), Malacca-Johore (Malay), Sri Vijaya (Sumatran), Majapahit (Javan), Sukhothai (Siamese), and Ayudhya (Siamese) empires.[13]

The political relationship between states in Southeast Asia, prior to the nineteenth century, revolved around tributary diplomacy between powerful kingdoms and their vassal states. Political ties during the "traditional" period (i.e., eleventh to nineteenth centuries) were overlapping and complex. States often paid tribute to several powerful empires at once, while many states simultaneously possessed, and served as, vassals. The "modern" (European) notion of fixed, scientifically mapped boundaries carried significance only after King Chulalongkorn's "modernization" reforms of the late-nineteenth century (Winichakul, 1994). Rather than ruling directly over fixed territories, then, the "traditional" states of Southeast Asia would instead receive annual tribute from vassal states whose native leaders swore allegiance and provided military assistance to more powerful suzerains. Other than presenting tributary

[13] Thai and Thailand are used interchangeably throughout this chapter with Siam and Siamese. Thailand was known as Siam from approximately 1782 until 1939, and again from 1946 to 1949. The name was changed by the nationalistic leader Field Marshal Phibun Songkhram in an irredentist attempt to link all Tai-speaking populations in the region.

gold and silver flowers (*bunga mas dan perak*) to Siamese kings, the myriad states of southern Thailand operated with relative independence until direct Siamese control commenced in the late-eighteenth century. It is important to note, therefore, that direct Thai rule and incorporation into the modern Thai state is only a recent development in an area long characterized by independent and occasionally powerful kingdoms.

In examining the history of southern Thailand, I will concentrate on one of two distinct regions whose histories, while frequently overlapping, developed separately and led to different patterns of incorporation into the present Thai "geo-body." First, the region known as the *Tanah Melayu* (Malay lands) centres on present-day Patani, and includes the Thai provinces of Pattani,[14] Narathiwat, Yala, and Satun in the extreme south (see Figure 1.3 on page 28). This region also includes former Malay *negeri* (states) - such as Trengganu, Kedah, Perlis, and Kelantan states of present-day Malaysia - which along with Patani, served as tributaries of Siam (Steinberg, 1987). The Patani region remains distinct from the rest of southern Thailand due to both the traditional independence of the area, and the high percentage of Malay Muslims found among its population.[15] Second, the area I will focus on in this section comprises the territory from Chumphon to Songkhla, and includes the provinces of Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi. This area has, for over seven hundred years, fallen under the influence of powerful states located at present-day Nakhon Si Thammarat, and the rulers of Nakhon have historically provided the key to Siamese power in both southern Thailand as well as the Malay principalities. Thus, in order to examine the history of Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi, it is necessary to trace, albeit briefly, Thailand's connection to Nakhon.

Known also as Ligor, Lugor, and Lakhon, Nakhon Si Thammarat was founded in the sixth century, but remained, along with the entire Malay peninsula, part of the Sri Vijaya Empire based in Palembang, Sumatra until the ninth century (Hall, 1981). Between the ninth and eleventh centuries, a powerful, and relatively independent, maritime kingdom known as Tambralinga, centred at Nakhon, controlled the majority of states in southern Thailand. As the Khmer Empire based in Angkor expanded southward along the Malay peninsula during the eleventh century, Tambralinga became a Khmer vassal state, and remained so until the 1250s. By the thirteenth century, the great empires of Angkor and Pagan (Burma) had begun to

[14] "Patani" is the Malay spelling, while "Pattani" is a transliteration of the Thai version.

[15] Islam spread throughout the Malay peninsula during the fifteenth century, before which a mixture of Hindu and Buddhist beliefs predominated. Patani itself became an Islamic state in 1457 (Che Man, 1990).

crumble, and in their place, *Tai* kingdoms grew throughout mainland Southeast Asia. The major development in this era, known as the "Tai century," was the "movement of the Tai down from the upland valleys onto the plains formerly dominated by the major empires and their founding both there and in upland regional centers of powerful states, in an attempt (self-consciously or not) to imitate and supplant their rivals" (Wyatt, 1984: 38). Replacing Khmer, Mon, and Malay ruling families, Tai rulers thus established kingdoms, and encouraged the influx and settlement of Tai-speaking populations. In Nakhon, a Tai empire was founded between 1240 and 1250. At roughly the same time (1238), the first distinctly *Thai* (i.e., Siamese) state was established at Sukhothai in north-central Thailand.[16] Through marriage and kin connections, Sukhothai maintained suzerain-vassal relations with several neighbouring states, including Nakhon in the south. Nakhon itself ruled over an impressive array of vassal states covering the entire upper Malay peninsula, and reaching down as far south as the Malay *negeri* of Pahang and Kedah. Since Nakhon fell within Sukhothai's sphere of influence, Nakhon's vassals (which collectively covered all of present-day southern Thailand) became indirect subjects of Sukhothai's rule - as mentioned above, suzerains in traditional Southeast Asian political relationships ruled not only over their vassals, but also their *vassals'* vassals. Hence, through the rulers of Nakhon, Sukhothai, along with subsequent Siamese kingdoms based at Ayudhya and Bangkok, ruled over all of southern Thailand, thereby initiating Siamese political and cultural domination of the region.[17]

Although Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi share a common history with the rest of southern Thailand, particular circumstances have served to create the historical, economic, ethnic, and geographical characteristics of the three provinces. Phuket was first visited by Indian merchants approximately 2,000 years ago. In addition to using Phuket as a base for trade in the Malay peninsula, these Indian traders established small settler colonies (Donner, 1978). Arab traders followed in the ninth and tenth centuries, hoping to capitalize on the strategic and economic position of this location. At the time of Indian and Arab trade missions,

[16] The Sukhothai kingdom is widely considered the birthplace of Siamese nationhood, language, and culture. Although Siamese values, tastes, and styles developed as a hybridized mixture of Tai, Khmer, and Mon cultural influences, the Siamese consider Sukhothai the cradle of Thai civilization, and the embodiment of "pure" Siamese culture (Bunge, 1981).

[17] Ayudhya was established in 1351 by U Thong (see Appendix Four for map locations). Following Ayudhya's defeat at the hands of Burmese invaders in 1767, King Taksin regrouped Thai forces, expelled the Burmese, and established a capital at Thonburi. In 1782, King Ramathibodi (Rama I) founded the Chakri dynasty, which still occupies the throne of Thailand today, and moved the capital from Thonburi to Bangkok on the east bank of the Chaophraya River.

Phuket and the surrounding areas were districts of the Takopa Kingdom (present-day Takuapa in Phangnga Province), which gained prominence both as a major tin-producing region and as the west coast sea-port servicing the northern half of the Malay peninsula. Until the middle of the eleventh century, the southwest coast of southern Thailand paid tribute to kings of the Mon Empire based in Pegu (present-day Burma), and following Pegu's downfall in the 1050s, the powerful Ligor Empire based at Nakhon Si Thammarat seized all territories in this region. As a vassal state of the Khmer Empire, and then the Siamese kingdoms of Sukhothai and Ayudhya, Nakhon extended Khmer and Siamese rule to its own vassal states, including Patani, Patthalung, Phangnga, Singora (Songkhla), and Takuapa. The great empires to the north and west thus largely shaped the early history of this region, which came eventually to serve as a direct vassal of Nakhon.

By the sixteenth century, a significant state had developed at Phangnga, and included Takuapa to the west, and Thalang and Phuket (the two districts of present-day Phuket Island) to the south. Phangnga's vast tin ore deposits, and its good location along the west coast, gave it an economic and geopolitical advantage over other local states.[18] In the early seventeenth century, the tin mining industries of Phangnga, Takuapa, Thalang, and Phuket became royal monopolies of the Siamese state, which thereafter granted trading and tax-farming licenses to both locals and Europeans (who by this time had developed an interest in southern Thailand's tin).[19] Due to the economic importance of this area, the Siamese king decided in the early-seventeenth century to detach Phangnga from the direct rule of Nakhon, and instead supervise the state directly. Soon afterwards, Thalang, Phuket, and Takuapa were in turn separated from Phangnga, thereby rendering Phangnga - a formerly powerful local state - so weak that even tribute was no longer required of it (Gerini, 1905). By the mid-seventeenth century, then, Siam had established firm control over its southwestern vassals, and began appointing governors directly in an attempt to control the growing tin trade.

Since early European involvement in Siam centred on trade, Phangnga, Takuapa, and Phuket represented crucial locations due to their tin resources and proximity to future British trading posts and colonies in peninsular Malaya (such as Penang) and the Tenasserim coast of

[18] Phangnga was long known to Chinese and European traders as the landfall where merchants entered to make their way across the peninsula on elephant (Cushman, 1991).

[19] Krabi was not included because the province possessed minimal tin ore deposits. Tax-farms refer to areas where an individual was granted the right to collect taxes on behalf of the Siamese king.

southeastern Burma. In 1664, the Dutch East India Company received trade rights in southern Thailand (including Phangnga, Takuapa, and Phuket), and in 1685, Siam granted tin monopoly rights in Phuket to the French. Hoping to develop the tin mining industry further, the Siamese king even appointed French officials as governors of Phuket between 1683 and 1689 (Gerini, 1905). British influence also played an important role in the development of this region: Francis Light remained stationed at Phuket between 1772 and 1781 before moving on to Penang (Thaitakoo, 1994). The mid to late-eighteenth century proved to be highly prosperous, with the tin mining industry continually expanding to incorporate a swelling Chinese coolie labour force.

Events between 1785 and 1812, however, precipitated a sudden reversal in the region's fortunes. The Burmese, having been expelled from Thailand after sacking the capital, Ayudhya, in 1776, launched a series of attacks on Thalang beginning in December 1785. After defeating Takuapa and Takuathung, the Burmese were repelled at Thalang by fierce Siamese defences.[20] The Burmese, however, continued to launch attacks on Thalang between 1809 and 1812, and by the time the invasions ended, Phuket's population had been decimated from around fifteen or twenty thousand to just over six thousand (Gerini, 1905). Written in the second decade of the nineteenth century by a Malay scribe from Kedah, the *Syair Sultan Maulana* records the hardships suffered by the residents of Phuket following the Burmese invasion of 1810:

> The people of Thalang who were still on the island had fled to the jungle in utter confusion, men and women, old and young...But many of them were suffering from dysentery or colic and reduced to mere skeletons; as the result of having to stay in the jungle, constantly on the watch, they had lost all spirit...As long as there was no rice in the fields, there was no way to eke out a living; of husked rice, not a basket was to be had, and they were reduced to eating the pith of fan-palms...Report had it that, through the ages, Thalang had never come to any harm; only now had disaster struck it, utterly destroying it. (Skinner, 1985: 243).

Coupled with incessant Indian and Malay pirate incursions, the Burmese invasions caused a rapid deterioration in the economic and social life of Thalang and surrounding areas.

In the wake of Thalang's decline, Siam sent a resident commissioner to the island, but by that time, a temporary shift of power had already occurred whereby Phangnga once again assumed the preeminent role in the region. Having established a *muang* (principality) at

[20] By 1782, Thalang had absorbed the Phuket region (the southern half of Phuket Island). Also, by this time, a principality by the name of Takuathung had arisen in an area shared by Phangnga, Phuket (i.e., Thalang), and Takuapa.

modern-day Phangnga town - where Thalang refugees from the Burmese invasions had settled - King Rama III sanctioned the transfer of the seat of government from Thalang to Phangnga between 1810 and the 1830s (Donner, 1978). In addition to assuming a promoted political role, Phangnga served at this time as the principal port of the area, shipping out its own exports as well as those of neighbouring provinces. Thalang rebounded quickly from the Burmese invasions, however, and by the 1830s, the governor of Phuket once again controlled the entire region, including Phangnga, Takuapa, and Takuathung (which by that time were districts with roughly equal status) (Songprasert, 1986). Throughout the nineteenth century, Phuket continued to consolidate its political dominance over neighbouring districts by utilizing its rapidly expanding tin mining industry to bolster its economic standing and, more importantly, its value to a Siamese state increasingly threatened and intimidated by growing British and French colonial power in Southeast Asia.[21]

As mentioned already, the tin mining industry boomed in the region beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. The rising value of tin and the perpetually expanding labour requirements of the industry encouraged large scale immigration of Chinese coolie labour from settlements on the Malay peninsula, including Penang and Singapore (Yip, 1969). By 1884, 50,000 Chinese coolies had settled in Phuket, allowing the owners of tin mines to both exploit additional labour, and derive greater income from tax-farms established by the Siamese state in tin, opium, gambling, and prostitution. The influx of Chinese labourers engendered social problems as well, and as early as the 1860s, Phuket experienced sporadic unrest due to secret society disputes. In addition to this growing tension between Chinese coolie labourers and Siamese governors, anxiety over growing British influence in Malaya and the desire to collect tax revenues led King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) to send in 1875 a "Permanent Commissioner of the Provinces" (*Khaluang Pracham Huamuang*) to Phuket in order to solidify Siam's control over its outlying provinces (Bunnag, 1977). Chinese tin mining coolies suffered many hardships due to heavy taxation and miserable conditions:

> Chinese mining coolies had perhaps the worst lives of almost any of the immigrants to South-East Asia in the nineteenth century. Their wages were poor, the conditions of employment favoured the mine owners, they were without the support of family and friends, and they operated in a system so harsh and unjust that few survived or prospered (Cushman, 1991: 37).

[21] Although never officially colonized, Thailand was forced by France and Britain to give up 456,000 square kilometres of territory (nearly half of its total land area), as well as having to endure economic losses and political humiliation (Wyatt, 1984: 208).

Coolie labourers, urged on by Chinese mining elites, rioted against the local Thai government in 1876, and continued to represent a serious problem throughout the following decades for the permanent commissioner of Phuket.

By the late-1890s, Phuket had entered into a temporary period of decline due to heavy taxation - amounting to over 40 percent - and the ineptitude of local government officials who sent the bulk of tax revenues to Bangkok to the detriment of the surrounding provinces. Starting in 1893, King Chulalongkorn initiated administrative reforms whereby the central Siamese government began to appoint superintendent commissioners (*Khaluang Thesapiban*) to rule over administrative circles (*monthons*). *Monthon* Phuket was established in 1898, and included the provinces (*changwats*) of Ranong, Takuapa, Phuket, Phangnga, Krabi, and Trang.[22] The establishment of Monthon Phuket served as a meaningful - and long-standing - confirmation of Phuket's superior economic and political role in the region. It is worth noting, however, that despite existing within the realm of Phuket's jurisdictional territory, Phangnga, Takuapa, Takuathung, and Krabi (which had been established as a province by King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) in the 1880s) remained within Nakhon's sphere of influence since members of the Na Nakhon ruling family served as governors in this area until well into the twentieth century (Bunnag, 1977).

Having enjoyed administrative control over southwestern Siam since the 1830s, Phuket would develop into the dominant economic and political power in southern Thailand by the early-twentieth century. Between 1900 and 1913, Phuket's economic fortunes rose precipitously due, in large part, to the rule of Commissioner Khaw Sim Bee (Cushman, 1991). Coming from the wealthy and politically influential ruling family of Ranong, Khaw Sim Bee used family prestige and connections to develop the economy and infrastructure of Phuket. In addition, intermarriage between the Khaw family and the influential Tan clan consolidated elite Chinese political and economic control over the island, which essentially continues to this day (Thaitakoo, 1994). The distinguished economic and political position of Phuket had thus been firmly established by the early-twentieth century. The remainder of the twentieth century saw the continued expansion of tin mining and smelting, while the completion of the southern railway line in 1922 improved communications and economic integration between the central

[22] Phangnga absorbed Takuathung late in the nineteenth century (Carrington, 1906). By 1915, Monthon Phuket comprised six provinces: Ranong, Phangnga (which by then had absorbed Takuapa), Phuket, Krabi, Trang, and Satun.

Siamese core and its southern periphery. The next seventy-five years would feature rapid changes in Phuket, Phangnga and Krabi, particularly with the establishment and growth of international tourism. Considering the vital role played by historical circumstances in shaping the economic, political, and ethnic characteristics of these provinces, I find it surprising and lamentable - although admittedly typical - that history continues to occupy such a marginal space within the local tourism imagination. More importantly, assessments of tourism's influence and impacts in Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi can be fully understood *only* when placed in the wider geographical and historical context, since appraisals, comparisons, and judgments made in and of themselves outside of this proper context remain severely limited in their scope and applicability.

5.5 Field Sites and Tourist Sights

The locations in which I conducted my research all lie within the three provinces discussed in this chapter. Phuket served as my base, as well as the site for much of the bureaucratic and industry research concerning government agencies, travel agents, and tour operators. In Krabi, my research took place in the vicinity of Ao Nam Mao (Figure 5.2). This area is approximately 17 kilometres from Krabi town, and features several scenic beaches separated by limestone cliffs. On the western end of Ao Nam Mao lies Rai Leh Beach, an area of increasing popularity amongst tourists. After Ao Nang, Rai Leh has become the most developed beachfront in this area, attracting large numbers of backpackers and budget travellers hoping to escape the "touristy" beaches of southern Thailand. To the east of Ao Nam Mao is *Su-Saan Hawy* ("Shell Cemetery"). Over 75 million years ago, a freshwater marsh in this area played host to millions of pond snails and clams, which died and formed a 40 centimetre thick fossil layer of shelly limestone. The limestone eventually cracked into giant slabs that now stick out into the sea. As one of only three such locations in the world - along with Japan and the United States (near Chicago) - the Shell Cemetery receives a large amount of attention in local tourism brochures. In addition to spending time at Rai Leh Beach, I conducted research near the Shell Cemetery at *Nature Paradise*, an "ecotourism resort" described in Chapter Two.

The bulk of my research took place in Ao Phangnga Marine National Park, which is adjacent to Phuket but administratively part of Phangnga province (Figure 5.3). Ao Phangnga

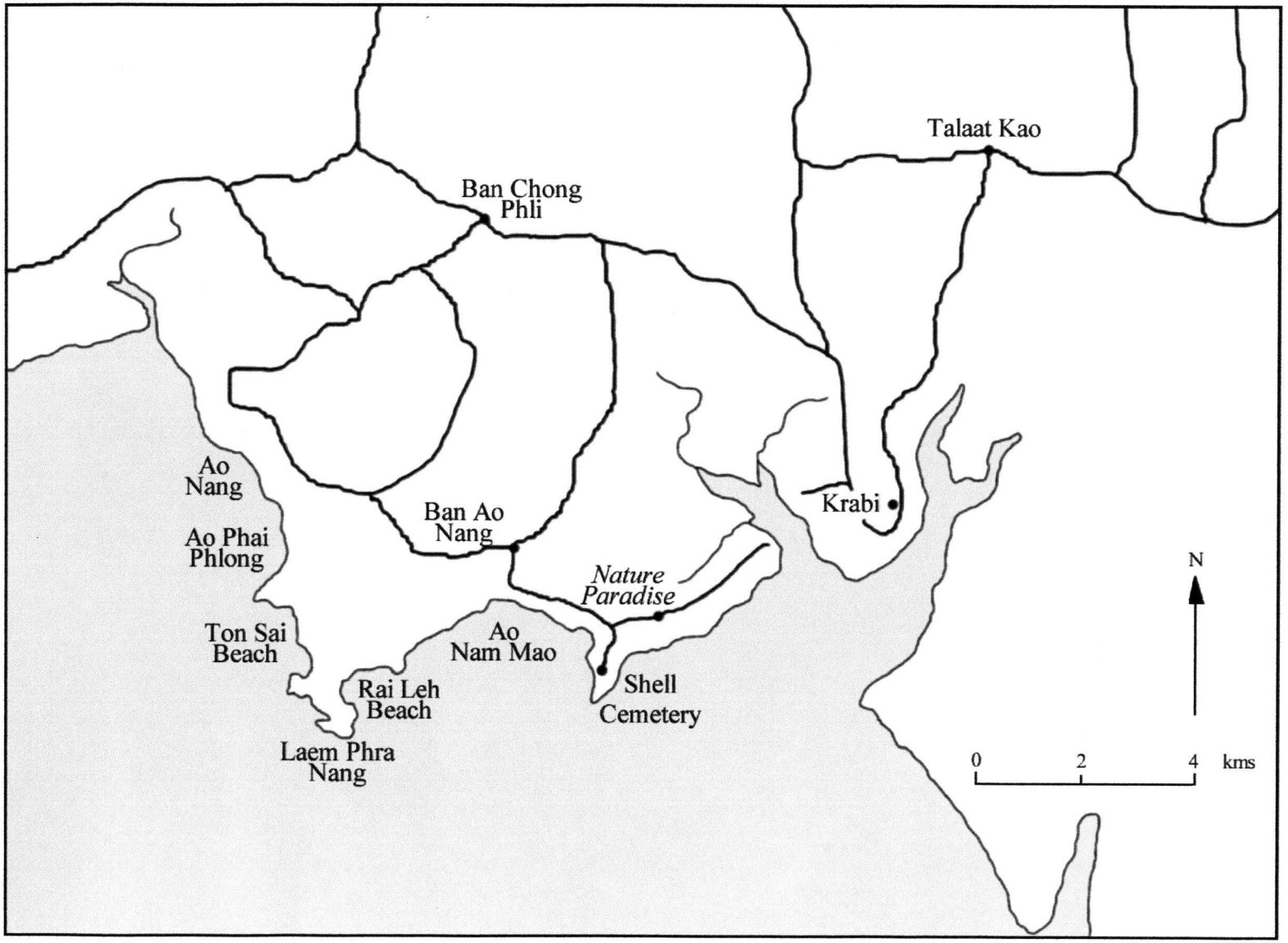


Figure 5.2 Vicinity of Krabi Town

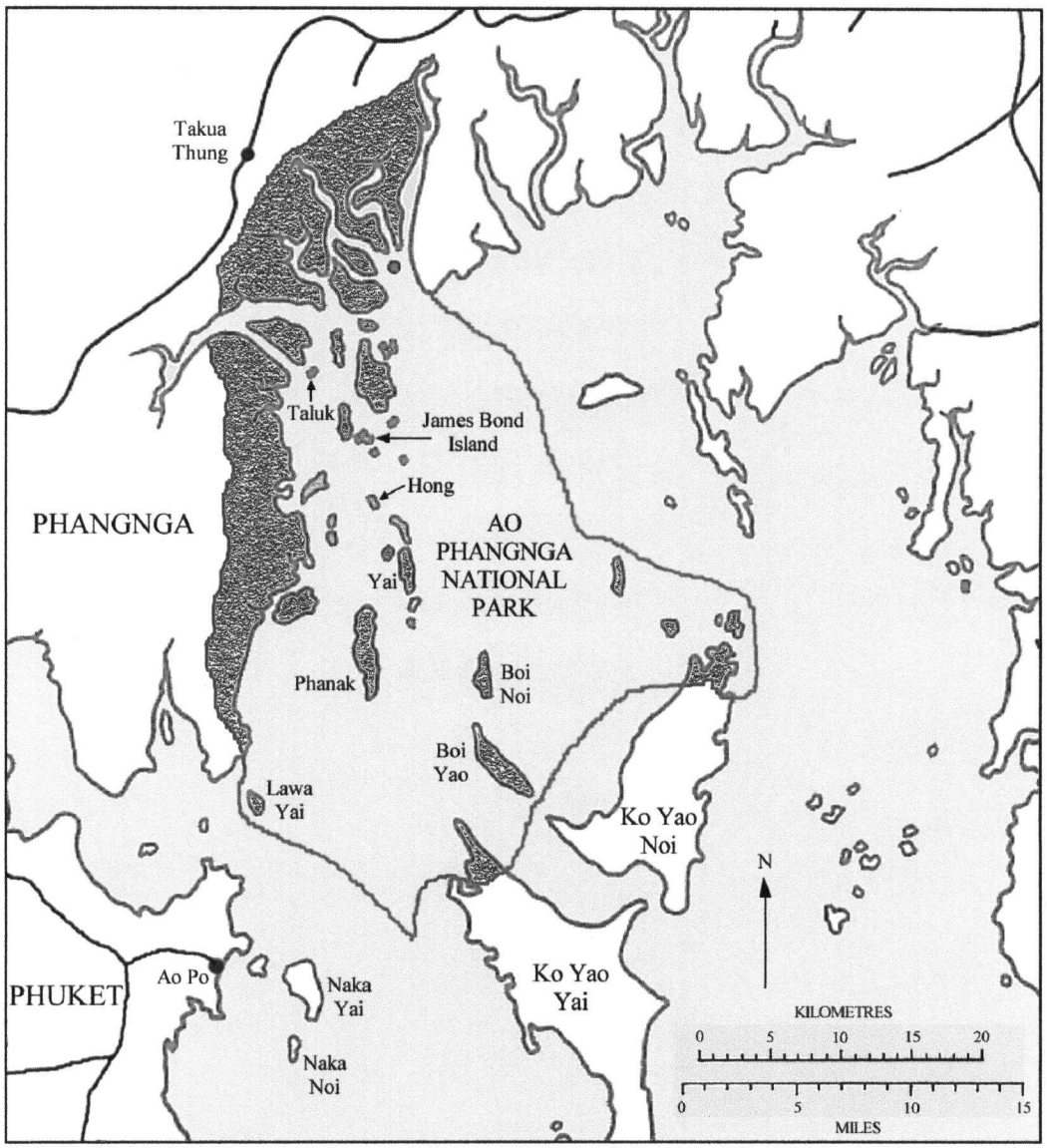


Figure 5.3 Ao Phangnga National Park

National Park was established in 1981 and covers an area of 400 square kilometres. Geographically, this area is known as a *drowned karstland*, a region of irregular limestone cliffs, underground streams, and caverns (Figure 5.4). The geological formations of this area belong to the same landscape of Guangxi and Yunnan provinces in southern China, reflecting their common geological history. Approximately 230 million years ago, a massive coral reef stretched from Krabi to southern China. As coral and other marine organisms laid down calcium carbonate deposits, a thick layer of limestone formed. Movement of the earth's plates 40 to 136 million years ago during the Cretaceous-Tertiary Era caused enormous pressure on the sedimentary rock, causing the brittle limestone to rupture, thrust upward, or sink (Gray, Piprell, and Graham, 1991). Near the end of the Pleistocene Era, 11,000 years ago, the sea level dropped radically due to polar ice cap expansion. Due to extreme shallowness, Ao Phangnga became completely dry, allowing the various animal species found on the islands today to migrate from what had previously been the mainland. Between 7,500 and 8,500 years ago, the sea level rose again precipitously as the polar caps melted. Changing sea levels from that time until approximately 2,700 years ago eroded the limestone at the base of the islands in Ao Phangnga, thereby creating large "shelves" and overhangs under which sea canoes now bring tourists for spectacular views (Figure 5.5).

Wave, rain, and current action have for thousands of years severely eroded the porous limestone formations of the bay. This constant erosion has turned the islands into giant sponges by carving out large interconnecting caverns and long, winding cave passages. Stalactites and stalagmites abound throughout the overhangs and caverns as rain water continuously leaks through the limestone, depositing traces of calcium carbonate. Over the past thousands of years, some caverns grew so large that the heavy limestone roofs caved in, leaving behind large sink holes in the middle of the islands (Figure 5.6). Surrounded by sheer cliffs rising up to 300 metres, these sink holes, or internal lagoons, are known locally as *hongs*, the Thai word for "room." Access to the *hongs* is gained by navigating through narrow caves at or near sea level. Due to high fluctuations in tide levels, however, entrance via these caves remains possible for only about half an hour twice a day since the caves are otherwise either full of water or completely dry. Prior to the arrival of sea canoeing companies to Ao Phangnga, few people, if any, had ever entered the *hongs* since the risks of either being caught under water in a cave or encountering evil spirits proved greater than any curiosity Thai

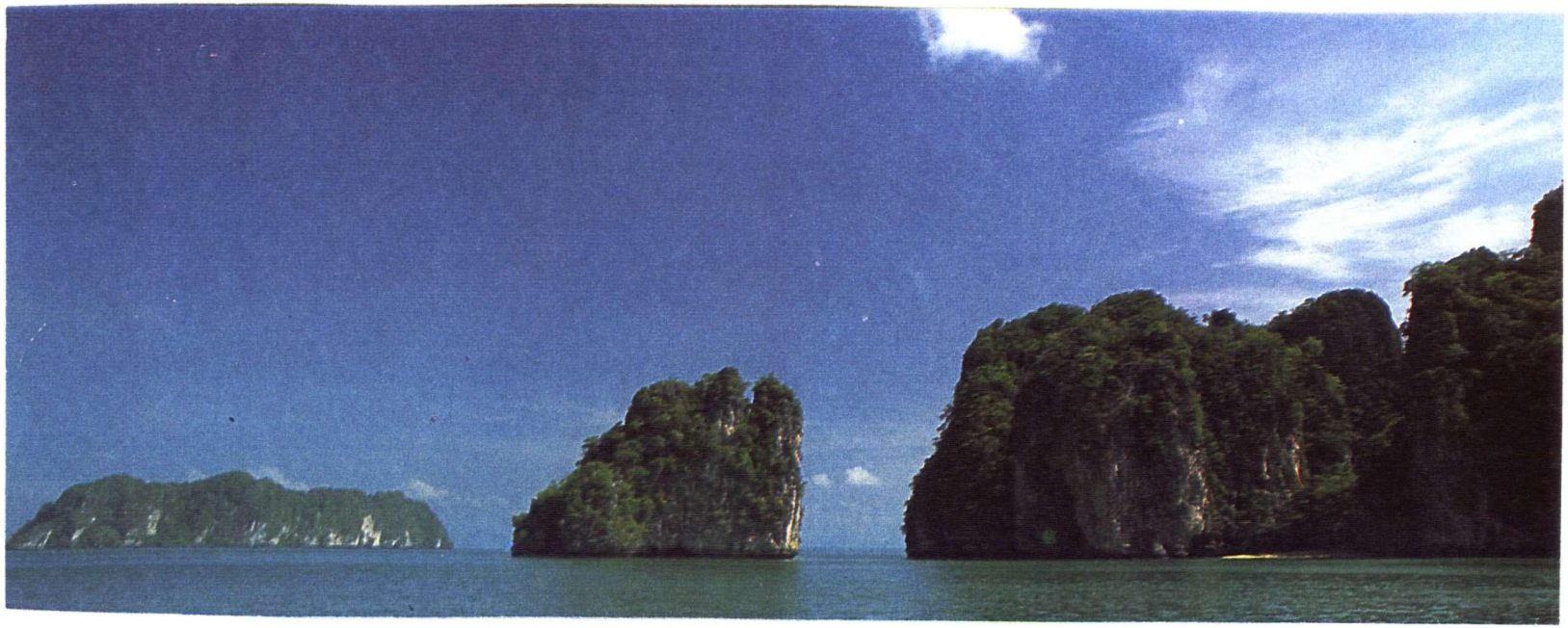


Figure 5.4 Approaching the Islands of Ao Phangnga

Figure 5.5 Limestone Overhang, Ao Phangnga

Figure 5.6 Aerial View of Ko Phanak, Ao Phangnga

Figure 5.7 James Bond Island (Ko Tapu), Ao Phangnga

fisherman may have possessed.

When the sea level rose suddenly between 7,500 and 8,500 years ago, many animal species found themselves trapped on mountains that quickly became islands; there exists a wide variety and abundant number of wildlife on the bigger islands as a result. A 1991 fauna survey conducted within Ao Phangnga National Park recorded 206 species of mammals including the White-handed Gibbon, the Serow, the Smoothcoated Otter, the Dusky Langur, and the Crab-eating Macaque (Royal Forestry Department, 1996). In addition to a number of reptiles and amphibians such as snakes, frogs, and monitor lizards, there are a total of 88 bird species which include various kinds of eagles, egrets, kingfishers, hornbills, and swiftlets (the source of edible birds nests). Finally, blue crabs, manta-rays, mud-skippers, humpback shrimp, and mud-lobsters make up some of the over 80 species of marine life found in the shallow and, because of its sheltered location, calm waters of Ao Phangnga. A total of 161 islands are found in the area, 40 of which rise to over 300 metres above sea level.

Although large-scale tourism development in Ao Phangnga has arrived only recently, tourists began visiting this area as early as the mid-1970s. This area was virtually unknown in the early days of tourism incorporation in Thailand, but gained international recognition following the filming here in 1974 of the James Bond movie, *Man with the Golden Gun.* Ko Tapu ("Nail Island"), the tiny rock column made famous by the film, currently attracts thousands of visitors every day to the adjacent island, Ko Pingkan (Figure 5.7). Ko Tapu is now generally known as "James Bond Island," and represents the major tourist attraction of Ao Phangnga. Other than James Bond Island, Ko Panyi, a Muslim "sea gypsy" village, sea canoeing, and boat cruising all bring tourists to this area. Considering the relatively small size of Ao Phangnga, the high and ever-increasing number of tourists - which reached 496,500 in 1990 - continues to threaten the environmental stability of the area. Coupled with the lax standards of local and national government officials, overcrowding and unchecked tourism growth may in short time lead to the same environmental crises currently plaguing other destinations in Thailand such as Pattaya and the nearby Phi Phi Islands. As I explore in later chapters, it is precisely within this context of tourism-induced environmental pressure that ecotourism emerges as such a potentially significant and novel means of achieving sustainable, community-based tourism development.

5.6 Conclusions: Contextual Lessons

I will conclude this chapter by briefly examining the relevance of local context in enhancing our knowledge of where, and how, tourism fits into the economic, ethnic, and historical setting of southern Thailand. Positioning tourism as simply one of many influences in contemporary Thai society allows us to cultivate a broad *grounded* appreciation of how tourism contributes to the "big picture," the ultimate product of complex and dynamic local-global relationships. Accounting for the contextual characteristics of a particular region promotes a more accurate and intricate geographic understanding of how "alternative" tourism and community development come together in southern Thailand. It also provides several lessons pertinent to my research. First, although the Thai government has essentially avoided using tourism for explicit political purposes, tourism has nonetheless accelerated the process of regional integration and nation-building begun by central Siamese rulers centuries ago. By solidifying links to national and international tourism networks, the government and ruling classes of Thailand have further integrated regions with longstanding histories of political resistance and religious independence. Second, the introduction and expansion of tourism have proven fortuitous in an area of diminishing economic alternatives. Formerly the *raison d'etre* of the local economy, the tin industry has collapsed, and mining activities have virtually ceased in this area. Moreover, the only other economic option, shrimp farming, involves extensive environmental risks that threaten the industry's viability. Tourism may not, in practice, represent the "smokeless" industry it is often characterized to be, but it has, on Thailand's southwest coast at least, successfully filled the void left by recent economic fluctuations.

The third lesson imparted by examining local context revolves around positioning Phuket and surrounding provinces as a site of contestation and interaction between the local and the global. Tourism marketing, and the actual face-to-face encounters it promotes, have certainly introduced this specific site to a swelling tourist population, but global cultural, economic, and political interactions have for centuries defined this transitional region. Once again, tourism represents merely the latest medium through which local circumstances in southern Thailand shape and respond to changing external flows. Similarly, taking a broad historical approach puts Phuket's preeminence within the region into proper perspective since

tourism has intensified, rather than actually initiating, Phuket's relative economic advantage. In the context of incessant oscillation between economic glory and destitution over the past century, Phuket's recent relationship with international tourism signals yet another prosperous cycle in the area's fortunes. According to some local tourism critics (Chongkhadikij, 1988; Lertkittisuk, 1992), environmental mismanagement and issues of touristic overaccumulation will eventually sink Phuket's tourism industry, thereby perpetuating historical patterns of boom and bust. Lastly, the strident, sensational tone typical of most commentaries on mass tourism in Phuket (see Ing K, 1988, 1991; Traisawasdichai, 1991) betrays an incomplete comprehension of, and inadequate appreciation for, historical continuities. By ignoring the historical legacies of tin-related environmental degradation, social unrest, and economic dependence, many critics fail to contextualize properly the impacts of tourism, and in doing so, are able to provide only partial prescriptions for change. Employing context as a conceptual backdrop assists me in achieving the aims of this thesis since to gauge the regenerative and sustainable value of ecotourism, one must first address the underlying forces driving the proliferation of "alternative," sustainable forms of tourism in southern Thailand. Having examined the contours of local context, I will now shift gears and begin, in the following chapter, to investigate the features of "alternative" tourism in Thailand's southwest provinces.

CHAPTER SIX. ECOTOURISM IN PHUKET: OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES?

6.1 Introduction

The rapid expansion of tourism in Phuket over the past several decades, and the consequent transformation of the area into a "typical" mass tourism destination, have created a prevailing image of Phuket based on swimming pools, shopping arcades, girlie-bars, skyscraper hotels, and other facets of the international tourism industry. In the midst of this dense, congested, "mass" environment, however, a handful of small, independent operators have begun, since the early-1990s, to offer a range of nature-oriented activities aimed at providing "mass" tourists with brief glimpses into the natural environments of Phuket and surrounding areas. Other than their self-identification with the "alternative" label, what characterizes virtually all of these ecotourism companies in Phuket is a concern for environmental sustainability and community-based development. Hoping to reverse, or at least ameliorate, the deleterious aspects of mass tourism and conventional Thai development, the owners of Phuket-based ecotourism companies have strived to establish a new ethical business paradigm, or "best practice," by rooting the benefits of tourism growth and accumulation to the local community in which it takes place. However, considering this local emphasis, it is in many ways ironic that long-term *foreign* residents of Phuket founded and currently manage the majority of these ecotourism companies. Although remaining "local" by virtue of their commitment to permanent residence in Thailand, these foreign ecotourism operators represent the latest example of the local-global interactions which have long shaped economic, social, and political life along Thailand's southwest coast.

Unlike the preceding four chapters, which rely principally on secondary materials, this chapter, and the two chapters which follow, draw directly from empirical data collected over a total of seven months of fieldwork, and present the key results of this research along the lines of the three themes of this thesis, based respectively on the tourism industry, tourist, and host perspectives. In this chapter, I examine three *farang*-owned or operated ecotourism companies, which in turn represent examples of each of the three "types" of Phuket ecotourism companies identified in the introductory chapter: sea-based, land-based, and accommodation-

based. By exploring the history, business operations, and management structure of these three companies, this chapter analyzes how "mass" and "alternative" tourism are connected and structurally dependent on one another in southern Thailand. The claim that "alternative" tourism stands completely independent of conventional, "mass" tourism (McLeod, 1997; Poon, 1993) will also be tested against the ground-level practice of ecotourism in Phuket. Since the development patterns and operational framework of ecotourism in Phuket cover only a small sample of the range of ecotourism activities possible even in other parts of Thailand, this chapter assesses the site-specific aspects of ecotourism activities in Phuket, and reconceptualizes the meaning and role of ecotourism in the southern Thai context.

6.2 Sea-Based Ecotourism: Jaidee Kayak

As with virtually all *farang*-owned or operated ecotourism companies in Phuket, Jaidee Kayak began almost by accident, growing and evolving in a piecemeal, spontaneous fashion. Jaidee is the brainchild of Jim Miller, a Californian by birth who has lived for most of his life in Hawaii. Educated at UCLA, with a double major in political science and film, Miller has held a variety of jobs, including communications director for the National Cancer Institute in Hawaii, part-time journalism lecturer at the University of Hawaii, and partner in a Hawaii-based sea kayaking tour company. Raised in a "Sierra Club" household, Miller earned his SCUBA certification at the age of 12 and developed an appreciation for environmental conservation early in life, travelling in a camper with his family to remote Mexican villages during the late-1950s and early-1960s.[1] In 1983, at the age of 38, Miller, bored with "climbing the corporate ladder," decided to "get into the waves again," by forming a sea kayaking company. Since 1985, Miller had travelled to Thailand on several occasions to participate in kayaking trips, and in January 1989, he visited Phuket with the intention of exploring some nearby islands, and possibly even expanding his sea kayaking operation to bring tourists from Hawaii to southern Thailand on kayaking expeditions. Upon returning to Hawaii a month later, Miller discovered that his American partners had "cleaned out the business...they even took my home phone and had the line disconnected" (Jim Miller,

[1] The Sierra Club was founded in 1892 by naturalist John Muir to help preserve the Sierra Nevada range in the western United States. It currently represents among the largest grassroots environmental conservation organizations in the world.

pers.comm.). After being "totally ruined and financially bankrupted," Miller decided to move to Thailand and start over from scratch. Jaidee Kayak was the eventual result.

When Miller returned to Thailand in December 1989, he came with plans to find local partners for a new community-oriented sea kayaking company. His first partner was not selected through business or government contacts, but rather through random chance, circumstance, and fortuitous timing. In particular, when Miller visited Thailand in January 1989, he had befriended the guide who was assigned by a tour company to meet Miller at the airport in Bangkok. By virtue of being in the right place at the right time, Bop, a Sino-Thai, travelled to Phuket with Miller to explore the caves of Ao Phangnga. When Miller returned again in December, 1989, he brought with him a total of 15 tourists from Hawaii, and in three two-week trips, explored the islands and caves even further, with Bop joining him once again. In the process of visiting Ao Po (Po Bay) in northeast Phuket, one of many departure points for Ao Phangnga, Miller met Jok, a local Muslim fisherman who had recently begun bringing tourists to Ao Phangnga in his longtail boat. Impressed with Jok's initiative, Miller took him along on his trips and discussed the possibility of Jok joining the imminent sea kayaking company with Miller and Bop.

As with Miller's Thai partners, who became involved in Miller's company by random circumstances, the *farangs* who would eventually come to form the cornerstone of Jaidee Kayak also joined due to coincidence and personal acquaintance. On one of the camping stops during those early trips in December 1989, Jok brought Miller and his passengers to the predominantly Muslim island of Ko Yao Yai (see Figure 1.4 on page 29), where Jok had grown up and recently met a *farang* named Cedric Carter. Originally from the United Kingdom, Carter first came on holiday to Thailand in 1987 and, after working in Australia for a year, returned to Thailand to stay permanently. For the next year, Carter lived in a Ko Yao village with a total population of three hundred, and enjoyed a "simple" lifestyle characterized by subsistence fishing in Ao Phangnga. Carter became fluent in the southern Thai dialect, converted to Islam, and married a woman from the local fishing village. Jok had lived with Carter in the same village, and thus, when Miller came to Ko Yao, Jok introduced Miller and Carter to one another. Jok and Carter were both initially reluctant to join Miller and Bop in their newly-hatched sea kayaking scheme, but after seeing the idea slowly taking off, they officially entered into a partnership. The first commercial trip offered by Jaidee Kayak took

place on 27 February 1990, and by May of the same year, Miller, Bop, Jok, and Carter had formed an official company. Soon after, the four original partners (two Thais and two *farangs*) bought a small house in Phuket, and moved in together. Within months, Bop's girlfriend from Bangkok joined the four, and became the fifth original partner in Jaidee Kayak.

In the two years between May 1990 and March 1992, Jaidee Kayak grew from a company with four leaky inflatable kayaks and 700 baht (US$28) in operating capital to one with twelve kayaks and 17 million baht (US$671,400) in total revenue. By mid-1992, Jaidee encountered severe difficulties caused by dissension and the embezzlement of millions of baht by Bop and his girlfriend (discussed in Chapter Eight). Following this interruption in the company's success, Jaidee Kayak legally folded and reopened under a slightly different name in order to restructure the company's ownership. In 1993, Nigel Lord, a *farang* from the United Kingdom, joined the company as director and general manager, allowing Miller to take a more backstage, consultative role in the company. Before coming to Thailand, Lord served as the managing director of a family-owned medium-sized industrial firm in Britain. On a buying trip to Asia, Lord travelled to Phuket to visit his childhood friend, Cedric Carter, who by then had become an official business partner in Jaidee Kayak. Bored with work in Britain, and seeking a lifestyle change, Lord moved to Phuket with his wife and daughter, and took over the business reins from Miller, who had been seeking to hire somebody with business experience. Rather than unfolding in a planned, coordinated, or professional fashion, therefore, the early evolution of Jaidee Kayak centred on personal relationships and wild swings in fortune. For this reason, the growth of Jaidee Kayak as a functioning ecotourism entity occurred, in many ways, as an accidental result of *farang* lifestyle changes.

Currently, Jaidee is run by a four-member executive committee consisting of Miller, Carter, Jok, and Lord. Miller and Lord do not officially own shares in the company, but Carter and Jok possess 17 and 19 percent of the company shares, respectively. In addition to Jok and Carter, five other local Thais own shares in Jaidee. These five shareholders comprise Carter's Thai wife, two former guides who have worked their way up to "lead guides," a long-time office staff member, and finally, Miller's Thai wife who, with 30 percent of Jaidee shares, "holds" the largest proportion among all shareholders.[2] Miller has never actually sold a share

[2] Miller explained to me that his wife does not legally own the shares, but is rather "holding" them until others in the company are judged deserving of company shares.

to anybody, dividing instead the shares among those who hold "sweat equity" in the company: the percentage of shares given to a particular person, Thai or *farang*, depends on the amount of work put into the company over the years. While shares are significant in the sense that legal ownership entitles shareholders to a certain proportion of the company's value if sold, Jaidee's system of shareholding is mostly symbolic since, as Miller comments, "how relevant are shares when the company (a) has never paid a dividend and (b) is run by a four person executive committee where two members [Miller and Lord] are not shareholders? In a way, dividends are paid out every two weeks as salary...Jaidee has one of the best employee salary packages in Thailand" (Jim Miller, pers.comm.). Miller argues that since company profits are reinvested into the company as salary, training, and improvement of equipment, shareholders (as well as regular employees) benefit indirectly from Jaidee's success.

The ownership and management structure of Jaidee Kayak has evolved in such a way as to provide a framework for success unique to the social, cultural, and financial requirements of operating an ecotourism company in southern Thailand. Each of the four executive committee members play a specific role, allowing the company to operate successfully at several levels. Miller, the original founder of Jaidee, has distanced himself from day-to-day management, and describes his current role as the "visionary, explorer, naturalist" of Jaidee whose responsibility includes creating innovative new products, itineraries, and ideas. Miller's national and global connections to politicians, activists, and travel industry representatives also prove vital, as I discuss in the next section, in building links between local ecotourism and global environmental conservation. Lord provides the financial management skills required in a small but growing company such as Jaidee, and acts as the "business glue that holds the company together" (Jim Miller, pers.comm.). Among the *farangs* of Jaidee, Carter has the most direct contact with the Thai staff and shareholders. Carter essentially manages Jaidee's overnight expedition trips, and occupies a crucial position in the company since his knowledge of English and his European background allows Jaidee to provide the familiarity and security demanded by "Western" overnight passengers, while his fluency in the southern Thai dialect and extensive local knowledge endears him well to both Jaidee's employees and members of the local community. Lastly, Jok serves as Jaidee's operations manager, carrying responsibility for ensuring that Jaidee's daytrips run smoothly. Included as part of these responsibilities are such tasks as purchasing food for trips, assigning work shifts to

employees, arranging the logistical aspects of passenger pick-up and delivery, and overseeing the hiring of guides. Jok also fulfils the public relations role once played by Bop, meeting often with local, regional, and national government officials in such agencies as the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the Ao Phangnga National Park administration, and the Royal Forestry Department.

Aside from functional differentiation among Jaidee's executive committee members, a *spatial* pattern of differentiation serves to demarcate separate spheres of activity and responsibility. Miller spends most days at his small rented home near Chalong Bay "surfing" the Internet and communicating with academics, politicians, and other kayakers across the globe. By contrast, Lord works fairly regular shifts in Jaidee's two-story central office in the outskirts of Phuket Town, and directs general business operations such as marketing and overseas bookings. At the "ground level," Carter and Jok work out of Ao Po, where Jaidee's daytrips originate. Although Jaidee runs a small sea-side "office" in Ao Po, where Jok and Carter meet to coordinate the daily activities, their work is largely outdoors and involves direct interaction with both Thai staff and foreign daytrip and overnight tourists. Borrowing terms from American football, Miller uses a sports analogy to summarize the management structure of Jaidee, stating that he is the coach, Lord is the general manager, and Jok and Carter are the quarterbacks leading the team. This combination of Thai and *farang* management allows Jaidee to overcome the linguistic and cultural difficulties associated with operating a company, ecotourist or otherwise, in Thailand. More than anything, Jaidee's example indicates that local circumstances require site-specific management strategies in order to operate effectively.

As I have already mentioned, Jaidee operates two types of tours: the daytrip and the overnight expedition trip, both sea-based and both occurring in and around Ao Phangnga. The sources of total revenues are split roughly in half between the two types of trips, even though in terms of sheer numbers, the daytrips provide the majority of Jaidee's customers; the ratio of daytrip to overnight passengers probably approaches twenty to one in an average month.[3] Every Jaidee daytrip costs US$100 per person and involves the same set of stages, with some

[3] Daytrippers far outnumber overnight passengers, but the revenues are split evenly between the two because Jaidee must pay high commissions to the wholesale companies that bring packaged tourists on daytrips. Conversely, many of Jaidee's overnight bookings are done directly over the Internet, thereby bypassing "middlemen" such as travel agents, tour operators, and travel wholesalers. Internet customers contact Miller directly and arrange all travel details before coming to Thailand.

variation in trip sequence and, occasionally, location.[4] The trip begins early in the morning when drivers of Jaidee vans congregate at the Jaidee office in Phuket Town to receive lists with passenger names and hotels. Between 7 and 7:30 am, passengers wait in the lobbies of their hotels to be picked up by Jaidee minivans. On any given day, between two and eleven vans drive to various parts of Phuket picking up passengers and bringing them to Ao Po. Once in Ao Po, passengers wait in Jaidee's open-front office until all the minivans have arrived with the day's guests. All passengers are then split into groups of no more than sixteen, and led across a wooden pier where a longtail boat waits to transport passengers to the "escort boats," which due to the shallowness of Ao Po, must remain docked far from the beach and the pier.

Each escort boat carries one "lead guide," a captain and assistant(s), at least two cooks, and one guide for every two passengers. In the Ao Po office, Jok and the lead guides working on that day assemble the day's itinerary based on the crucial determining factor of all trips based in Ao Phangnga: tides. As a shallow bay, Ao Phangnga is affected by changes in sea levels caused by large differences between high and low tide. In Ao Phangnga, tides work on a six hour cycle, creating two periods of high tide and two of low every day. The reason tide cycles affect the activities of Jaidee, and all other sea-based ecotourism companies in Phuket, stems from the careful timing and intricate tidal knowledge required to navigate entry to inner lagoons via cave passages found at sea level in most of the porous limestone islands of Ao Phangnga. Early on in his explorations of this area, Jim Miller calculated the ideal times to enter the *hongs* (inner lagoons) based on careful readings of readily-available tide tables. *Hongs* are accessible only through narrow caves with walls covered by stalactites and oyster shells. At high tide, cave passages are completely filled with water, while at low tide, the same caves are emptied of water completely, leaving behind only knee-deep clay and razor-sharp shells and rocks. A short "window of opportunity" thus exists for kayaks to safely enter and leave *hongs*, the alternative choice being to get caught either underwater in a cave or inside a lagoon with no possible exit until six hours later when the tides change directions again. Depending on the tide tables for that day, then, Jaidee itineraries involve the same three or four stops, but may change the order in which they are visited.

After boarding the escort boat, and being served fruit, coffee and tea, passengers are

[4] Miller originally charged US$90, but after the introduction in December 1990 of "escort boats" to the trip, the price rose to US$100 and has remained at that level ever since.

brought from Ao Po in Phuket to either Phanak or Hong islands, the two principal stops for all five sea kayaking companies operating in Ao Phangnga (see Figure 1.4 (page 29) and Figure 5.2 (page 181) for locations). Approximately once a month, the tide reaches such heights that Jaidee must bring passengers past James Bond Island to Taluk Island, thereby providing slight variation to the typical daytrip itinerary. At some point during the 45-minute trip from Ao Po to Ko Phanak, the lead guide gives a brief presentation lasting between 10 and 15 minutes in which he outlines the itinerary, discusses issues of safety, and describes some of the natural history of the area. Passengers are then paired up and introduced to their guide for the day. When the escort boat comes to the first "stop," the bright yellow inflatable kayaks used by Jaidee are tossed from the escort boat - where they are piled up on top of one another on the sides of the boat - into the ocean. After hopping into the kayaks, the guides then take turns steering to the back of the escort boat where their assigned passengers board the kayaks. The kayaks then follow one another into the particular cave and *hong*. Ko Phanak is home to three caves visited alternatively on virtually every Jaidee daytrip: Oyster Cave, Diamond Cave, and Bat Cave. Oyster Cave contains millions of tiny fossilized oyster shells. Diamond Cave received its name from the calcium deposits in the cave walls that glitter when illuminated by a flashlight, and as the name suggests, Bat Cave houses a large number of bats that live in the small nooks in the cave ceiling, thereby giving the cave a pungent aroma due to their droppings. The island of Ko Hong also hosts many kayakers, and features a spectacular theatrical-shaped inner lagoon area that consists of two interlinked *hongs*.

With several caves to choose from, Jaidee daytrips enjoy a certain degree of freedom in working around the tidal patterns to make kayaking stops at a minimum of three caves. In between the second and third stop, but more commonly after the final paddling stop, passengers are served a buffet meal on the escort boat. There are three main areas on every escort boat: the captain's steering room, the upper deck, and the lower deck. The upper deck, where tourists sit during the trip, consists of an open area with padded benches on either side. Underneath this space lies an enclosed lower deck, where the cooks prepare the meals and where the boat captain and his assistant rest at the various stops. In many ways, the upper deck represents the "front stage" where tourists interact with one another as well as with the Thai staff, whereas the lower deck, or "back stage" serves as the private sphere for the staff wishing to eat, smoke, or chat with one another. The final stage in a Jaidee daytrip consists of

a one-hour "relaxation stop" at one of two islands located near Ao Po, namely Naka Yai or Lawa Yai (see Figure 5.3 on page 182). Small beaches on these islands allow passengers to participate in a range of activities, including swimming, solo kayaking (without the assistance of a guide), diving from the boat, or even sleeping on either the boat or on the beach. Even at these "relaxation stops," the Jaidee guides often continue their interactions with the passengers, engaging in lively banter and "unstructured play." By around 3:30 pm, the escort boat has arrived back at Ao Po, and the passengers enter the same minivan they travelled in during the morning. By 5 pm, at the latest, all passengers have been returned to their hotels, thus bringing a formal conclusion to the daytrip.

Many of Jaidee's overnight expedition trips (referred to as "overnighters") overlap with, and expand upon, the structure and sequence of the standard daytrip. Since February 1991 - one full year after its first commercial daytrip - Jaidee has given groups of tourists (often through tour companies, wholesalers, or ground handlers) the option of designing their own overnight itineraries, but in terms of set "packages," Jaidee offers three overnight trips varying in length from three day "mini expeditions" (US$500 per person), to six day expeditions (US$900), to two week southern Thailand survey and exploration trips (US$2,250). Three day trips remain largely confined to the same general area as the daytrips, but travel a little farther into Krabi province. Like daytrips, overnighters feature guided kayak trips into caves and lagoons in Ko Phanak and Ko Hong, but also include kayaking lessons, plenty of solo paddling, snorkelling, and overnight camping on small isolated beaches.

Other than a huge discrepancy in price, overnighters and daytrips vary in three principal ways. First, lengthened trips provide tourists with more time to appreciate and absorb new experiences. The expanded time frame, and the consequent relaxed pace set throughout the overnight trips, allow Jaidee guides, particularly Carter who travels along on virtually all overnighters, to emphasize the educational and environmental aspects of the trip at a level of detail and depth made almost impossible by short, fun-oriented daytrips. Second, the nature of an overnight trip is transformed by the necessity to stay in "alternative" accommodations, beach campsites in this case, far beyond heavily-visited tourist destinations. The islands of Ao Phangnga are best seen at dusk or dawn as the sun illuminates the sheer limestone cliffs. The absence in the evening of passengers from other companies as well as local Thai fishermen in noisy longtail boats creates a silence on overnight trips rarely experienced on daytrips. Third,

passengers on overnighters and daytrips originate in different markets, with "mass ecotourists" from four and five-star hotels providing the bulk of daytrip passengers, and "adventurers" on two-week "off-the-beaten-track" vacations providing the majority of overnight customers. In addition to the business generated from adventure companies such as American-based Backdoor Adventures, Jaidee secures an increasing amount of direct business through individual reservations made via the Internet. Although the differences between overnight and daytrips are often exaggerated, especially in the marketing of Jaidee Kayak, the two variations on the sea kayaking theme provide examples of locally-oriented sea-based ecotourism alternatives to standard sightseeing and cruising activities in Ao Phangnga.

In Chapter Three, I outlined the various theoretical measures of differentiation serving to separate "alternative" and conventional, mass tourism. Among these measures of classification and philosophical principles, education, environmental awareness, flexibility, and individual attention are all employed by Jaidee Kayak as techniques to establish the company as a responsible, environmentally-friendly tourism venture. Education of both tourist and employee underpins most aspects of Jaidee's operations, although the way educational experiences are sought and achieved revolves around subtle reminders. According to Carter, "education is ninety percent of it, but I wouldn't call it 'education,' because education freaks people out sometimes...you start to frighten people away...but the whole thing is a learning experience" (Cedric Carter, pers.comm.). Similarly, Miller commented that "daytrippers don't want to be educated on vacation so we sneak up on them...they think they're going on a weird exotic trip in a strange setting...most expect Disney in nature and we try to send them away with a new feeling" (Jim Miller, pers.comm.).

While the majority of both daytrip and overnight passengers choose a Jaidee trip for reasons other than education, such as adventure, novelty or simply "something to do," many leave the trip with not only a bolstered geographical knowledge of the area, but also with a heightened sense of environmental appreciation and awareness. This awareness is often also coupled with a sense of achievement on the part of "Western" tourists who feel good about participating in an environmentally-responsible tour, principally because many respond to various cues in an effort to *appear* environmentally concerned. Regardless of how serious or concerned individual passengers may be about the environment, it is obvious that most seem to feel that they *should* be interested and concerned, and thus, Jaidee's efforts at promoting

awareness and knowledge have proven successful due to a "Western" environmental discourse that encourages people both to appear concerned about the environment, and to enjoy any opportunities that make them feel as if they are "doing their part."

The educational aspects of Jaidee's tours often (but not always) begin early into the trip, as passengers travelling from their hotels to Ao Po are given a steady flow of information from the guide who accompanies the minivan driver. Once on the escort boat, passengers receive a presentation from the lead guide aimed at providing information, outlining the details of the day's trip, and building excitement around the adventurous and natural elements of kayaking in Ao Phangnga. The on-board presentation consists of approximately twenty components, or pieces of information, although lead guides rarely mention all twenty, remembering instead only a combination of fifteen or so. During these presentations, the lead guide holds in his hands a bound folder containing several laminated information sheets. This folder serves as an informal presentation outline and guide, and passengers are encouraged to peruse the folder throughout the day. On overnight trips, Carter performs the on-board presentations which, due to a greater allowance for time, feature more depth than lead guide presentations given on daytrips. The written information on overnighters also outweighs the daytrip information, since in addition to the standard folder, passengers are shown a small suitcase full of hardcover books covering such topics as coral reefs in Thailand, the collection of birds nests in the caves of Ao Phangnga, and Thailand's national parks. Most passengers on both daytrips and overnighters only glance, if at all, at the written material, but as with the verbal presentations, the emphasis placed by Jaidee on "subtle education" and learning serves to project the image, real or otherwise, of a form of tourism centred on edification, self-improvement, and environmental awareness.

Flexibility and individualism are other key features of "alternative" tourism promoted and practised by Jaidee. As discussed earlier, daily itineraries differ according to tidal patterns, an aspect of sea-based ecotourism not lost on tourists since lead guides often "play up" their complete lack of control over the itinerary in order to impress upon passengers the feeling of adventure and spontaneity. Thus, even on fairly standardized daytrips, tourists enjoy a sense of flexibility not typically found in most other packaged tour itineraries in southern Thailand (the regimented sightseeing trips to the nearby Phi Phi Islands being the most prominent example). Personal customer attention is a key feature of Jaidee trips, and passengers leave the

trip with an impression of superior personal service. Despite expressing an appreciation of the spectacular aesthetic and natural elements of the trip, most passengers identify their "personal guide" as the number one attraction. Coupled with the overarching importance of earning a large tip at the end of the day, a high staff to tourist ratio encourages extensive one-on-one interactions and conversations between passengers and guides. By matching guides with the same two passengers (who are often couples travelling together) for the entire day, Jaidee attempts to foster a sense of individualism, whereby a passenger can avoid feeling like just one of the "tourist masses." Again, in pursuit of large tips, the guides create a jovial atmosphere on the escort boat by joking with, and often teasing, many of the passengers.[5] By playing with children of families travelling with Jaidee, the guides also ease parents' fears about safety while at the same time creating a family atmosphere where passengers and guides alike must work together to provide a safe and environmentally-responsible experience. Hence, Jaidee guides demonstrate a keen ability to promote individuality and personal attention while simultaneously creating a feeling of community among foreign tourists and Thai guides.

A sense of individuality is also conveyed by Jaidee to mass ecotourists through the "staging" of geographical remoteness. In Phuket, the close proximity between mass tourism resort areas and ecotourism sites such as Ao Phangnga, and small forest tracts in central Phuket, makes it almost impossible to communicate such a feeling of remoteness, but Jaidee nonetheless succeeds both in fostering an atmosphere of isolation from other tourists, and in communicating the natural authenticity of primitive, pristine, unspoilt locations away from mass tourist "hordes." A major element of Jaidee Kayak daytrips revolves around communicating authenticity and conveying to tourists a feeling of discovery and explorations of "untouched" caves, lagoons, and mangrove forests, a task made difficult and perhaps necessary by the staggered presence of up to three hundred tourists a day. In its 1996-97 brochure, Jaidee assures potential customers of the natural and historical authenticity of its locations :

> Nothing gets you closer to Nature than Jaidee Kayak. The freedom from motor noise and exhaust glides you silently across the water into a natural tranquillity

[5] An important reason for this jovial attitude is also the Thai interest in having *sanuk* (fun) while working. The most notable example of a joke that is utilized on virtually every trip to break the ice is the singling out of the most corpulent male passenger, who in the course of the on-board presentation has his belly rubbed as the lead guide states "some of you may have trouble squeezing through the caves." The only time this routine failed to elicit laughter from the target of the joke (not to mention the rest of the "Western" passengers) occurred when the lead guide, struggling to find a beer-bellied male, tried the joke instead on an unamused American female in her forties.

> you've only imagined. Approach birds, monkeys, reptiles, and fish closer that you have ever dreamed possible. Guests claim that cruising through a sea cave into Asia's limestone inland tidal lagoons is like going back a million years, to a time before people walked the Earth."

Jaidee lead guides consistently build up the "hype" surrounding the daytrips by telling passengers during the on-board presentations that they will soon be entering a "lost world" or alternatively "another world" that is millions of years old and preserved in its pristine pre-modern state. Despite the occasional piece of floating garbage, and the site of many other passengers in kayaks, Jaidee continues to cultivate a sense of temporal and spatial detachment from the "modern" built environment, which ultimately produces mass tourists hoping to escape temporarily to "primitive" areas of natural beauty and authenticity.

Perhaps the most important "alternative" tourism concept promoted by Jaidee Kayak is the notion of environmental and social "carrying capacity." Soon after launching Jaidee, Miller decided that the number of people entering the *hongs* should not exceed twelve, but by January 1993, the maximum limit was set at sixteen, a figure which remains firm to this day. Based not on any scientific assessment, but rather on the opinions and "gut instincts" of Miller, the carrying capacity established by Jaidee fixed the maximum number of people allowed in the *hongs* at any one time. Only a handful of local fishermen had ever entered the *hongs* prior to Miller's explorations in the late-1980s, and thus the *hongs* initially remained "safe" from passengers of other sea-based sightseeing and sailing tour operators since Miller, his partners, and Jaidee employees stood alone in both their knowledge of critical cave passages and their ability to navigate entry using daily tide tables. Between 1992 and 1997, however, Ao Phangnga witnessed an explosion of tourist activity, most notably in sea kayaking where four Thai-owned companies emerged in succession as barely-disguised replicas of Jaidee Kayak. The first "copy" sea kayaking company grew out of the activities of Miller's original partner, Bop, who in the process of embezzling funds from Jaidee Kayak, proceeded behind the scenes to form another company with Mong, an old college roommate who had also worked for the same major tour wholesaler as Bop. The industry "secrets" guarded by Jaidee Kayak in the process of building knowledge of the caves and *hongs* of the area thus passed onto others who then used them to compete directly with Jaidee Kayak.

By 1994, a second "copy" company named *Phleng Canoe* had formed through a

collection of local Thai partners, the most prominent of which is a Phuket-based karaoke club owner. One year later, this company split into two after internal squabbling, thereby creating a third copy company. Finally, in late-1996, the son of a boat captain working for an upmarket Phuket hotel started the fourth, and up until now, final Jaidee-imitation. What makes these four companies copies, rather than just competitors, is the multiple ways in which the basic structure of a Jaidee Kayak daytrip is stripped down and emulated in form, if not in function. All four companies visit the same exact caves as Jaidee, and feature the same basic itinerary: cave and *hong* exploration, buffet meal, and, at the end of the day, a one-hour "relaxation" break. Despite some cosmetic similarities, "copycat" companies lag behind Jaidee Kayak in numerous ways: the overall knowledge and personality of the guides; the focus on nature, education, and safety; the level of language proficiency among the guides; the quality of equipment, information, and food; and the general efficiency of operations in ticketing, trip timing, on-board presentations, and hotel transfers. Jaidee remains the only company that places emphasis, beyond a brief mention, on the environmental and ecotourism aspects of the trip, regardless of the "ecomarketing" efforts of all four imitations. Partial and flawed patterns of imitation have thus ensured that each copy company develops as a diluted, hybridized version of the company before it, with Jaidee serving as the original image.

Although the "original" copy company started by Bop and Mong have for the most part coexisted peacefully with Jaidee Kayak, the second company, Phleng Canoe, has created severe inter-company friction. Since only Jaidee enjoys the widespread support of wholesaler companies, Phleng Canoe, along with all three other copy companies must rely strictly on FIT business, which is achieved by undercutting Jaidee through lower prices and larger under-the-table commissions to "walk-in" travel agents in Phuket.[6] Jaidee advertises its daytrips for 2,500 baht (US$99) and denies travel agents the leeway to allow tourists to bargain down the price. Conversely, Mong's company advertises at 2,400 baht (US$95) while Phleng Canoe and the two latest copy companies instruct travel agents to sell daytrips for 1,950 (US$77) and

[6] This was confirmed by conducting informal empirical research on walk-in travel agents in Patong and Karon beaches in Phuket. Out of twenty travel agents interviewed formally (and ten interviewed informally), only two highly recommended Jaidee Kayak over the other companies, and virtually every agent pushed the two cheapest companies, claiming that since all the companies were "same same," I may as well choose the least expensive. Further, when I inquired about Jaidee, most agents stated (without an adequate explanation) that it was the most expensive since it was started by a *farang*, rather than a Thai. Other than misleading tourists about the comparative quality of the various daytrips - which I also personally confirmed after travelling on all five sea kayaking companies - most travel agents also concealed such things as the poor safety standards and lack of insurance among the "copy" companies.

1,500 baht (US$59), respectively. Beyond these fairly standard competitive measures, Phleng Canoe's blatant violation of environmental laws, including the breaking of stalactites by its guides, has angered other companies operating in Ao Phangnga, and has even attracted the admonition of Niti, the TAT Phuket director. When, in mid-1996, Phleng Canoe began taking tourists on rock-climbing expeditions on the protected limestone cliffs of Ko Phanak, Niti immediately joined forces with the National Park in forcing the company to stop. The rock climbing venture would have likely continued unchecked had Jaidee - as both Phleng's business competitor and advocate for the environmental protection of Ao Phangnga - not investigated the rock climbing sites and followed it up by showing photographic evidence to Niti and Ao Phangnga Park staff. As the following email message from Miller, dated 11 January 1997, demonstrates, the tension between Jaidee Kayak and Phleng Canoe has continued unabated, and serves as a reminder of the acrimonious atmosphere surrounding sea-based ecotourism in Phuket:

> Speaking of snakes, Tula [Cedric Carter's Thai wife] was just arrested for visiting the Phleng Canoe office. That's right - here's what happened.
>
> You know the problem with rock climbing that Jok reported to the TAT. Well, violence against our staff on the trip has escalated since then - pushing our kayaks into rocks, elbowing staff in the caves, crowding our folks away from wildlife - the usual. Well, one of our staff finally complained, and was visited at home by FIVE Phleng Canoe staff. Of course, he was rat-packed and soundly beaten.
>
> We did not retaliate, but the next day Tula visited the offending Phleng guide in the Phleng office. The office was open for business, lights were on and a Phleng staff was inside. Soon, both Phleng owners showed up, and the discussion became rather heated. Two cops showed up, escorted Tula out of the office, but took her outside and suggested she file charges since she was being verbally assaulted by three strong guys. She chose to drop the matter.
>
> The next day, two plainclothes police came to our office, took Tula to the police station and arrested her for trespassing and verbal abuse - with a (Thai) bail of B70,000!
>
> There is no doubt that corruption was involved here. One of the Phleng owners also owns a karaoke bar (and we know what that means in Thailand). He has to pay regular corruption and certainly knows all the right cops.
>
> By the way, is a pimp either a kayaker or a naturalist? You may not have noticed it, but the mangrove colony in Mangrove Hong is only 50% of when I discovered it - all since Phleng Canoe. Our staff say they just run over the seedlings as they trample the bigger trees. Complaints are returned with threats of violence.

In just seven years, then, the small islands and enclosed *hongs* of Ao Phangnga were transformed from an area with virtually no visitors, ever, to a key tourism zone hosting between two and three hundred tourists *every single day*. Jaidee's success, and the high (for Thailand) prices they charge encouraged the entry of local entrepreneurs intent on turning quick profits from the sea kayaking business. As Miller himself admits, a carrying capacity of sixteen people proved naive in an area where lax (non-existent) government regulations and industry standards have allowed up to forty inflatable kayaks carrying eighty people, or five times Miller's carrying capacity, to enter the same *hongs* at once. The overcrowding of the caves, lagoons, and waters surrounding Ko Hong and Ko Phanak has reached levels that not only threaten the viability of the trips themselves - since wholesale tour companies eventually drop declining or unpopular tours - but also lead to tragic consequences, such as an incident in early-1997, in which a Thai guide was "dragged under a boat and disembowelled by its propeller" (Cunliffe, 1997). The escort boat belonged to the offshoot of Phleng Canoe described above (the third copy company), and decided, because of overcrowding at one of the lagoon stops at Ko Phanak, to move to another spot, but the decision was not communicated to the victim who was caught underneath the boat as it reversed to pull up its anchor. Accidents such as these illustrate the classic tourism, and especially ecotourism, dilemma where an attraction is loved to the point of death. As the pioneer of sea-based ecotourism in Phuket and surrounding areas, Miller and Jaidee Kayak have suffered from, but at the same time exacerbated, this dilemma. Starting with a tiny tour company based on the lifestyle and philosophical motives of a few *farangs* and locals, sea-based ecotourism in Phuket has thus grown into a profitable, internationally-recognized industry characterized by intense business rivalries and personal animosities.[7]

6.3 Land-Based Ecotourism: Trekkers

Like Jaidee Kayak, and all other *farang*-owned or operated ecotourism companies in Phuket, Trekkers' origins and recent development stem principally from the lifestyle changes of an environmentally-minded *farang* expatriate wishing to remain in Thailand. The founder

[7] The implications of these rivalries, and of the lack of legal enforcement of regulations, are examined in Chapter Eight.

and managing director of Trekkers is Don Strock, an English agricultural scientist who first visited Thailand in 1983 while working as a dairy farm manager in Saudi Arabia. While working in Saudi Arabia, Strock met many Thai workers and began to learn elementary Thai. After meeting his future wife, Kip, in Bangkok, Strock decided to move to Thailand permanently in 1987. Strock initially operated a cafe and bungalow resort, but soon after, in 1989, he sold the bungalows and used the money to start Trekkers. Following a visit to Burma, Strock fell severely ill with hepatitis, forcing him to close the company temporarily until late-1991. By July 1992, however, between 150 and 200 people were participating in Trekkers trips each month. Strock claims that the company became "serious" at that point, turning from "somewhat of a hobby into a way of making a living" (Don Strock, pers.comm.). In just four years, between 1994 and 1997, Trekkers expanded rapidly, growing from 4,000 to 30,000 customers per year. Although the flow of financial transactions remains relatively small compared to some other Phuket-based tourism firms, the rapid transformation of Trekkers from an afterthought of a *farang* to a viable, well-known local tour company illustrates both the surging popularity of ecotourism and the successful marketing strategies of a company working within existing mass tourism markets.

Trekkers is owned collectively by seven shareholders, all of which are Thai (Strock does not officially own any company shares). As with Jaidee, where Miller's wife is the majority shareholder, Strock's wife, Kip, holds the largest proportion of Trekkers shares. Although shares mean little in the context of Phuket ecotourism companies - there are no annual dividend payments as such - they nevertheless indicate legal ownership and serve as personal assets for local Thai shareholders. From the very start, Strock and Kip have managed the day-to-day activities of Trekkers. The only other Thai manager in Trekkers history was Kip's brother, who left the company in 1994 under hostile circumstances to start his own land-based ecotourism company. Currently, the only other manager aside from Strock and Kip is Alistair Jones, an English animal sciences graduate who came to work for Trekkers in July, 1996. Hoping to attract a manager with experience in wildlife conservation, Strock put an advertisement in an English weekly agricultural journal, and after receiving forty responses, Strock chose Jones due to his recent experience in southern Africa where he assisted a conservation company with the tranquillization and transportation of elephants threatened by poachers. Jones's role in Trekkers centres on guide training (in spoken English and

conservation practices), as well as product development in consultation with Strock and Kip.

Trekkers employs between forty and forty-five people, depending on the season. The majority of Trekkers' employees are various guides, but also include elephant mahouts, drivers, office staff, and monkey owners. Hiring is done locally, usually with a small sign at the end of the *soi* (alleyway) in Chalong where Trekker's "nature compound" and central office are located: 80 to 90 percent of all Trekkers' staff are from Chalong, making the company firmly rooted in the local community. Although Trekkers' labour diversification is much simpler than that found in some other ecotourism companies in Phuket, such as Jaidee Kayak, the actual number of people employed remains high relative to the number of tourists participating on Trekkers trips.

Trekkers offers a combination of nature-oriented activities, many of which originate in the company's walled "nature compound" in Chalong. Covering an area roughly equivalent to an entire football field, the compound houses a small office building, covered thatched parking sheds for twelve Land Rover trucks, four elephants, a small stall serving drinks, a tamed water buffalo, a cage of guinea pigs, and Strock and Kip's house. Daytrip passengers are picked up from their hotel lobbies in the early morning or afternoon by Land Rovers painted green with a Trekkers sign adorning the front of the truck's roof. Trekkers offers three daytrips, each involving a segment at the compound. In many ways, the compound serves as an expanded tropical petting zoo, giving tourists with little time a chance to experience and learn about animals that, otherwise, would perhaps remain unknown and mysterious. The "Mini Eco-Safari and Elephant Trek" costs 940 baht (US$37) per person, and takes passengers on an half-hour elephant trek through an idle rubber plantation adjacent to the compound. Prior to the trek (and occasionally following), tourists are given a ten to fifteen minute guide presentation that provides detailed information on the historical importance, life-cycle, biology, and recent problems of Thailand's Asian elephant population. Next, tourists learn about the Asian water buffalo, and are given the opportunity to get close to and pet a "tamed" water buffalo. Finally, a guide discusses the historical utilization of short-tail macaques (referred to generically as "monkeys") in coconut farming, a practice which relies on trained monkeys to jump from tree to tree picking ripe coconuts. After seeing the monkey up close, tourists then watch a brief demonstration of the monkey's skills on a constructed wooden beam with hanging coconuts (monkeys are allowed to climb trees in the compound only rarely since frequent demonstrations

would quickly deplete the local coconut supply). With only four elephants, Trekkers staggers the separate components of its nature compound activities, with one group of tourists riding elephants while another watches the monkey demonstration or listens to a presentation about water buffaloes.

The second daytrip offered by Trekkers is known as the "Three-in-One Half Day Eco-Adventure," and expands on the range of activities offered in the nature compound. For just under 2,000 baht (US$79), tourists participate in three "adventures": an half-hour elephant trek; a 45-minute nature trail walk, which involves nature interpretation, a visit to a rubber plantation, where tourists are given a rubber tapping demonstration, and a visit to a "local home," where people "see how local people live" and receive a Thai cooking demonstration; and finally, a 45-minute "nature canoe" trip on a river that runs through one of Phuket's few remaining mangrove swamps. Lastly, for 2,200 baht (US$87), tourists can choose a seven-hour full day tour which essentially replicates the "Three-in-One" trips, but with more detail, information, and intensity.

In previous years, Strock organized small-group overnight trips to Khao Sok National Park, but recently, he has turned away from the overnight market due to logistical difficulties as well as the particular political problems associated with operating tours in Khao Sok. Strock still occasionally arranges overnight expedition trips for special customers, but for the most part, the "product development" and marketing efforts of Trekkers increasingly target Phuket's existing mass tourism market. As part of his efforts at spatial consolidation - and out of concerns for opening up isolated or "untouched" areas to rapid tourism growth - Strock has in recent years concentrated on improving and expanding the Trekkers nature compound. Although some would accuse him of the "museumification" of natural experience and cultural contact, Strock wishes to introduce a handicrafts demonstration and "cultural village" project to the compound. Further, Trekkers' daytrips to the compound will soon be complemented by visual information such as videos, slide shows, and boards featuring graphics and written text.

Despite seeming to move towards a more mass, "packaged" form of tourism, Trekkers continues to embody many key features of "alternative" tourism. As with all other companies in Phuket identified in this research with the "ecotourism" label, Trekkers describes itself as an "eco-nature tour company" dedicated to showing tourists the "real natural Thailand." Cultural and natural authenticity thus play a critical role in Trekkers marketing, and are coupled with a

sense of altruism and sensitivity towards Thailand's cultural and environmental heritage. Trekkers has paid particular attention to wildlife conservation, devoting resources and building many daytrips around issues such as elephant protection. Working together with various organizations, including English-based Flora and Fauna International - among the oldest conservation bodies in the world (founded in 1902) - and the Asian Elephant Foundation of Thailand, Trekkers has raised several thousands of dollars for various conservation projects. According to the Asian Elephant Foundation (1998), the number of elephants in Thailand has dwindled from roughly one-hundred thousand at the turn of the century to its current level of five thousand, only two thousand of which are wild with the rest being held in captivity. An annual population drop of three percent has exacerbated other threats posed to Asian elephants in Thailand such as poaching and harsh working conditions in illegal logging areas near the Burmese border. By selling t-shirts and collecting donations on behalf of the Asian Elephant Foundation, Trekkers has made the protection of Asian elephants an explicit company objective. As the company's web site explains,

> Trekkers started the first elephant treks on Phuket Island in 1994 when there were only about 15 elephants on the island. Now there are nearly 150 elephants in Phuket. To help sick and injured elephants and with regular health checks in Phuket and Southern Thailand, we are raising money to buy a mobile elephant clinic. So far 130,000 baht [US$5,134] has been raised...the total needed is 500,000 baht [US$19,750]. Our goal is to put a tranquillizer gun in every province so that elephants in musk can be tranquillized until it calms down rather than being shot while on a rampage...they [the Asian Elephant Foundation of Thailand] have the medicine, but not the guns, which are expensive (from Trekkers' web page).

By introducing and popularizing elephant trekking in Phuket, Trekkers has provided an economic outlet for many northern and northeastern elephants which are either "unemployed" due to the Thai logging ban in place since the late-1980s, or overworked in illegal logging camps.

I mentioned earlier the various means or devices utilized by Jaidee Kayak to foster spontaneity and individualism among its customers, and when examined closely, Trekkers employs a similar approach. Although in truth Trekkers daytrip itineraries are largely fixed around a few key activities, the ways in which trips are made to seem flexible, "natural," and open to change - for example by following a loose time schedule and allowing tourists to spend as much time as they wish at each activity - creates the *appearance* of flexibility and openness in

a "mass" tourism environment in Phuket marred by rigidity and routinization. The natural authenticity of Trekkers' tours is also conveyed to customers through marketing materials. For example, the company brochure promises to take people "far from the tourist crowds" to "another world - The Real Natural Thailand." The degree to which a tourist site or experience is authentic or inauthentic depends on the desires and expectations of each individual tourist, and thus I wish to avoid claiming that the natural authenticity of mass ecotourism sites is "staged" or somehow "fake." But leaving aside, for the moment, the issue of how "truly" authentic mass ecotourism experiences are in Phuket, it is clear that Trekkers successfully highlights the natural authenticity of its tours.

Much like Jaidee, the provision of a "personal guide" willing and able to answer questions at any time cultivates a sense of individualism among tourists weary of being shuttled from one sightseeing spot to the next by tour guides attempting to speak to large, undifferentiated groups of tourists. The most important "tool" in promoting a sense of personal attention, flexibility, and freedom from the "hordes" of mass tourists is the relatively small, and strictly-monitored, tour group size characteristic of all Phuket ecotourism companies.

Each Land Rover, itself painted jungle green to project an adventurous, off-road feel, carries a maximum of eight passengers, who travel together the entire day and, thus, participate in the trip as a "team." The guide serves as the team leader, or coach, who leads the team through nature-based adventure experiences. According to Strock, two Land Rovers are ideal for one group, since they can be divided into two groups of eight, but the half-day schedule can safely accommodate up to one hundred passengers a day since staggered tour schedules allow different groups to come to the Trekkers compound at different times of the day, and thus depart with a feeling of isolation and intimacy since individual passengers, and the small teams they belong to, are freed from the strains of competing with other groups of tourists for attention and even sheer physical space. Adventure and fun underpin many of Trekkers' daytrips, but perhaps more than any other ecotourism company in Phuket, Trekkers promotes education, environmental awareness, and responsibility among its passengers. This can of course be expected, since the educational and environmental advocacy roles played by Trekkers distinguishes it as an ecotourism company, and not just one of many sightseeing or leisure tours found throughout Phuket. Nonetheless, the emphasis on personal learning found in

Trekkers marketing, guide presentations, and daytrip activities serves to set the company apart as "alternative" within a local tourism industry often conceptualized disparagingly as quintessentially "mass," packaged, and hedonistic.

The high priority placed on educating tourists about the natural heritage of Thailand, in areas such as wildlife, botany, geology, and in some cases even "culture," extends to the intense training regimen required of Trekkers guides. Although, Strock's disciplinarian style conflicts with Thai standards of behaviour and expectations, the four hours of weekly classroom instruction forced on all guides, regardless of experience, serves to inculcate a sense of education and environmental awareness among staff, who despite long hours and a strict workplace atmosphere, stay with Trekkers for long periods of time. In an industry which features enormous rates of employee turnover, over three-quarters of Trekkers' staff were likely to have remained with the company for over a year (Don Strock, pers.comm.). Trekkers' training program centres on English-language skills and nature interpretation which are taught by Jones two hours per day, two days per week, using information sheets written by Strock and Kip in both Thai and English.

Through connections to national government agencies and environmental organizations, Strock has attempted to disseminate the environmental message from his particular company, and the local community in which it operates, to the wider national Thai audience. Fluency in Thai also assists Strock in relating conservation training to those employees with no initial proficiency in English. The material upon which information sheets are based comes directly from the efforts of a Belgian researcher who lives on the Trekkers compound and has for the past several years worked with Strock in compiling an environmental "audit" of Phuket's flora and fauna for a nearly-completed book.

Strock sees enormous potential in the domestic Thai market for both ecotourism development and its connection to an emergent national environmental consciousness. Two Thai television programmes have featured stories on Trekkers, and the company was the subject of a major article in TAT's monthly Thai-language travel magazine in June, 1994. Through consultation projects and training assistance, Strock is using Trekkers as an example and springboard from which other Thai-owned land-based ecotourism companies throughout Thailand can enter the small-scale adventure niche of the lucrative tourism industry. In Phuket alone, approximately fifteen companies, some as small as a shack by the side of the highway,

have started offering elephant trekking since Trekkers introduced the concept to the island's tourism industry in 1994. Land-based ecotourism in Phuket has therefore added educational, environmental, and personalized elements to the existing tourism market. Simultaneously, it has also encouraged domestic Thai consumers and entrepreneurs to participate in and reproduce, albeit superficially at times, nature-oriented travel activities based on fun, novelty, adventure, and learning.

6.4 Accommodation-Based Ecotourism: Nature Paradise

The final "*farang* ecotourism company" I will examine is Nature Paradise, a beach resort located in the Ao Nam Mao area of Krabi (see Figure 5.2 on page 181). Although the island of Phuket features no accommodation-based ecotourism, per se, the Phuket "cluster" which includes Phangnga and Krabi, is home to at least a few "eco-resorts." The early history of one such resort, Nature Paradise, shares many parallels with other ecotourism companies in Phuket, and developed to an even greater extent as an accident. The original founder of Nature Paradise, Rex Gilmore, had travelled several times from his home in Canada to various parts of Thailand, and decided finally in late-1990 to build a house in a remote part of Krabi. As an internationally-renowned conservationist with extensive travel and ecological experience, Gilmore found the particular natural habitat of Krabi attractive, and wished to preserve the immediate ecosystem in which his new house would be located. After meeting a local Thai man by the name of Prit, Gilmore left for Canada and arranged for his house to be built under Prit's supervision. When Gilmore returned the next year, he discovered to his surprise that, in addition to a central house, Prit had also built a small set of bungalows with Gilmore's money. At roughly the same time, Gilmore and approximately thirty mostly Canadian investors formed the Siam Eco Partnership (SEP), a "time share" company devoted to entering into partnerships with local Thai families interested in operating nature tours and eco-resorts. In 1991, Nature Paradise entered the SEP network, joining an existing SEP "ecolodge" in Khao Sok National Park. Due to its "accidental" origins, Nature Paradise was from the beginning the weaker cousin of SEP's Khao Sok ecolodge, and has lagged behind in promotion and investment. Despite beginning and evolving under spontaneous circumstances, therefore, Nature Paradise, unlike virtually all other ecotourism companies in the Phuket vicinity, has stagnated due to

financial neglect and its position within the hierarchy of priorities associated with Nature Paradise's *farang* founder and co-owners.

The motivating principle driving SEP is a concern for environmental education and community-based development. As an internal document aimed at potential investors states:

> We truly feel that our company's environmental and social ethics are providing new models of tourism in Thailand. Our joint venture agreements with Thai families ensure that land titles stay in local hands and that all our businesses truly benefit local families and communities. At the same time our environmental education programs are doing much to expand awareness amongst Thais and foreign visitors to Thailand. We intend to demonstrate that private business with a social and eco ethic support conservation efforts which usually rely heavily on the public purse.

Ironically, given the statement above, part of the reason for Nature Paradise's financial neglect stems from the nature of land ownership and lease arrangements. SEP leases the small plot of land on which Nature Paradise sits from an elderly man whose son is eager for the lease to run out so that land could be put to more profitable uses such as shrimp farming, an activity proliferating throughout this area (as I discussed in Chapter Five). SEP's lease is due to expire in 1999, and realizing that a renewal is unlikely, Gilmore has channelled profits to SEP's other property in Khao Sok Park. Gilmore expressed his concerns about the future viability of Nature Paradise, and admitted that "all of our profits from Nature Paradise are put back into Khao Sok, since we have a thirty year lease in Khao Sok and our property is located in the best part of the park" (Rex Gilmore, pers.comm.). As "ethical investors," the thirty or so (mostly) Canadian investors in SEP are told not to expect large returns on their investments, especially since all profits, however small, are reinvested (but, unfortunately for the resident Thai managers of Nature Paradise, only into the Khao Sok ecolodge).

For parts of every year, either Gilmore or another SEP investor live in the majestic central home built originally for Gilmore on the Nature Paradise property. In hindsight, Gilmore feels some measure of regret about choosing the present location. This relates mostly to the current lease arrangement, but also stems from less "material" reasons such as the burial sites adjacent to Gilmore's house containing two powerful local shaman priests, including the 6'5" grandfather of the current landowner. Due to the strength of superstitious beliefs in this area, the Thai staff of Nature Paradise refuse to enter Gilmore's house at night, and privately believe that the Nature Paradise enterprise was from the start doomed to failure by the curse brought on by the thoughtless construction of a bungalow resort next to feared, and revered,

grave sites. Gilmore and his co-investors manage Nature Paradise - technically in tandem with the resident Thai managers - but only legally own 49 percent of the property. The other 51 percent is owned by Prit, his immediate family, and three or four other local Thai partners. All of the Thai partners, including Prit and his family, live on site in small houses at the edge of the Nature Paradise property. All together, Nature Paradise employs roughly ten local Thai staff during the high season, but the number dwindles to perhaps two or three (not including members of Prit's immediate family who also work as cleaners and cooks).

Nature Paradise houses fifteen separate rooms, divided into two sets of units. The first set consists of one long concrete building with a row of nine rooms, while the second comprises six individual thatched bungalow complexes built in a semi-circle around a central open air lounge pagoda. The six-bungalow "complex" also features footpaths connecting individual bungalows to an adjacent beach and a small covered outdoor restaurant. Prices range from 200 to 400 baht (8 to 16 US dollars) per night, depending on the season, and bungalows feature two twin beds, mosquito nets, and private bathrooms (with "Western" toilets and a traditional Thai water bucket and scoop for bathing). Running through the property are also a creek lined with nippa palms, a series of tropical gardens, and three lotus ponds. Nature Paradise relies exclusively on one Australian-based adventure travel company, Exclusive Explorations (described in Chapter Two, pages 59 to 60), for over sixty percent of its business (Rex Gilmore, pers.comm.). Other than Exclusive Explorations customers, and of course vacationing SEP time share investors, the majority of Nature Paradise's visitors are backpackers who learn of Nature Paradise through word of mouth or sparse advertising in Krabi Town (17 kilometres from Nature Paradise). Located only a few kilometres from backpacker centres such as Ao Nang and Rai Leh Beach, Nature Paradise relies heavily on backpacker "FITs" to make up the business share not occupied by Exclusive Explorations. The popularity of Nature Paradise among backpackers finds expression in the *Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit to Thailand* (Cummings, 1995), the bible of alternative budget travel in Thailand which recommends Nature Paradise as an environmentally-friendly resort committed to using local building materials and minimizing sewerage and rubbish disposal in the adjacent bay.

Despite claiming to be "a pleasant 1 hour and 45 minute drive from Phuket International Airport," Nature Paradise is more accurately a three to four hour drive from Phuket, a trip

whose comfort varies widely from relaxing but time-consuming (five-hour) local bus transportation to quicker, more harrowing trips in speedy private minivans packed with tourists and their luggage. Once in Krabi Town, tourists must then make their way to Nature Paradise in a privately-owned *tuk tuk*, motorized three wheel motorcycles with small benches fitting two to three passengers. Since the only other point of interest in the immediate vicinity of Nature Paradise is a Shell Fossil Beach (Shell "Cemetery"), tourists must make special trips to the resort from Krabi Town on tuk tuks, since the lack of public transportation requires privately arranged transfers.[8] Due to its isolated location and dependence on one company, Nature Paradise suffers from seasonal fluctuations, which not only reduce the income generating capacity of Prit, his family, and other local partners, but also lead to infrastructural damage since a lack of funds limits Prit's ability (and, according to Gilmore, incentive) to maintain the Nature Paradise facilities. For the past few years, Gilmore and the SEP have considered closing down Nature Paradise during the low season (April to October), but this would only add to the financial difficulties faced by Prit and others who have no other means of making a living.

As part of SEP's mandate, environmental education and responsibility are made key features of Nature Paradise's limited marketing efforts. The Nature Paradise brochure makes a clear attempt to convince potential customers of the company's "sensitive nature":

> Nature Paradise strives towards environmental sensitivity in meeting your comfort needs. We've initiated a Youth Conservation Corps which uses a percentage of your bungalow fee to finance beach clean-up efforts by local youths and to further local education on marine ecology and tropical forest conservation. A nature library, special presentations by guest naturalists and wildlife photo safaris to nearby national parks are all part of our ongoing environmental education efforts.

In many ways, Nature Paradise remains compelled to provide interesting natural and cultural experiences for its tourists since the resort sits in an area with virtually no other tourists or activities, and a shallow, muddy beach eliminates the prospects of offering the only obvious recreational pursuit of this and most other beach resorts: swimming, either in a pool or in the open sea. Treating "culture" as an integral component of the environment, Nature Paradise offers many daytrips to surrounding islands, villages, caves, waterfalls, Buddhist monasteries, and local outdoor markets. Alternatively, tourists can also, according to the same brochure,

[8] Recognizing the potential hassles associated with finding or travelling to Nature Paradise, Prit often drives to Krabi Town in his pick-up truck to pick up customers who call in advance.

spend their time "just soaking in the serenity of our private paradise." The small size and physical dimensions of the resort foster an almost forced intimacy with the Thai managers/staff as well as with other tourists. Besides creating a "totally relaxed and unpretentious...overall atmosphere as natural as family and friends," the social and physical layout of Nature Paradise fulfils the desire, shared by most of its backpacker and adventurer customers, to participate in forms of "alternative" tourism that promote both a community feeling among brethren "travellers" and a feeling of community development among local Thai participants.

6.5 "Alternative" Versus Mass Tourism: The Chicken or Egg Dilemma

In Chapter Three, I examined the initiation, production, and perpetuation of an "alternative" tourism discourse that posits "mass" and "alternative" as mutually exclusive forms of tourism which feature characteristics belonging to either the harmful and the old (mass), or the emancipatory and the innovative (alternative). In this section, I will follow Butler (1992) in arguing that either/or distinctions between mass and "alternative" tourism are simplistic, misleading, and inaccurate, particularly in light of the empirical evidence from southern Thailand examined in this research. Other than the many overlapping and interconnecting relationships between mass and alternative, the links that prove vital in the success of "alternative" tourism ventures in Phuket demonstrate that the two are *necessarily* related and connected insofar as regional economic development is concerned.

Mass ecotourism as a form of "alternative" tourism

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, ecotourism companies based in Phuket feature, by definition, three sets of characteristics: self-identification as an "alternative" or ecotourism company; a demonstrated concern for environmental or cultural authenticity; and an inclination towards such "alternative" characteristics as an ethical concern towards the host population, a desire to avoid the "beaten path," and a commitment to educational experiences. However, as the three case studies examined in this chapter indicate, ecotourism in and around Phuket overlaps structurally with "mass" tourism in several ways. First, the number of people, although divided into small sub-groups or "teams," remains collectively high, most notably in comparison to the small groups of backpacker and adventurer tourists travelling

elsewhere throughout Thailand. Determining a specific number of tourists beyond which tourism becomes "mass" is, of course, relative to each destination - and one could argue it is perhaps impossible - but most would agree that two to three hundred tourists a day inside the confined space of a *hong* falls towards the "mass" end of the spectrum in terms of sheer tourist numbers.[9] Second, the daily business operations of Phuket ecotourism companies are structurally linked to mass tourism networks and companies in integral ways, pointing therefore to the obvious "mass" orientation of ecotourism in Phuket. Lastly, the customers of Phuket-based ecotourism companies are quintessentially "mass" in that the vast majority stay in four- and five-star resort hotels, visit Phuket either en route to another destination or on short (three to five day) holidays, and arrange virtually all aspects of their holidays, including daytrips with ecotourism operators, through tour package wholesalers and other intermediaries of the international mass tourism industry.

By offering daytrips to tourists from "mass" accommodations and packaged tour companies, Miller had originally hoped to tap *temporarily* into the "mass" market in order to finance his true passion, overnight explorations trips. Having successfully campaigned against mass tourism in the past, Miller remains understandably ambivalent about Jaidee's connections to mass tourism but has come to view this relationship as a necessary evil. Despite decrying the deleterious environmental and social aspects of conventional mass tourism, Don Strock of Trekkers has also embraced mass tourism, or at least some of the more "responsible" elements, and feels no remorse or ambivalence about dealing with the proverbial mass tourism devil, which serves as the underlying base for future, more specialized forms of travel:

> Ecotourism, to start at least, it must take its market from the mass tourists. I think eventually...you'll get people who specifically want to travel with the idea of conservation and sustainability, but I don't believe there are very many at this present time. Some people mention "ecotraveller," but I don't believe there are many ecotravellers. But I do believe there's a hell of a lot of mass tourists who have a strong interest in sustainability and conservation, and when they know there are products available where they can go on a homestay with the locals or they can go on a tour which doesn't pollute or where money from their tour goes into conservation, then I think a new market segment will emerge. (Don Strock, pers.comm.)

Regardless of some initial concerns regarding mass tourism, Miller of Jaidee Kayak sold his first trips out of Le Meridien, one of Phuket's most exclusive five-star hotels, and received marketing and transportation support from Diethelm, the largest tour wholesaler

[9] This number of tourists also likely approaches or surpasses the physical carrying capacity of Ao Phangnga's *hongs*.

operating in Thailand. Nearly a decade later, Diethelm still provides Jaidee with the majority of its passengers and revenues, and Jaidee in turn represents Diethelm's largest single source of revenue in Phuket. Without the steady business guaranteed by international tour operators, companies such as Nature Paradise, and Phuket's mass ecotourism "copycats," are forced to depend on the unreliable Foreign/Free Independent Traveller (FIT) market. Relying on FIT business creates obstacles related to constant payment collection from small travel agents throughout the island, and also opens up opportunities for corruption and inefficiency since individual travel agents often undercharge for daytrips while also threatening to promote other companies unless higher commissions are paid as under-the-table cash payments. Jaidee and Trekkers have increasingly shunned the FIT market, which only provides between ten and fifteen percent of total company revenues, and Don Strock has begun to deal exclusively with only those half dozen or so tour companies which can guarantee a steady supply of tourists willing to pay the high prices necessary to support nature-based community development initiatives.[10]

In logistical, quantitative, and structural terms, then, the ecotourism companies of Phuket follow "mass" systems of organization and distribution. A problem arises however when *qualitative* characteristics, including inflexibility, routinization, standardization, and personal detachment, are necessarily attributed to, and associated with, the more quantitative, "factual" aspects of mass tourism such as tourist numbers, accommodation styles, and purchasing patterns. In short, ascribing value-based judgments to particular trips simply because they involve mass tourism networks or draw their business from tourists travelling on "mass" packaged holidays is inaccurate and misrepresents the manner in which Phuket-based ecotourism companies operate. As documented throughout this chapter, individual ecotourism companies which, for reasons outlined above, fill a niche within the regional and global "mass" tourism industry, utilize various tools and tactics in order to create for their passengers an overall tourism "product" characterized by typically "alternative" features such as flexibility, spontaneity, education, and personal attention.

Critics who believe in the fundamentally contrived and planned nature of (mass) tourism encounters and experiences (MacCannell, 1989; Urry, 1990) would perhaps argue that

[10] The best example of "alternative" and "mass" working together through symbiotic, and often surprising, relationships also comes from Trekkers, which organizes short eco-daytrips from its nature compound for customers of the Club Méditerranée resort located nearby in Kata Beach.

the appearance of flexibility serves to mask standardization and rigidity from tourists who, out of ignorance and lack of critical self-awareness, fail to notice. Whether the daytrips of Jaidee Kayak and Trekkers actually do manage to incorporate "true" flexibility into their itineraries, however, is a moot point since, with a few rare exceptions, *all* tourism experiences are restricted by a certain degree of packaging, standardization, and routinization. Despite this general pattern, Jaidee and Trekkers cleverly integrate a sense of flexibility into trips which, for the most part, remain tied to a central itinerary. This allows "mass" ecotourism companies in Phuket to differentiate their "products" from other overdeveloped "mass" packaged tours in the vicinity that do in fact corroborate more stereotypical images of impersonal, mechanistic, and overly-rigid "tourist traps." Jaidee and Trekkers both make successful efforts at giving "mass" tourists accustomed to more ritualized forms of recreation (like poolside swimming and shopping) spontaneous and novel experiences based on brief encounters with the natural landscapes and wildlife of Thailand.

The emphasis placed at Jaidee and Trekkers on learning and environmental awareness introduces an educational element that many falsely associate *only* with small-scale, special-interest "alternative" tourism. The latent interest in novelty and (fun) educational experiences was obvious to Don Strock of Trekkers in his early interaction with "mass" tourists visiting Phuket in the mid-1980s:

> When we had the bungalows in Phuket, people would come and say I want to see a rubber plantation, I want to see how people live...People didn't want typical mass tourism, they didn't want just scenic or shopping tours, they wanted to learn about things (Don Strock, pers.comm.).

A high staff to tourist ratio, an ongoing focus on guide training, and a "commitment to quality" all foster a spirit of individualism and personal attention amongst "mass" tourists who participate on Jaidee and Trekkers daytrips. From comments made in interviews, as well as written comments in customer surveys, it is obvious that the "mass" clients of Phuket-based ecotourism companies appreciate, above all, the flexible and personalized aspects of the daytrips, thereby demonstrating the successful integration of "alternative" features on the part of ecotourism companies essentially operating through necessary links to "mass" tourism intermediaries.

There are many packaged tour experiences both in Thailand and elsewhere that lack educational value and suffer from standardization, rigidity, and inflexibility, but these

characteristics are not necessarily linked to the intensity with which a company relies on "mass" numbers, accommodations, or networks. In practice, many supposedly "alternative" forms of travel, such as small-scale "adventure" tours and backpacking, also feature standardization, inflexibility, and poor educational value. Thus, the degree to which a touristic experience reproduces "alternative" characteristics simply depends on the unique features and circumstances of that particular experience. Taken as a broad set of principles - rather than a series of *actual* characteristics supposedly missing from all "mass" forms of tourism - "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand is thus best considered a potential component of all forms of tourism, regardless of how closely linked they may be to the "mass" tourism industry.

Since normative "alternative" features such as flexibility and education can potentially underpin any form of travel or "type" of tourism company, each individual touristic experience becomes a distinctive combination of both "mass" and "alternative" features simultaneously. It remains incorrect, therefore, to assume that companies such as Jaidee and Trekkers, which cater to "mass" tourists travelling on "mass" packaged holidays, must necessarily offer shallow, rigid, and inflexible experiences. We are thus left with a situation in Phuket where education, flexibility, and individual attention are being promoted not by small-scale, locally-independent operators but by ecotourism companies tied to *farang* expats that are structurally and organizationally "mass" in orientation. Since "alternative" characteristics such as flexibility, education, spontaneity, and personal attention shape and define land- and sea-based ecotourism companies like Jaidee and Trekkers, it can safely be stated that Phuket is home to "alternative" forms of tourism, ecotourism in this case, which in the daily practice and production of touristic experiences, straddle the theoretical, normative fence between "mass" and "alternative." For this reason, and notwithstanding the various limitations of firm categorizations, "mass ecotourism" remains an accurate description and convenient marker of Phuket's ecotourism industry due to the merging of "mass" tourists and channels with "alternative" experiences such as flexibility, novelty, excitement, and learning.

Reconceptualizing spatial and temporal patterns

The experiences of "alternative" tourism companies in southern Thailand highlight the point that ecotourism enjoys its greatest chances for financial success not in remote areas, but

those adjacent to "mass" destinations such as Phuket. The spatial requirements of successful "alternative" tourism have not escaped Miller of Jaidee Kayak, who recognizes its role in overall "ecotourism" planning: "One of the great things about our daytrip is that it's close enough so that people can leave their comfortable hotels in the morning and come back at night" (Jim Miller, pers.comm.). Spatial proximity to "mass" destinations in Thailand, including Bangkok, Pattaya, Chiang Mai, Ko Samui, and Phuket proves crucial in ensuring a steady supply of relatively wealthy mass tourists looking for interesting, novel, and *time-efficient* experiences beyond their pre-bought packaged holidays. The inconvenience in both time and comfort of travelling to Nature Paradise ensures that only those with plenty of flexible holiday time, or those on pre-bought Exclusive Explorations adventure packages, visit on a regular basis, translating in turn to low profits due to the unwillingness of such customers to pay high room rates.[11] Hence, even in the unlikely event that Nature Paradise could upgrade the standards of its facilities, its isolation and distance from Phuket - not to mention the lack of recreational possibilities on its stretch of beach - would still limit its ability to lure short-stay mass tourists attracted to places where novelty and feelings of natural "authenticity" must not preclude one's ability to get a pizza or make a long distance phone call, for instance.

While wildlife- and nature-oriented tourism continues to take place in outlying parks and reserves, the bulk of recent "ecotourism" activities in southern Thailand have grown out of, and adjacent to, "typical" mass sites like hotel complexes and urban centres.[12] Further, the infiltration of "alternative" ideas such as personalization and environmental responsibility into the mass tourism industry, as well as the development of actual "alternative" companies and projects, challenges conventional notions of the unilinear *temporal* relationship between mass and alternative. As Butler (1992), Cohen (1987a), and Pearce (1989), have illustrated, small-scale forms of "alternative" tourism usually lead eventually to greater numbers of tourists and more "mass" forms of tourist activities. Serving as a precursor to large-scale, "typical" mass tourism development, "alternative" tourism often involves the "discovery" of remote, unknown

[11] The poor condition of Nature Paradise facilities also precludes the charging of high rates. The desire of adventurers and backpackers to pay low room rates relates directly to particular notions of authenticity, as discussed in the following chapter.

[12] Examples of this close spatial relationship between mass and alternative are ubiquitous in Phuket, where tiny elephant trekking ventures, often consisting of no more than a couple of elephants and a wooden shack by the side of the highway, operate within a few hundred metres behind built-up resort areas such as Patong Beach. Further, companies such as Trekkers take "mass" tourists on short trips into the small remaining tracts of jungle and mangroves (not to mention agricultural land containing rubber and palm trees) which often immediately adjoin built urban and tourist areas of Phuket.

destinations by scattered groups of pioneering backpackers and other alternative "travellers." These travellers, in turn, pave the way for larger-scale, more organized forms of mass tourism that ultimately drive out backpackers in perpetual search of "untouched" locations.

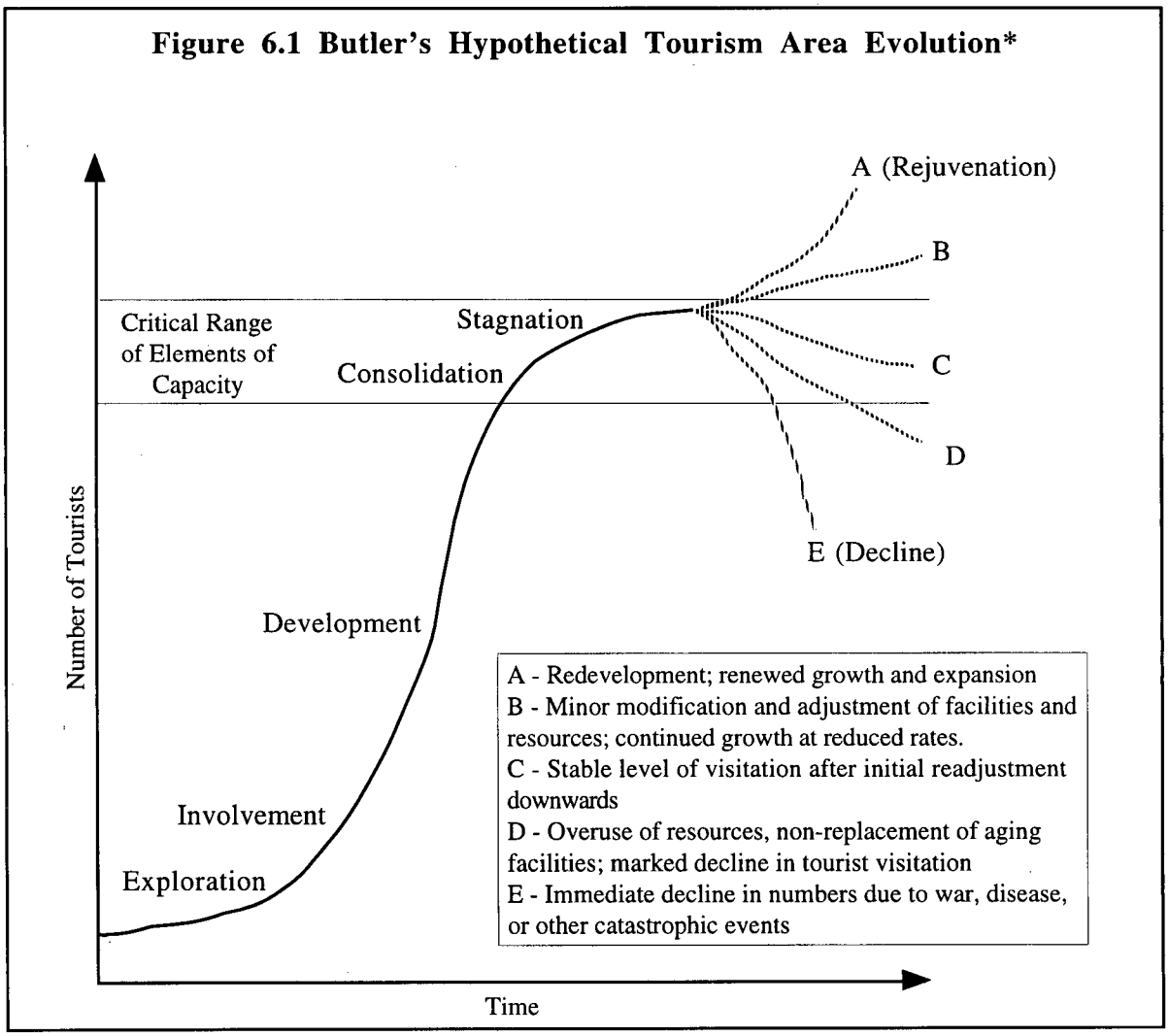
During the late-1960s and 1970s, Phuket represented a backpacker haven replete with cheap bungalow accommodations and limited tourism infrastructural development, but by the early-1980s, the island had gradually assumed a prominent role within Thailand's expanding international (mass) tourism industry. Phuket has thus undergone a typical evolution from small-scale, isolated, alternative, and "authentic" to large-scale, incorporated, mass, and contrived. However, following nearly two decades of mass tourism development, Phuket appears to have also witnessed the birth of "mass ecotourism," itself a form of "alternative" tourism which, while standing apart from other forms such as adventure travel and budget-oriented backpacking, replicates "alternative" ideas nonetheless. The usual unilinear temporal direction of change from "alternative" to "mass" tourism has thus come full circle in Phuket, where early manifestations of "alternative" tourism fed eventually into a style of mass tourism development which in turn precipitated a move towards "mass ecotourism" variations on the "alternative" theme: the chronological relationship between mass and alternative thus resembles the chicken or egg dilemma.

From the comments of early ecotourism "pioneers" in Phuket, including Jim Miller, Don Strock, and several other *farang* owners and managers, it is clear that the harmful environmental and social consequences of rapid tourism development during the 1980s served as the principal catalyst for the initiation of nature- and adventure-oriented companies. The steady transformation of Phuket into a congested, "urbanized" beach environment directly stimulated heightened mass tourist demand for novel, adventurous, and "natural" experiences removed both spatially and psychologically from the shops, touts, and traffic congestion of main resort areas. Hence, the rising demand for, and interest in, "mass ecotourism" and other related "alternative" principles such as environmental responsibility, education, and spontaneity represent a collective market reaction and by-product of the ecological damage, personal detachment, and social conflict associated with mass, packaged tourism development in Phuket. Instead of, or perhaps in addition to, mass tourism coming along to destroy its small-scale backpacking "alternative," it is mass ecotourism, and the "alternative" principles it embodies, which may in the end "save" Phuket's mass tourism industry from the inevitable

stagnation and decline that befall many established international tourism destinations.

The idea that "alternative" tourism could potentially rejuvenate Phuket as a mass tourism destination fits closely into Butler's (1980) well-known and often-cited "tourism area cycle of evolution" (Figure 6.1). According to Butler, tourism areas are dynamic and evolve constantly over time in response to "a variety of factors including changes in the preferences and needs of visitors, the gradual deterioration and possible replacement of physical plant and facilities, and the change (or even disappearance) of the natural and cultural attractions which were responsible for the initial popularity of the area" (Butler, 1980: 5). The hypothetical evolution of tourism areas proposed by Butler involves several stages: *exploration*, during which small numbers of "explorer" tourists make individual travel arrangements and follow

Figure 6.1 Butler's Hypothetical Tourism Area Evolution*



* From Butler, R. (1980) "The Concept of a Tourist Area Cycle of Evolution: Implications for Management of Resources," *Canadian Geographer*, 24, 1, 5-12.

irregular patterns of visitation; *involvement* of local residents, whereby incipient tourist infrastructure such as accommodations and advertising emerge; rapid *development* of the tourism area as an international destination characterized by institutionalization, the development of natural and cultural attractions, the swelling of tourist numbers beyond the size of the local population, the import of labour and tourist-oriented auxiliary facilities, and the erosion of local ownership and control; *consolidation*, during which tourist numbers continue to increase but at a slower rate, an area's economy becomes tied more directly to tourism, local resentment towards tourism builds, and well-defined tourism enclaves develop; *stagnation* of an area, which occurs as tourist numbers peak, environmental and social carrying capacities are met or exceeded, and natural and cultural attractions are superseded by imported "artificial" facilities; and finally *decline* where competition from other destinations causes a reduction in tourist traffic, while tourism facilities are either sold off to locals at low prices or converted to non-tourism related structures.

Butler indicates that the stagnation stage is not necessarily *always* followed by decline, since some tourism areas may experience rejuvenation by altering the attractions upon which tourism in the area is based. This is achieved by following two possible strategies. First, the addition of a built attraction previously lacking from the area, such as gambling in Atlantic City, allows an area to cater to a new base of tourists, thereby revitalizing that area's overall attractiveness. The second strategy involves tapping into, and taking advantage of, previously unappreciated or underutilized natural resources. The recent surge in the popularity of ecotourism in Phuket indicates a newfound awareness and appreciation of the area's natural resources, especially their potentially regenerative capabilities and overall contributions to the gradual dissemination of "alternative" tourism principles into the conventional mass tourism industry. Between total collapse and rejuvenation, Butler suggests several possible paths, from continued growth at reduced rates to diminishing competitiveness and slow decline (curves B to D in Figure 6.1). Since ecotourism in Phuket depends on finite resources in areas with limited carrying capacities - the *hongs* of Ao Phangnga and remaining jungle tracts in Phuket can only handle so many tourists - the role performed by mass forms of "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand revolves around diversifying, and thus partially sustaining the immediate future growth of, the existing industry (curve B). Thus, although acting to rejuvenate an area of declining environmental and cultural attractiveness, mass ecotourism, and

"alternative" tourism generally, will perhaps fail, over the long term, to remove Phuket from the inevitable cycle of boom and bust that characterizes all but a handful of unique destinations of timeless attractiveness.[13] Nevertheless, despite both its dependence on limited natural resources and its vulnerability to fickle tourist preferences, "alternative" tourism, as embodied in the practices of, and principles behind, land- and sea-based ecotourism companies in Phuket, has not only strengthened the region's attractiveness but has also essentially developed as a *result* of mass tourism growth, thereby necessitating the slight reconfiguration of recognized models that posit a strictly unilateral spatial and temporal shift from "alternative" to "mass."

The meaning and significance of localized forms of "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand

The example of "mass ecotourism" in southern Thailand demonstrates that the initiation, growth, development, and implications of ecotourism, or any other form of "alternative" tourism, in Phuket and southern Thailand generally remain anchored to their local setting, standing apart from other such forms of tourism in other parts of Thailand or Southeast Asia. In northern Thailand, for example, research conducted by Dearden[14] illustrates that particular local conditions and circumstances contribute to creating specific regional forms of "alternative" tourism, most notably those associated with trekking activities in "hilltribe" jungle areas. Issues such as carrying capacity, environmental conservation, and sustainable development shape trekking in northern Thailand in highly localized ways. The particular interplay of entrepreneurial, tourist, and host adaptations to shifting perceptions of authenticity also serve to differentiate "alternative" tourism in northern Thailand from other localized forms, including "mass ecotourism" in southern Thailand. While southern Thailand does possess some relatively "unspoiled" natural areas, a lack of sufficient transportation connections, coupled with the poor, neglected infrastructure found especially at accommodation sites such as Nature Paradise, preclude the financial viability of many small-scale "ecotourism" ventures located in areas far from "mass" destinations in the south. The combination of mass tourism infrastructure, markets, and networks with "alternative" principles of individuality, education,

[13] Butler points out that even in cases where an area's attractiveness persists over time, human tastes and preferences must remain constant. Further, "[a]rtificial attractions, such as the spectacularly successful Disneyland and Disneyworld, may also be able to compete effectively over long periods by adding to their attractions to keep in tune with contemporary preferences" (Butler, 1980: 10).

[14] See Brockelman and Dearden (1990); Dearden (1991, 1993); and Dearden and Harron (1992, 1994).

and flexibility has contributed to the production of a localized form of ecotourism, whereby a vulnerable resource base, a well-developed mass tourism industry, and a long history of economic development require the reconceptualization of ecotourism in the southern Thai context.

Rather than merely constituting a local reaction to global growth in "alternative" forms of travel, ecotourism in Phuket, and many other parts of southern Thailand, has grown out of the lifestyle changes of a handful of environmentally-oriented *farang* expatriates. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, foreigners, and *farangs* in particular, have proven crucial to the development of ecotourism in Phuket, this connection extending to *farang* owners and managers, *farang* "Western" tourists, and the foreign tour operators which bring tourists to Phuket on packaged holidays in the first place. In addition to its spatial proximity to mass destinations, and to some extent, the sheer number of tourists involved, the form of (mass) ecotourism practised in southern Thailand stands apart from ecotourism in other parts of Thailand due to a more relaxed concern for cultural and natural authenticity on the part of mass ecotourists based in Phuket. As I discovered throughout the course of my research, and as I will discuss in the next chapter, mass ecotourists entertain relatively lax expectations of, and desire for, authenticity in comparison to either "hard-core" ecotourists travelling to remote areas of northern Thailand, or other trekkers who respond to eroding cultural authenticity by shifting attention to the authenticity of the natural environment and the overall jungle trekking experience (see Dearden and Harron, 1992).

Although mass ecotourism in Phuket relies less extensively on the pursuit of cultural, natural, or experiential authenticity than other forms of "alternative" tourism across Thailand, the providers of ecotourism experiences, such as Jaidee Kayak and Trekkers, nevertheless make great attempts to *communicate* a sense of natural authenticity to mass tourists who, being constantly told they are part of a mass, undifferentiated crowd and part of the "problem," enjoy feeling as if they are "getting away" from it all, however short or fleeting the experience may be. In this way, mass ecotourism in Phuket features the "communicative staging" found throughout northern Thailand, whereby increased tourist visitation and heightened competition between trekking operators has led to the communicative staging of authenticity in order to portray to "alternative" tourists a (false) sense of the "primitive," remote, and authentic nature of villages visited during trekking tours (Cohen, 1989).

Mass ecotourism is southern Thailand shares another similarity to "alternative" tourism in northern Thailand, namely the importance placed by tourists on the authenticity of the actual trip and associated experience.[15] For example, when interviewed, many Jaidee passengers stated that they chose Jaidee over other "copy" companies because the former represents the "original." Mass ecotourists thus betray a general concern for the authenticity of product and experience afforded by travelling with the "original" company that offers the "real thing." Despite sharing with the "alternative" tourism industry in northern Thailand the communicative staging of natural authenticity and the emerging importance of authenticity of tourism product and experience, mass ecotourism in southern Thailand, and the circumstances surrounding its development, necessitate a locally-derived, contextualized definition of, and approach to, the meaning of ecotourism. While the particular forms of "alternative" tourism practised in Phuket may, to some observers at least, appear quite superficial or constitute "ecotourism light" in the words of Honey (1998), the symbiotic relationship between the existing mass tourism industry and many "alternative" principles points to the emergence of a specific variation of ecotourism in the southern Thai context.

The need to treat mass forms of ecotourism practised in Phuket and surrounding areas as locally-specific stems from the poor applicability of standard ecotourism definitions to the political, economic, and social situation in southern Thailand.[16] Most definitions of ecotourism comprise three critical elements: "responsible travel" which conserves the environment and contributes to the welfare of local communities; a spatial focus on travel to "relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas" (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1988: 2); and tourist motivations that centre on studying, admiring, and enjoying scenery, flora, and fauna of an area. When applied to southern Thailand and the mass ecotourism industry in Phuket, such standard definitions and approaches fall short as descriptive and analytical devices. "Responsible travel" remains a slippery term at best, and environmental conservation and community-based development in southern Thailand often clash, a topic I examine closely in Chapter Eight in the context of the inevitable "trade-offs" associated with "alternative" tourism and community development. Assessing the degree to which an enclosed landscape is

[15] Dearden (1993) has demonstrated that in addition to seeking authentic natural and recreational experiences, trekkers in northern Thailand adapt to changing conditions of cultural authenticity by evaluating the authenticity of the trekking experience as a whole.

[16] See Chapter Two for a review of some ecotourism definitions.

"undisturbed" or "uncontaminated" also proves operationally problematic since drawing the line between these areas and "disturbed" ones depends on the specific criteria used, as well as on the nature of the activity considered. In the case of southern Thailand, financially successful, and thus sustainable, "alternative" tourism ventures require a close spatial and functional relationship to nearby mass tourism destinations, which to many would constitute "unnatural," contaminated areas. However, although the islands, lagoons, and caves of Ao Phangnga seem "natural" due to the absence of inhabitants or built structures, the presence of hundreds of daily tourists travelling from Phuket, a "developed" area just under twenty kilometres away, makes this site of mass ecotourism less than completely "unspoilt" or natural.

The third element of standard ecotourism definitions, environmental motivations, also involves simplistic assumptions about the usually complicated inducements behind an individual's decision to travel. Categorizing ecotourists according to the intensity of their interest in taking "ecotrips" (see Hvenegaard and Dearden, 1998; Lindberg, 1991) does have some merit in drawing comparisons between individual tourists, but overall, differentiation of travel motivations along a single axis such as "interest in nature" becomes empirically difficult to measure since even "hard-core" ecotourists travelling to remote areas to observe birds or receive conservation training, for example, likely travel for an elaborate combination of reasons. According to Boo (1990), positing one person as an "ecotourist" and another as something else is extremely difficult in practice, and this difficulty extends to the labelling and categorization of tourists in southern Thailand. Initially, I went into my ethnographic research with many assumptions regarding how ecotourists should look, act, talk, and dress. However, soon after formally and informally speaking with several mass ecotourist customers of Jaidee and Trekkers, I realized that drawing quick conclusions regarding environmental awareness, concern, and sensitivity based simply on the nature of an individual tourist's accommodation, dress, or holiday package not only fosters simplistic and inaccurate assessments of tourist motivations, but also ultimately precludes an adequate understanding of how the southern Thai context has produced a locally-rooted form of ecotourism.

Considering the critical position of mass tourism marketing networks, markets, and distribution channels in the gradual dissemination and implementation of "alternative" tourism principles in Phuket, *one* way to view ecotourism in southern Thailand revolves around the application of such "alternative" principles of environmental awareness, education, and

appreciation to the wide range of tourist activities found throughout the region. Such a site-specific approach to ecotourism that seeks definition from existing conditions in Phuket opens up the possibility of conceptualizing ecotourism not in universal or static terms, but in the context of the potentially regenerative impact of ecotourism ideas on the overall mass tourism industry in southern Thailand. Broadly speaking, then, "ecotourism" in the southern Thai, and notably Phuket-centred, context could refer to any tourist activity that raises awareness of, contributes to knowledge about, or simply piques an interest in the "natural world," environmental conservation, wildlife, flora, or any other aspects of the natural environment.[17]

Taking this much broader, fluid, and *subjective* approach to ecotourism in Phuket acknowledges that there does not *necessarily* exist a correlation between, on the one hand, an individual tourist's place of accommodation, type of holiday package, or duration of vacation and, on the other, the degree of environmental awareness and concern featured or cultivated within that tourist before, during, or after participating in a particular activity. Thus, the scope of mass ecotourism in southern Thailand potentially extends to a broad spectrum of tourist activities that promote environmental awareness or appreciation among individual tourists and Thai "hosts," including not just heavily nature-oriented special interest pursuits such as birding or litter removal, but also the "casual" nature activities of mass tourists participating, for example, in a half-hour elephant trek or a paddle through the *hongs* in Ao Phangnga.

Incidental experiences with "nature" may or may not carry a lasting impact on, or significantly alter the immediate behaviour of, individual tourists, but by virtue of its potential contribution to raising environmental awareness and building knowledge, however minimal, the meaning of ecotourism in southern Thailand should be developed, judged, and assessed on its own terms, as a "greening" force within an often irresponsible mass tourism industry. The reconceptualization of (mass) ecotourism in southern Thailand therefore requires the acknowledgement of a local political, environmental, and economic context which serves to differentiate ecotourism in this region from ecotourism, and other forms of "alternative" tourism, in other parts of the world and in other areas of Thailand such as the north, where a more stringent and specialized approach to ecotourism proves necessary and appropriate to that

[17] Taking this approach even further, one could argue that since the natural environment includes cultural features as well, "ecotourism" involves appreciation of past and present cultural manifestations (as some authors (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1988) and Phuket-based ecotourism operators have argued). However, including cultural awareness or appreciation in my site-specific definition of ecotourism adds further ambiguity to an already operationally difficult definition, and thus I refer to only the non-human aspects of the natural environment.

region's particular local circumstances.

6.6 Conclusions: *New* Wine in *Old* Bottles

Due to the necessary structural links and connections between "mass" and "alternative" in southern Thailand, "mass ecotourism" in the Phuket region represents a new facet of the overall industry rather than a completely distinct or independent sphere of activity. However, the function and practice of mass ecotourism, as exemplified by individual *farang*-owned or operated enterprises, extend beyond merely allowing a rejuvenated mass tourism industry to perpetuate the status quo under an "alternative" guise. Major players in the global tourism industry have responded to sharpened demand for experiences featuring novelty, flexibility, and responsibility by adopting a more differentiated, "alternative" face, but this only *partially* explains the situation in southern Thailand. Mass ecotourism in Phuket represents more than just old wine in new bottles, whereby tourism relies on a business-as-usual approach within a supposedly new, "alternative" framework. The proverbial old bottles provided in Phuket by established mass tourism infrastructure, advertising channels, and distribution mechanisms are being increasingly filled by a new wine based on the gradual implementation of "alternative" principles by small and medium-sized *farang*-initiated ecotourism projects. To speak of a discrete, independent "alternative" tourism "industry" in southern Thailand is therefore misleading, since it ignores the similarities between "mass" and "alternative" while also misrepresenting the spatial and temporal relationship underlying the two. Ecotourism in Phuket has developed as a by-product of mass tourism, and as such, remains linked to and dependent upon the future viability of national and regional tourism development.

The growing popularity of mass ecotourism in southern Thailand stems from heightened demand among mass tourists for novel, fun, and rewarding trips to "natural" areas, but, as I explore in Chapter Eight, this has predictably, and ironically, produced a dilemma for environmental sustainability since nature-oriented activities such as sea kayaking are "popular goods," the mass tourist demand for which continues to outstrip supply. Considering the dearth of industry standards or government enforcement of limits and regulations, future expansion of ecotourism activities will thus likely depend on how successfully individual operators can continue tapping into mass markets without threatening the very resources

utilized to attract mass tourists in the first place. Although mass ecotourism in Phuket has essentially grown out of the lifestyle preferences of a handful of environmentally-minded *farangs*, the profit motive driving all forms of commercialized forms of travel and tourism will continue to ensure that mass ecotourism ventures possess the financial capabilities required to follow an "alternative" path to community economic and social development in southern Thailand.

CHAPTER SEVEN. KEEPING UP WITH THE JONES': MASS TOURISTS, ALTERNATIVE "TRAVELLERS," AND THE QUEST FOR AUTHENTICITY

7.1 Introduction

Unlike the previous chapter, which reviewed the various ways in which connections to Phuket's mass tourism industry enhance opportunities for community-based development, this chapter turns attention away from the "alternative" tourism industry, per se, and focuses instead on the motivations, behaviour, and consumption patterns of individual tourists travelling throughout southern Thailand. Although often simplified or taken for granted in many tourism studies, the tourist obviously lies at the heart of every form of tourism, domestic or international, mass or "alternative." Tourism in southern Thailand involves numerous processes and actors, but the importance of human desires, expectations, and experiences should not be ignored when attempting to assess the impacts of discrete tourist categories. Empirical examples from southern Thailand prove valuable in illustrating how subtle variations and diversity among tourists, otherwise depicted as homogeneous and undifferentiated, carry direct implications for social change and economic development in southern Thai communities.

Probing "alternative" tourist contributions to community-based development leads to several areas of inquiry, and these will frame the discussion in the three sections of this chapter. First, motivational desires fuelling the "Western" need to visit "exotic" destinations such as Thailand tend to partition tourists into broad groups according to collective approaches to *authenticity*. As indicated in Chapter Three, the role played by authenticity in the motivations of tourists has long formed a underlying question in the academic study of tourism. Many leading tourism scholars position authenticity as a key motivational factor behind travel (Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1989), and I will argue in this chapter that certain types of "alternative" tourists clearly engage in a quest, or competition, to achieve authentic experiences in genuine locations with "real" Thais. Although prevailing, stereotypical images of loud and obnoxious behaviour remain associated with mass tourists, the daily activities in southern Thailand of all three tourist groups identified in Chapter Two - mass ecotourists, adventurers, and backpackers - contradict common perceptions of responsible and culturally-sensitive behaviour on the part of certain "alternative" tourists, and also demonstrate the ways

in which behavioural similarities bring together all tourists.

Second, discrepant levels of concern for authenticity among different categories of tourists relate to larger issues of class and status differentiation based on the "consumption" of tourist experiences as positional goods. Third, in addition to illustrating how social trends in "Western" society underpin consumer demand for "alternative" tourism in Thailand, a discussion of class, status, and touristic demands provides a good opportunity to highlight the rarely-explored relationships between tourist lifestyle choices and community development. The examination of both personal and broad, categorical differences among tourists represents a primary goal of this thesis, and thus, this chapter presents the thoughts, feelings, and actions of people belonging to the three tourist groups mentioned earlier in order to contextualize their role in community development.

7.2 Intimate Encounters with "Real" Thais: Travel Motives and Behavioural Patterns

As I discussed in Chapter Three, images of crude, vulgar "hordes" of mass tourists have existed as long as tourism itself. Stereotypical portrayals of the "ugly" tourist usually make explicit contrasts between insensitive, clumsy, and naive mass tourists out to escape boring, routine work and domestic lives, and "alternative tourists" who, by contrast, represent "travellers" seeking to avoid the beaten track by acting responsibly towards host populations and participating in novel, authentic, and self-fulfilling travel experiences. Despite initially holding some reservations about the supposed theoretical differences between mass and "alternative" tourists, I nevertheless retained several assumptions regarding contrasts in the motivations and behavioural patterns of disparate tourist "groups." Despite "knowing better," it is obvious from early comments made as field notes or diary entries that I found it difficult to relinquish the idea that mass tourists focus extensively, often exclusively, on fun, hedonistic entertainment, relaxation, and self-indulgence whereas their "alternative" counterparts prioritize education, conservation, and participation in low-impact responsible tourism. What emerged during the course of my research, however, were clear behavioural patterns that bind together all tourists. While mass ecotourists, adventurers, and backpackers differ in several, mostly cosmetic, ways such as means of transport, nature of holiday package, duration of trip, or

actual number of people, major inter-group differences centre on discrepant levels of desire and concern for authenticity.

As I discovered repeatedly, making assumptions and drawing conclusions about the motivations underlying the travel patterns of various tourist groups not only relies on incorrect, unsubstantiated tourist stereotypes, but also remains simplistic and incomplete in the absence of indepth discussions with, and sustained observations of, tourists on a daily basis. Initial appearances often prove deceiving in terms of behaviour and motivations: on one occasion, for example, an elderly Korean woman who seemed completely uninterested in Jaidee's environmental message, and resembled in dress and behaviour a "typical" mass packaged tour customer, later coordinated a garbage clean-up with Jaidee's passengers at the final "relaxation" beach, thereby revealing environmental interest and belying assumptions formed through superficial, "thin" observation. In seeking to analyze dissimilarities in the motivations of the three tourist groups, I asked people several questions, three of which will frame the discussion in this section: what does authenticity mean to you?; have you achieved or experienced authenticity during your trip?; and does it matter whether or not you have achieved or experienced authenticity (i.e., how important is authenticity to your overall trip anyway)? This section will then conclude with a brief review of behavioural affinities common to all tourists, "packaged," "alternative," or otherwise.

Primitive, poor, and pure: the meaning of authenticity

Despite the difficulty of assessing complex, subjective ideas such as "authenticity," tourists from all three categories share, at a general level, a common conceptualization of authenticity that focuses on "traditional" manifestations of culture. Environmental authenticity, as expressed by pristine, "untouched" natural settings, and authenticity of the tourism "product," achieved by travelling with "original" operators offering the "real thing," both influence the concerns of many tourists. However, the majority of people take a distinctly *cultural* approach to authenticity when questioned about "real," authentic Thai society. The prevailing touristic view of Thai authenticity therefore encapsulates several facets, but revolves largely around the human, cultural elements of Thai life considered inaccessible to the "gaze" of most "ordinary" tourists. The prevailing image of authenticity among most tourists interviewed for this research comprises three elements. First, authenticity for "Western" tourists exists in

other times and in other places. At a temporal level, the material and social threads of "modern" life in industrialized societies appear intrinsically inauthentic, as opposed to the "traditional" realm which, despite its perpetual creation and "invention" (see Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983), cradles those few remaining traces of authenticity lost in the global rush towards "modernization" and "Westernization." Similarly, most tourists interviewed pictured rural locations and exotic destinations as authentic havens which continued to cultivate different worldviews and ways of life. The degree to which a particular place or "culture" harbours authenticity thus correlates directly with the degree of difference from "Western" life; the more "Other," or exotic, the better.[1] Second, spontaneous encounters devoid of commercial transactions between tourist and host embody a fundamental authenticity. Financial interactions involving the purchase of services or experiences fall short of most tourists' expectations of authenticity since these transactions are intimately associated with planned or structured encounters within touristic environments. Finally, in seeking to escape other tourists, most people consider obviously "staged" or contrived tourist settings blatantly inauthentic since in the collective tourist imagination, "true" Thai life exists only in places where tourists are not. Again, as with the search for "exotic" times and places, authenticity is linked proportionally to the scarcity of tourists and other inauthentic sorts.

Authenticity as traditional, rural, "un-Westernized," and non-commercial permeates the thoughts of most tourists in Thailand, but the extent to which this conception of authenticity goes unchallenged varies widely across different tourist groups. Among adventurers and backpackers, for example, poverty, "roughing it," and the lack of visual representations of "Western" consumerism all exemplify a certain perception of Thai authenticity. The conceptual link between poverty and authenticity typically engenders two reactions from adventurers and backpackers. First, hoping to "live like the locals" - who according to prevailing views of authenticity offer genuine Thai life only in the form of traditional, rural, and, by extension, impoverished forms of cultural and economic expression - adventurers and backpackers voluntarily subject themselves to relatively harsh accommodation conditions while often travelling third class on "local" buses and trains; unless of course, time is precious, whereby a commercial flight necessitates a temporary departure from "authentic" travel. Despite often possessing the financial means, contrary to conventional belief, backpackers "rough it" not

[1] See Ley (1996) for a discussion of similar issues in the context of the gentrification of urban neighbourhoods.

only for budgetary reasons, but also out of a deep-seated mental association between material comfort and *in*authenticity. Adventurers, on the other hand, pay high prices to foreign adventure travel companies, and thus act out on poverty-related conceptions of authenticity through harsh, yet expensive, styles of travel alone, rather than simultaneously "roughing it" while engaging in the desperate backpacker competition to travel "on the cheap."

The second outcome of poverty-centred formulations of authenticity involves "dressing down" and striving through appearance to assimilate into authentic Thai life, which is (incorrectly) associated with tattered clothing, lax hygienic standards, and an overall dishevelled appearance. An informal dress code consisting of loose tie-dye t-shirts, tank-tops, and pants, as well as the all-important sarong[2] thus burdens the majority of Thailand's supposedly "independent" backpackers with obvious routinization as well as conformity to an extremely casual, and evidently trendy, style of dress.

In addition to forging material and philosophical links between tradition, poverty, and authenticity, backpackers and the customers of Exclusive Explorations and Backdoor Adventures draw clear demarcations between staged tourist encounters and genuine, "back-stage" interactions.[3] The prevalent discourse of authenticity leads to comparisons of "real" Thai people with those found in contrived tourist settings such as Phuket and Pattaya. Although never explicitly stating so, tourists imply in discussing "real" people that there somehow exist "fake" Thais tainted by corrupting "Western" cultural influences. The dichotomization of the "real" and authentic with the contrived and artificial implies that direct contact with tourists leads to cultural pollution. In the words of one Exclusive "tour leader":

> Tourism has changed the Thais. Exclusive has the responsibility to the preservation of the Thai people, the preservation of their integrity. They're losing that integral link to their ancestors. We're trying to encourage people to keep authenticity within their communities and teaching them that they can prosper as they are, by staying who they are, by not changing too fast (Dave Gann, pers.comm.).

An important facet of this strategy to "preserve" those Thais considered "real" comprises an

[2] In Thailand, the sarong is known as *paakhama* for men, and *phaasin* for women, and is described by Cummings (1995: 84) in his backpacker "bible" *Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit to Thailand* as "a very handy item; it can be used to sleep on or as a light bedspread, as a makeshift 'shopping bag', as a turban/scarf to keep off the sun and absorb perspiration, as a towel, as a small hammock and as a device with which to climb coconut palms - to name just a few of its many functions. It is not considered proper street attire, however." Despite this warning, many adventurers and backpackers wear their multi-purpose, and most importantly authentic, sarong on a daily basis in the mistaken belief that this allows them to blend in better among Thais.

[3] See pages 59-60 in Chapter Two for brief descriptions of Exclusive Explorations and Backdoor Adventures.

effort to shield the natives from ostentatious displays of "Western" materialism, as one Exclusive customer from Birmingham explained:

> At the beginning of our trip, Dave [the tour leader] warned us about not showing off cameras, camcorders, or flashy watches - you know, our goodies and toys - to local people since we don't want to create needs that weren't there before.

Outlets of mass media and popular culture have for decades ensured full awareness among most Thais of the range of "Western" consumer goods available, but Exclusive nevertheless succeeds in convincing its adventurer customers that "real" Thais have yet to embrace inherently inauthentic "Western" materialism. Backpackers share this belief in, and search for, "real" versus "ruined" Thailand, but take it one step further by, among other things, avoiding (or claiming to in any case) all aspects of organized, packaged "mass" tourism. Themes of preservation and authenticity pervade backpacker conversations as well, but an obsession with avoiding contrived (mass) tourist settings generally takes backpackers to remote locations for longer periods of time and often fosters a more antagonistic, bitter attitude toward other tourists.

Having encountered such an extensive litany of criticism aimed at mass tourist "dupes" (summarized in Chapter Two), I entered my research expecting to find simplistic expectations and perceptions of authenticity on the part of Phuket's mass ecotourists. As with many other pre-conceived assumptions, however, observations and personal discussions refuted fashionable mass tourist stereotypes concerning the meaning of authenticity. The diverse passenger profiles of Jaidee Kayak, Trekkers, and other "mass ecotourism" companies include some former backpackers and even previous customers of Exclusive Explorations, who as mentioned above, entertain very specific ideas about authenticity. Along with the thoughts of these former adventurers and backpackers travelling as mass tourists, many of Jaidee's mass ecotourist customers share the common, almost universal, tourist belief in the direct relationship between authenticity and poverty, exoticism, non-commercialization, and tradition. Surprisingly, however, I encountered *at least* one mass ecotourist on virtually every daytrip who strayed from this hegemonic discourse of authenticity, thereby displaying, in comparison to most adventurers and backpackers, a richer, more intricate, and often more thoughtful understanding of how meanings of authenticity vary and evolve over time. Several Jaidee passengers stated during interviews that Thai authenticity consists of infinite levels, only a few

of which can be experienced by travelling on short holidays. As a musician from London commented:

> There are aspects or layers of real Thailand we haven't seen although we have tried to see as much as we can. Meeting Thais in Phuket is at one layer, rubber plantation workers in the south are another, Chiang Rai in the north...I guess it's all real, but in their own ways, and it's really difficult to see them all on just one trip.

Contrary to the firmly entrenched and rigid views of adventurers and backpackers, many mass ecotourists offer nuanced opinions and often openly question the characterization of authenticity as a concrete entity consisting at merely one level or as traditional rural Thai life. Another Jaidee passenger stated:

> The real Thailand is what the people do now, and what we see every day around us...it's all real. I came to see how Thailand is changing now, what modern Thais are like and how people live today in Bangkok or other places. Some friends who came to Thailand years ago described it as very different and traditional, but it's much less exotic or different than I expected...I'm not disappointed or anything though. If you keep an open mind, come to Thailand with an open mind, then you can see things as they are now and how they're changing.

An understanding of authenticity as a mixture of traditional and contemporary elements provides a more balanced, and I would argue more accurate, conception which runs counter to the static, one-dimensional views of most adventurers and backpackers. Urry (1990) argues that conventional tourism involves the collection of signs and the corroboration of cultural stereotypes, but many mass ecotourists in southern Thailand travel with an open mind and remain willing (but perhaps, according to some, unable) to have their pre-conceived perceptions challenged. Thus, while some mass tourists even describe Bangkok shopping malls as authentically-Thai, backpackers and Exclusive and Backdoor adventurers, meanwhile, venture to rural, exotic locales in a determined effort to confirm their own crude stereotypes of "real" Thais unblemished by contrived encounters with mass tourists.

With only one exception in seven months of research, every tourist interviewed believed that Thailand is becoming, or has already become, "Westernized." There exists overwhelming individual support, therefore, for the modernization thesis discussed in Chapter Three, which posits that since all societies are on the same path to development, some countries (such as Thailand) are perpetually catching up to the "advanced" societies of the "West."[4]

[4] This of course includes "developed" countries in Asia such as Japan and the "Four Tigers" (Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, and Singapore).

However, despite all agreeing at a general level about the inevitability of "modernization" and "Westernization," the three tourist groups discussed in this thesis differ drastically in their assessment of contemporary cultural changes in Thailand. As a result of rigid but primitive impressions of authenticity, adventurers and backpackers feature attitudes towards these changes which border on misinformation at best, and arrogance at worse. The patronizing treatment found in many adventure travel brochures of primitive, "fragile" local cultures in need of protection from tourism and "Westernization" colour the expectations of Exclusive and Backdoor customers and tour leaders keen on protecting and preserving authentic local traditions:

> We're creating a need by showing ourselves. By exposing ourselves to them we're creating a need within them to change themselves to be more like us. I think this will have a long term effect because in the long run, we'll stop coming if they become like us and they have our toys and our way of life... we're going somewhere else because the aim of travelling is to experience something different. One of our Thai guides in the north accused me of wanting Thailand to stay poor and not change at all, but I told him 'I don't want you to stay poor, I just want to teach you how to do it better, learn from the mistakes we made, go slowly, slowly' (Dave Gann, pers.comm.).

When asked the McDonald's and Coca Cola question,[5] backpackers would typically launch into a tirade against mass consumerism and its evil effects on Thai society, adventurers would express sadness and guilt for spreading "Western" cultural influence, and mass ecotourists, while also conveying a tinge of sorrow and apprehension, would react to suggestions that contemporary Thais are losing their cultural identity by stating, in the words of one Jaidee customer from Australia, that "we have loads of Thai restaurants at home but that doesn't mean *we're* becoming Thai." Many mass ecotourists confess that it would appear hypocritical and selfish for them, as tourists from countries with high standards of living, to decry the processes of economic development, cultural change, or "modernization" in Thailand. Hence, unsophisticated conceptualizations of authenticity and patronizing cultural attitudes originate not, as expected, from mass tourists staying in Phuket, but rather from adventurers and backpackers who often, despite claims to the contrary, approach the issue of authenticity and modernization from a skewed and myopic perspective.

[5] Hoping to unravel individual reactions to the perceived "modernization" occurring in Thailand, I asked people how they felt about the voluntary Thai acceptance of obvious symbols of "Westernization" such as McDonald's and Coca Cola. See Appendix Two for full copies of interview schedules.

"Seeing" authenticity through the eyes of others

In addition to deciphering the various notions of authenticity held by each of the three tourist groups, I was interested in assessing the degree to which tourists feel successful in their attempts to achieve authentic experiences while travelling in southern Thailand. Not surprisingly, the sense of achievement among each group, not to mention claims to have travelled "properly," varies considerably. Although, as mentioned above, some mass ecotourists feel that their experiences reveal merely one of myriad layers or levels of authenticity, the majority admit that the short duration of their holidays essentially preclude the opportunity to discover the "real" Thailand. Mass, packaged tourists thus view the length of time spent in Thailand as the variable linked most directly to opportunities to experience authenticity. Further, linguistic proficiency in Thai, the diversity of travel experiences, and the formation of personal relationships with "locals" all factor heavily in what mass ecotourists consider necessary conditions for the achievement of authenticity. Significantly, though, not one mass ecotourist passenger of either Jaidee Kayak or Trekkers characterized encounters with Thai employees, street vendors, or others involved in the tourism industry as contrived, "fake," or culturally-polluting.

By contrast, virtually every adventurer, with the rare exception or two, acknowledged during both interviews and informal conversations that they had achieved an experience more authentic and rewarding than those associated with more "typical" tourists. Despite travelling for short periods of time (almost always two weeks), adventurers, in stark opposition to mass ecotourists, feel that authenticity depends not on how long one travels or assimilates into everyday Thai life, but rather on *how* one travels in the first place. This requisite style of travel revolves around various exercises in "roughing it," ranging from sleeping on dirt floors, to travelling overnight on wooden benches, to pitching tents in dense jungles. Coupled with cramming a maximum number of "rough" experiences into a short period of time, Exclusive and Backdoor visit seemingly remote destinations with "exotic" residents, such as members of Thailand's various "hilltribes": *where* one travels thus becomes as important as one's travel style. Regardless of how or where adventurers travel, feelings of accomplishment and achievement hinge on the foreign "tour leader," who serves as the vital link mediating

interactions between adventurers and Thai hosts.[6] Tour leaders provide a window into Thai life by virtue of their knowledge of, and extensive travel experience in, Thailand. A Backdoor customer from New York made clear the crucial role played by tour leader intermediaries :

> John [Backdoor tour leader] has pretty much made this trip for me. You really feel like you're sharing his friends and contacts. By travelling with John, you get to see the real Thailand through his eyes...unlike other trips where you have no contact with locals. My trip in Indonesia wasn't as good because the person [tour leader] wasn't very interested or connected to the country like John.

Responding to questions about their overall enjoyment of a trip, or their assessment of whether authenticity was achieved or not, most adventurers emphasize the importance of the tour leader, as well as the leader's ability to offer brief glimpses into authentic Thai life.

The least introspective and critical tourists clearly belong to the backpacker category, the majority of which, although replicating the adventurers' sense of competition to achieve authenticity, generally take it to obsessive heights. Perhaps fearing the disapproval of other "travellers," backpackers remain loathe to admit anything other than full achievement of authenticity, a level of accomplishment made possible only by travelling for long stretches of time among "real" Thais far removed from the destructive and culturally-superficial reach of mass tourism. Hence, backpackers combine mass ecotourists' temporal expectations of authenticity with adventurers' spatial concerns, but differ in that posturing among backpackers intent on proving their independence negates any potential role for tour leaders, guides, or any other representatives of organized tourism. But strangely, popular backpacking and budget travel sites such as Khao San Road in Bangkok, Ko Samui, and Rai Leh Beach in Krabi feature large clusters of "independent" travellers, and as I discuss below, claims that authenticity and genuine Thai life are achieved by backpackers within these *genuinely* contrived and constructed budget travel "scenes" hosting scores of other travellers appear bizarre considering the prevailing backpacker definitions of authenticity discussed above.

Determining the extent to which individual tourists achieve "true" authenticity not only simplifies a complex and subjective issue, but also presumes the existence of a reified, tangible "authenticity" capable of being experienced, witnessed, or felt. "Capturing" authentic Thai life also proves tricky in the southern Thai context where historical patterns of ethnic and religious

[6] In yet another attempt to distance adventure travellers from "ordinary" tourists, Exclusive and Backdoor avoid calling their "tour leaders" guides, which in actuality is a more accurate description, since to do so would perpetuate the negative stereotypical image of guides shepherding swarms of tourists from one spot to the next.

diversity have infused Chinese, Malay, Muslim, and European elements into mainstream Siamese society. The heterogeneity of the south, examined in Chapter Five, is matched in the north by various "hilltribes," in Isaan by Lao residents, and in central Thailand by descendants of Mon and Khmer communities. Despite this diversity, the touristic imagination has focused almost exclusively on Siamese cultural symbols as manifestations of Thai authenticity. By perpetuating the myth of Thai homogeneity (see Cohen, 1991 and Reynolds, 1991) in their conceptions of authenticity, adventurers and backpackers, especially, base judgments of their achievements on a rudimentary appreciation of Thailand's complexity. Further, Thai (Siamese) social conventions which project a sense of acceptance and tolerance, while emphasizing social harmony and the avoidance of conflict, lure backpackers into a false sense of behavioural freedom where apparent Thai acceptance of counter-cultural behaviour from foreigners, such as ingestion of drugs and informal dress, is incorrectly conflated with "authentic" travel in Thailand.[7]

If we, for the sake of discussion, take authenticity to denote everyday life, namely the mundane and routine aspects of the "taken-for-granted" world of Thais, then it is obvious that all three groups, on the whole, fail to achieve authentic experiences. Other than the corroborated fact that everyday life remains too boring to constitute authenticity for most tourists - one Backdoor customer from Kansas City, discussing her residential community, commented wearily that "all we have is everyday life" - mass ecotourists and adventurers travel for periods of time too short to experience or "penetrate" more than a few of the infinite layers that form everyday Thai life. While backpackers often travel for relatively long periods to presumably "untainted" locations, the predilection to travel with other "independent" travellers and stay firmly anchored to a distinct budget travel "scene" makes it unlikely, perhaps impossible, to experience "typical" authentic Thai life. Backpacker sites such as Krabi and Khao San Road in Bangkok feature outdoor cafés, nightclubs, bookstores with European-language publications, and Western-style restaurants, the lounges of which serve as screening rooms where scores of backpackers, backs to the street, watch Hollywood films on a central television. For these reasons, claims to experience authenticity and genuine social interaction with Thais therefore seem disingenuous. Backpacker scenes may juxtapose settings of more

[7] Thai cultural attitudes regarding tolerance and harmony were discussed in Chapter Two, and are examined in Cooper and Cooper (1990), Klausner (1982), and O'Reilly and Habegger (1983).

packaged, mass forms of tourism organization, but they remain highly circumscribed tourist scenes nonetheless.

As adventure travel companies promising unusual experiences off the beaten mass tourism track, Exclusive and Backdoor cleverly satisfy customer demand for novelty and authenticity by utilizing several strategies. First, prior to the trip, adventurers receive from the respective company a folder containing information on their imminent itinerary as well as on the history, geography, culture, climate, and "do's and don'ts" of Thailand. As a cultural "primer," the informational folder affords those with the desire and time to learn about Thailand the opportunity to gain a "privileged" level of knowledge possessed by few people, including even those who have visited Thailand. Second, Exclusive and Backdoor employ foreign tour leaders who enjoy extensive local connections, and can share their personal relationships with adventurer customers searching for authenticity. By arranging accommodation with local families, or in family-owned bungalows, Exclusive and Backdoor engineer a feeling of community among their clients, who deeply appreciate the cozy, intimate, and *non-commercialized* atmosphere created by staying with "grandma," and other "dear old friends" of the companies and their tour leaders. John Lawson, a Backdoor tour leader, clearly understands his role and the importance of providing adventurers with a family ambience:

> Our customers are not just looking for someone who gets them to their flights on time. They're looking for someone who can say, 'Hey, this is my friend Khun Rhad in Chiang Mai, for example, and this is his family and that's his son and he had a cold last week and he's really looking better this week'...They really want that intimate contact with people, and one of the first things I say to my clients when they arrive here is 'what I am is a liaison to the people and if you're not interested in the people, you may as well have gone to Florida for your vacation. What I can offer you is the people of Thailand' (John Lawson, pers.comm.).

This desire to promote deep-seated, and thus authentic, feelings of family and community also leads to the deliberate concealment of commercialized interactions. Since all accommodations are pre-paid as part of the cost of their trip, adventurers avoid having to pay cash for room and, often but not always, board. Instead, it is the tour leaders who pay a per person, per evening price to hosts, such as hilltribe headmen, "grandma," or other locally-based owners of small bungalow operations. At the same time, tour leaders ensure that this commercialized transaction occurs beyond the immediate gaze of adventurers who, buoyed by feelings of authenticity and genuine cultural interaction, are successfully convinced that their

overnight homestays stem from an intrinsic Thai hospitality and generosity rather than from the financial rationale actually driving these, and other, encounters between adventurers and Thais. Preservation of the traditional, rural, and non-commercialized nature of host families and entire villages forms a critical component of supplying authenticity to adventurers, but as another tour leader from Exclusive confided, this occasionally proves challenging in light of contemporary circumstances shaping everyday life in Southeast Asia:

> In Bali, they've had tourism for ages, and they know exactly what they're doing. We have a problem...we have to call them ahead of time in Bali because they need time to put their Mercedes under huts and take off their t-shirts, put on traditional clothes when tourists come through. The families we've been dealing with for years...are great, but we have to make sure that everyone knows when we're coming...I think it's hilarious but I don't tell our customers (Heather Karras, pers.comm.).

Regardless of the myriad techniques employed by Exclusive and Backdoor to convey authenticity, adventurers fail to achieve it not only on their own poverty-centred, tradition-based, and non-commercialized terms, but also on those which fasten authenticity to a wide range of everyday experiences. Other than the "staged" nature of seemingly spontaneous and genuine interactions between adventurers and their Thai hosts, a majority of Exclusive and Backdoor customers confessed embarrassingly that, aside from a quick glimpse, they "didn't quite get around to reading through the information folder...it's just too huge." The positive *feelings* of responsibility and appeasement of tourist guilt that come with receiving the folder clearly outweigh actual efforts to *become* better informed about Thailand than other, more "typical" tourists. The belief that foreign tour leaders possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and local contacts to provide authentic experiences also proves mistaken when bearing in mind the high turnover, and limited Thai language skills, of most tour leaders, particularly those from Exclusive Explorations. Unlike Backdoor Adventures, which employs ten well-paid tour leaders with an average of ten to fifteen years of experience living in their destination countries, Exclusive frequently hires previous backpackers and former customers hoping to finance their travels in Southeast Asia. Besides often speaking no more than a few key phrases of the local language, Exclusive tour leaders come and go on an annual basis: out of Exclusive's thirty 1998 tour leaders in Southeast Asia, only ten have been with the company for more than a year, and not one single guide from the 1996 program remained with Exclusive in 1998. This rapid turnover, coupled with the frequent swapping of tour leaders from one Southeast Asian

destination to the next, casts serious doubt on the supposed personal connections, intricate local knowledge, and extensive work and travel experience possessed by Exclusive tour leaders.

The semblance of spontaneity and flexibility on Exclusive and Backdoor journeys confirms to adventurers the inherent superiority of "alternative" forms of travel, but in actual practice, every portion of a trip follows a tight itinerary. Further, the self-professed independence of adventurers is contradicted by the sight of dirty and tired groups of whining "travellers" shuffling closely behind their tour leader, often less a "window" to authenticity than a teacher or parent leading a group of children by the hand. Despite the rigorous operational style and length of travel associated with adventurers and backpackers, respectively, the depth of knowledge demonstrated by each generally fails to surpass that of many mass ecotourist customers of Jaidee and Trekkers. Rather than deriving from tourist "types," therefore, awareness and knowledge of Thai history, politics, geography, and "culture" depends on the individual tourist in question: empirical evidence corroborating stereotypes of privileged backpacker and adventurer insight or, conversely, mass tourist ignorance was certainly rare. Aside from the relatively basic knowledge of Thailand possessed by *all* tourists in Thailand, the three groups share the same obstacles to achieving authenticity. Foreigners, and more specifically *farangs*, mediate the experiences of most "Western" tourists, from backpackers who rely invariably on "rough guides" written by *farangs* such as Joe Cummings,[8] to mass ecotourists who purchase trips and receive information through *farang* tour representatives in Phuket, and finally to adventurers shepherded around by Exclusive and Backdoor tour leaders, thirty-nine of which (out of a total of forty for both companies) are *farangs*. Whereas mass ecotourists eschew sweeping claims regarding their achievement of authenticity, adventurers and backpackers continue to boast of "genuine" travel within clearly-staged, Eurocentric environments. Indeed, as I sat with Exclusive adventurers in remote rafthouses in Khao Sok National Park playing drinking games and listening to Irish folk music, Spanish ballads, Billy Holliday, and the soundtrack to Moulin Rouge, I reflected quietly on the ironic claims being made around me regarding cultural understanding and authentic social interaction with "real" Thais.

[8] In addition to constantly revising his backpacker classic, *Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit to Thailand*, Joe Cummings also currently works for an adventure travel company as a tour leader in Burma and Thailand.

"That's the only reason we're here"

The two previous sections have demonstrated the disparate meanings of - and feelings of achievement concerning - authenticity, but I was also interested in assessing the importance of authenticity to different tourists. The overall weight given to experiencing or "achieving" authenticity follows a similar pattern to general conceptualizations of authenticity. Just as traditional, rural, and poor conceptions of authenticity underline the beliefs of many tourists, despite significant inter-group differences, a large proportion of tourists interviewed and spoken to expressed a concern for achieving authenticity, a goal thought worthy albeit difficult to accomplish. Thus, an anti-tourist discourse, which decries "typical," lazy, and insensitive (mass) tourists engaging in hedonistic, self-indulged behaviour, encourages "Western" visitors to Thailand to characterize "meeting the locals," and other signifiers of authenticity, as often the only, or by far among the most important, reasons to travel. Whether people actually believe this or not proves insignificant, a moot point, since the ethos of tourist guilt and a "Western" anti-tourist discourse means that admitting an utter lack of concern for meeting "locals" or "getting away" from poolsides and tourist traps would surely appear ignorant, crass, and "typical." According to every single tourist encountered during my research, authenticity, variously defined, represented an important travel motivation to be sought out whenever possible.

Most tourists recognize the importance of authenticity, but the degree to which the enjoyment of a holiday depends on "achieving" genuine, authentic experiences again varies widely across the three tourist groups. In many ways, contrary to actual behaviour (discussed below), backpackers rarely claim to travel for any other reason than to enter a realm of authenticity inaccessible to those trapped within the contrived confines of organized mass tourism. Authenticity occupies such a prominent place in the professed motivations of backpackers that aberrant, "harsh" travel experiences are prized for their value as atypical, and therefore *anti*-mass, markers:

> After bungalow owners start going away from backpackers and start building big hotels and get the high rise tourist crowd in, they start giving unnecessary services like having your room cleaned every single day, it's just...you know, like in Ko Pangyan [Ko Pangngan, near Ko Samui], you get a broom in your bungalow and nobody's going to...if your room is filthy dirty no-one's going to come and clean it. You know, I woke up one morning and there's this awful stench in the room, I couldn't understand what it was, the stench, and it was

> there for about three days and actually I tried to find out what this smell was so I turned the room upside down. There's nothing there so I look underneath the bungalow and a dog had died underneath the bungalow...it was great, I couldn't believe it (English backpacker staying at Rai Leh, Krabi).

The importance of achieving authenticity among backpackers stems not from a true desire to understand "real" Thais, but rather from a concern for acting, and most importantly appearing, different from all other foreigners travelling in Thailand either as "ordinary" mass tourists or as organized adventure travellers.

Like backpackers, adventurers place great emphasis on the achievement of authenticity, but contrary to long-term travellers on a tight budget, adventurers pay high prices for short trips, thereby choosing to *purchase* authenticity from companies who can "deliver" genuine experiences. As mentioned already, tour leaders serve a monumental role in providing authenticity, and the only true difference between Exclusive and Backdoor centres on the quality of tour leaders, accounting in turn for the higher prices paid on average by Backdoor customers.[9] As Chris Johnson, a Backdoor guide, explained:

> Our customers expect a lot, and at the prices they pay, the deserve a lot. That's why the tour leader is so important. We stay in very basic accommodations so the money doesn't go to paying for that, it goes to paying me (Chris Johnson, pers.comm.).

Since authenticity implies "rough" travel to remote traditional communities, adventurers tolerate the squalor, inconvenience, and danger associated with their efforts to achieve authenticity. These efforts, however, are endured but definitely not enjoyed, as was demonstrated by constant complaints about feeling hungry and tired, having to sleep on floors with cockroaches, and going for days without a proper bath. After finishing off two weeks of "rough" travel with a three-day "mini-adventure" with Jaidee Kayak, several Backdoor customers complained that despite the value of their experience, they had become "burned out" and even "templed out" after seeing one cultural site and Buddhist temple after another. Staying overnight with three different hilltribes for three consecutive evenings also taxed the energy of Backdoor adventurers, but ultimately boosted the authentic merit of their trip,

[9] Both companies charge over $2,000 for a two-week trip, but Backdoor charges in American dollars (versus Australian dollars with Exclusive) and does *not* include airfare (whereas Exclusive does), making its trips between twenty and thirty percent more expensive than Exclusive's.

therefore offsetting any discomfort.[10] Although the elements of danger and adventure frame the majority of their experiences, adventurers can find solace in the knowledge that while searching out the "raw" face of Asia, the presence of an established and experienced tour leader will ensure that the temporary escape from modern life will not be *too* dangerous, unfamiliar, or inconvenient.[11] Nonetheless, putting up with "authentic," yet cushioned, hardships is all part of the adventure game and, according to one media executive travelling with his family on Backdoor, "seeing the real Thailand is what it's all about - that's the only reason we're here."

Although mass ecotourists, like the other two groups, feel that authenticity enhances the overall travel experience, its importance varies among individuals. Despite admitting that short trips prevent the realization of "true," or myriad layers of, authenticity, many Jaidee and Trekkers customers feel that sincere cultural interaction remains the only reason one should travel. More often than not, however, mass ecotourists travelling on short, packaged holidays claim that the lack of authenticity on their trip fails to spoil or detract in any way from the overall enjoyment of their trip. Thus, the hypothetical importance of authenticity to mass ecotourists outweighs both its actual influence on a tourist's perception of the quality of travel and the lengths to which individual tourists will go to satisfy their demands for authenticity. Further, some individuals travelling as mass, packaged ecotourists with Jaidee and Trekkers had, during previous trips to Thailand, travelled as either adventurers and backpackers, where the importance and even perceptions of authenticity differed considerably from attitudes possessed while participating in a "mass" holiday. An Australian couple travelling on a Jaidee daytrip, for example, had travelled years ago throughout Thailand on an Exclusive Explorations trip, and despite boasting excitedly "we were the only whites they saw for seven years" when discussing their trek in northern Thailand, they remained untroubled at this later stage about the dearth of "authentic" opportunities offered by their current packaged holiday.

Having reviewed the impressions of, and attitudes towards, authenticity possessed by distinct groups of "alternative" tourists in southern Thailand, I believe several patterns

[10] Ironically, many adventurers and backpackers mock mass tourists for accepting only brief and superficial encounters - adventurers travelling with both Exclusive and Backdoor clearly prefer to "see" three tribes than to stay with one for three days, which would in fact allow them to achieve more than a shallow understanding.

[11] In its brochure, Exclusive also reassures potential customers that not all aspects of the trip will involve harsh, "authentic" travel: "Sometimes - especially in cities - we stay in centrally located hotels with swimming pools and all mod cons. Outside the bigger centres we usually stay in small friendly guesthouses that are chosen not so much for their facilities, but for the abundance of local character and smiling faces" (from Exclusive Explorations 1997 Brochure).

contribute to our overall understanding of the relationship between authenticity and travel. First, authenticity carries different meanings for different individuals, particularly those belonging to the mass ecotourist group. Although adventurers and backpackers often follow discernible trends, there are no *necessary* correlations between an individual tourist's dress, accommodations, length of trip, or nature of holiday and their conceptions of the meaning or importance of authenticity - predictions based solely on the group to which a tourist belongs are often incorrect and overlook exceptions and subtle variations based, among other things, on experience, occupation, nationality, or age. Second, the importance of authenticity varies not only between the three groups, but especially *among* mass ecotourists, many of whom once shared backpacker or adventurer expectations in the past but feature a more relaxed approach while travelling for other reasons as a mass tourist in Phuket. Lastly, feelings of achievement and accomplishment correspond closely to tourist group, dissipating as one moves from backpackers to adventurers to mass ecotourists. Out of all three groups, only mass ecotourists consistently question both prevailing exoticized and traditional views of authenticity, and the ability of "outsiders" to experience authentic Thai life. Contrary to many travel writers, tourism scholars, and "alternative" tourists, therefore, mass ecotourists in Phuket display an ambiguous, rich, and personally-honest interpretation of authenticity in the southern Thai context.

Tourists, travellers, and barbarians

Aside from supposedly travelling for hedonistic, selfish, and simplistic reasons, the conventional international mass tourist has taken a proverbial beating for behaving in crass and patronizing ways towards hosts. Labelled self-deceiving, infantile, ignorant, neurotic, and even racist, mass tourists travel in a "Western" discursive environment mapped out early by authors such as Turner and Ash (1975: 11), who wrote disparagingly: "It is perfectly legitimate to compare tourists with barbarian tribes." Again, though, as with motivational stereotypes, months of empirical research in southern Thailand disaffirmed my expectations, demonstrating that whatever broad conclusions we *can* draw apply evenly to all groups of tourists instead of remaining fixed to the vilified mass tourist alone.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, tourists often undergo a series of ritual inversions along such dimensions as environment, class, lifestyle, "civilization," health, and formality

(Graburn, 1983). These key inversions, or reversals, in normal patterns of behaviour often occur in clothing, time schedules, and sexual relationships. This prevailing "holiday mentality" underpins the actions of all three groups of tourists, and the focus on fun, adventure, and entertainment is just as evident among adventurers and backpackers as it is among mass ecotourists. The highlight of most Jaidee daytrips centres on aspects of fun and adventure, with the jovial personality of the guides heavily influencing customers' enjoyment of the trip. The proliferation of cultural demonstrations, shopping centres, transvestite cabarets, and other venues of entertainment in Phuket illustrate the well-documented focus of tourism on temporary escapes from work, home, and other "normal" spheres of activity. The infamous "Brits Abroad" image, however, although evident in most tourist destinations, fails to materialize during Jaidee Kayak trips where the majority of passengers behave respectfully and graciously towards the Thai staff.[12] Aside from occasional incidents, interactions between mass ecotourists and Thais foster a sense of congeniality, made possible by the brief and amicable interpersonal interactions taking place in the "environmental bubble" found aboard the Jaidee boats.

Despite the lofty claims made by many adventurers and their "leaders" concerning respectful and "appropriate" behaviour, the holiday mentality as exemplified by drinking and sexual "freedom" especially, forms a critical and visible component of adventure travel in northern and southern Thailand. Tourism in Thailand has long been associated with prostitution, and the high ratio of male to female tourists hints at a connection between the *image* of Thai promiscuity and the pattern of international tourism arrivals. Thus, regardless of its inaccuracy and simplicity, Thailand's "mass" sex tourism image, a combination of the exotic and erotic, continues to shape the industry by attracting certain types of international tourists to Thailand. "Alternative" tourism marketing materials tend to single out mass tourism as the unilateral cause of social disruption, but the ecotourism industry in Phuket also shares an important social and sexual connection to the image and practice of the conventional sex tourism industry in Thailand. The *farang* population of Phuket, which has proven instrumental to the development of ecotourism in the region, is overwhelmingly male: nearly eighty percent of Phuket's registered *farang* residents are men (Government of Thailand, 1991a: 33-43).

[12] The only exception to this occurred on my very first trip with Jaidee, during which five Liverpudlian "lager louts" and their temporary Thai "companions" proceeded to drink and shout obnoxiously for the entire day.

Virtually every *farang* involved with ecotourism companies in Phuket has either married a Thai woman or engaged in several relationships with local Thai women. While the extent to which ecotourism-related *farangs* in Phuket participate in the thriving local sex trade remains unknown - and difficult to ascertain - one could argue that a certain image of Thailand has served to attract the majority of Phuket's *farang* population, ecotourism operators included. The close relationship between the Hash House Harriers and some of Phuket's most prominent ecotourism companies also hints at a sexual connection, since the Harriers share many subtle, and occasionally explicit, connections to the island's "adult entertainment" industry.[13]

The social and sexual relationships that characterize conventional "mass" sex tourism in Thailand also form an important, yet rarely discussed or reported, component of the "alternative" tourism industry in Phuket and surrounding provinces. However, unlike the specific gender structure of "mass" sex tourism, where interactions centre on foreign men and mostly young Thai women, the relationships that characterize adventure travel and mass ecotourism in Phuket stem from fleeting encounters between female tourists, both "Western" and Japanese, and young Thai men working either directly or marginally in the region's budding "alternative" tourism industry. For example, the intimate social interaction between tourist and host that distinguishes Nature Paradise in Krabi as an "alternative" site is taken to literal extremes, as a steady stream of female guides and adventurers from Exclusive Explorations converge with a small but busy collection of local Thai "beach boys," resulting in frequent encounters of the most "intimate" variety.

The extra-curricular activities of Exclusive Explorations, a company that strives to "respect local cultures" and "come into close contact with the local people, history, and culture," remain the source of mild amusement among local Thais and *farang* expatriates. The following account, given by an anonymous female *farang* resident with a keen knowledge of tourism in southern Thailand - and corroborated on several occasions by local Thai guides, male Exclusive tour leaders, and even by Rex Gilmore himself - provides a glimpse into the sexual spin-offs of the "alternative" tourism activities of adventurers and their tour leaders:

[13] Hashing began in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 1938, when a group of British colonial officials and expatriates founded a running club called the Hash House Harriers (HHH). HHH runs were patterned after the traditional British paper chase. A "hare" was given a head start to blaze a trail, marking his way with shreds of paper, all the while pursued by a shouting pack of "harriers." A typical hash today is a loosely-organized group of 20 to 40 people who meet weekly or biweekly to chase the hare. Beer drinking, partying, and celebration are key ingredients of all Harrier clubs, and the Phuket chapter of HHH operates essentially as an expatriate *farang* fraternity of men, many of whom remain deeply involved in the local go-go bar scene.

> I think fleeting affairs happen a lot. There's a lot of sex going on with tourists and guides here for just one night. The Exclusive leaders, the Exclusive girls have a wild reputation because of Nature Paradise. I don't know absolutely everything that goes on at Nature Paradise, but I know that there are a couple of male studs, male prostitutes that...I know there's a lot of sex going on...it's more like *Sex* Paradise. All the Exclusive girls have slept with someone there, and the guys [at Nature Paradise] have slept with loads of Exclusive women, guides and tourists. You see, a lot of people come and they're on holiday and it's like a fantasy land, they can do whatever they want and no-one knows because they don't have their social group...they wouldn't do these things in Australia or America because they couldn't. If you carry on that way at home, it's the same cultural standards as here for Thais...because they'd worry about their reputations, but here, it doesn't matter because nobody knows.

Casual encounters between female tourists and young Thai men also permeate daily interactions between some mass ecotourists and the guides of Phuket-based ecotourism companies. A large number of guides working for Jaidee Kayak, for example, are unmarried men between the ages of twenty and twenty-four who have either pursued or initiated personal relationships with female daytrip passengers, especially young single Japanese women, by offering to "show them around" the island on their own personal time.

I should note that many of these relationships, unlike those involving Thai "beach boy gigolos" and the female tour leaders and customers of adventure travel companies, last beyond the short duration of a tourist's holiday. Several Jaidee guides maintain contact with former passengers/girlfriends, and at least two have visited girlfriends in Japan. Judging from the seriousness with which some guides have discussed with me their former and current relationships with foreign women, a few even displaying love letters from former passengers as unsolicited proof, it is obvious that many of the social and sexual relationships that form between some "mass ecotourists" and Jaidee guides are far from fleeting or "meaningless."[14] In addition to the underlying economic "push" and "pull" factors attracting Thai labour into the tourism industry, a social, and often sexual, undertone augments the economic motivations of many young male Thai guides. As one Jaidee guide - who like the majority of Jaidee staff originates from the Muslim community of Ko Yao - explained:

> A long time ago before Jaidee Kayak, I left home and went to Malaysia to work illegally on a palm plantation, then I came home to help my family fish for a year before going into the army. After the army, I worked in Phi Phi [islands] as a water scooter operator and then as a diver. When I was working in Phi Phi, I looked around me and saw topless women lying everywhere on the

[14] See Cohen (1986) for a discussion of similar relationships between *farangs* and Thai women.

beach, and I said to myself 'I think tourism is good for me.'[15]

Growing up in a Muslim community with firm restrictions on pre-marital sexual relations, this guide, along with many others, express satisfaction at the sexual openness and freedom afforded by working amongst foreign female tourists. Thus, although the sexual motivations of Phuket ecotourism guides, such as those at Jaidee, remain largely hidden from the average tourist, they nonetheless often play a role in the private motivations of many young, unattached, and suddenly "liberated" local Thai ecotourism guides in southern Thailand.

"Alternative" forms of sex tourism associated with adventurers and mass ecotourists stand apart from the more conventional manifestations of sex tourism documented extensively elsewhere (see Cohen, 1996 and Truong, 1990). Since sexual relationships formed in the course of participating in "alternative" tourism take place outside of a formal, institutionalized apparatus, they differ from conventional sex tourism arrangements which unfold within complex national and international networks of production, advertising, and distribution. "Alternative" relationships usually lack commercialized sexual transactions, focusing instead on "spontaneous" encounters between consenting Thai men and female tourists travelling to Thailand for reasons other than the explicit pursuit of sex.[16] Lastly, the particular gender direction of "alternative" sex tourism reinforces stereotypes about "Western" female promiscuity among Thais, and thus serves to differentiate foreign women from women in Thailand, who continue to suffer from sexual double standards and expectations of chastity. Regardless of the various differences between "alternative" sexual encounters and conventional, organized sex tourism, "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand - as represented by ecotourism companies and their interactions with mass ecotourists, adventurers, and tour leaders - reflects and reproduces the liminal subversions and social relationships interweaving virtually all forms of travel. Despite the lack of *formal* recognition among practitioners and tourism scholars, the social, inter-personal, and sexual aspects of "alternative" tourism in and around Phuket essentially link it to the region's mass tourism industry, and highlight the contradictory behaviour of many supposedly "sensitive" adventurers travelling in southern Thailand.

[15] All direct quotations from Thais presented in this thesis are grammatically-correct English versions of actual comments, which for the most part were given as a mixture of Thai and choppy English.

[16] This is not to deny, however, that, as with conventional sex tourism, notions of Thai exoticism and eroticism probably fuel many of the relationships between mostly "Western" female tourists and attractive young Thai men.

Other than frequent and "authentic" sexual encounters between adventurers and Thais, drinking games and other forms of "party" behaviour clash with the message of cultural sensitivity and assimilation promoted by Exclusive and Backdoor marketing. On one occasion, for example, after serendipitously encountering an Exclusive group travelling by train from Bangkok to Surat Thani in southern Thailand, I was greeted by a drunk group of twelve, mostly female, passengers, one of which, sipping a Carlsberg beer from a straw for "quicker effect," recounted a story about her first few days in Bangkok:

> Before our trip started officially, a few of us went to Patpong [Bangkok's red light district] and wanted to take a look, but after drinking all night, I couldn't remember how to get back to Khao San, I was so hammered. Somehow, a driver must have dropped me off at Khao San in the early morning...I had no idea where I was.

Exclusive tour leaders ignore, and often encourage, the actions of their customers, but in those rare instances when standards are enforced, adventurers resent the moral monitoring of their behaviour. Adventurers commonly complain of always being told how to act or what to say, and many admitted in private conversations with me and with other customers that the constant supervision of behaviour by some tour leaders strips some of the fun out of travel, and is, in their minds at least, completely unnecessary. Clearly, adventurer claims to act responsibly thus overshadow actual efforts to bring behaviour in line with local cultural expectations.

In addition to possessing a hedonistic, party-oriented mindset, many adventurers also conveniently forget what they are (supposedly) taught about conservative Thai attitudes regarding female nudity and sexual impropriety. The issue that most vexed those Thais with which I spoke was topless bathing, and although many young male Thais working at Jaidee and other tourism companies enjoy the gratuitous exhibitionism of female *farang* tourists, the lack of awareness and sensitivity about improper dress displayed by many adventurers and backpackers causes considerable resentment. Because it is not expressed by Thais due to cultural notions of social harmony, this resentment goes unnoticed by tourists as they continue to violate local standards of moral decency. The behavioural transgressions of adventurers not only lead to social conflict - ironically, considering the purportedly "appropriate" nature of "alternative" tourism - but also perpetuate stereotypes of "Western" women, stereotypes that expand on more conventional images of wealthy foreign mass tourists. A female volunteer from England working in southern Thailand commented on the *mis*adventures of adventurers

and the consequences of their behaviour:

> I would say that of all the groups I've seen, they're [Exclusive] the most culturally insensitive. Every single time I've seen Exclusive in the rafthouses [in Khao Sok], they sit around with tiny bikinis and topless and get drunk and skinny dip in the lake. The young Thais love it at the the rafthouses...but I get annoyed...As a woman, you have to cope with people's perceptions of Western women, and so I get annoyed when Western women act in a certain way that reinforces people's images, so they [Thais] treat me disrespectfully. With tourists, that's really irritating but they don't know any differently, but for the guides [tour leaders] who have been coming here for years, they should know better. It's like a theme park - one day they're here and the next they're gone, so they don't actually spend that much more time than other tourists getting to know the area.

In spite of the long periods of time spent travelling throughout Thailand and staying in small, locally-owned establishments, backpackers represent the least sensitive and respectful of all three tourist groups. The search for fun and novel experiences typical of mass tourists and adventurers becomes, with many backpackers, an interest in underground counter-cultural environments, and leads to a strange fascination with local narcotic practices such as smoking opium with the headman of a hilltribe. Participation in the "hippie" lifestyle, along with obsessive haggling over small amounts of money, has created a poor reputation for backpackers among many Thais. Rather than serving a role in cross-cultural communication and understanding, therefore, many backpacker enclaves such as the Khao San Road area of Bangkok and Rai Leh/Ao Nang in Krabi have become sites of cultural confrontation between niggardly backpackers and jaded, abnormally-rude Thais. The chimera of responsibility, sensitivity, and altruism surrounding the travel patterns of backpackers have in recent years come under increasing criticism (see Llewellyn Smith, 1996 and Wheeller, 1993). For example, McLaren (1998: 83) writes:

> They [backpackers] tend to stay in cheaper hotels and stay in cheaper restaurants owned by locals and so get closer to the local culture. These young vacationers like to distinguish themselves as "travellers," not "tourists." They live by budget travel guides and often flock to the same inexpensive areas of villages and cities. But in "frontiers" like Kathmandu, Goa, and Bangkok, where a backpacking subculture has existed since it became part of the "hippie" routes in the 1960s, such travellers have a reputation for stinginess and rude, hard bargaining. In Indonesia I met a British cyclist who was cycling around the world. He was proud that he had spent virtually no money on his trip. He lived with families that took him in every night from the road and ate what was offered to him by people he met along his way. He had not worked in any of the places he had visited. He was extremely happy that he had just bargained a local merchant down from the equivalent of ten cents to a penny for four pieces of bread. I thought it was rather odd that he was taking advantage of everyone

he met and wouldn't even pay a fair price to a poor baker.

Although the "holiday mentality" manifests itself in specific ways among backpackers in Thailand, the markedly anti-social atmosphere of the budget travel "scene" creates, in turn, misunderstandings between tourist and host which, although possible in different guises within mass tourism interactions, stand alone as distinctive examples of deleterious social impacts on host communities.

Beyond various liminal subversions and an interest in fun, the three groups of tourists share several other behavioural characteristics. First, a general feeling of "tourist guilt," induced by the dominant anti-tourist discourse, encourages people to behave in certain ways as a means of both countering negative stereotypes and reversing previous harms committed in the name of tourism. However, the nature of this reaction differs between groups, ranging from guarded but polite engagement on the part of mass ecotourists, to altruistic claims and inappropriate, contradictory behaviour from adventurers, and finally to the hostile and often peculiar attitudes of backpackers. Second, although not readily apparent among backpackers, the tourist preoccupation with "capturing" moments on camera and, more recently, hand-held "camcorders," dominates the activities of many mass ecotourists and adventurers. Only a tiny percentage of mass ecotourists travelling on Jaidee trips choose not to bring along cameras or video-recorders, and the "shooting" of footage often proceeds uninterrupted during on-board lead guide presentations and meals; some passengers even photograph or film such petty details as meals. This fixation on photography extends to adventurers as well, many of whom travel with expensive, technologically-sophisticated equipment. The inherent power relations exercised through photography (see Sontag, 1979) characterize the behaviour of adventurers more than any other group due to a strong desire to encounter and "capture" on film smiling, happy, and passive "natives." Lastly, the inability of all tourists to project an entirely accurate or complete representation of their "ordinary" life at home hinders bilateral cross-cultural communication between tourist and host. Mass ecotourists, on the whole, accept this and avoid attempts to penetrate these insurmountable barriers, but adventurers and especially backpackers believe (publicly at least) that their "alternative" approach to travel results in a sincere form of communication with Thais. However, coupled with the various cultural obstacles to understanding Thai society discussed in Chapter Two, the inappropriate and

purposely-atypical behaviour of adventurers and backpackers undermines the veracity of these claims.

7.3 Social Differentiation, Spatial Separation, and the Pursuit of Status

Although the motivational determinants of travel and the behavioural patterns of tourists produce interesting patterns clustered around the three tourist categories identified in this research, the desired *result* of travel in terms of social status and the acquisition of "cultural capital" also serves as an axis of inter-group differentiation. Mowforth and Munt (1998: 136) indicate the importance of status in both traditional and contemporary tourism:

> Of course, travel has always been an expression of taste and a way of establishing class status...But, with the rapid growth in the numbers of people taking holidays, it has never been so widely used as at present. Put simply, the democratisation of tourism has created a social headache when it comes to classes attempting to differentiate themselves from one another.

Class and status differentiation play a role in the motivations and behaviour of all three tourist groups but, once again, to varying degrees. By asking individual tourists several questions relating to such things as the importance of having unique experiences, or the value of holidays in terms of "being able to tell people about it," I attempted to assess the importance of social differentiation in the various travel styles of the three groups. The group least concerned with status comprises mass ecotourists, packaged holidaymakers simply diversifying their overall trip by participating in fun, nature-oriented daytrips with Jaidee Kayak, Trekkers, or any other of the twenty Phuket-based ecotourism companies. However, this is not to say that differentiation plays no role at all in mass ecotourist motivations. Jaidee customers would often comment on how their holiday to Thailand had not only allowed them to "do" and see different places, cultures, or societies, but had also given them great stories to share with friends back home, the majority of whom have never travelled to Thailand. Notching proverbial countries on one's travel belt is important to many mass ecotourists, and frequent verbal recitals of people's travel resumés demonstrates the importance of informing others of the scope of one's travel experiences.

Mass ecotourist comments such as "wait till the folks back home see this," and "I came to Thailand because it's on my list of paradise locations" reveal the inherent social value of first, possessing the financial means to travel at all and, second, of visiting a maximum number

of countries in one's lifetime. To those mass ecotourists who relish travelling to places unvisited by friends and acquaintances, an interesting dilemma arises based on the need to balance a location's exotic cachet with a certain popular familiarity. In short, marking notches on one's mass ecotourist belt impresses others only if those notches mean something, which in most cases implies forming a part of the collective global touristic imagination. This is clearly evident in this telling statement, made by a middle-aged Englishman travelling with Jaidee:

> I came here [Ao Phangnga] because this is the area where that James Bond film was shot. I've taken loads of photographs of the area to show my friends, especially James Bond Island...there will be a lot of envious people back home. I didn't really want to go to places like Phi Phi islands because it's spoiled and crowded, and besides, people at home would say 'Huh? Where is that?' Have Canadians heard of this area?

Notwithstanding the social status desires of some mass ecotourists, it is important to note that not everybody possesses an interest in impressing friends, and more often than not, individuals express either a curious amusement about, or admiration for, backpackers and others perceived to be brave (or crazy) enough to visit isolated, unfamiliar locations. Despite occasionally striving to impress others with their travel knowledge or experience, the majority of mass ecotourists interact amicably with one another and with Thai staff, creating a pleasant, non-competitive atmosphere. When asked whether she enjoys going to places nobody else has ever visited, an Australian manager staying in Phuket for a work-related conference politely interrupted, stating firmly: "I don't want to go home and have a story that my friends have never heard before. That's not an interest of mine. I don't feel the need to outdo them."

The status concerns of adventurers and backpackers are best understood and contextualized when placed within the context of work done by, among others, Betz (1992), Bourdieu (1984), Featherstone (1991), and Urry (1990).[17] These authors posit the emergence, within late capitalist societies, of a postmodern society in which consumption serves to mark distinctions between class fractions. An important distinction is made here between economic classes and status groups: the former represent groups based on property and market relations, while the latter represent communities based on similar conventions, lifestyles, and modes of consumption. These authors link the idea of subjective identity based on common consumption patterns to the dynamics of status group formation within

[17] I include this discussion of literature here rather than in Chapter Three since it directly underpins this chapter's analysis of certain "alternative" tourist practices.

contemporary capitalist systems. As Bourdieu (1984) demonstrates, classes wage hegemonic battles to distinguish themselves from the rest of society. Classes, and class fractions, establish distinctions based on occupation, education, commodities, and consumption. Further, Bourdieu argues that the *habitus* - the unconscious dispositions, classificatory schemes, and taken-for-granted preferences - of a particular social group provides the basis for class differentiation and informs the struggle between classes to impose their particular tastes as *the* legitimate tastes (Featherstone, 1991).

Framing analysis within the context of status group identity and classificatory modes of consumption, Mowforth and Munt (1998) and Sharpley and Sharpley (1997) argue that "alternative" tourism constitutes an attempt by members of the new middle classes, or "new petite bourgeoisie," to mark their distinction through unique modes of touristic consumption. By advocating the development of "new" forms of tourist consumption, "alternative" tourists aim to stand apart from working and (old) middle class individuals engaging in mass tourism. In addition, scarcity is guaranteed since participation in "alternative" tourism usually requires a certain level of financial resources, specialized cultural knowledge, or tourist limitations, as is demonstrated by the "carrying capacity" concept so vital to ecotourist discourse (Featherstone, 1991). Since only tourists who satisfy the above criteria can participate in "alternative" tourism, exclusion is established vis-à-vis mass tourism which, by definition, implies participation by a large, undifferentiated group of people. Seen in this light, "alternative" tourists appear to employ rhetorical claims to distinction in order to compensate for the corrosion of objective, economic measures of social stratification. According to these authors, therefore, the selfish status intentions behind seemingly altruistic tourist motivations render new middle class claims of a distinctly "alternative" tourism disingenuous and partisan.

Other than a handful of exceptions, the majority of adventurers travelling with Exclusive and Backdoor work as managers, teachers, business executives, and other professional fractions of the new middle classes. As members of certain highly-paid and stressful occupations such as banking and corporate management, many adventurers display a keen sense of competition centred on the acquisition of positional experiences. John Lawson, a tour leader with Backdoor, even expressed to me a measure of frustration at the incessant competition between his adventurer clients, stating that "many of our customers, especially Americans, view vacations as competitions where you must accomplish something all the time

and surpass other tourists constantly." In addition to decrying the appearance, preferences, and behaviour of "typical" tourists, adventurers achieve status differentiation by using presumably "authentic" experiences and a privileged style of travel to mark their social territory. Commenting that South America is the next region she wishes to "knock off" her list, a bank manager from Seattle alluded to the importance of rare, positional experiences:

> Finding untouched areas is crucial in travel, and Thailand is still pretty exotic. This [Backdoor] has been a very rustic trip and it took us off the track of regular tourism. I got a sense of what is was like to be in a hilltribe and I got a better picture of Thailand than most others...It's very important for me to go to places others haven't seen.

Like mass ecotourists, then, adventurers strive to check destinations off a mental wish-list and then communicate their experiences to friends or acquaintances. However, the nature of these lists, and the places they incorporate, include more than just an inventory of countries and familiar destinations. The notches marked by adventurers comprise mysterious, exotic places which are not only missing from the common tourist vocabulary, but are also difficult to access due to the financial, temporal, and logistical restraints facing other, more mundane mass tourists. The more obscure the destination and rigorous the travel, therefore, the better the social stature accorded to new middle class adventurers.

This perpetual search for "untouched" locations has become an increasingly difficult endeavour due to international tourism growth and globalization, but adventurers nonetheless pursue these *spatial* distinctions as complementary tools in an overall strategy of social class differentiation. Whether visiting a distant hilltribe village or an uninhabited island in Ao Phangnga, the mere absence of other tourists suffices in assuring customers of Exclusive and Backdoor that social *and* spatial distance are being maintained from the masses. As mentioned above, distinctions are sought as markers of class and status, but a certain degree of alienation from "Western" society also drives the demand for "alternative" forms of tourism (Cohen, 1979). As Cohen (1988: 374) explains, "the alienated modern tourist in quest of authenticity hence looks for the pristine, the primitive, the natural, that which is as yet untouched by modernity." I have already documented the conceptual links made by adventurers and backpackers between authenticity and premodern peoples and places. Another indication of this derives from the ambiguous and puzzled responses that I received to questions regarding the authenticity of an adventurer's home society. Americans, in particular, find it difficult to

define authenticity in a modern, "Western" society such as theirs, whereas Europeans embody their historical heritage and tend to view authenticity at home in pre-industrial and rural terms. The following comments, made by an American IBM executive and his wife travelling with their teenaged daughter, exemplify the alienation, competition, and desire for positional experiences that characterize adventurers:

> Father: We wanted to bring Becky [our daughter] on this trip because it's very unique. No-one from her high school will have done anything like this, no-one will have rafted down a river, no-one will have ridden elephants, no-one will have stayed with the hilltribes, no-one will have kayaked in these islands.
> Mother: Our life in Chicago is very comfortable, abundant, we have more than we need. In a way, I would like to have less material things because having so many things is a burden, so I like the idea of paring down and simplifying things. Our community is alright I suppose, but if your neighbour redecorates, you have to do the same. You know, keeping up with the Jones'...
> Father: Yeah, but the Jones' have never been to Thailand!

Although lacking the financial resources to purchase authentic, positional experiences in the same manner as adventurers, backpackers utilize an ostensibly-privileged knowledge and sensitivity to amplify the social prestige that instantly comes with the acquisition of cultural capital. However, this status differentiation is premised on the *rejection* of status, materialism, and mainstream social conventions, with counter-cultural lifestyles and experiences serving not only to rank backpackers internally but also to distinguish the group as a whole from the rest of "Western" society. Thus, rather than playing the status game by seeking prestigious short-term travel experiences, individual backpackers in Thailand accomplish their exclusive social position by transgressing and "letting go" of conventional "Western" notions of time, nutrition, comfort, and hygiene. The extent to which backpackers can suffer hardships, save money, and avoid the trappings of "Western" consumerism determines their position in the overall counter-cultural social hierarchy. This concern for demonstrating one's toughness and rejection of organized tourism leads to fierce competition among backpackers.[18] For example, an English backpacker who came to Thailand to "get as far away from civilization as possible" offered this lengthy, scathing indictment of other "travellers":

> There are places like Khao San Road where there are so many travellers that that in itself becomes like a nightmare. The thing is, although I travel with other travellers, I'm not a typical traveller because there's the stereotype that goes with being a traveller and I don't associate myself with that. The image is kind of like very hippie, very kind of anti-establishment, we are rebels, we don't

[18] Pico Iyer's (1988) *Video Night in Kathmandu* chronicles several amusing examples of backpackers in Asia attempting to outdo one another through the harshness of their travel experiences.

> agree. They have some kind of political agenda but if you try and push them on it, they've got no idea what the f**k they're talking about. It's kind of like they're designer hippies, they don't want to be part of the capitalism thing...Basically, what it boils down to is the fact they don't want to get a f**king job, that's what it is mate. They want to party and take it easy for the rest of their lives and they'll try to justify it. Lots of them are from middle class families and their parents are very wealthy. They're lazy, they don't want to get a job. They're so politically correct and right-on - they talk about, oh yeah, the environment. Whatever the buzzword is, that's your hippie traveller man. Oh, peace man and boom shiva. They're the kind of people who go to India for two days and walk around with a sarong on their heads and no shoes. They take the superficial things from each country. They say 'I'm an individual' but the fact is, they come here and all they want to do is hang around with all the other people that have that attitude, and take drugs they've brought with them because hippie travellers always have drugs and they just want to take their drugs and have their little techno party scene in the sunshine.

Despite coming from a privileged background, staying in Khao San Road, and engaging in the drug scene himself, the attitudes of this backpacker reflect the intense posturing and competition that take place among "travellers" in Thailand, as well as perhaps betraying a tinge of ambivalence and self-contempt. As with adventurers, therefore, backpackers aim for social status differentiation from the rest of society, but achieve this by going much further than any other tourist group in their attempts to escape "Western" capitalist society. Needless to say, though, just in case this experimental endeavour to "fight the power" goes too far, the American Express card at the bottom of one's grungy backpack will usually sort out most tricky situations.

Mass ecotourists, adventurers, and backpackers in southern Thailand not only employ discrete rhetorical, spatial, and stylistic strategies to delineate social rank, but also seek different *kinds* of status differentiation, based essentially on the class fractions against which superior status is measured. Many, but not all, mass ecotourist "daytrippers" hope to impress friends with recollections of trips to enticingly exotic, yet familiar, destinations. Mass ecotourist distinctions therefore operate within mainstream society, the majority of which has travelled relatively little beyond established mass tourism sites such as Hawaii, Disneyland, or Costa Brava. Adventurers extend this general search for status into a competition to outperform other cosmopolitan, jet-setting new middle class "trendies on the trail"[19] who have travelled extensively and possess a similar need for positional goods and experiences, including travel to places of which few others have heard. Finally, backpackers seek

[19] From Mowforth and Munt (1998: 125).

distinctions not within existing class fractions, but rather *from* "Western" society as a whole. By participating in "alternative" lifestyles, and specialized styles of travel, backpackers set out to prove that their vision of status relies on forms of behaviour antithetical to modern capitalism, and the various class fractions embodied therein.

In many ways, the adventurers and backpackers examined in this research fit rather closely into the classificatory frameworks established by Bourdieu (1984), Errington and Gewertz (1989), and Mowforth and Munt (1998). Bourdieu (1984) identifies two important class fractions: the new bourgeoisie and the new *petite* bourgeoisie. Possessing both economic and cultural capital, the new bourgeoisie can afford expensive holidays to areas made exclusive by the absence of other tourists. By contrast, as mentioned already, the new petite bourgeoisie - which comprise artists, media representatives, and members of other aestheticized professions - lack financial capital but establish class and status distinctions through positional goods, claims to specialized knowledge, and conspicuous modes of consumption. Thus, adventurers in southern Thailand, particularly those travelling with expensive companies such as Backdoor, represent the new bourgeoisie while backpackers, with their lack of financial resources and claims to immense cultural capital, form part of the new petite bourgeoisie. Contrasting new bourgeoisie ecotourists with new petite bourgeoisie *ego*tourists, Mowforth and Munt (1998: 134) describe some of the problems faced by the latter, problems which were confirmed in the comments and actions of backpackers interviewed for this research:

> [T]he burden of class differentiation weighs most heavily on this social class who must differentiate themselves from the working classes below (mass packaged tourists) and the high spending bourgeois middle classes above (ecotourists). Part of the reaction has been for the new petit bourgeoisie to deem themselves unclassifiable, 'excluded', 'dropped out' or perhaps, in popular tourism discourse, 'alternative.'

Surprisingly, the group of people most interested in the pursuit of status differentiation are not tourists at all, but rather the *farang* owners and managers of Phuket-based ecotourism companies. As big fish in a small pond, male *farang* expatriates in Phuket strive to stand out from their counterparts, and within the tourism industry, these efforts at distinguishing oneself take on a nasty tone due to overlapping, and therefore conflicting, business interests. This dislike of other *farang* operators usually centres on claims to be the "original" ecotourism company in Phuket, and when interviewed, most *farang* owners and managers would reveal underlying tension through barely-veiled shots hurled in the direction of other operators. As

mentioned in Chapter Two, the rivalry between *farang* expatriates made research difficult at times, but proved fruitful since it revealed the importance of status distinctions among a *farang* expatriate community in Phuket which, as a diverse collection of professionals, barflies, and long-term travellers, possesses even fewer markers of class and status than those communities producing distinction-seeking adventurers and backpackers.

Due perhaps to its recent achievements, and the high regional and international profile these have created, Jaidee has served as a target for criticism among other *farangs*, both those involved in tourism and those pursuing other recreational activities in Phuket. Other than the inevitable envy that success breeds, Jaidee seems to have split Phuket's *farangs* into two camps, one supporting the company's efforts, and the other remaining cynical of Jaidee's true commitment to Thailand and environmental conservation. In addition to condemning the negative advertising of Jaidee - which, as a result of being copied incessantly, has pursued a very publicized campaign against its competitors - some *farangs* residing in Phuket disdain the boastful tactics of the "Jaidee *farangs*." The following warning, given to me under similar circumstances by several other Jaidee detractors, illustrates many of the issues rallying some *farangs* against the company:

> You've got to be careful not to get sucked in by the whole Jaidee thing. I joke with my friends that what Jaidee does is not ecotours but egotours. The only thing that the people running it care about is self-promotion and gloating, you know, feeding their own egos. If they were really concerned about nature, they wouldn't have commercialized the *hongs* [caves], and despite what they may want to tell you, it's their fault more than the other companies' that there's no wildlife left in the *hongs*...One of the guys running Jaidee is really worried about his reputation, and unlike some other foreigners in Thailand like me, he is only here for the short term as something interesting to do. I know what he says about me behind my back, but I don't care. He's always trying to be the biggest and the baddest. His nickname in the Harriers is Four-by-Two because he bought this fancy jeep and he would bring it to all the races to show off in front of everybody. Jaidee has this aura around it, but if you live here for a while you begin to see through it. They should just stop pretending to be an environmental company since business is all they really care about.

It is likely that Jaidee's poor reputation among some *farangs* in Phuket has more to do with envy and individual animosities than anything related to the company itself, but the acrimonious atmosphere within Phuket's *farang* community betrays a keen competition for status differentiation. The reluctance of *farang* ecotourism operators to cooperate, or even in some cases speak to one another, replicates in many ways a colonial style of conflict whereby

foreign rajahs struggle for rare status, and financial, recognition within a competitive Phuket expatriate community.

7.4 Intersections Between Motivations, Behaviour, and Community-Based Development

Although many studies have examined either the social, economic, and environmental impacts of tourism or the behavioural characteristics and motivational profiles of tourists, few have attempted to link such seemingly-unrelated issues as lifestyle, consumption, and community development.[20] I have thus far used this chapter to explore the tourist perspective since, as Crick (1989) argues, the human factor remains critical to our understanding of tourism, but is yet continually neglected in many tourism studies. While the particular attitudes towards authenticity, patterns of behaviour, and concerns for status differentiation explored in this chapter point to interesting trends in and of themselves, their value to the overall aims of this thesis stems from their connection to broader issues of social change and community-based development in southern Thailand. Hence, this section assesses the ways in which discrepancies among the three groups of tourists lead to uneven prospects for community development, focusing specifically on the consequences of disparate approaches to authenticity.

As I indicated in the previous chapter, "alternative" tourism ventures in the Phuket area must necessarily build connections to the lucrative mass tourism industry in order to financially survive. Of all the three categories of "alternative" tourism examined in this research, mass ecotourism clearly carries the greatest promise for regional economic development. The reasons for this vary, as the preceding and following chapters illustrate, but from the perspective of the tourist, the most critical factor driving the potential success of mass ecotourism revolves around the relaxed attitudes and relatively unobtrusive, well-intentioned behaviour of its "mass," packaged customers. Mass ecotourist notions of cultural authenticity may, on a general level, incorporate popular discursive images of tradition, poverty, and "otherness," but frequent deviations from this simplistic conceptualization, coupled with a lax concern over whether or not authenticity is "achieved," provide Jaidee Kayak and other such

[20] As the work of Mowforth and Munt (1998), Sharpley and Sharpley (1997), and Stabler (1997) demonstrate, however, this has begun to change in recent years.

companies with enough freedom to offer trips which generate sufficient revenue to implement community development projects. By relying principally on the high-end of Phuket's tourism market, as embodied by packaged tour wholesalers and mass tourists staying in five-star resort areas,[21] Jaidee capitalizes on the willingness of organized mass tourists to pay high prices for "quality" travel experiences. Despite his ambivalent attitudes towards the international tourism industry, Miller has utilized the wealth of mass tourists in order to implement his "alternative" ideas:

> At the time I started Jaidee, the most expensive tour in Phuket was nine hundred baht [US$35]. I looked around and said 'hey, wait a minute.' We may be in Thailand but these customers are from the West. They may have been in Monaco on their last vacation, they may be going to Miami Beach on their next one. They're accustomed to quality and they're accustomed to paying for it, and they don't mind paying for it as long as you deliver on the quality (Jim Miller, pers.comm.).

Since few mass ecotourists seek out poverty-related manifestations of "authentic" Thai culture in their daily travel practices, the remoteness, lack of amenities, and absence of material signs of "Westernization" that characterize supposedly "authentic" people and places in Thailand fail to attract mass ecotourists, the majority of whom prefer convenient, fun, and adventurous experiences. Trekkers and Jaidee Kayak may certainly market the cultural rewards of their daytrips, but in actual practice, the desire for personal interactions with "authentic" Thais remains insignificant in the overall motivations or expectations of mass ecotourists.

In addition to entertaining notions of cultural authenticity flexible enough to allow operators to charge sufficient prices for service and quality of experience, mass ecotourists enjoy the feeling of *natural* authenticity provided by travelling to ostensibly-pristine environmental landscapes. A desire for natural authenticity thus complements a lack of concern for genuine cultural experiences on the part of mass ecotourists, and this carries even greater implications for community development since most tourists realize that the price for visiting natural sites such as Ao Phangnga must, by necessity, remain high. The *farang* owners of Jaidee and Trekkers capitalize on these tourist demands, and by conveying a sense of environmental urgency to their customers, mass ecotourism companies can justify charging high prices while also providing "feel-good" environmental experiences available only to those willing to pay for it. An interesting dynamic has therefore developed, whereby loose,

[21] A majority of Jaidee's customers stay in the Laguna Bay area of Phuket, an abandoned tin mine that now serves as an integrated resort complex housing over five international five-star hotels.

ambiguous attitudes to cultural authenticity stand juxtaposed against fixed expectations and eager anticipation of authentic natural experiences. Taken together, these opposing attitudes collectively allow mass ecotourism companies to generate revenue while concurrently promoting "alternative" principles such as education, flexibility, and individual attention.

The nature of mass ecotourist daytrips also fosters beneficial social experiences between tourist and host. The environmental "bubble" which, according to some critics (see McLaren, 1998), insulates mass tourists from the "natives," leads ironically, in the case of Jaidee Kayak, not to spurious or shallow personal encounters but rather to pleasant gatherings within a limited and controlled social space. Due to the Thai preference for surface harmony and social interactions which circumvent the personal, "inner" world, the short duration and pleasant atmosphere of Jaidee daytrips make serious cultural misunderstandings and social tension between Thais and mostly "Western" tourists rare, as the absence of even a single incident over months of fieldwork demonstrated. Not surprisingly, the Thai employees of mass ecotourism companies generally enjoy their interactions with mass ecotourists, particularly since these interactions almost always feature exciting activities and, more importantly, confine contact to both a circumscribed space and a fixed period of time. After performing in front of tourists for an entire day, Jaidee's Thai staff would surely resent having to maintain a jovial, public persona within their private sphere, and despite this cultural "fact" being lost on the majority of adventurers and backpackers, mass ecotourists accept the "staged" nature of their social interactions with Thai tourism workers and strive, for the most part, within these parameters to behave politely while receiving an entertaining travel experience. Some would argue that "true" cross-cultural understanding is made impossible by the power relations inherent to all forms of tourism, but in arriving at an image of Thais as "gentle, warm, sensitive, and wonderful, polite hosts," in the words of one Jaidee passenger, mass ecotourists form essentially positive cultural stereotypes, rendering the issue of accuracy or depth largely irrelevant within the framework of potential contributions to community development.

In spite of the positive economic spinoffs of mass ecotourist conceptions of authenticity, it is surprising that the *farang* owners and managers of Jaidee Kayak perpetuate an "alternative" tourism discourse which labels mass tourists as ignorant, lazy, and dim-witted. The patronizing views held by Jaidee management toward mass tourists become most apparent when comparing daytrips to "overnighters." Although daytrips provide half of total company

revenues, and absorb over eighty percent of Thai staff, the Jaidee management has nevertheless allowed the daytrip aspects of company operations to languish in relation to overnighters. Due partly to the endless copying of their ideas by Thai-owned "copy-cats," Jaidee has remained reluctant to introduce new ideas into their daytrips, and as a result, innovation has come slowly or not at all during the past several years. By admission, Nigel Lord devotes over eighty or ninety percent of his time and energy to the overnight aspects of Jaidee, Cedric Carter works only on overnight trips, and Jim Miller sits at home communicating with potential overnight customers over the Internet. Conversely, Jok, the original Thai partner, oversees virtually all aspects of Jaidee's daytrip operations, and Jaidee's *farang* managers rarely, if ever, travel along on daytrips, choosing instead to organize and participate in overnight "exploration" trips. Although the information and promotional materials aboard Jaidee escort boats surpass in both quantity and quality the materials on the various "copy-cat" companies, the leisurely pace at which improvements are implemented in comparison to the constant evolution of overnight trips, betrays an ingrained bias among Jaidee's *farangs* against both daytrips and the mass ecotourists who support them.[22]

Initial assumptions made early in my fieldwork concerning a lack of environmental concern and educational interest among mass ecotourists mirrored the thoughts of Jaidee's *farangs* who, because of never travelling on daytrips or conversing with mass ecotourist passengers, continue to harbour empirically-incorrect stereotypes. By constantly drawing explicit distinctions between overnight passengers, the majority of whom are adventurers, and mass ecotourist "daytrippers," Jaidee management perpetuates the myth of a discrete and noble "alternative" tourist. One quickly realizes that, despite the integral role played by packaged tourists, Jaidee's *farangs* feel ambivalent about having to follow the distasteful route of mass (eco)tourism in order to fund their "true" interest, namely small-scale, overnight "ecoadventures":

> We're an expedition company with a daytrip problem...Overnighters are really different. The market is not kayaks though. It never will be. The market is adventure travel, adventurers... let's just call them adventurers. We're running daytrips now because we need to use these to fund our overnight explorations in the area (Jim Miller, pers.comm.).

[22] Daytrips have had a greater impact over time on economic community development because of their earlier establishment, and greater initial success, than overnighters. However, due to the copying and hybridization of daytrips, Miller continues to favour overnighters since in his opinion, they promote a "deeper" ecotourism experience.

As former adventurers and backpackers themselves, members of Jaidee's *farang* management team believe strongly in the superiority of certain forms of tourism over others. Hence, the financial survival of Jaidee Kayak, as with all successful Phuket-based mass ecotourism companies, hinges on the group of tourists least appreciated and preferred by Jaidee's *farangs*. On the other hand, adventurers are ascribed with an oppositional stance, embodying everything missing from more "typical" mass tourists:

> Overnight passengers are much more inquisitive, much more eager for information. They're here because they want to learn about what's going on in the sea (Cedric Carter, pers.comm.).

Challenging prevalent anti-tourist sentiments is a difficult task, but in light of contradictory empirical evidence gathered during observations of, and interviews with, mass ecotourists, the dichotomous, pessimistic views of Jaidee management disregard two important considerations. First, the degree to which individual tourists respond to environmental issues and educational experiences depends not on any categorical definitions based on packaging or nature of tour, but rather on the amount of information provided, as well as on the types of expectations placed on those tourists in the first place. The reason, therefore, that adventurers seem more inquisitive and responsive than mass ecotourists emanates more from the expectations and efforts of Jaidee than any objective motivational or behavioural differences between tourist groups. The only substantial difference separating adventurers and mass ecotourists in practice is a dissimilar approach to authenticity, which in the case of the latter, actually *creates* opportunities for community development and mainstream environmental awareness. Second, the conviction held by Jaidee's *farangs* that overnight trips somehow promote more intimate cultural encounters between tourist and host is impugned by the social atmosphere created on overnight trips. The presence of Cedric Carter, a knowledgeable and English-speaking *farang*, on virtually every overnight trip fundamentally changes the social dynamic between passengers and Jaidee's Thai staff, since otherwise gregarious and socially-unrestrained Thai staff suddenly assume a background role in the presence of a *farang* intermediary. Despite lasting much longer than daytrips, therefore, overnight trips actually feature *fewer* social interactions between passengers and Thai staff. Moreover, since this social interaction takes place principally between adventurers, their tour leader, and Cedric Carter, Thai employees are relegated to an essentially passive, service-oriented role associated

with more conventional, "mass" forms of tourism.

Although privately decrying mass tourism, the *farang* managers of Jaidee Kayak nevertheless exploit mass ecotourist conceptions of cultural and natural authenticity in order to generate revenue and, more importantly, promote community development. However, Jaidee could harness this potential even further were it to drop its condescending views of mass tourists. The explicit, often snobby, orientation of Jaidee toward *farang*, "Western" tourists has stirred criticism among several local Thai travel agents - and of course disgruntled *farangs* - who complain that "Jaidee for *farang*, not for Thai people." Bearing in mind the relatively successful community development efforts of Jaidee examined in the next chapter, these complaints often overlook the "big picture," but suffice to say that Jaidee gives amazingly little credit to its mass ecotourist customers.

Jaidee almost completely ignores certain tourist markets, particularly those from East Asia and even Thailand itself. Thais, Koreans, Japanese, and Chinese from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the mainland are discounted entirely by Nigel Lord, who feels that the cost-sensitive, packaged nature of tours from East Asia preclude participation in Jaidee daytrips. Interestingly, though, every single Jaidee daytrip in which I participated featured at least one or two East Asian tourists, but Jaidee's on-board informational folders continue to contain written text only in English and German. In those cases where language barriers failed to prevent discussion, I often discovered that East Asian passengers are, in fact, interested in Jaidee's environmental message, but, as is often the case, prevailing "Western" stereotypes of camera-toting East Asian tourists prevent Jaidee's *farang* management from enhancing the educational value of their trips for *all* of their customers. The overnight, adventurer, market produces half of Jaidee's revenues, but within the context of overall community development as measured by local employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, daytrips remain the best available path due in large part to the relaxed mass ecotourist demands for authenticity. Daytrips also carry greater promise in terms of environmental advocacy since preaching to already-converted adventurers and "explorers" would limit the scope of Jaidee's message. As discussed previously, successful "alternative" tourism ventures require connections to mass tourism, which suggests in turn that Phuket's packaged tourists must necessarily occupy a prominent place in the marketing efforts of mass ecotourism companies. While some operators, including Trekkers, have embraced mass tourism unproblematically, Jaidee's *farangs* remain ambivalent

but continue to manipulate mass ecotourist expectations of authenticity to finance overnight trips, described in company brochures as "the heart of Jaidee Kayak." Although mass ecotourists are considered valuable from a business perspective, this is *not* because of a collective inclination to pay blindly for travel services, as Jaidee's *farangs* believe, but rather because lax and firm views of cultural and natural authenticity, respectively, foster a greater willingness to pay the high price associated with "quality" mass ecotourism experiences.

Dissimilarities in group conceptions of authenticity play themselves out in practice, and nowhere is this more evident than in the preferences and travel patterns of adventurers and backpackers. Where mass ecotourists voluntarily participate in costly, short-term nature tours, adventurers and backpackers instead strive at all costs to fulfil pre-existing prophecies of travel to authentic places featuring "real" people. Since dominant discursive constructions of Thai authenticity incorporate rural images of poor "natives" in traditional costumes, popular adventurer and backpacker destinations, by their very definition as "authentic" sites, must avoid "modern" amenities and prices while also communicating a sense of security. However, the lack of luxury associated with theoretical conceptions of authenticity produces tangible results for Thais, who unfortunately become trapped by the poor revenue-generating capabilities of shabby, and thus authentic, "alternative" tourism facilities. As Exclusive and Backdoor tour leaders admit, accommodations that raise prices and become too modern in appearance or operation are abandoned in favour of more "local" establishments. What this translates to, of course, is cheaper operating costs for adventure travel companies, but the demand of adventurers for visual and experiential corroboration of simplistic cultural images allows Exclusive and Backdoor to justify travel to remote areas, such as hilltribe villages in the north or parts of Krabi in the south, where small and inexpensive family-run establishments can convey a sense of "genuine," uncommercialized hospitality. In the meantime, locals are left to ponder just where the money for community development will come from when improvements in standards seem only to drive their backpacker and adventurer customers away.

Wishing to avoid, or more accurately *appear* to avoid, the harmful and contrived settings of mass tourism, backpackers surpass adventurers in their thirst for danger, poverty, and intimate social interaction with Thais. Like adventurers, the close and prolonged interpersonal contact required by backpackers to satisfy stringent demands for cultural

authenticity leads perhaps to greater social disruption, with demands constantly being placed on the private personal space of Thais. Backpacker social settings force Thais to participate in unceasing interaction with tourists whereas the "staged" environmental bubble that allows those working with mass tourists to retreat eventually to private space ultimately proves less intrusive. While mass ecotourists form unidimensional, but positive, stereotypes of smiling, gentle Thai natives, the jaundiced, socially-tense environments of "traveller" scenes engender a suspicious attitude among many backpackers, a surprising number of which come to view Thais as dishonest, shallow, or greedy. Similarly, Thais who must deal with backpackers on a daily basis quickly grow weary of endless bargaining over tiny amounts of money, and as one Thai merchant in Krabi stated, "hippie *farangs* are *khee nieo.*[23] They do nothing for Thailand."

The universal desire to improve one's living standards, symbolized in southern Thailand by locals upgrading facilities in order to generate greater profits, is thus frowned upon by adventurers and backpackers hoping to "preserve" Thais in state of "authentic" deprivation. The evolution from small-scale "alternative" travel to organized mass tourism not only becomes a sore point among backpackers, but is also offered as confirmation of the growing materialism and shallowness of Thais:

> The Thais are realizing that the backpackers don't have that much money compared to, like, the tourists, so would rather have the tourists there, even though they can't sit around at night and get to know the person, or have any kind of familiarity...It's too bad they want money more than they want foreign friends (backpacker staying in Rai Leh Beach in Krabi).

Myriad factors determine the prospects for success of "alternative" tourism projects, but despite their practical, empirical relevance, the motivations of individual tourists have often gone unexamined and unreported. Among the case studies examined in this research, Trekkers and Jaidee Kayak succeed largely because of the attitudes and behaviour of their mass ecotourist clients, while Nature Paradise continues to suffer the financial limitations of dealing with mostly adventurers and backpackers reluctant to pay anything but unrealistically-low prices. Hence, tourism-related community development in the southern Thai context involves much more than astute planning or altruistic principles. It requires in addition a serious consideration of the expectations and preferences of discrete tourist groups.

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[23] Khee nieo translates literally to "sticky excrement," Thai slang for somebody who is extremely stingy.

7.5 Conclusions

Many seasoned tourists would attest that travelling off the beaten track and pursuing independent, spontaneous experiences certainly proves personally-rewarding in terms of freedom, excitement, novelty, and other such features missing, according to some, from inauthentic and alienating "modern" life. As Butler (1992) points out, however, the continued growth and popularity of mass tourism indicate that despite the numerous criticisms levelled at the "typical" packaged holiday, millions of people continue to purchase and enjoy such trips. From a tourist perspective, then, calls for "authentic," small-scale forms of "alternative" tourism overlook individual tastes and preferences:

> [M]any people seem to enjoy being mass tourists. They actually like not having to make their own travel arrangements, not having to find accommodations when they arrive at a destination, being able to obtain goods and services without learning a foreign language, being able to stay in reasonable and sometimes considerable comfort, being able to eat relatively familiar food, and not having to spend vast amounts of money or time to achieve these goals...It is necessary to ask therefore, why anyone should want to promote alternative forms of tourism, given the "success" and appeal of mass tourism (Butler, 1992: 32).

It is clear from the material presented in this chapter that tourism in southern Thailand incorporates discrete styles of travel, but these styles stem not from self-identification with a particular group, nor from universal, timeless tourist attributes. Rather, the three broad categories of tourists identified in this research comprise individuals who may travel for different reasons at different stages of their lives: tourists participating in mass, packaged vacations on one trip, or one *portion* of the same trip, can just as easily travel as backpackers or adventurers on other occasions or in other places.

In assessing individual and group motivations, behaviour, and lifestyle choices, this chapter has highlighted the tourist's pivotal role in community-based development, leaving us with several concluding observations. First, the only obvious, or at least relevant, measure of differentiation between mass ecotourists, adventurers, and backpackers in southern Thailand involves authenticity, and specifically, divergent degrees of concern for achieving "genuine" cultural and natural experiences. Not only do aesthetic differences such as packaging, appearance, or nature of accommodations represent inaccurate analytical tools for predicting tourist demands and preferences, but other purportedly-intrinsic differences based on

motivations and behaviour remain, more often than not, unsubstantiated at the empirical level. Second, despite some general group similarities in awareness, sensitivity, responsibility, and social concern, it is in the end each individual tourist which matters most. Belonging in principle to a particular group, especially the mass ecotourist category, does not *necessarily* determine a person's travel behaviour or reasons for travelling. In practice, favourable "alternative" attributes more often characterize mass ecotourists in Phuket than backpackers and adventurer customers of Exclusive and Backdoor. This research undermines the belief that collective, undifferentiated factions of mass tourists and "alternative" travellers engender, by their mere presence, harmful and emancipatory social change, respectively. Finally, and most importantly, forms of tourism which feature stringent tourist conceptions of cultural authenticity hinder regional economic development. Adventurer and backpacker attempts to promote more "appropriate" and equitable forms of development ultimately *impede* economic growth by seeking out primitive, rural destinations premised on the exoticized, commodified absence of "modernization." There will surely always be a place, or more accurately a "market," for small-scale, "authentic" travel, but tourists and host communities need to recognize that the self-indulgent, lifestyle, and class issues propelling the growth of "alternative" tourism serve to limit its potential contribution to community development in southern Thailand.

CHAPTER EIGHT. "ALTERNATIVE" TOURISM, SUSTAINABILITY, AND COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT

8.1 Introduction

Among the many "alternative" tourism claims reviewed in Chapter Three, few remain as contested as the belief that such forms of tourism bring equitable, sustainable, and "bottom-up" community development. In addition to serving as a theoretical *and* empirical challenge to the technocratic, inappropriate nature of more established development approaches, community-based development in Thailand carries promise as a means of compensating for those shortcomings of conventional development examined in Chapter Four. As discussed in the Introduction, national five-year development plans have long solidified the connection between tourism and development in Thailand, but only in recent years has this relationship incorporated ecotourism and other discursive tropes of sustainability. In the midst of a prolonged financial crisis caused by devaluations in regional currencies, the Thai government will continue to push tourism as an avenue for foreign exchange generation, employment creation, and other aspects of economic development. It remains to be seen, however, whether or not rhetorical statements concerning community-based and sustainable forms of development will translate into genuine policy changes in light of Thailand's reluctance to either limit tourist numbers, or decentralize tourism planning decisions.

Unlike the previous two chapters, which examine the industry and tourist perspectives, respectively, this chapter focuses on the changes generated by "alternative" tourism in host communities in and around Phuket. Rather than merely highlighting the economic aspects of community development, this chapter discusses social change and environmental sustainability as well since, as illustrated in Chapter Three, "alternative" development embodies a holistic concern for both economic *and* non-economic processes. This chapter assesses the success of mass ecotourism companies in Phuket in promoting community development in economic, social, and environmental terms. While other examples of "alternative" tourism, such as adventure travel and backpacking, provide interesting lessons as well, this chapter singles out mass ecotourism since it alone exemplifies the successful adaptation of an "alternative" tourism form to the unique circumstances of southern Thailand. The first section of this chapter

surveys the economic and social contributions made by Jaidee Kayak towards community development, paying special attention to the relevance of Jaidee in the lives of its Thai employees. The second reviews the immediate and long-term impacts of mass ecotourism on community environmental development, impacts that essentially tackle the debate over differences between sustainable development and sustainable tourism. The importance of local context is highlighted in the final section, which documents the practical barriers inhibiting the community development endeavours of mass ecotourism operators. In exploring the prospects for, and consequences of, community development, I ground analysis in the experiences of individuals whose lives have been altered by the introduction of "alternative" tourism to southern Thailand.

8.2 Mass Ecotourism, Social Change, and Community Economic Development

Aside from providing novel, "alternative" experiences to organized holidaymakers, the fifteen *farang*-owned or managed mass ecotourism companies in Phuket all possess an interest in promoting equitable, locally-oriented development. As stated elsewhere, Jim Miller's primary goal behind Jaidee Kayak centres on the development of "sustainable business opportunities with local people that promote environmental conservation by providing high quality recreational adventures specializing in natural history and cross cultural education" (from Jaidee Kayak 1996/97 Brochure). By maintaining certain entrepreneurial elements underpinning the growth of international tourism, Jaidee has combined such features of global industry as efficiency and quality with more localized features of community development, such as equitable revenue distribution, personal growth, and environmental sustainability.

Viewed by local Thais and *farangs* as both a visionary and hopeless, naive romantic, Miller has clung fiercely to a set of ideals which have kept him, and Jaidee Kayak, in Phuket despite myriad obstacles and early setbacks. Miller perceives his involvement in tourism as a small component of a much broader struggle:

> In Hawaii, I helped defeat a two billion dollar development which would have created twenty thousand jobs, and people asked me afterwards, 'OK, now what?' Jaidee Kayak is the now what. I didn't want to be only an activist and complain, but I had to come up with solutions too...I could see that Southeast Asia is where the planet will be won or lost...Until somebody stops and says, 'excuse me, my professional life is inconsequential to the future of the planet and the human species,' we're still going to keep repeating the same mistakes.

> So, I said 'cut, here's the chance.' Southern Thailand is the ideal experiment, it's fairly clean, a clean slate as far as development is concerned, and a good kayaking environment. Southern Thailand is our planning laboratory and we want this business formula to spread to grocery stores, rubber plantations, etc. We're redesigning social fabrics, that's what it's really all about (Jim Miller, pers.comm.).

Although, as documented in Chapter Six, mass ecotourism in Phuket has grown almost by accident, as a set of coincidences involving vacationing *farangs* wishing to remain in Thailand, Jaidee Kayak serves as a partial exception in that Miller, due to his prior involvement in kayaking and small-scale adventure travel, came to Phuket with fixed ideas concerning the optimal evolution of his southern Thai "experiment":

> My whole game plan was, and still is, to plant five or six locally-owned companies up and down the coast here, sea-kayaking companies, and let these companies then take the concepts from the Jaidee formula, the business concepts, and spread them out throughout the different cultural opportunities that exist here in the south...I thought originally that I could start a company every two years and have ten [companies] in twenty years, but it hasn't worked out that way. I would hope that in ten years, the Thais can manage it [Jaidee] themselves (Jim Miller, pers.comm.).

The functional and spatial segregation of management tasks reviewed in Chapter Six also extend to the intellectual realm where Miller envisages Jaidee's philosophical direction, Nigel Lord, Jaidee's managing director, assesses the financial feasibility of these principles, and Jok and Carter implement the company's strategies at the ground level on daytrips and overnighters. Fortunately for the Thai employees of Jaidee Kayak, Miller's abstract, altruistic convictions, which in other situations would perhaps remain difficult to implement, play themselves out on a daily basis in Phuket due to the pragmatic approach of Nigel Lord. Lord understands and accepts the type of development desired by Jaidee's Thai staff, and the company succeeds in meeting the latter's needs by blending together, on a small scale, "alternative" development tenets such as decision-making power, linkages to indigenous economic networks, and local ownership with more orthodox strategies such as capital investment, revenue generation, and fiscal responsibility. Lord summarizes Jaidee's approach in the following way:

> Education and environmental awareness are of course very important, but if you can combine that with making money for people from the assets around them, then why not? We have given money to several projects, but we're not really into charity for its own sake. We try to help locals help themselves, and we believe that a good mix of environmentalism and good old non-greedy capitalism can actually provide the answers. At the end of the day, you have to

> look at the aspirations of the people that you're actually dealing with to try to get that balance (Nigel Lord, pers.comm.).

The overall contribution made by Jaidee Kayak towards community economic development incorporates several areas, including employee salaries, payments to the owners of escort boats and transport vans, food purchases, training costs, advertising payments, and other operational costs. With the exception of specialized equipment, such as inflatable canoes manufactured in the United States, Jaidee spends over 98 percent of its total costs locally.[1] In an average month, Jaidee contributes approximately two million baht (US$79,000) to the local economy, with one-third going to payroll and roughly three to four hundred thousand baht going towards paying the owners of three contracted and two "freelance" (i.e., part-time) escort boats. Over half of Jaidee's kayaking guides, and virtually all boat captains, deck hands, and on-board cooks, are native residents of Ko Yao, a large island just off the east coast of Phuket which hosts several small Muslim fishing communities. While Jaidee avoids preferential hiring practices based on regional origin, the close proximity of Ko Yao, and other areas of Phangnga, enhances the value of local guides to the company. In this way, the seasonal migration that characterizes labour from other parts of Thailand, especially northeastern Thailand (Isaan), fails to affect Jaidee's operations. Further, local guides from Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi possess a privileged knowledge of the area's landscape, gathered in many cases during years of working as fishermen.

Despite the involvement of several *farangs*, the introduction of Jaidee Kayak, a tourism concept previously unknown to the area, has absorbed local Thai labour and worked alongside existing conditions rather than forcing inappropriate exogenous ideas onto an unaccommodating community. In addition to occasionally hiring friends of trusted staff members, Jaidee also provides employment for staff relatives in need of work. For example, Miller's sister-in-law works as a cook, while Jok's sister, brother-in-law, and cousins have all worked with Jaidee at some time during the past three years. Local environmental groups also benefit from Jaidee's presence. Until recently, Jaidee has provided funds, and volunteered the labour of one guide, to the Gibbon Rehabilitation Project in Phuket. It has also acted simultaneously to lobby local, regional, and national officials on several environmental issues. At the community scale, Jaidee pays a local resident of Ao Po, the launching point for all of

[1] Local in this case means Phuket, although a small proportion of expenditures is also spent in Phangnga and Krabi.

Jaidee's (and three of its copy companies') trips, over 30,000 baht (US$1,185) annually in order to maintain the cleanliness of the pier and surrounding area. By infusing capital into, and building kinship connections among, communities in Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi, Jaidee has put its charitable principles into practice and enhanced opportunities for locally-rooted economic growth.

As noted above, the most significant economic contribution made by Jaidee involves direct salary payments, not only to full-time employees, including kayak guides, office staff, and cooks, but also to boat captains, van drivers, and other "freelance," part-time staff. Jaidee employs between forty-five and sixty full-time staff, depending on the season, and the number of people receiving wages or salaries from the company reaches close to one hundred. This number may initially appear small in the context of the overall tourism industry, but considering that Jaidee has until very recently remained a medium-sized, locally-oriented tour operator, the total number of Thais employed, or at least benefiting indirectly from, Jaidee Kayak compares favourably to virtually all other tour companies in Phuket, as well as against many small- and medium-sized hotels.[2] Salaries paid by Jaidee vary widely according to each individual's position, skills, and seniority, but at a general scale, monthly salary or wage levels fall into three categories: management, full-time staff, and part-time employees such as boat captains and van drivers. The top salaries belong to Jim Miller and Nigel Lord, who each earn 50,000 baht (US$1,975) per month. Even though, as an annual salary of 600,000 baht (US$23,697), this more than suffices to live in Thailand, it nevertheless represents a drastic paycut in comparison to previous business sector salaries earned by both Miller and Lord in Hawaii and England, respectively. The remaining members of the Jaidee management team, Cedric Carter and Jok, each earn 40,000 baht (US$1,580) per month.

Among the full-time Thai staff of Jaidee Kayak, the five to seven women (depending on the season) who work in the central office on the outskirts of Phuket Town as office administrators and receptionists, earn the largest monthly salaries at 12,000 baht (US$474). Kayaking guides, who constitute the largest single category of Jaidee employee, start at a

[2] According to Horwath and Horwath International (1989), 158 full-time jobs are created in Asia for every 100 hotel rooms. If we extrapolate these data, the 45 to 60 full-time jobs created by Jaidee annually would require a hotel with between 28 and 38 rooms to provide the same number of jobs. While this falls below the average number of rooms in Phuket hotels (63), it remains roughly on par with a large number of small- and medium-sized establishments (TAT, 1991: 313). It is also important to remember that the average is brought up substantially by a handful of large hotels in Patong and the Laguna Bay area containing over four hundred rooms.

monthly salary of 5,500 baht (US$217), but this increases by 1,000 baht (US$39) for each foreign language other than English in which a guide is proficient. The acquisition of other skills, such as American Canoe Association (ACA) or first-aid certification (discussed below), also enhances a guide's monthly salary. Lead guides, who give on-board presentations and generally supervise daytrips, belong to a second salary category among kayaking guides, which starts at 8,000 baht (US$316) per month and rises with increased skills or experience. Unlike most other tourism companies in Thailand, Jaidee pays monthly guide salaries based on only ten days of work, beyond which a daily bonus of 200 baht (US$8) is paid for every trip worked. Early in the formation of Jaidee, Miller decided that in order to combat fluctuations in employment caused by the seasonality of tourism arrivals, it was necessary to pay a fixed income based on a small number of days, ten in this case, per month. Since paying daily wages alone to guides would cause severe financial strain among many employees during the low season, Miller decided instead to provide stable income while also rewarding work performed in excess of the ten day minimum. A guide who works 19 days in one month would therefore receive a bonus of nine times 200 baht, or 1800 baht (US$71), on top of his regular monthly salary, not to mention the 1,500 to 2,500 baht (US$59 to US$99) which most guides earn, on average, every month from tips. With the combination of salary, daily bonuses, and tips, "regular" guides can earn a total of between 6,000 and 12,000 baht (US$237 to US$474) per month, depending again on the season, whereas lead guides, according to Miller, often earn between 17,000 and 20,000 baht (US$671 to US$790) in a busy month.

The fixed income and daily bonus combination also applies to on-board cooks, the majority of whom possess no English language skills or previous tourism work experience. Despite this lack of skills and experience, cooks earn 5,000 baht (US$197) per month, plus a 100 baht (US$4) daily bonus for every trip beyond the tenth day of work.[3] Among the numerous reasons for employee satisfaction examined later in this section, the stability of income, and the relatively few days required to earn it, represent major benefits and performative incentives for full-time Jaidee employees. Unlike full-time employees, "freelance" guides earn no fixed income, receiving instead a daily bonus alone for any on-call work performed. The owners of Jaidee escort boats each receive 3,800 baht (US$150) per

[3] Cooks also receive a proportion of a guide's tips, often five to ten percent depending on the individual guide.

day, or 114,000 baht (US$4,502) for a full month's work, and distribute their payments, in turn, to the boat captain and any others working on the boat. Typically, escort boat workers make roughly 5,000 baht (US$197) per month, but as with all other Thais employed directly or indirectly by Jaidee, this monthly salary rewards relatively few days of work per month, and more importantly for only four or five hours of work per day. Similarly, van drivers, who literally "work" for only the duration of a return trip to Ao Po from various resort areas in Phuket, earn 800 baht (US$32) per day and often obtain the maximum of 24,000 baht (US$948) per month, a generous amount considering the short duration and relatively "light" nature of their work.

Besides offering the security of a fixed, guaranteed monthly income, Jaidee salaries remain comparatively attractive from both an occupational and regional perspective. Interviews with guides from the various Thai-owned, "copycat" kayaking companies revealed a sizable discrepancy between Jaidee and competitor salaries. Lacking both medical insurance and training, the guides of copy companies earn less than half the salaries of Jaidee guides, making in some cases only 2,500 baht (US$99) per month as a base salary and a further 100 to 150 baht (US$4 to US$6) in daily bonuses. Even the most benevolent of the Jaidee imitations pays its premier lead guide only 3,500 baht (US$138) per month with a 150 baht (US$6) daily bonus. Based on conversations with Thais working in other tourism-related occupations in Phuket, it is clear that Jaidee salaries match up well against those offered by other employers: Thais working in dive shops can earn between 4,000 and 5,500 baht (US$158 to US$217) per month, whereas in hotels, even skilled, experienced positions such as operators or front desk receptionists can usually procure no more than Jaidee's *minimum* starting guide salary of 5,500 baht (US$217) per month.

As actual monetary amounts, Jaidee's base salaries resemble the medium to top end of earnings in other tourism-sector occupations, but more significantly, employment with Jaidee differs from the rigorous, often demoralizing nature of other jobs in Phuket. Restaurant employees, for example, must work for at least nine hours a day, six days a week under strict supervision. Bearing in mind that Jaidee guides need only work for ten days each month to earn their salaries, the relatively generous payroll contributions made by Jaidee appear especially attractive in comparison to other employment options available to Thais living and working in Phuket. However, to appreciate the effect of Jaidee Kayak on the economic lives

Table 8.1 Average Annual Per Capita Incomes, 1992

		Unit: Baht (1996 $US)
	Entire Kingdom	Southern Thailand
Total Income from All Sources		
All Thais	21,729 ($858)	18,682 ($738)
Clerical, sales, and services workers	34,553 ($1,365)	24,906 ($984)
Income from Wages and Salaries		
All Thais	8,468 ($334)	6,518 ($257)
Clerical, sales, and services workers	24,677 ($975)	17,214 ($680)
Jaidee Kayak Full-time Salaries (1996)		
Cook	60,000 ($2,370)	
Regular guide*	66,000 ($2,607) - 96,000 ($3,791)	
Lead guide*	96,000 ($3,791) - 180,000 ($7,109)	
Office staff	144,000 ($5,687)	
Management	480,000 ($18,958) - 600,000 ($23,697)	

Source: Author's data and National Statistical Office (1993).
* Salary figures do not include daily bonuses or tips.

of individual Thais, one must juxtapose the company's salaries against national and regional average per capita incomes (Table 8.1). The starting salaries of regular guides exceed the average total income of Thais by over three times, and when wages and salaries are examined in isolation, guides make at least 7.8 times the national per capita average. The large proportion, and meagre incomes, of agricultural labourers in Thailand keep average per capita incomes depressed, but Jaidee salaries nonetheless remain three times higher than the average wage and salary earnings of the relatively well-paid group of clerical, sales, and services workers. Even cooks, the lowest paid of Jaidee's full-time employees, collect incomes at 2.4 and 4.7 times the average rate for clerical, sales, and services workers in Thailand and southern Thailand, respectively. Thus, the salaries paid by Jaidee not only exceed those of other kayaking companies and tourism employers in Phuket, but also provide a rare opportunity for local unskilled workers to earn incomes well above national and regional levels.

Salaries alone distinguish Jaidee Kayak as a generous employer, but the company also contributes to community economic development through its human resources program. According to Miller, Jaidee staff enjoy "full Western benefits," including life insurance, disability allowances, and a full medical package where Jaidee matches government contributions to health coverage. Considering only a handful of private companies in Thailand provide medical benefits for workers, Jaidee stands alone among other tourism employers in

Phuket in terms of employee welfare, covering in some cases off-the-job medical costs and even paying for emergency treatment of employee family members in need of assistance.[4]

The cornerstone of Jaidee's human resource strategy centres on training programs aimed at enhancing the professional development and education of Jaidee staff. The fervour with which Jaidee staff pursue opportunities for professional advancement relates not to an inherent desire for personal development, but rather to financial incentives which, on average, reward each qualification with an additional 1,000 baht (US$39) in monthly salary. Jaidee spends over half a million baht (US$20,000) annually on employee training, and guides personally receive 50,000 baht (US$1,975) in training by the time they receive promotion to a lead guide position. Jaidee provides training in five areas. First, guides receive environmental education through a range of Thai- and English-language informational materials located at Jaidee's main office in Phuket Town. Guides augment this written information with informal, ongoing lessons on natural history, geology, flora, and fauna provided by Jok, Cedric Carter, and other experienced guides. Second, Jaidee organizes and pays for an annual week-long course in first-aid, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and marine rescue, taught variously by local hospital staff, Navy personnel, or TAT instructors. Third, Jaidee encourages language education among all of its full-time staff. The full costs of any lessons taken by Jaidee staff in languages other than English are reimbursed by the company, and this has created a multilingual staff proficient in German, Japanese, French, and Italian.

Government certification represents the fourth form of training provided, or in this case financed, by Jaidee. As with language training, Jaidee reimburses guides who take, and pass, an official TAT guide certification course. According to Niti Kongkrut, director of the TAT Phuket office, roughly 500 people have passed the provincial TAT guide course, but due to increasing FIT business, an additional 800 guides are needed in Phuket (Niti Kongkrut, pers.comm.). The majority of tourism guides in Thailand lack legal TAT certification but, in practice, few are hassled by authorities due to both lax government regulations and official acknowledgment of trained guide shortages. Due to these shortages, however, TAT guide certification remains a highly coveted achievement among Thais working in the tourism

[4] The two kinds of health insurance offered through employers in Thailand is private and government-subsidized. In the case of the latter, the Thai government contributes to half of all health insurance costs for companies with more than ten employees. Jaidee Kayak provides its employees with government-subsidized health insurance, and while government insurance does not cover family members, Jaidee has occasionally assisted employees in paying for medical costs incurred by ill or injured relatives.

industry. In addition to receiving a salary increase, certified Jaidee guides enhance their market value and thus create opportunities for even better tourism work in their post-Jaidee futures. Lastly, every guide participates in two to three day canoeing training sessions which are held annually to bring Jaidee guides up to skill levels set by the American Canoe Association (ACA). As a certified ACA instructor, Miller originally conducted the training himself but in recent years, canoe training has fallen under the supervision of Jok and Carter, both officially-trained ACA members. The human resource programs provided by Jaidee for its employees surely benefit the company's bottom line by improving the quality, and therefore profitability, of its "product," but they also promote the well-being of Thai individuals. Jaidee Kayak has thus imparted a beneficial economic and social contribution which extends beyond the immediate, short-term business interests of one particular mass ecotourism operation.

Building community development "from the ground up, one person at a time"

The efforts of Jaidee's *farang* management team to initiate community tourism projects based on "quality" kayaking experiences go a long way in replicating the altruistic philosophical tenets behind community-based tourism development, but how successful have these efforts been in practice? Judging from comments made by Thai staff, and other research findings, it is clear that Jaidee Kayak has succeeded at the ground level in changing the material and social prospects of many members of the local Thai community. Notwithstanding most office staff and a few lead guides, the majority of Jaidee's forty-five to sixty employees have attended school for only seven to nine years, with a large number leaving school after the state-sanctioned minimum of six years. The skill, education, and experience levels needed to find work with Jaidee vary according to position: office staff must speak English and usually come from other clerical positions, cooks require few skills beyond the ability to prepare simple meals, and kayaking guides fall somewhere in between where some English language skills and experience dealing with tourists usually suffice to earn an opportunity with Jaidee.

The poor educational backgrounds of most Thais working for Jaidee would normally serve to restrict employment options to demanding, low-paying work such as fishing, farming, or manual labour in either factories or tourism-oriented occupations such as hotels, restaurants, and shops. However, by giving enjoyable, lucrative work opportunities to those straddling the bottom strata of Thailand's social and class pyramids, Miller has empowered many Thais

whose lives would otherwise follow a different path. Contrary to the disagreeable or cynical attitudes held universally towards most forms of manual and service-oriented labour, Jaidee guides clearly enjoy their work, for reasons discussed below, and some, like Ajan, a twenty-five year-old guide from Phuket, even perceive their involvement with Jaidee as a matter of fate: "Jaidee Kayak has been very good for my life. I have had *pawn sawan* [a talent] for paddling given to me naturally by a ghost [spirit]."

Almost without exception, Jaidee guides have followed a similar career path which takes them first from job to job within Phuket's tourism industry, and then eventually to Jaidee. Most guides initially enter the tourism labour market from primary occupations, most notably fishing in Ao Phangnga or rubber tapping and farming in Phangnga or Krabi provinces. As nomads drifting from fishing or farming to hotel and restaurant work in Phuket, and ultimately to jobs such as kayaking for Jaidee, Thai guides do not necessarily possess any prior interest or experience in outdoor activities, adventure travel, or sea kayaking. Instead, they take perpetual steps up the ladder of tourism employment, boosting their wages and salaries along the way. Regardless of efforts by Jaidee's *farangs* to cultivate management within the ranks of the company's workforce, virtually every "regular" guide views their tenure with Jaidee as temporary, a stepping stone for even better tourism employment in the near future. Due to the strenuous physical demands of sea kayaking, guides believe that the decline in stamina that comes with age will one day force them to quit. All the same, Jaidee serves a pivotal role in the career and life trajectories of these young Thai men since, as a transitional stage, it provides valuable opportunities to improve English language skills, to bolster knowledge of, and experience with, the demands and behaviour of tourists, and finally, to receive for free the training and TAT guide certification necessary to enhance one's value in Phuket's tourism labour market.

Urged on by two cases in which former employees went on to start ecotourism companies in northern and central Thailand, the majority of Jaidee kayaking guides harbour hopes of one day owning their own businesses. In addition to the transitional nature of Jaidee employment from a skills and personal development perspective, the financial latitude created by Jaidee's generous salary structure allows guides to make substantial lifestyle changes, such as marriage, child-bearing, and other manifestations of "settling down," that in Thai society depend heavily on the financial situation of the male suitor. Many guides wed soon after

joining Jaidee, and some even purchase homes, a rare luxury among Thais living in urban or tourist areas such as Phuket. The newfound sense of financial freedom that comes with working for Jaidee coincides with decisive periods or stages in the lives of many guides, and as a result, Jaidee represents both a window of opportunity within the tourism industry generally, and a platform from which Thais with poor educational backgrounds and limited opportunities for economic prosperity can initiate positive changes to their circumstances.

The personal narratives of guides serve as poignant illustrations of the beneficial economic and social impacts of Jaidee Kayak on individual lives. Every guide has an interesting story about previous employment and the particular ways in which they eventually came to Jaidee, but I will briefly disclose only a few here in order to portray the overall value of Jaidee employment. Dhum, a twenty-five year-old lead guide from Phangnga Province, comes from a family with a long history as rubber farmers. As the first member of his family to have *"son jai rian"* (shown an interest in studying), Dhum attended college for four years in Phangnga with government support, acquiring a degree in accounting. After graduation, Dhum could only find work as a waiter in an Italian-style restaurant attached to a five-star hotel in Karon Beach, Phuket. In just four years, Dhum rose from his position as waiter, which paid 1800 baht (US$71) per month, to restaurant captain, and finally to supervisor. A German food and beverage manager took Dhum under his wing, and his salary eventually rose to 10,000 baht (US$395) per month. When this manager left Thailand, the new food and beverage manager, a Thai, substantially cut Dhum's salary, forcing the latter to leave as well.

Dhum started working at Jaidee Kayak in October 1992, and became lead guide after only eight months due to his educational background, ambition, and experience in dealing with tourists. In 1995, Dhum earned his guide certification after passing the three-month national TAT course, and coupled with his proficiency in Italian, this qualification has put Dhum's base salary over 10,500 baht (US$415) per month, not including daily bonuses or tips. A guaranteed salary has allowed Dhum to save enough money for marriage, to purchase a house, and to pay 10,000 baht (US$395) each month in mortgage payments. Eventually, Dhum hopes to implement one of several entrepreneurial ideas, including a "travel counter," a fitness centre, snooker hall, ice-cream shop, or tourist-oriented nightclub. Like many other guides, especially those possessing ambition and motivation, Dhum refers to his employment with Jaidee as one of numerous "steps," and claims that due to the difficulty of rising above the rank

of lead guide within the company, he will soon need to "make the next step up." Dhum possesses a college degree in accounting, but because of Jaidee's generous salaries and easygoing atmosphere, he has chosen to work instead in the service sector despite the loss in status. Aside from the financial perks associated with working for Jaidee, the chance to interact with tourists from around the world remains a rewarding work spin-off for Dhum. He keeps in touch with at least three tourists whom he met on Jaidee trips, even engaging in a relationship with an English tourist for over a year and a half. From a cultural point of view, those guides, including Dhum, who participated in the 1993 Jaidee overnight trip with Thailand's Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, received a rare opportunity to meet a member of the nation's much revered royal family. For Dhum and other guides from poor, rural backgrounds, the chance to spend an entire day with the Princess and her entourage on a multi-day kayaking and camping trip surpassed any experience money could buy, demonstrating that Jaidee's contributions to the well-being of its Thai staff reach beyond the monetary realm.

Jaidee's ability and willingness to serve as a gateway for financial and social security among otherwise disenfranchised members of Thai society underpin the experiences of two other guides, Gaeng and Tan. At the age of twenty-two, Gaeng was among the youngest of the four or five freelance guides working for Jaidee at the time of my research. Unlike the majority of Jaidee guides, who grew up in either Ko Yao or Phuket, Gaeng was born in Surin province in northeastern Thailand (Isaan). Due to poverty, his family, which had for generations worked as rice farmers, moved to Phuket in 1982 in pursuit of greater economic opportunities. His family's inability to pay for school past the mandatory sixth year forced Gaeng to work as a thirteen year-old minor aboard Thai trawlers fishing illegally in Burmese waters. Gaeng's recollection of the following story illustrates the harshness of previous working and living conditions:

> When I was a fisherman, our boat had to sneak into Burma and take fish from their water illegally. We had to be very careful because the Burmese navy would shoot at us and try to arrest us. One day, the Burmese navy chased us and caught up to us. They were shooting their guns, I was very scared because if they caught me...they put Thai people in jail for eight years. I jumped from the ship, and I survived by using pineapples to float. I waited two days in the water eating pineapples until our boat could come and get us. But some of my friends got shot on the ship or drowned. I was lucky.

After returning to Phuket from the fishing trawlers, Gaeng repeatedly heard from others working in the tourism industry that Jaidee was a generous employer and thus, he joined the

company as a kayaking guide in December 1995.

As a *freelance* guide, Gaeng does not earn a base monthly salary, but claims to make 5,500 baht (US$217) per month during the low season and up to 12,000 baht (US$474) per month during peak months. It is likely that his marine experience, and possession of TAT guide certification, have brought Gaeng's daily bonus above the standard 200 baht (US$8) per trip. The financial leverage afforded by Jaidee has not only improved Gaeng's circumstances, but has also corresponded to a period of transition and financial need in which Gaeng's wife was expecting their second child just months after this research was completed. Gaeng fears for his future and that of his children because Thailand is changing at a rapid pace, and while some Thais have become wealthy, many are getting poorer and failing to keep up. Gaeng also worries that Ao Phangnga will deteriorate like the nearby Phi Phi islands, since this may perhaps cause "Mr. Nigel to move somewhere else and then I'll have no job." For these reasons, Gaeng wishes one day to own his own fishing boat or agricultural land so that he can earn an income independent of the vagaries of tourism fluctuations and the environmental degradation of popular tourism sites. Regardless of his concerns, however, Gaeng feels blessed for finding work with Jaidee, since its flexible schedule and ample revenue possibilities allow him to cover such medical exigencies as the 5,000 baht (US$197) required for injections to ease his wife's premature labour pains. Apart from demonstrating the benign nature of certain forms of tourism employment, Gaeng's elevation from an impoverished Isaan childhood and grim work history to financial security illuminates the role played by mass ecotourism companies such as Jaidee in enhancing the "life chances" of individuals.

Although representing a different set of geographical and social circumstances, Tan also embodies Jaidee's community development efforts. Tan comes from Ko Panyi, an island in Ao Phangnga containing a large Muslim fishing village on stilts. Due to its picturesque setting, and the spectacular sight of hundreds of houses built on stilts, Ko Panyi adorns postcards throughout southern Thailand. It was only recently, though, that the Ko Panyi fishing community engaged the tourism industry in order to reverse its longstanding poverty and isolation. Tan is thirty years-old, and attended school for only three years before helping his family full-time with fishing duties. His family continues to fish, but have recently opened a small shop selling souvenirs to tourists in Ko Panyi. Tan's involvement with Jaidee occurred accidentally. With no prior tourism experience whatsoever, Tan was convinced in 1991 by

Jok, his brother-in-law and one of Miller's original Thai partners, to come work as a guide for Jaidee. Soon afterwards, Tan's wife, Jok's sister, also joined Jaidee as a freelance cook. In the next few years, Tan received CPR training, earned official ACA certification, and learned to speak English from tourists aboard Jaidee daytrips, despite not knowing a single word prior to coming to Jaidee. Realizing that Tan and his wife carry clout by virtue of their family connections to Jok, a company "big boss," Jaidee staff are careful to display the correct amount of respect, which in the Thai context remains a paramount social priority. Tan has thus complemented increased economic prosperity with a rise in social stature. As with those Buddhist guides who met the Princess, Tan has also benefited culturally from his employment with Jaidee, in his case because he hopes to save enough money working with the company to one day make the *haj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca. The luck and success created by Jok's serendipitous involvement with Jaidee have therefore, in effect, spread to family members and others belonging to impecunious rural communities in and around Phuket.

Jaidee has improved the lives of virtually all of its employees, but nowhere has its impact been more profound or lasting than with Jok, the original local Thai partner now serving as a manager and company shareholder. Jok has risen from humble origins to become an influential figure in the local community. Jok grew up in a Ko Yao fishing village, and moved to Phuket in order to attend four years of secondary school. After leaving school, Jok found work as an open-sea tin diver, but left after five years because the work was dangerous and physically-taxing. After migrating to Bangkok and selling automobile tyres for two years, Jok served his mandatory two years in the army, and then returned to Ko Yao to help his father with fishing duties. Another two years went by until Jok, by this time twenty-five years old, decided to move again to Phuket and offer longtail boat tours of Ao Phangnga. It was here, in Ao Po in the northwest corner of Phuket, that Miller came across Jok in 1989. Jok immediately became a nominal shareholder by forming Jaidee Kayak with Miller, Cedric Carter, and Bop, another Thai. In 1993, Jok stopped working as a lead guide and became the company's Operations Manager, taking control of all aspects of daytrips. With a monthly salary of 40,000 baht (US$1,580), Jok belongs to the wealthiest 2.8 percent of Thailand's population, and only 1 in 500 people living in rural villages, such as Jok's in Ko Yao, make even half of what Jok earns (Hewison, 1996: 147). As documented above, Jok's family has also benefited from his success, both through employment and the ownership of land which

has allowed them to build new homes on Ko Yao.

Social status and security

This portion of the chapter has thus far focused mostly on Jaidee's economic contributions and impacts on individual Thai employees, but the social implications of mass ecotourism employment, particularly with *farang* companies such as Jaidee̊, are just as important. Whether giving career opportunities to young men with minimal education or bolstering the status of individuals normally at the bottom end of the Thai social hierarchy, Jaidee Kayak has succeeded in "redesigned social fabrics," to paraphrase Miller. By reversing normal patterns of class, status, and social differentiation, the employment model created by Jaidee favours those residents of Thailand normally excluded from lucrative tourism work. The economic liberty and consequent social prestige fostered by Jaidee also transcend the numerous historical, socio-economic, and ethnic obstacles facing most Muslims in Thailand. Local Muslims such as Tan constitute a sizable portion of Jaidee's total staff and stand apart from Muslims in other parts of the country. By overcoming the illiteracy, indigence, and social marginalization afflicting many other Muslims in southern Thailand, Jaidee's Muslim guides illustrate mass ecotourism's progressive role in community development. Spending an entire three days and nights with a prominent member of Thailand's royal family would normally seem out of reach for uneducated rubber tappers and farmers from Thailand's southern perimeters, but for Jaidee guides, the experience allowed them to make a giant leap upwards on Thailand's social ladder, albeit for just a few days.[5]

Psychologically, the casual and egalitarian atmosphere aboard Jaidee escort boats frees Thai guides from the rigid social structures and hierarchical norms permeating Thai society. As I explained in Chapter Two, the importance of establishing and maintaining one's place in the Thai system of status differentiation binds those with little education, money, or religious merit to a strict, often subordinate, code of conduct. However, the temporary suspension of these rules in the company of tourists leads to behaviour markedly different than the serious, reserved, and deferential attitudes displayed by guides towards those few Thais, usually wealthy Bangkok residents, who participate in Jaidee daytrips. Working at Jaidee, and with

[5] The Princess' trip remains a huge source of pride for those Thais who participated, and is so meaningful to Jaidee staff that Miller claims to be unable, years later, to hang up a photo of him with the Princess in the main Jaidee office due to jealousies (since Miller, dismayed by the bitter feuding over which guide would paddle the Princess, decided to do it himself, thereby spending lots of time with the Princess and her entourage).

tourists generally, clearly supplies a breath of fresh air for Thais who, with few class and status markers, enjoy the chance to tease and interact with wealthier and better educated foreigners in ways made impossible within Thailand's meticulous social structure.

Despite being overlooked in most assessments of tourism-related community development, the cultural, psychological, and social advantages gained by Thai managers and shareholders such as Jok lie at the heart of mass ecotourism's enduring legacy. Jok has acquired immeasurable status from his rise in occupational rank and, as mentioned earlier, this proves significant in light of the pivotal role played by status in sustaining Thai social structures. In the case of Jok, attributes which determine status such as education, social connections, appearance, salary, and occupational position have all mushroomed in the past decade due to Miller's efforts. Jok meets regularly with government officials, academics, and others with high status, and has even travelled abroad to Europe, a rare experience among southern Thais, not to mention rural Muslims. By controlling all personnel decisions - who to hire, who to fire, and who to promote to lead guide - Jok holds the fate of over fifty Thai employees in his hands, and has as a result become a de facto *poo yai ban* (village headman) of the local community. Jok's climb up the multi-tiered ladder of social rank remains an impressive achievement considering not only his particular family background, but also his affiliation with a Muslim minority that rarely enjoys superior status within mainstream Siamese society. Jok has increasingly assumed the role of a community patron who, along with clients, forms relationships crucial to the patronage system underlying Thai society:

> The perception of the ways to power are primarily located in hierarchical, that is, vertical relationships that crosscut class lines. The Thai way to power and resources is to seek patronage, to attach oneself to superior power, to join a *khana* (faction, clique, group), and to be the client (*luuknoong*) of somebody who has more resources. Social relationships are hierarchically ordered and valued in terms of *bunkhun*, gratefulness (*katanjuu*), and reciprocity (*kaantoobthaen*). These perceptions belong to national culture and are valid for almost all Siamese Thai participants, irrespective of their class position (Mulder, 1990: 5).[6]

Like all good patrons, Jok treats his clients with kindness and a measure of protection. Jaidee staff show an enormous amount of respect for Jok, or "Khun [Mr.] Thaitawat" as they

[6] Although not defined in the original quotation, *bunkhun* refers to a favour or service performed which puts the receiver under an obligation.

refer to him,[7] and Jok's reputation as a fair and generous manager pervades general staff opinion. As a patron, Jok expresses benevolence and earns clients by granting jobs to poorly educated farmers and fishermen with perhaps only a couple of years of tourism experience. Jok serves as proof of Jaidee's emphasis on local communities, and has, in turn, embraced the company's bottom-up philosophy while also fulfilling his role as the benevolent head or patron of Jaidee's Thai family:

> For local communities, basically we like to keep the local people, like to benefit local companies. For example, the boats, we don't own the boats, we don't have our own escort boats...We can buy our own boats, but we said it's something for local people. They can do business with us so we rent the boat from them. The escort boats, the longtail boats, the fish shop, the coffee shop in the village, they all get business from us. The idea for employee staff [is], we look for guides and staff that are local people and many guides, many staff, we get them as low education people, not many university degrees because our idea is that we like to get these people to have more education in the travel business...We work like a family here. All the time I like to get together with the guides, like you can see I carry things with the guides. I do the work with them, I like to check what they need. I keep close relationships with them (Jok, pers.comm.).

Despite serving as one individual example, Jok exemplifies Miller's success in "redesigning social fabrics" among members of rural communities in southern Thailand who utilize opportunities to improve their material circumstances drastically and to suspend or even reverse the conventional limitations of Thai status hierarchies.

The final ground-level indication of Jaidee's practical success in fostering community economic and social development comes from the sustainability and security of Jaidee employment. Entry-level and menial occupations in the tourism industry in Thailand feature high rates of turnover as workers move from one job to the next. As I discovered during previous research (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1994), only 65 and 71 percent of hotel and guesthouse workers in Ko Samui and Phuket, respectively, stay with the same employer for more than one year. By contrast, 80 to 90 percent of Jaidee guides remain with the company for over a year, and of the thirty or so guides shown in a company photograph with the Princess in 1993, only nine had left by 1996.[8] The employment stability provided by Jaidee stems from three

[7] All Thais have a given name, a surname, and a one- or two-syllabled nickname. I refer to most Thais in this thesis by their nicknames, since that is the most common name used in everyday interaction. Proper names are usually reserved for more formal occasions, or particularly when referring to strangers, superiors, or others deserving respect.

[8] Guides generally leave Jaidee only to start their own businesses, to enter the army, or to move back home. In over seven months of research, I learned of only three guides who had left Jaidee over a seven year span (1989-96) under acrimonious conditions.

principles: *sanuk* (fun), *itsara* (freedom), and open communication. A recurring theme during interviews and conversations with Jaidee's Thai staff revolved around the importance of having *sanuk* while working. Having come from tedious agricultural, hotel, or restaurant employment, most Jaidee guides appreciate the *sanuk* atmosphere created aboard escort boats by the playfulness and congeniality of mass ecotourists. By having to work only ten days each month to earn a base salary, Jaidee guides enjoy an easy pace and relaxed expectations. Many guides, most notably those from Ko Yao and other areas of Phangnga, work alongside childhood friends, and are able to earn bountiful salaries without having to leave their communities.

The glamorous nature of tourism work, exemplified by frequent opportunities to interact with young *farang* and Japanese females, renders the work of guides both exciting and occasionally sexually-liberating, as illustrated in the previous chapter. Jaidee ensures that its staff eat a good quality, and variety, of food on board, and surprisingly - from my "Western" point of view at least - many guides prefer coming to work over staying at home. As one guide put it:

> At home you must buy food, pay for gasoline, pay for whiskey, pay for women (laughter). At work, I eat good food, see my friends, and make money. It [work] is like a holiday, *sabai sabai* [happy, peaceful] and *sanuk,* so why stay at home?

In recognition of the company's role in the everyday well-being of its staff, Jok looks the other way when guides come aboard escort boats, despite not working that day, in order to eat for free. Just as working for Jaidee offers a rare chance to suspend behavioural norms based on social and status positions, the temporary escape into a "free" and *sanuk* environment proves emancipatory for those Muslim guides facing strict monitoring and expectations at home.

Translated as freedom, the Thai concept of *itsara* also characterizes the nature of the work performed by Jaidee guides. The laid back personalities of Miller and Carter, Jaidee's two founding *farangs*, have defined the company's overall atmosphere and style. Reflecting upon former work experience, many guides contrast the casual and flexible atmosphere at Jaidee against the restrictive set of rules and regulations found in hotel and restaurant work. From the day Jaidee was started, Miller strove to provide attractive employment alternatives in terms of salaries and social workplace conditions:

> I purposely rejected the 'three-hundred and ten rules approach.' The tyrannical

> regime of hotels is just ridiculous. Guides are big boys, they don't need to be told when to cut their hair or how to behave every single minute of the day (Jim Miller, pers.comm.).

In direct opposition to the standards of dress, behaviour, and responsibilities expected by hotel and restaurant employers, Jaidee guides keep casual time schedules, interact with guests in a non-subservient and casual manner, enjoy decision-making responsibility during trips, and meet company "uniform" requirements by simply wearing shorts and an official Jaidee t-shirt. Most enjoyable to the majority of guides, however, is the sheer absence of management and supervision during the daytrips. Seen more as peers than supervisors, lead guides represent the only form of "management" on Jaidee daytrips, and the lack of perpetual assessment and surveillance come as psychological weights lifted off the shoulders of Thais accustomed to more stifling and unpleasant paid work.

The third principle driving the sustainability of Jaidee employment, Miller's policy of open staff communication, also serves to set the company apart from other employers in Thailand, including those operating tourism companies. Although Lord's more business-like approach stands as an occasional exception, Miller, Carter, and Jok grant considerable leeway to guides in need of either financial assistance or paid leave. Family tragedies often require guides to return home, but whereas most employers in Thailand allow minimal time off, Jaidee provides ample time for its staff, in some cases extending over three or four months. According to many guides, Jaidee allows open communication with approachable "bosses" since it is a company "started by *farangs*," the implication being that Thai employers often show far less compassion towards their staff. While Jaidee's policy of open communication often fails to overcome cultural barriers preventing Thai guides from making explicit criticisms or challenging company managers with superior status positions, the accessible styles of Miller, Carter, and Jok cultivate an amicable working atmosphere which serves, in turn, to enhance Jaidee's economic and social contributions to local communities in and around Phuket and Ao Phangnga.

8.3 Sustainable Development or Sustainable Tourism? Prospects for Community Environmental Development

At the intersection between nature-oriented forms of "alternative" tourism and

community-based development lie attempts by Jaidee Kayak, Trekkers, and other mass ecotourism companies to promote environmental awareness and the long-term sustainability of their particular "alternative" ideas. The environmental lobbying efforts of Jaidee include investment in local clean-up projects, persuasion of the regional TAT office to erect life jacket instructional signs in various tourism sites, and contribution of funds and labour to conservation initiatives such as the Gibbon Rehabilitation Project. Jaidee employees understand the negative implications of further environmental degradation of marine tourism destinations throughout southern Thailand. By personally receiving, and subsequently preaching to passengers, the environmental message advocated by the company's *farang* founders, the Thai kayaking guides of Jaidee realize the financial importance of maintaining the aesthetic and natural qualities which attract mass, packaged (eco)tourists to Ao Phangnga. The economic incentive fuelling the preservation of natural habitats in various ecotourism regions of the "developing" world thus also characterizes the experiences of Thais working for responsible mass ecotourism companies intent on spreading a message and leading the environmental fight by example.

Environmental appreciation among most of Jaidee's Thai staff corroborate the positive repercussions of revealing the "wealth" of Ao Phangnga's natural resources to locals whose lives depend on the sustainability of tourism in the area. Insecurity regarding future employment in an area of potential environmental desecration represents one way in which the financial benefits of ecotourism motivate guides to preserve the resources upon which ecotourism is based. In addition, such *immediate* monetary interests as the garnering of tips serve as fundamental a role in building environmental appreciation as more long-term educational initiatives or fears concerning future job security. Although broad, aspatial, or universal descriptions of "alternative" tourism and community development would normally ignore the role played by tips, and other "taken-for-granted" facets of the tourist-host encounter, the immediate monetary forces motivating Thai guides are never far below the surface. At times, it seems as if every action carried out by Jaidee guides aboard escort boats stems from an interest in bolstering tips, and the disappointment on the faces of guides receiving only a handshake or pat on the back from passengers at the end of a long day is palpable. As one disappointed guide joked with me after learning that his *kaek* (guest) had written glowing things about him in Jaidee's comment book, *"kian dee, tae mai mee tang"* (he

writes good things, but has no money (tips)).

The suspense created at the conclusion of a daytrip by the uncertainty of earning a tip shapes guide behaviour in several ways and even influences the overall atmosphere of a trip. Before an escort boat has left Ao Po in the early morning, guides will have "sized up" that day's group of passengers according to appearance, age, and nationality, since these factors determine the likelihood of tips. Tips represent such an overarching concern that when faced with the decision whether to curb inappropriate tourist behaviour or preserve one's chances for tips by not openly criticizing a passenger, Jaidee guides almost always choose the latter. Due in part to the Thai inclination towards harmony and the avoidance of public disagreement, Jaidee guides remain hesitant to issue polite reminders to passengers engaging in improper behaviour such as yelling inside *hongs*, collecting shells or plants, or starting water fights with other passengers or guides. Thus, although Jaidee guides are knowledgeable, environmentally concerned, and successful in instilling a sense of proper kayaking etiquette among passengers, few go out of their way to ensure that noise levels are consistently kept low, especially when it is perceived, correctly or incorrectly, that a passenger may take offence.

A cooperative atmosphere among guides on Jaidee escort boats makes interpersonal conflicts rare, but the issue of tips does provide one source of slight tension. The task of assigning passengers to guides falls on the lead guide, who enjoys full autonomy to pair up tourist and guide however he sees fit. Since passengers are immediately appraised according to their tip potential, favourites are chosen, and guides remain hopeful of being assigned a "good" passenger by the lead guide. In those cases when guides get stuck with *khee nieo* (cheap) passengers for the entire day, resentment builds towards the lead guide, who in turn is accused of hoarding generous tippers such as Americans and Germans while passing off cheap, undesirable passengers from Australia and Canada. Dhum, the lead guide profiled earlier, notes with consternation the Jaidee guide obsession with tips:

> Some people have talked about me and said bad things in the main office because they say that I always give them shit passengers like Australians or tourists with miserable faces, and that I keep all the good passengers to myself. But somebody has to work with cheap guests, so somebody will always be angry. Too many guides think only about tips, nothing else, tips tips tips tips. They make much better salaries than people in hotels, and the job is much more fun and easy, but still they always complain about money and tips. Guides will only learn something new if they can get better tips. That's the only thing that matters to many guides (Dhum, pers.comm.).

The final part of Dhum's statement points to the environmental importance of tips since one's level of knowledge and ability to describe elements of the natural environment to passengers in English are accurately perceived as contributing factors to enhanced tips.

Most guides engage in a constant effort to improve their environmental knowledge, or more accurately their ability to convey this knowledge to passengers. Thus, tips act as an immediate financial incentive for guides to develop environmental knowledge and appreciation. This appreciation then allows some guides to graduate to the next step, whereby environmental conservation and responsibility are preached to the broader Thai community. Tan, for example, took an emergent environmental consciousness back to his village and after expressing concern to the *poo yai ban* (village headman) of Ko Panyi regarding the large amounts of rubbish being tossed into the water of Ao Phangnga, the latter agreed to have rubbish bins placed throughout the village. Long exposure to Miller's message has also influenced Jok who, like others working with mass ecotourism companies and passengers, has adapted more environmental priorities:

> When I worked with tourists, I learned more and thought more about the environment, about nature, about *tamachat* (nature)...When I have more education in my mind, I believe that nature can make a better life. Before, when I was young or when I stayed on the island [Ko Yao], I only thought about it a little bit. I thought more about how I can get better food. I wanted to do everything to make my life better and I didn't care as much about nature. I thought about money first but now I've started to think more about the environment and the future (Jok, pers.comm.).

In spite of the beneficial changes brought by Jaidee Kayak to the environmental outlooks of individual Thai members of staff, the company's success has had the unintended effect of tarnishing prospects for the environmental preservation of the Ao Phangnga area. By enticing local Thai entrepreneurs, or former Jaidee business partners like Bop, to enter the profitable sea kayaking industry, the public image and visible success of Jaidee have worked against both the company itself, and the very resources used to sell its daytrips and overnighters in the first place. Four "copycat" kayaking companies now operate alongside Jaidee, and with the total number of kayaks floating around inside each lagoon exceeding eighty on some days, the *hongs* of Ao Phangnga have become known jokingly to some locals as *talaat nam* (floating markets).

The number of kayaks found in formerly "pristine" caves and *hongs* presents a problem in and of itself, but this is compounded by the questionable practices of Jaidee's competitors.

Whereas Jaidee imposes a limit of sixteen passengers per escort boat, competitors cram up to thirty people on each of their numerous boats, and due to both their use of substandard equipment and their primitive command over negotiating entry into *hongs* based on daily tide tables, the safety levels found aboard "copy" kayaking companies compare dismally to those enforced by Jaidee. The following newspaper editorial points out, albeit in sensational terms, the problems caused by "eco-pirates" in Ao Phangnga:

> To make sure there is no mistake as to who is who around the caves, the "captains" of the pirate canoes entertain their guests by playfully breaking off stalactites with their paddles. "Plop" there goes a couple thousand years' worth of drip-limestone sediment to its watery grave...Hong Island, our next step, is not so quiet. A pirate ship has off-loaded its human cargo into red kayaks. As we navigate our way through its entrance cave, we almost collide with oncoming traffic. Because of the narrow tidal time span, a new peak hour, including the traffic jam, has descended on Thailand. If Bangkok's traffic jams were caused by greed and lack of planning, then surely the same applies here (Vannisse, 1996c: A5).

Though the standards found among kayaking copycats are not as abominable as described by Jaidee's *farangs* or some journalists, I nonetheless noticed a wide discrepancy between Jaidee and its copycats during several trips taken with the latter. Besides unnecessarily crowding narrow caves and *hongs*, copycat guides engage in yelling, water fights, and other raucous behaviour which have in recent years forced wildlife to flee away from the coastlines and open *hongs* of small Ao Phangnga limestone islands. Due to limited English skills and the absence of training, the majority of copycat guides are able to provide only scant environmental information to their passengers. Jaidee's expatriate detractors, in addition of course to the Thai owners of copycats, claim falsely that the *farang* owners of Jaidee are uninterested in cooperation, but previous attempts by Jaidee to bring other kayaking companies under the same set of standards have resulted in either finger-pointing and resentment or tentative verbal agreements which fail to curb the activities of copycats in practice.[9] Even Jok, who as a local and a Thai can appreciate the concerns of domestic entrepreneurs hoping to improve their livelihoods, feels frustrated about the environmental insensitivity and myopic perspective of copycat owners:

> Owners of other companies are businessmen and they care only about making money. They have no idea what Jaidee is all about or what ecotourism means. If they can bring as many people as they can, they will always do it because it

[9] Following the fatal kayaking accident in 1997, copycat owners took heed of potential problems of overcrowding and agreed, in principle at least, to abide by some basic and established standards related to sea kayaking.

> means more money. They don't care, they don't think about what they're doing. Maybe they own a karaoke bar, maybe something else. It is only another business to them. This is a problem. It is why we can't get together [to cooperate] (Jok, pers.comm.).

Looking back retrospectively on Jaidee's formation and subsequent success, Jim Miller feels a measure of guilt and ambivalence about further opening up Ao Phangnga to commercial forms of tourism. The thousands of tourists visiting James Bond Island (Ko Tapu) by longtail boat or travelling with sailboat cruises on scenic tours of Ao Phangnga have secured tourism's place in the region for at least two decades, but the form of mass ecotourism practised by Jaidee brought tourists, for the first time, to islands and *hongs* previously unvisited by local residents. Despite fearing their eventual destruction, Miller hoped idealistically that his "discovery" of Ao Phangnga's *hongs* would eventually lead to sustainability:

> When we saw the *hongs* for the first time, I said 'we can't let anyone see this, they'll get ruined.' In the end I decided in order to preserve the area, we needed to take a Sierra Club approach and commercialize it slightly so that people will get a sense of the economic value of conservation and go from there. We needed to commercialize the area to save it from longtail boats and tour boats (Jim Miller, pers.comm.).

The managers and owners of Jaidee justify the commercialization of *hongs* by claiming that other, less responsible operators would eventually have come along and exposed the *hongs* had Jaidee not done it first. While this may or may not ring true, such attempts to justify sea kayaking in Ao Phangnga clearly serve as defence mechanisms since even Miller admits that perhaps it would have been better environmentally, if not economically, for Ao Phangnga's *hongs* had Jaidee not operated in this area at all.

Though acting in good faith, a tormented Miller acknowledges the double-edged environmental nature of the mass ecotourism sword:

> I can't go on the daytrip. Emotionally, it tears me up. I can't put myself to see what's happening in the *hongs*. I feel a moral obligation, I feel personally responsible. I recognize that I've done everything I can, but without government help, there's nothing that can be done. I've recognized the corruption that is called the Thai government, and the incompetence. Regardless of all that, I feel personally responsible for what's happening in there [the *hongs*] and I just can't even deal with it emotionally (Jim Miller, pers.comm.).

Ao Phangnga thus suffers from the classic dilemma afflicting many other popular ecotourism destinations whereby pleasurable experiences contingent upon small numbers tend to attract excessive levels of visitation and, in the case of Ao Phangnga, competitors eager to cash in on

intensifying tourist demands. This dilemma has led to yet another for Jaidee in that Miller, exasperated by the incessant copying of his ideas, wishes to leave the area completely but is forced to stay out of concern for the nearly one hundred Thais directly or indirectly dependent on the company for income.

Feeling increasingly frustrated by the actions and mere existence of competitors, Miller and Lord have begun to expose the environmental infringements of copycats to Jaidee customers, who are then cleverly advised to direct any complaints to regional officials. In a letter presented to passengers aboard Jaidee escort boats, Nigel Lord writes:

> It is our policy to preserve the "hongs" for all to enjoy. Unfortunately, other unscrupulous operators who have copied our activity do not take the same approach. Over the last few weeks, we have received several complaints from customers of ours saying that people in other groups were noisy in the "hongs" and not taking care of the environment. If you witnessed any problem on your trip, we would request that you write to the regional director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, whose address is given below.

Whether or not Jaidee's reasons for promoting sustainability and responsible tourism practices signify true environmental altruism is a moot point, due to both the incidental environmental benefits of mass ecotourism lobbying campaigns, and the difficulty of getting such campaigns past local bureaucratic obstacles. Political vice in Thailand incorporates a wide array of problems, and in the case of tourism in Ao Phangnga, the TAT's lack of enforcement capabilities, the absence of a national environmental monitoring program, and the National Parks Department's unwillingness to clamp down on illegal operators or activities have jeopardized the environmental sustainability of the area. Despite admitting initial gullibility over lax Thai levels of regulation and relentless industrial imitation, Miller continues to blame the prevailing Thai political and cultural climate for the steady deterioration of Ao Phangnga's caves and *hongs*, noting with a tinge of bitterness that, "the sad thing about it all is that because of the Thai bureaucracy's incompetence, they have forced Jaidee Kayak to expand in other countries in the region" (Jim Miller, pers.comm.). Corruption and apathy have thus not only imperilled Ao Phangnga's future sustainability, but have also blemished prospects for community development by nearly forcing mass ecotourism companies such as Jaidee Kayak to abandon local operations.

The environmental limitations of sea kayaking in Ao Phangnga relate directly to issues of sustainability, and tie in especially well to the debate over differences between sustainable

tourism and sustainable development.[10] Although many tourism industry representatives and researchers consider sustainable tourism an offshoot of sustainable development, the two are often incompatible. As Butler (1993) points out, sustainable tourism exists in a form which is able to maintain its viability indefinitely without consideration necessarily of the sustainability of other activities or processes. Sustainable development, by contrast, requires tourism to coexist with other activities and achieve a balance whereby the preservation of those human and physical environments supporting tourism enable sustainable development in multiple sectors. Sustainable tourism thus remains a unidimensional concept which, more often than not, actually hinders sustainable development:

> While it [sustainable tourism] has drawn attention to the need to achieve a balance between commercial and environmental interests, and has even spawned several successful examples of energy efficiency and recycling among tourist operations, as a single-sector concept it fails to acknowledge the intersectoral competition for resources, the resolution of which is crucial to the achievement of sustainable development (Wall, 1997: 47).

The case study provided by Jaidee Kayak, and sea-based ecotourism in Ao Phangnga in general, illuminates the potential incongruities and conflicts between sustainable forms of tourism, and tourism's place in promoting sustainable development. I argued in Chapter Six that by introducing elements of both "alternative" tourism and community development, certain mass ecotourism companies in Phuket have rejuvenated the existing packaged tourism industry while also providing novel and adventurous options to "Western" customers reaching a point of saturation with the conventional four S's - sun, sea, sand, and sex - of tourism. Since mass ecotourism has assumed a potentially regenerative role in the further growth, or at least survival, of Phuket's tourism industry, land-based nature safaris such as Trekkers and sea kayaking ventures such as Jaidee Kayak have contributed to the sustainability of *tourism* in the region. In this case, however, regardless of Jaidee's fruitful attempts to impart a sense of environmental appreciation among its Thai employees, sustainable tourism has failed to ensure *sustainability* since the proliferation of irresponsible copycat operators and the dearth of both government regulations and industrial standards seriously threaten the long-term environmental viability of tourism in Ao Phangnga and Phuket. Although some mass ecotourism companies have successfully fostered sustainable community *economic* development, therefore, the

[10] See, for example, Butcher (1997), Butler (1991), Dearden (1993), France (1997), Middleton (1998), and Stabler (1997).

success of high-profile operators such as Jaidee Kayak has worked against the environmental sustainability so crucial to the continuation of any form of tourism. It is certainly ironic, and discouraging for Miller and other ecotourism *farangs*, that by sustaining tourism's survival in Phuket, successful mass ecotourism operators have in effect compromised tourism's place *in* sustainable development.

8.4 Exceptions, Trade-Offs, and Other Limitations of Community-Based Development

Grassroots attempts at decentralized community development in Thailand have traditionally suffered from several constraints, including funding shortages, conflicts with traditional Thai cultural systems and existing power structures, and cultural differences in the meanings of key terms such as "self help" and "public participation" (Pratt, 1993; Rigg, 1991a; Verhagen, 1987).[11] While mass ecotourism operators such as Jaidee and Trekkers have, after years of fine-tuning and innovation, succeeded in promoting economic and social development in southern Thailand, these achievements have not always come easily. Contrary to those accounts of tourism and community development which posit universal, overly abstract sets of principles and requirements,[12] Jaidee's experiences with "alternative" tourism and community development reveal the inherently-localized nature of both processes, and also illustrate the myriad obstacles facing *farang*-owned businesses in southern Thailand.

The limitations encountered by "alternative" tourism operators in southern Thailand fall into several categories. First, site-specific circumstances complicate the practical implementation of "alternative" ideas. For example, the Exclusive and Backdoor policy of alternating businesses within the community in order to distribute revenues represents a principle which, like all "motherhood" issues, seems great in theory, but proves a hindrance to community development in practice. As Dave Gann, an Exclusive Explorations tour leader, complained in frustration:

[11] Despite the persistence of some fundamental hurdles to community development in Thailand, isolated cases of successful grassroots development have received occasional attention (see, for example, Attavutichai, 1994; Shigetomi, 1995; Srisermbhok, 1994). Authors such as Rigg (1998) have illustrated the challenges created by Thai social and political hierarchies, and some Thai intellectuals and spiritual figures have argued that a uniquely Buddhist approach to community development is the answer to overcoming the various obstacles of more conventional, "Western"-oriented conceptions (Ketudat, 1990; Sivaraksa, 1981, 1987; Suksamran, 1995).

[12] Examples of universal prescriptions for successful community-based tourism include Brandon (1993), Horwich *et al* (1993), Lynn (1992), McLaren (1998), and Whelan (1991).

> When we're in Khao Sok, we stay at either B & K Nature Huts or Jungle View Lodge. We prefer B & K, but when we tried to move from Jungle View, the original place, Leosam the owner, he's a corrupt bastard, he threatened to close off our access to the rafthouses on the lake. He told us that he controls Khao Sok and can get us kicked out, which is bullshit. He's just trying to intimidate us with his mafia connections, and he's obviously lost the plot...Unfortunately, Exclusive encourages dependence, despite what the official company line says. Moving business around and spreading the wealth within the local community is a totally foreign, a Western, idea which is alien in Thailand. What actually happens is that a place becomes dependent on Exclusive and if you all of a sudden say 'ok, thanks, everything is great, but we're moving to give your competitor a fair shot as well,' you may as well forget about it. You'll get yourself in all kinds of trouble, and the place you're moving to now has a new enemy as well (Dave Gann, pers.comm).

Efforts to distribute profits or "empower" locals often take unexpected, culturally-specific turns. In yet another example, Heather Karras, an Exclusive tour leader, recounted a story in which the male members of a northern hilltribe family being paid by the company for weekly accommodations and trekking tours used their newfound financial gain not to invest in infrastructural upgrades or to pay for a family member's education, but rather to patronize local prostitutes.

Second, the corrupt practices of government officials and private operators hamper the ability of conscientious mass ecotourism operators to promote environmental sustainability. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, park rangers and other staff working in Ao Phangnga National Park claim to lack the necessary boats and even gasoline to pursue sea kayaking companies which violate environmental laws or operate without an official TAT licence. In light of the financial windfall created by the 10 baht charge levied against every tourist entering Ao Phangnga, it is likely that most of this money fails to get past local Ao Phangnga staff and officials, the majority of whom are severely underpaid. Even in those rare cases when officials, such as Niti Kongkrut of the regional TAT office in Phuket, possess a genuine concern for environmental issues, conflicting local interests and the lack of legal enforcement capabilities limit prospects for any tangible or practical solutions. The private corruption of copycat companies - the owners of which have recently initiated prohibited activities such as rock climbing in Ao Phangnga - also inhibits opportunities for inter-company cooperation. In an unregulated business and physical environment, private corruption further curtails the sustainability of certain activities.

Aside from various levels of corruption, the notorious underside of Thai society, and

the underground mafia figures operating therein, represent the third major limitation facing *farang* mass ecotourism operators. In Jaidee's case, mafia intimidation began as soon as the company offered daytrips into *hongs*. Since the fifteenth century, the same family has possessed, thanks to the Thai government, a monopolistic contract to collect the birds nests of swiftlets in the caverns and grottoes of Ao Phangnga. As with all other lucrative endeavours in Thailand, including to a certain extent tourism, the collection of edible birds nests falls under the control of powerful mafia figures who use intimidation and deadly force to dissuade poachers from illegally infringing on nest gathering territories.[13] Within months of Jaidee's formation, local birds nest gatherers began harassing guides and their passengers, and eventually the company's managers received an invitation in 1991 to a meeting in Ko Yao arranged by the central figure controlling Ao Phangnga's birds nest trade. During the meeting, the birds nest "mafia don" slammed down his nickel-plated .45 calibre pistol on a table and, staring Miller in the eye, demanded fifty percent ownership of Jaidee. Refusing to back down, Miller and Jaidee faced, for the next two years, the constant intimidation of birds nest guards who, equipped with shotguns and M-16s, would often turn up at the entrance of caves in longtail boats to demand that guides pay 50 baht (US$2) for every *kaek* (guest). Despite wellfounded fears of being shot, Jaidee's guides were instructed to refuse making such payments by Miller, who convinced his employees that regardless of the nasty disposition of some mafia figures, few would be foolish enough to shoot somebody in front of twenty *farang* tourists.

Miller's imposing physical presence, resilient character, and political connections to prominent local and national Thai officials most likely prevented his untimely death, but in the end it took a uniquely-Thai solution to rid Jaidee Kayak of mafia interference once and for all. During the aformentioned overnight trip of the Thai Princess, the leader of Ao Phangnga's bird nest syndicate made a fatal error by refusing to cease, even temporarily, his intimidation of Jaidee. According to Miller, such acts of intimidation "greatly upset the Princess, and it was basically 'end of story' for them [mafia] after that" (Jim Miller, pers.comm.).

The fourth barrier confounding "alternative" tourism's contribution to community development centres on the predicaments associated with operating a business as a foreigner,

[13] Summers and Valli (1990) provide an interesting account of the activities of birds nest gatherers in southern Thailand. See also the series of articles by Sukpanich (1998a, 1998b, 1998c) in the *Bangkok Post.*

and more importantly as a *farang*, in Thailand. Gradual awareness of, and the ability to work within, the political climate of southern Thailand allow some *farangs* with no prior cultural or historical attachments to succeed in implementing "alternative" tourism and community development, but a large number of other cultural constraints manage to frustrate even the most assimilated of Phuket's *farang* residents. The complex and multi-tiered cultural context embodied by Thai society presents difficulties at several levels, from superficial daily encounters to more protracted social relationships. For *farangs* running business ventures in Thailand, arrogance or sheer ignorance exacerbate potential cultural misunderstandings. On one occasion, for instance, a Jaidee guide assaulted Nigel Lord with a wooden beam at Ao Po due to a simple misunderstanding concerning something Lord said to the guide before a daytrip. Instead of seeking clarification or express concern at the moment the words were spoken - which would run counter to Thai desires for surface harmony - the guide seethed for the entire day and upon returning to Ao Po at the end of the day, lost control and attacked Lord. Confrontations in Thailand, however small, often lead to fist fights, resignations, or eventual revenge, and since departures from a *jai yen* (cool heart) always result in a "loss of face," people involved in confrontations, or even small disagreements, are usually given no choice but to leave situations unresolved. Since open criticism of company procedures or policies is considered confrontational and disrespectful, most Thais unhappy with their employers go along with the flow of things in public, but privately will either eventually explode into violence after quietly storing up anger, humiliation, or frustration, or in order to avoid losing face, will alternatively engage in theft and other subversive means of undermining their employers.[14]

As visible minorities with seemingly large amounts of money, *farangs* in Thailand are moving targets for scam-artists, corrupt officials, and nefarious criminal leaders. Besides mysterious deaths and other suspicious crimes perpetrated against *farangs* in Phuket, every mass ecotourism operator has invariably suffered from incidents meant to generate fear or issue forceful reminders of a foreigner's outsider status in Thai society. Some operators, including Don Strock of Trekkers, has had tyres on company transport vehicles slashed, while other *farang*-owned sightseeing tour companies have had boats purposely sunk by vandals. In Jaidee's case, occasional damage caused to escort boats was several years ago complemented

[14] For a good description of subtle means of subversive resistance in Thailand, see Cooper and Cooper (1990).

by the "kidnapping" of six inflatable canoes, the company's entire fleet at the time, which required a handsome ransom from Miller before they could be returned. Due to the vulnerability that comes with tourist or temporary immigrant status, *farangs* also face the constant threat of deportation which, as illustrated later, remains a key tactic of intimidation used by unscrupulous members of the local Thai community against certain *farang* operators.

The targeting of *farangs* as wealthy outsiders unfortunately reflects recurring, but often insidious, themes of racism found throughout Thailand. Longstanding ethnic stereotypes, and the animosities these often feed, almost killed Jaidee Kayak in its incipient days of operation due to the racial and religious intolerance of Bop, a Sino-Thai and one of Miller's four original partners. Upon moving into a house with Jok, Cedric Carter, Bop, and Noong, Bop's girlfriend from Bangkok, Miller felt optimistic about the company's future and was elated about the apparent racial harmony prevailing among Jok, a southern Muslim fisherman, and Bop and Noong, urbane Sino-Thais from Bangkok.[15] In short time, however, it became obvious that ethnic bigotry would persist and create serious disruptions to the company's operations:

> I thought naively, 'we have Buddhists and Muslims living together and isn't it just wonderful?' But, Bop and his girlfriend are Chinese and were *very* rude and patronizing to Jok...and the other Muslims working with the company. At one meeting, Bop stood up and said, 'Jim, you may think we have an equal company here, but never in my life will I allow a Muslim to be equal with me.' Eventually, Jok and others just started refusing to work with Bop. (Jim Miller, pers.comm.).

In many ways, Miller's negative experiences with Bop have created a discernible anti-Chinese sentiment at Jaidee, thereby reproducing common racial and ethnic stereotypes of Thailand's Chinese minority. In spite of the notable absence of racial, ethnic, or religious issues in most recipes for tourism and development success, empirical examples from southern Thailand betray the practical, and inveterate, prejudices obstructing exogenous attempts at community empowerment and emancipatory social change.

Questions of *farang* vulnerability lead into the final hurdle facing "alternative" tourism operators interested in community development: the betrayal of outsiders by indigenous partners. Enabling "natives" to serve as partial owners and managers in a tourism company seems reasonable, particularly when discussing local involvement and grassroots development.

[15] As discussed in Chapter Five, most Muslims in southern Thailand are ethnically Malay, and thus anti-Muslim intolerance in the south contains an added racial component as well.

In practice, however, the periodically distasteful tactics associated with business everywhere mar the operations of Phuket-based ecotourism companies. As with problems created by organized criminal figures, infighting and treachery have plagued most *farang* operators, including Rex Gilmore of Nature Paradise and Don Strock of Trekkers, who several years ago returned from an extended surgery-related overseas trip only to find that his operations manager, incidentally also his Thai brother-in-law, had cleaned out the company's coffers, and had taken half of Trekkers' staff with him in order to start a rival copycat enterprise.

The tale of embezzlement and betrayal provided by Miller's experience with Bop remains the ultimate example of the ground-level difficulties encountered by small, independent *farang* entrepreneurs in Thailand. Bop created problems for Jaidee from the very beginning, treating Muslim staff with contempt and demonstrating paranoid and conniving tendencies. After failing the ACA novice course three times in succession, Bop aroused further suspicion among Miller, Carter, and Jok. Meanwhile, Noong, Bop's girlfriend and Jaidee's bookkeeper, carried out what Miller refers sarcastically to as "Chinese-style accounting." In March of 1992, following just over two full years of operation, Jaidee was left with minimal capital reserves, but after poring over the books, Miller noticed total revenues and expenditures of seventeen and twelve million baht, respectively. After failing to account for the five million baht (US$20,747) deficit, Noong resigned, setting off a chain reaction of events involving Bop and Miller.

When Miller originally formed Jaidee Kayak with Bop, the latter's lawyer drafted a contract in Thai giving signing authority to the two co-owners. Following the addition of Jok, Carter, and Noong to Jaidee's ownership group, the official company charter remained unchanged, leaving the three new "partners" with no legal ownership or signing authority. With Bop's consent, Miller drafted a letter permitting Jok and Carter to sign contracts, but when Miller brought the letter into the same lawyer's office to finalize the deal, Bop reneged - stating that English-language documents are invalid in Thailand - and followed up by threatening to cause further legal hassles unless Miller provided the funds to buy Bop out of the company. Since the original Jaidee charter neglected to list Miller as official company chairman, Bop claimed that, as an equal partner, he was owed half the company's assets (which at the time stood legally at one million baht). Miller refused to pay Bop that amount, offering instead to honour the former's nineteen percent share in the company. Soon

thereafter, armed with the knowledge that Miller, like many *farang* expatriates, had overstayed his three-month tourist visa, Bop bribed the local immigration officer to make an arrest. However, Miller's Thai wife, Mia, eventually explained the situation to the immigration officer, and Bop was told to collect his nineteen percent share (190,000 baht) and drop the matter. After being brought to the governor of Phuket in order to issue a personal apology for overstaying his tourist visa, Miller was charged with just a misdemeanour and released.

Learning that Miller had escaped with a proverbial slap on the wrist, Bop took the matter to the national immigration office in Bangkok, which immediately issued another arrest warrant for Miller, this time on a felony charge. Once again, a female Thai ally salvaged the situation when Raowadee, an office manager and small shareholder in Jaidee, spoke at length with, and "turned around," the prosecution the day before trial so that Miller would eventually receive acquittal by having only to pay a fine of 4,000 baht (US$158) and leave the country for one day. Bop went on to assist in the formation of Jaidee's first copycat competitor with Mong, a friend from his college days in Bangkok. Using the lawyer for Diethelm, Thailand's largest packaged tour wholesaler, Miller dissolved Jaidee and reformed the company with a new company charter. Despite the bitterness and near financial ruin caused by Bop, the lessons provided for Miller have prepared him for other unanticipated snags, and have highlighted to other *farang* tourism operators in Phuket some of the practical issues afflicting altruistic or naive community empowerment schemes.

The inevitable trade-offs of community development in southern Thailand

In addition to professing "no compromise environmental and quality policies," Jaidee Kayak proclaims that "a 100% commitment to 'No Trade Off' conservation must come before business interests" (from "Guidelines for Potential Partners" in Jaidee's web page). However, beyond the philosophical goals and moderate successes of Jaidee, the experiences of mass ecotourism operators in southern Thailand indicate that tourism-related community development occurs not as a smooth or linear process but rather as a set of trade-offs, compromises, and caveats. Such trade-offs have tempered otherwise successful development initiatives, and have also forced the inevitable reorientation of mass ecotourism strategies towards finding localized solutions to site-specific dilemmas. The number of trade-offs made by successful "alternative" tourism companies such as Jaidee and Trekkers is extensive, but for

the purposes of this research, I will group them into three areas: environmental, entrepreneurial, and developmental.

In the preceding section of this chapter, I discussed the contradictions between sustainable tourism and sustainable development in the southern Thai context. Despite fostering appreciation among its Thai staff and demonstrating the financial importance of halting the degradation of Ao Phangnga's natural resources, the activities and policies of Jaidee have led to environmental sacrifices. Jaidee's success in raising the collective environmental consciousness of local communities in southern Thailand thus stands juxtaposed against the detrimental effects of copycats and slack government regulations on the long-term environmental sustainability of Ao Phangnga. Miller denies having to make compromises of an environmental nature, but in practice, the social, political, and cultural climate in which Jaidee operates necessitates the trading off of certain environmental policies in exchange for other facets of development and sustainability. One example comes from the employment and revenue generated by copycat kayaking companies. While it is true that copycats engage in questionable environmental practices, and generally display an abysmal appreciation of the need for long-term sustainability, they nevertheless provide jobs for Thais. Regardless of the notorious backgrounds of some copycat owners, the revenues created by increased mass tourist demand for sea kayaking in Phuket do in any case enrich these "locals," however corrupt or unsavoury they may be.

Jaidee's managers mock copycats for hiring people off the street, whatever their qualifications, but instead of providing intermediate-level stepping stone experience for guides as Jaidee does, copycats serve a similarly important role in creating temporary labour opportunities for unskilled local workers. A Jaidee monopoly on sea kayaking in Ao Phangnga would surely benefit the natural habitat of the region, but again, this would come at the cost of local entrepreneurial and employment opportunities. More problematically from a political perspective, such a monopoly would contain traces of colonial privilege in light of Jaidee's *farang* origins and touristic orientation. By trading off some of its more dogmatic environmental principles, however, Jaidee has created many relatively attractive positions for both its daytrip staff and those Thais working for copycat competitors.

A second environmental trade-off facing Jaidee centres on the nature of the daytrip itself. The overall tone underlying Jaidee's sea kayaking trips incorporates recurring themes of

adventure and environmental appreciation, but at the heart of the daytrip lies a focus on the quality, fun, and value of the actual tourism "product." With this in mind, Jaidee guides partake in certain practices which, though enhancing the experiential aspects of daytrips, prove far from ideal in environmental terms. On the initial journey to Ko Phanak, the first stop in most daytrips, guides regularly feed hovering Brahminy Kites (brown hawks) raw pieces of chicken flesh to the amusement and photographic ecstasy of passengers. Also, passengers are given flashlights while boarding inflatable canoes in order to light the path for guides in caves devoid of daylight. By flashing lights on bats hanging from the roofs of large caverns, passengers disturb the natural conditions found in bat habitats, but as minor environmental transgressions, practices such as these are offset by the added novelty created for tourists.

The educational value of Jaidee daytrips compares favourably to other such tours in southern Thailand. Yet, during the early stages of my research, I repeatedly made mental and recorded notes regarding the various ways in which Jaidee's efforts, although adequate, could nevertheless be improved, streamlined, or further concentrated. For example, standardized, tightly-structured lead guide presentations, stricter guide supervision and measurement of job performance, and tougher training requirements would likely bolster the educational, and thus environmental, value of Jaidee daytrips. I soon realized, however, that the relaxed demands placed on guides, as well as the peaceful, family atmosphere prevailing aboard escort boats, represent necessary trade-offs since difficult work, constant monitoring, and a lack of *sanuk* would undoubtedly drive away resentful guides, thereby eliminating any social or economic gains made by Jaidee in terms of community development.

The stability offered by Jaidee to its Thai employees originates from the company's beneficent human resources program, an *entrepreneurial* trade-off which, although contributing to community development, retards the maximization of short term profits. Given that Jaidee manages to generate enough revenue to finance community development schemes, the self-restraint exhibited by the company's owners and managers fails to hamper overall success. But this does not mean that temptations to enhance profits by increasing tourist numbers or laying off superfluous staff are easily resisted. As Carter commented:

> Our trips are usually full, but since we have a sixteen person maximum, we have to turn loads of people away every day. Turning away only six people, though, means choosing to give up six hundred dollars. That's a hard thing to do (Cedric Carter, pers.comm.).

The number of guides employed by Jaidee exceeds that actually required to run daytrips by a factor of two or three, but in the interests of "spreading the wealth" among the local community, Miller insists on employing more people than is physically necessary. Like Carter, Miller also abides by Jaidee's founding principles of ethical business and environmental responsibility, but reveals in the following comments the tension caused by having to make entrepreneurial trade-offs for staff welfare and environmental carrying capacities:

> I get jealous...I go into the head office and I see guides driving better motorbikes than me. I've got a six year-old motorbike that's about to die. I realize locally-owned tour companies like Jaidee will never make tons of money, but Mia [Miller's wife] is always bugging me about it. She sees the owners of these other companies driving around in Mercedes and all we have to share is this crappy moped. Of course, these guys exploit their staff and squeeze everything they can out of the environment, but we've got to start thinking of our son and the future. I'd like to make money again some day, I mean I've gone from a corporate job paying over a hundred thousand dollars to getting two thousand dollars a month and living in this small rented house. Eventually, I want to write books, go on speaking tours, and you know just supervise these local companies as a consultant, but for now, I guess I'm here to stay (Jim Miller, pers.comm).

The enormous power invested in Jok points to yet another example of trading away certain elements of entrepreneurial efficiency, in this case for the economic, social, and political empowerment of a individual member of the local Thai community. Jaidee's *farang* managers have decided to give full control over daytrip operations to Jok, a formerly-inexperienced, poorly-educated fisherman from Ko Yao. Bearing in mind that patronage, corruption, and other prevalent Thai methods of conducting business have often scuppered community empowerment schemes, Jaidee has taken huge risks in giving financial and managerial control to "locals," some of which like Jok have "worked out" while others like Bop and Noong have not. The casual and familial nature of Jok's style may cut into the overall efficiency of the company, but in effect, this has proven worth the freedom, social liberation, and *sanuk* created for local workers. Considering Jaidee's proven concern for the tenets of community development, fortified revenues and stringent administrative methods would certainly push the company's efforts even farther, but in return for its restrained entrepreneurial ambition, Jaidee has nurtured labour stability, well-distributed material prosperity, and other long-term economic goals of community development.

Jaidee remains restrained in its pursuit of profit, but the necessities of running

successful "alternative" tourism ventures also demand the formulation and implementation of astute business strategies. The foreign orientation of Jaidee, where three out of five managers are *farangs*, violates a fundamental principle of community development, namely full local control over capital resources. Other than the wives of Miller and Carter, individual Thai shareholders together possess only a bare majority (51 percent) of Jaidee shares. Once again, however, foreign involvement in this case is compensated by several extenuating circumstances and serves as a final, *developmental*, trade-off. Without the protection of a well-connected and tenacious *farang* like Miller, locals with little inherited status such as Jok would suffer from the continued intimidation of community strongmen. Likewise, the imperative mass tourism connections discussed in Chapter Six often require *farang* managers who are knowledgeable in, and comfortable with, global methods of tourism marketing, accounting, and "product" delivery.

In a United Nations conference on the management of coastal cities, Nigel Lord offered the following lengthy explanation, perhaps justification, for continued *farang* involvement in Jaidee:

> Management is a harder issue. Operation Management is handled very successfully by Thai managers. Unfortunately, many Thai businesses operate their accounting procedures in a way that would be unacceptable in the west. Jaidee Kayak, being in the public eye, must be seen to pay every Baht of tax that is due to the government. We cannot lobby the government as environmentalists with one hand and avoid paying taxes with the other. Marketing is another problem, especially international marketing where the Thais are inexperienced...The ultimate aim is to have each centre with only one Westerner in a management position. The reason for this is simple; most of the guests come from the West and a manager from a similar culture is both sensible and necessary. Many guests and travel agents from foreign countries need some form of reassurance that the company that they are spending a lot of money with will not disappear off the earth with their deposits. Also, when problems arise, a Western face is often more reassuring. Xenophobia is one problem we have not managed to eradicate (Lord, 1994: 4-5).

Besides facilitating commercial success, the sacrifice of outright local ownership for foreign expertise and experience also proves necessary in terms of conservation. Of course, there is no innate connection between local ownership and environmental destruction, but as Thai-owned kayaking copycats demonstrate, the connection frequently exists in practice throughout southern Thailand. Thus, as with other compromises, developmental trade-offs in one area, foreign ownership, yield laudable accomplishments in such others as conservation and entrepreneurial viability.

8.5 Conclusions: Mass Ecotourism as Community-*Oriented* Development

Among the many models of universal "ten-step" formulas for "alternative" tourism and community-based development currently in vogue, the following list by Brandon (1993: 136) discloses which specific issues are typically considered "critical to eliciting community-based participation in nature tourism": empowerment as an objective; local participation in the project cycle; creating stakeholders; linking benefits to conservation; understanding site-specific conditions; distributing benefits; involving community leaders; using change agents; and monitoring and evaluating progress. Specific suggestions such as these embrace laudable principles, charitable goals with which few, if any, would disagree. However, a lack of geographic specificity and local context, while meant to convey a sense of analytical versatility, render such universal lists peripheral to our empirical comprehension of how "alternative" tourism interacts with sustainable development in southern Thailand.

What, then, does successful community-based tourism mean in the southern Thai context? Rather than stemming from the implementation of philanthropic beliefs, the example of mass ecotourism in Phuket elucidates the need to rethink conventional approaches, the majority of which continue to either ignore or downplay ground-level variations, patterns, and inconsistencies. Tourism-related community development in southern Thailand comprises more than simply introducing tourism to a community, empowering "the locals," or distributing benefits through community leaders. "Alternative" tourism operators must overcome countless political, social, and cultural obstacles, and an accurate prescription for success in southern Thailand would include keeping in check mafia intimidation, working through various levels of corruption and inadequate government support, dealing with longstanding issues of racial, religious, and even regional prejudice, and, finally, minimizing internal sabotage and treachery on the parts of perfidious "local" partners. This chapter has illustrated that "alternative" tourism companies striving to improve the well-being of local communities are able to nurture equitable and "bottom-up" forms of development, but it is not an "either or" situation. Even the most successful "alternative" cases represent imperfect examples of community development, whereby certain goals are achieved only by compromising others. In daily practice, such community development trade-offs not only temper the unqualified triumph of "alternative" tourism endeavours but also highlight the wide

range of possible variations. Further, the collective experiences of "alternative" tourism operators in southern Thailand serve as persuasive examples of how local context shapes prospects for both "alternative" tourism success and sustainable forms of community development.

Relatively successful operators such as Jaidee Kayak contribute to community economic and social development for a variety reasons, but the most pivotal centre on the combination of "alternative" principles with "mass" markets and marketing channels. If we take mass ecotourism to connote nature-oriented tours for mass, packaged tourists, it becomes clear that there exists no necessary connection between mass ecotourism and community-based development. In other words, while most *farang* operators came to Thailand as environmentally-minded expatriates, not all mass ecotourism companies in Phuket fulfil roles as environmental advocates or posit community development as a top priority. Whether an operator offers small-scale ecotours or runs a hotel, it is in the end the tastes, priorities, and strategies of individual operators which most clearly determine the community orientation and developmental outlook of a tourism company.

In addition to the general lessons it provides, Jaidee stands as an example of how one individual, such as Jim Miller, can make a difference in improving the material and social prospects of often marginalized members of small, "local" communities in southern Thailand. Since mass ecotourism and community development are not automatically synonymous, only those companies with generous and dedicated owners bear the ability to bridge altruistic principles of "alternative" tourism with concrete measures of community development. In light of the various "alternative" tourism failures examined in this thesis, self-identification with the "alternative" label, and even adherence to certain "alternative" practices such as flexibility, small-scale capacity, and personalized attention, do not *necessarily* bring about community development. Jaidee Kayak has thus fostered community development not *because* of, but rather *in addition to also being*, an "alternative" tourism company.

At a more theoretical level, Jaidee exposes the myriad obstacles encountered in achieving truly indigenous forms of "alternative" tourism since the nature of international tourism, and the globalized flows of ideas, capital, and people constituted therein, essentially necessitate some type of external involvement. In those cases where "alternative" tourism does manage to remain locally-based, as with sea kayaking copycats, the lack of necessary global

connections, as well as an insufficient knowledge of "Western" tourist tastes and business conventions, curtail opportunities for long-term financial viability. In addition, Thai-run "alternative" tourism operators in southern Thailand exploit both labour and environmental resources, exacerbate income and social inequalities within local communities, and reveal a predilection for short-term profit maximization. The lesson to be learned from mass ecotourism in southern Thailand centres on the difference between community-*based* and community-*oriented* forms of "alternative" tourism. Bearing in mind the numerous requirements of participation in international tourism, it is clear that the overall goals of community development, in southern Thailand at least, are on the whole best served by generous, financially successful operators who happen also to feature a strong orientation toward, and commitment to, members of those local communities hosting "alternative" tourism in the first place.

CHAPTER NINE. CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the key findings of my research, discusses some of the policy ramifications of these findings, and outlines the implications of this research for the study of "alternative" tourism and community development. Unlike most other academic studies on this topic, this thesis steers away from a definitive taxonomy of "alternative" tourism, and instead refutes the very notion of a mass-alternative tourism dichotomy. Infusing an environmental ethic into *all* tourism activities allows industry representatives, tourists, and hosts to move away from simplistic distinctions between "good" tourisms and "bad." This research impugns conventional beliefs regarding tourism and development "alternatives," and by challenging the assumptions of "post-development" scholars concerning the pattern of "Third World" development, this study accentuates the need to address the aspirations and experiences of Thais encountering economic growth, social change, and globalization on a daily basis. The first section of this chapter summarizes the empirical results of my research. The second addresses more general theoretical questions and presents a reconceptualization of "alternative" tourism centred on the industry, tourist, and host perspectives. Serving as both a summary and theoretical critique, this reconceptualization draws on the empirical examples examined in previous chapters and situates the discussion in the experiences of local communities. The next section explores the ways in localized forms of "alternative" tourism replicate historical interactions between the local and global and shape future policy implications of community-oriented tourism in the region. Finally, I conclude with some directions for future research.

9.2 Summary of Empirical Results

This section summarizes key empirical findings following the three principal themes of the thesis. From the perspective of the tourism industry, successful forms of "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand share many structural and conceptual links with the existing conventional tourism industry. Rather than signalling a true departure from mass, packaged tourism, "alternative" tourism serves as a regenerative niche in the stagnating tourism industry

of Phuket. Regional "alternative" tourism operators, the majority of whom are long-term expatriates, confirm the inadequacy of the rigid dichotomy between mass and "alternative" tourism. By combining mass tourism infrastructure, markets, and networks with such "alternative" principles as individuality, education, and novelty, mass ecotourism operators in southern Thailand illustrate the ways in which mass and "alternative" *necessarily* overlap through tourist numbers, tourist types, and the nature of daily operations. Further, contrary to conventional spatial and temporal patterns, in which "alternative" tourism always precedes and encourages its mass counterpart, mass ecotourism in Phuket has come *after* mass tourism.

Aside from enjoying conceptual affiliations with conventional tourism, mass ecotourism succeeds financially due to the ability of operators to convey a sense of natural authenticity to passengers. This is designed to create novel experiences away from more "typical," contrived sites or activities. By catering to mass tourists keen on escaping "hordes" of other tourists, mass ecotourism operators have utilized the few remaining areas of natural beauty in the Phuket area in order to promote environmental appreciation. "Alternative" tourism operators have produced a unique localized form of ecotourism in southern Thailand, the evolution of which has reflected historical patterns of development, a precarious environmental situation, and a well-established mass tourism industry. Site-specific circumstances necessitate a reconceptualization of ecotourism's meaning and implications since conventional definitions and approaches fail to capture the complexities of southern Thailand.

The second theme of the thesis deals with the tourist perspective, and relates to the ways in which authenticity and ethical concern distinguish "alternative travellers" from mass tourists. Instead of corroborating the supposed separation of touristic good ("alternative") and evil (mass), this research demonstrates that of the three groups of tourists identified by their collective positions on the mass-alternative tourism continuum (Figure 2.1 on page 51), it is the two groups - adventurers and backpackers - found at the "alternative" end which exhibit the least realistic expectations and most insensitive behaviour. Notions of authenticity among adventurers and backpackers centre on static perceptions of the noble, and poor, Thai "savage." In addition, the quest for authenticity becomes a *competition* among individual adventurers and backpackers to see who can achieve the deepest level of authenticity with spontaneous, "real" people and genuine cultural settings. Despite buying into an "alternative" tourism discourse which glamorizes their particular styles of travel, adventurers and

backpackers in southern Thailand often display patterns of behaviour characterized by insensitivity, intrusion, and hypocrisy. By contrast, many mass ecotourists in Phuket feature levels of cultural awareness, environmental concern, and personal respect which are both surprising and encouraging considering the defamatory views held by most people, even some mass tourists themselves, towards the stereotypical "ugly tourist."

Adventure travel companies operating in southern Thailand communicate a sense of authenticity to their passengers through several devices. These include the staging of non-commercialized transactions and the provision of pre-trip information aimed at preparing - and appeasing the guilt of - "sensitive" and educated "alternative" travellers. Despite these efforts to impart a sense of authenticity, adventurers fail to achieve it both on their own terms as well on those which assume that authenticity relates to the everyday experiences of "average" Thais. The fierce desire for authenticity displayed by most adventurers and backpackers relates to more than just feelings of tourist guilt or a fundamental desire to communicate across cultural barriers. It also derives from the class and status concerns of new middle class adventurers and backpackers keen on accumulating cultural capital and establishing positions within "Western" societies increasingly jaundiced by mass forms of consumption and the "democratization" of aesthetic taste. The motivations and behaviours of disparate groups of "alternative" tourists prove interesting from a sociological perspective, but insofar as the goals of this thesis are concerned, their primary significance revolves around their association with community development. Due to the relaxed attitudes of mass ecotourists towards authenticity, operators in Phuket are able to free themselves from the limitations of dealing only with those "alternative" tourists who care more about confirming ingrained views of poverty-centred notions of authenticity than promoting, in practice, the development of communities throughout southern Thailand.

Finally, addressing "alternative" tourism from the host perspective, this research affirms that certain forms of "alternative" tourism promote different patterns of development than those characterized by conventional, mass tourism. The principal mass ecotourism case study of this research, Jaidee Kayak, fosters economic and social development among its staff through several means. These include financial security from generous salaries and guaranteed income, social well-being from a relaxed workplace environment and the opportunity to suspend normal hierarchies of status, and future success as a result of extensive training and

on-the-job experience.

By travelling in small groups, adventurers and backpackers have a minimal impact on the environment. Conversely, in spite of cultivating environmental awareness and appreciation among its employees, mass ecotourism operators in Phuket have jeopardized the environmental sustainability of the area by encouraging the proliferation of less responsible "copycat" companies. Victims of their own success, mass ecotourism operators such as Jaidee Kayak and Trekkers have unwittingly exacerbated a situation marred by the lack of industrial standards and government regulations, thereby fortifying the sustainability of tourism to the detriment of sustainable development in environmental terms. Mass ecotourism operators demonstrate that community development premised on "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand can alter the lives of individuals in beneficial ways, but the experiences of these operators also verify the persistence of several constraints, ranging from corruption and the intimidation of foreigners, to betrayal and internal dissent.

9.3 Theoretical Implications of "Alternative" Tourism in Southern Thailand

As even a cursory review of most industry strategies, tourist attitudes, and academic assessments would indicate, "alternative" tourism means different things to different people. While such diversity would normally provide analytical strength and versatility in certain other cases, it serves instead in the case of "alternative" tourism as an indictment of the confusion, and often hypocrisy, surrounding the term. By revisiting the conventional norms and definitions of "alternative" tourism surveyed in Chapter Three, this section examines theoretical questions and offers a general critique of "alternative" tourism based on the subjective experiences of self-identified "alternative" tourism operators, foreign tourists, and southern Thai hosts.

Addressing theoretical questions

At the conclusion of Chapter Three, I posited several theoretical questions which I hoped to answer in light of the empirical findings presented in consequent chapters. In this sub-section, I reiterate these questions and provide brief comments on each one. First, do patterns of development change according to the prevailing form(s) of tourism, and if so, are

there "types" of tourism that prove more effective than others in promoting "alternative" development? Bearing in mind the different developmental experiences of the operators examined in this thesis, it is clear that "mass alternative" tourism, and mass ecotourism in particular, enjoy the greatest chances for success in implementing the tenets of "alternative" development, since sufficient revenues are first produced, and then distributed, in Phuket's case, according to the charitable principles of *farang* expatriate owners of mass ecotourism companies. Companies which target adventurers, backpackers, and other "alternative" tourists with stringent expectations of authenticity usually face financial misfortune. The enduring legacy of such adversity is often the lack of social and economic development for Thai communities hosting such forms of "alternative" tourism. As I indicated in the previous chapter, community development can apply to any form of tourism, mass or "alternative," and ultimately, the task falls upon the individual owners of tourism companies to implement humane social and economic policies for their Thai staff and the surrounding Thai community.

Second, do "alternative" conceptions of development and tourism represent true departures from traditional strategies, or do they represent more rhetorical, euphemistic devices aimed at deflecting persistent criticism of conventional approaches? The experiences of "alternative" tourism companies in southern Thailand illustrate the practical difficulties of applying universal theoretical models for both "alternative" development and "alternative" tourism. Aside from highlighting the importance of local circumstances, the hurdles faced by all "alternative" tourism operators serve to distinguish practically relevant theoretical principles from those which remain incongruous with the grounded, subjective experiences of operators, tourists, and Thai hosts. While mass ecotourism companies in Phuket have avoided the top-down, inappropriate, and large-scale nature of conventional tourism and development, other characteristics such as foreign involvement, revenue generation, and capital investment prove crucial to "alternative" tourism success. In short, rather than representing complete departures from conventional approaches, "alternative" conceptions of tourism and development, as embodied by Jaidee and Trekkers, work *within* established models to build a better path to social and economic development.

Third, do philosophical challenges to conventional, top-down development and mass tourism mirror the actual concerns of those most affected by development, or are they more a reflection of the concerns of a small group of scholars and grassroots activists? After speaking

with many members of Thai communities in and around Phuket, I have come to realize that the "crises" in both development theory and tourism practice are really only *theoretical* crises which inaccurately depict the desires and outlooks of most Thais. Though, of course philosophically meaningful, academic concerns with "post-impasse" development solutions remain out of touch with the continued emphasis placed by the Thai government on policies of "modernization" and top-down capitalist growth. Further, dismissing the material desires of Thais as misguided or misinformed would perpetuate a neo-colonial, patronizing approach to "Third World" development which assumes the superior knowledge of outside "experts." By professing to "know what's best" for presumably fragile and vulnerable "Third World" cultures, operators such as Exclusive and Backdoor ignore the everyday experiences, social desires, and material expectations of Thais, thereby imposing romanticized, foreign ideas onto communities hoping in practice for little more than enhanced economic prosperity. However, "alternative" tourism operators such as Jaidee accept the supposedly shortsighted and "narrow" material desires of its Thai staff for "TVs, VCRs, and pick-up trucks" (Nigel Lord, pers.comm.) and strive to meet these needs while simultaneously furthering the cause of equity and social empowerment. Hence, as Rigg (1998) correctly suggests, the shortcomings of conventional development in Thailand, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, do not automatically necessitate the denial or rejection of the material desires of individuals struggling on an everyday basis to improve their immediate circumstances.

Finally, how do global forces such as ecotourism shape patterns of development at the regional and community levels? Viewed from a long-range historical perspective, "alternative" tourism represents both a new global influence and the latest in a long line of global forces interacting with local circumstances on Thailand's southwest coast. As the numerous locally-rooted examples discussed throughout this thesis illustrate, "alternative" tourism has failed to erase the local cultural and political nuances that serve to distinguish southern Thailand from other parts of the country, region, or world. Instead, the activities of *farang*- and Thai-owned mass ecotourism operators corroborate the ability of locally-based individuals, institutions, and companies to absorb foreign elements and render them uniquely-Thai. The emergence of "alternative" forms of tourism in southern Thailand, and the southwestern provinces of Phuket, Phangnga, and Krabi specifically, thus signals more than just the capricious nature of an adaptable international tourism industry. As a contemporary moment in the area's overall

development, it extends historical continuities and perpetuates processes of social, cultural, and economic change. "Alternative" tourism thus exemplifies the local-global interactions initiated centuries ago by Arab, Indian, and European traders and sustained today by waves of international tourists, "travellers," and holidaymakers.

Mass ecotourism, as a specific form of "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand, remains tied to the wider Phuket area and the political, social, and economic circumstances characterizing this region. In other parts of Thailand such as the north or northeast, a different set of conditions has led to dissimilar manifestations of "alternative" tourism such as trekking and specialized cultural travel. To speak of a universal "alternative" tourism definition or template for success is therefore inappropriate since analytical assessments of any form of tourism must first come to terms with the "living" localities in which tourism, development, and other processes of change occur on a daily basis. In reaching a theoretical, abstract comprehension of "alternative" tourism, therefore, one must first assess empirical patterns to construct localized *theories* from the ground up.

"Alternative" tourism: innovation or market adaptation?

The growing popularity of "alternative" forms of travel is reflected in the marketing of the international tourism industry. By perpetuating images of the "new" active tourist interested in more than pure hedonistic relaxation, the international tourism industry - and more accurately the large tour operators who control the global distribution of tourists - have adapted quickly to changing "Western" tourist demands for novelty, adventure, and lifestyle-oriented positional experiences. It is important to note that the tourism industry has on the whole provided the most honest assessment of the supposed birth of a new, "alternative" form of tourism. Tour companies and travel agents make little attempt to hide the true reasons behind their support for "softer," more rewarding tourism experiences: profit, expansion, and product diversification (Giannecchini, 1993; Wight, 1993). With the market saturation of mass forms of tourism, the segmentation of tourists into specialized categories represents the industry's response to demographic and technological changes. Since intensifying tourist demands for flexibility, choice, novelty, and authenticity have produced a new industry "best practice" (Poon, 1993), the seemingly independent development of "alternative" tourism constitutes more a specific method of capital accumulation for niche tourism industry players than any

fundamental challenge to global tourism intermediaries.

"Alternative" tourism exemplifies a shift in the appearance, not underlying essence, of tourism industry practices and priorities. As Fernandes (1994: 4) points out "the mainstream tourism industry has in fact, merely tried to invent a new legitimation for itself - the 'sustainable' use of the environment, including the preservation of nature as an amenity for the already advantaged." This is evident in Phuket, where small-scale operators and enormous hotel resort complexes both vie for ecotourism awards based, in the case of the latter, on such efforts as recycling and sewage treatment. Aside from the environmental implications of these endeavours, "integrated" resorts at Laguna Bay and other mass enclaves in Phuket have maximized the marketing cachet of their heightened environmental profile in order to cash in on changing tourist expectations.

Many of the "Third World" locations in which "alternative" tourism takes place serve a peripheral role in the global capitalist system. Due to the need for, and reliance on, foreign sources of capital, manufactured goods, managerial skills, and tourists, structural links are necessarily established and maintained between "metropolitan" countries and peripheral destinations (Britton, 1982). Hence, the growth of both mass and "alternative" tourism in "developing" countries inherently favours metropolitan, tourist-generating countries who, by virtue of their economic size and diversity, monopolize most world trade associated with the tourism industry. Put simply, despite benefiting hosts in entrepreneurial and employment terms, most forms of tourism between "developed" countries and "Third World" destinations evolve largely in response to both the needs of tourists and the interests of tourist-generating countries. "Alternative" tourism thus serves the needs of authenticity-seeking and soul-searching tourists just as mass tourism satisfies the needs of tourist-generating economies.

Besides featuring the characteristics of a capitalist mode of production, virtually every form of "alternative" tourism is united by one central concern: authenticity. The alienation found in "modern," industrial societies has caused a desire in many tourists to "overcome the opposition between their authenticity-seeking self and society" (Cohen, 1988: 373). This quest leads tourists to look beyond their own societies for what is perceived to be authentic life, but distinguishing authentic from inauthentic depends on subjective interpretation, and traditions considered to be "traditional" or genuine are often socially constructed as such for particular political or economic purposes (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). This thesis suggests that the

search for authenticity proves interminable, especially for those "alternative" tourists with fixed attitudes towards authenticity. As discussed below, "alternative" tourists ostensibly achieve authenticity and novelty in their travel experiences, and this serves, in their minds at least, to mark distinctions from mass tourists. However, the conventional view that mass tourism offers no "true" authenticity (MacCannell, 1989; Poon, 1993; Urry, 1990) misses the point and overlooks the empirical "fact" that while mass tourist concern for authenticity may be less intense than that for "alternative" tourists, an interest, however minimal, may exist all the same.

Others have pointed out elsewhere (Cohen, 1988; Silver, 1993) that "alternative" tourists differ only in the degree to which they desire authenticity, and in practice, the "staged authenticity" of host populations creates an "authentic" facade for all tourists wishing to "penetrate" the cultural world of "natives" (MacCannell, 1976). Even so, the level of authenticity sought by mass ecotourists in southern Thailand is negotiated in that experiences, while often recognized as incomplete, are judged according to the diverse expectations and desires of individual tourists. For certain "alternative" tourists, the knowledge that travel experiences may not in fact produce unadulterated and unstaged authenticity drives them to pursue it even more intensely through exclusionary discursive and spatial measures of travel distinction. Thus, despite seeming to offer authentic and novel experiences, "alternative" tourism mimics the perpetual mass tourism search for scenic vistas and pristine beaches by combing the "Third World" for increasingly scarce levels of authenticity.

The final products of mass and "alternative" tourism both carry symbolic value. Travel has long symbolized different things to different people, but it has always stood as a measure of status (Adler, 1989). Although described as "experiential" and individualized, "alternative" tourism is clearly symbolic as well since the possession of an interest, and the ability to participate, in "alternative" tourism usually symbolize substantial economic resources or specialized cultural knowledge. An asserted aspatiality also exposes a key contradiction within the "alternative" tourist discourse. "Alternative" tourism destinations are advertised for their distinctive cultural or physical characteristics, thereby allowing for spatially-specific tourism marketing. However, "alternative" tourists travel to certain destinations not for their unique or authentic attractions, but simply *because* they possess unique or authentic attractions in the first place (Mowforth and Munt, 1998). To customers of Exclusive and Backdoor, for example, the historical, cultural, and social characteristics of northern hilltribes or southern Thai

fishermen are not necessarily interesting in and of themselves, but prove attractive by virtue of representing the "Other" while also juxtaposing the "modernization" and alienation of "Western" life. Thus, although destinations are marketed for their specific attributes, "alternative" tourists participate in a speculative, aspatial form of tourism since it is the mere existence of "exotic," unique, or authentic settings that attracts "alternative" tourists.

Mass ecotourism operators in southern Thailand such as Jaidee and Trekkers confirm that certain "alternative" principles, including self-imposed limits, education, and a concern for local communities, can inform the future direction of tourism development in Thailand and elsewhere. But what these successful companies also hint at is the symbiotic spatial and temporal relationship between mass and "alternative." In Phuket, "alternative" forms of tourism have emerged *out of*, not in complete opposition to, the established packaged tourism industry. Those "alternative"operators who deliberately choose to remain isolated and independent of mass tourism inevitably falter both as financial ventures and social "experiments." Other than filling old tourism bottles with new, "alternative," wine, viable mass ecotourism operators in the Phuket area have contributed to an emerging "alternative" tourism paradigm in which geographically circumscribed cultural or natural settings such as Ao Phangnga host a large number of tourists interested in novel, nature-oriented experiences. By accommodating a maximum number of tourists within reasonable limits on total capacity, mass ecotourism sites such as Ao Phangnga obviate the search for "untouched" destinations which exist more as romantic social constructions in the minds of some "alternative" tourists than as actual Thai communities. In practice, therefore, there exists no such thing as an "alternative" tourism industry, per se, since it not only constitutes a recent trend, or niche, within the international tourism industry generally, but also serves as little more than a set of admirable goals applicable to any form of tourism, mass, "alternative," or otherwise.

Mass barbarians, "alternative" ambassadors

Hoping to escape the pejorative connotations surrounding the stereotypical tourist, "alternative" tourists, or more appropriately "travellers," seek distinction by claiming seemingly virtuous motivations, including self-realization, self-discovery, intellectual curiosity, and a concern for cross-cultural understanding (Munt, 1994b). Such motivations, posited as preferable to those of presumably selfish mass tourists, engender, in theory, beneficial changes

within host communities, as well as providing quality, authentic travel experiences for sensitive "alternative" tourists. However, as this research demonstrates, tourists at the "alternative" end of the spectrum feature motivations and patterns of behaviour based not on any objective achievement or discovery of "authentic" Thai life, but rather on narrow subjective conceptions of authenticity. Looking beyond motivational and behavioural differences between discrete "alternative" tourist groups reveals fundamental similarities and characterizes at a symbolic level the very nature of travel between "developed" countries and exotic "Third World" destinations. Regardless of whether travel motivations stem from "seek" or "escape" factors, the *self* remains the centre of all travel. Mass ecotourists interviewed for this research may travel largely for rest, recuperation, and occasionally novelty and exploration, but despite the rhetorical emphasis placed by "alternative" tourists on education and cross-cultural experiences, the principle at work is still, at any rate, the satisfaction of personal goals and desires, as illustrated by such common "alternative" tourist motivations as *self*-actualization, *self*-discovery, and *self*-fulfilment. Ultimately, and contrary to much of the literature on this topic (Brooks, 1990; Krotz, 1996; McLaren, 1998), the majority of both mass and "alternative" tourists encountered during nearly seven months of fieldwork displayed motivations based on *self*-indulgence, albeit in different ways.

The idea that "alternative" forms of tourism represent, by definition, "softer" versions of mass tourism (Poon, 1993; Crick, 1994) also appears disingenuous when measured against the empirical evidence of this study. Sensitive tourist behaviour based on respect for, and realistic expectations of, host populations certainly minimizes cultural interference, but in light of the overtly insensitive behaviour displayed by some "alternative" tourists, a contradiction arises whereby travellers aiming to interact with "real" Thais in constructive and mutually rewarding ways initiate social encounters which carry the seeds of social change and "Westernization" so reviled by such travellers. The assertion made by Deming (1996) and Honey (1998), among others, that "alternative" forms of travel promote "meaningful" cross-cultural understanding and communication is therefore clearly contradicted by the daily experiences of Thais working in "alternative" tourism sites such as Krabi and the Khao San Road area of Bangkok. The commercial nature of most tourist-host encounters essentially precludes expressions of bilateral communication which, even under "normal" circumstances, remains an elusive accomplishment. Additionally, the privileged position occupied by tourists

allows the latter to travel to distant and "exotic" destinations and interact with "natives" who, for the most part, will never enjoy the opportunity to reciprocate the tourist visit.

At a basic psychological level, many tourists enter an artificial realm of behaviour in which priorities, goals, and perceptions often drastically contradict or invert normal, everyday conditions of home life. Thus, opportunities for hosts to gain a "genuine" insight into the lives, beliefs, or outlooks of tourists remain hampered by tourist behavioural and value inversions while, similarly, the commodified nature of tourist-host cultural exchanges usually prevents tourist insights into host populations from ever scratching beyond the proverbial surface. This study indicates that instead of serving as globetrotting cultural ambassadors, many "alternative" tourists reproduce, and in the case of southern Thailand exacerbate, the purportedly harmful cultural and social influences introduced by *all* forms of tourism originating in the "West." By claiming a high degree of assimilation into host societies, "alternative" tourists downplay the inevitable changes brought about by wealthy, foreign transplants moving freely through another's territorial and mental space. In doing so, these travellers justify and glamorize certain aestheticized forms of new middle class touristic consumption (see Munt, 1994a).

Although this research reveals several motivational and behavioural dissimilarities among mass ecotourists, adventurers, and backpackers, philosophical affinities between mass and "alternative" tourism bring together theoretical "ideal types" at diametric ends of a spectrum. As I discussed in Chapter Seven, "alternative" tourist groups feature distinct collective patterns of behaviour, motivations, and expectations, but months of fieldwork have confirmed the methodological complexity of categorization whereby the sensitivity, awareness, and overall objectives of individual tourists vary as much within, as between, discrete groups. Determining the degree to which a tourist abides by commendable "alternative" principles remains a difficult empirical task, particularly since *anyone*, packaged tourist or independent backpacker, can in daily practice embody such principles individually. Notwithstanding such variations, the issue of authenticity - the one attribute identified in Chapters Two and Three as inherent to all forms of "alternative" tourism - nevertheless remains the clearest measure of differentiation between one "alternative" tourist group and another. From the tourist perspective, then, I wish to reconceptualize "alternative" tourism in the following three ways. First, having challenged the notion of "alternative" tourism as a discrete category based on

charitable motivations or innocuous personal conduct, this research corroborates the original classification of tourist groups diagrammed in Figure 2.1 (see page 51) which suggests that gradations of "alternative" tourism derive more from the relative stringency of demands for authenticity harboured by individual tourists than from any objective measures of differentiation.

Second, the quest for authenticity pursued by certain "alternative" tourists, most notably adventurers and backpackers, points to the critical position occupied by status markers and positional experiences in the practices of new middle class consumers keen on amassing scarce cultural capital. Thus, despite partly growing out of the changing preferences of "Western" tourists, the recent popularity of "alternative" forms of travel in southern Thailand reflects what some would refer to as "postmodern" cultural and political trends occurring in the host societies of tourists (Betz, 1992; Featherstone, 1991). Lastly, "alternative" tourism represents a discourse with political and status utility for those members of the new middle classes who, on the one hand, possess feelings of guilt over mass tourism's destructive tendencies and the privileged economic positions of "Western" tourists, but on the other, use "alternative" tourism to perpetuate such pretentious and privileged social positions. Just as sustainable development has renewed faith in a contested concept, "alternative" tourism discourse has legitimized the continued growth of international tourism in the midst of worries over cultural pollution and environmental contamination in "Third World" destinations. Discursive notions of the noble "alternative" tourist pervade the attitudes of tourists and tourism operators in southern Thailand, shaping even the opinions of those companies such as Jaidee Kayak which have succeeded because of their engagement with presumably insincere mass tourists. Like all discursive constructs, the prevailing "alternative" tourism discourse justifies particular policies and practices, prioritizes certain issues over others, defines power relations, and shapes conventional tourism wisdom. However, the cynical feelings held by southern Thais toward some "alternative" tourists speak volumes about the practical fallacy of the good-versus-bad tourist dichotomy and discourse perpetuated in the "alternative" tourism literature (Culler, 1988; McLeod, 1997; Wood and House, 1991).

"Alternative" tourism and community development: sustainability or naivete?

Claiming to possess a compassionate concern for host populations, "alternative"

tourists believe that their discriminating style of travel mitigates the hazardous effects of large-scale, technocratic tourism schemes by promoting more appropriate, community-based forms of development (see Lindberg and Hawkins, 1993). In addition to emphasizing the need for local involvement, community-based tourism projects strive to implement several key strategies: inter-community cooperation, involvement of "key players," heightened community awareness of tourism issues, and financial investment for initial development (Gunn, 1988: 249; Murphy, 1985). Community-based initiatives appear reasonable and feasible in theory, but in practice, these objectives rarely enjoy effective implementation (Johnston, 1990). The high financial stakes of tourism participation makes inter-community and industrial cooperation difficult in political and social environments such as those prevailing in southern Thailand. Even when certain "alternative" forms of tourism such as mass ecotourism succeed in nurturing local involvement, the corruption of government officials and industrial competitors tends to offset many short-term gains, especially in terms of environmental sustainability. As the numerous tales of betrayal and mafia intimidation documented throughout the thesis indicate, involvement of local residents is problematic in communities dominated by underground figures or other political "strongmen."

Local control, autonomy, and empowerment are, in certain cases, possible in southern Thailand, but these remain constricted by several problems which also afflict many other "developing" communities struggling to negotiate entry into the global tourism industry. First, community-based development is usually difficult to implement at a local or regional level due to the vested political and economic interests of national governments (Kelly, 1996). In Thailand's case, the continued expansion of tourism, and the consequent surge in tourist numbers hoped for by government planners, bodes ill for the future environmental sustainability of popular sites such as Phuket and Ao Phangnga. Second, even in those rare cases when political autonomy and economic independence are promising, internal measures of social stratification and traditional structures of political power hinder a truly autonomous, democratic form of development predicated on the equal participation of all members of a community (Johnston, 1990). Likewise, since external linkages to foreign markets and intermediaries inevitably increase as tourism develops within a community, the ability to retain control over the tourism industry slips away from local hands (Britton, 1982). The underlying principles and processes sustaining international tourism, coupled with the practical

requirements of running a tourism company in southern Thailand, preclude local control over tourist flows and international marketing and in effect render such issues empirically moot points, laudable goals which rarely if ever receive implementation on an everyday basis.

As well as receiving criticism for exacerbating individual and regional inequalities, conventional tourism is blamed for introducing, and then encouraging, forms of development that poorly match the needs and values of local communities (Horwich *et al*, 1993). Since host populations presumably possess greater control over their level of participation in "alternative" tourism, development is posited as the conscious choice of a community. The impetus for every form of "alternative" tourism introduced into southern Thailand has come from an exogenous source. Most southern Thai communities have accepted such externally-initiated projects, but this does not mean that this acceptance has occurred evenly or unanimously. For instance, certain forms of "alternative" tourism such as adventure travel and backpacking have engendered, by virtue of their miserly financial contributions to community development, unfavourable attitudes among some Thais, whereas mass ecotourism, another *farang*-initiated tourism idea, has enjoyed the acceptance of community members whose lives have benefited both economically and socially from the activities of such companies as Jaidee Kayak.

While some "alternative" tourists claim to foster local decision-making, such assertions overlook an insidious characteristic of all forms of international tourism: the decision made by local communities to participate in *any* form of tourism is shaped by unequally seductive choices. When faced with the choice to either capitalize on the economic rewards of tourism involvement, or remain marginalized and disadvantaged in comparison to tourist-receiving regions, it is logical that most communities choose the former. Hence, a community's decision to welcome tourism is far from voluntary since the choices involved carry different implications for the economic health of that community. Having said that, communities moving towards mass ecotourism, and other flexible varieties of "alternative" tourism, acquire benefits much greater than those associated with forms of travel premised on poverty-centred and rigorous notions of authenticity. By asserting that tourism occurs only because a host community has *chosen* to become involved, some "alternative" tourists absolve themselves from responsibility for tourism's negative impacts, thereby engaging in a cathartic form of travel which "appeases the guilt of the 'thinking tourists' while simultaneously providing the holiday experience they

want" (Wheeller, 1990: 298).[1]

The "alternative" tourist argument that conventional mass tourism causes environmental damage accurately reflects the post-war history of international tourism. However, *all* forms of tourism threaten natural environments, and deciding where to draw the line is difficult. As Butler (1990: 44) correctly states, "to have some tourism but not too much is like being a little bit pregnant. Fun getting there but an increasing problem living with it as the product grows and changes almost independent of the parent's influence." Environmental preservation based on fixed carrying capacities and strict government regulations would certainly create opportunities to foster appreciation among local communities in Thailand (see Dearden, 1997), but as sea kayaking in Ao Phangnga illustrates, it takes more than just isolated examples of responsible companies to overcome the ingrained political obstacles preventing long-term sustainability. Aside from preaching environmental sensitivity, some "alternative" tourists assume that by travelling "on the cheap" and living like "the locals," host communities will suffer only minor social disruptions due to the successful integration of innocuous "travellers" (Cohen, 1979). In their quest for novelty and authenticity, many "alternative" tourists seek "meaningful" social contact with "real" Thais beyond the artificial environments of hotels, restaurants, and taxi cabs. Staying in typically small groups, these travellers in southern Thailand bring about limited environmental changes, but prolonged and "deep" individual contact between Thais and "alternative" tourists induces greater immediate *social* changes than those associated with brief and amicable encounters between mass ecotourists and hosts. Whether or not these changes are considered beneficial or harmful remains a subjective issue, but suffice to say that they remain *significant* in terms of "alternative" tourism's ability to court such social changes. Concerns for "authentic" social interaction have, therefore, led to contradictions within an "alternative" discursive philosophy committed to promoting sincere cross-cultural communication and understanding.

Regardless of the potential limitations of abstract generalizations, one theoretical lesson we *can* draw from mass ecotourism in Phuket, despite its association with a precise destination, is that community development often involves trade-offs, exceptions, and complex predicaments, the resolution of which leads, at best, to partial successes and bittersweet

[1] I should note that not all "alternative" tourists in Thailand express this complete denial of responsibility for the ills of tourism. In northern Thailand, for example, Hvenegaard and Dearden (1998) found that most "alternative" tourists acknowledge and accept the potentially negative consequences of all forms of tourism, be it conventional or "alternative."

victories. The complications and hurdles facing "alternative" tourism operators in southern Thailand imply that the best one can hope for in terms of local development is a community-*oriented* company which strives to involve and empower individuals in a meaningful and lasting manner. However, this research has illustrated that not all forms of "alternative" tourism advance the cause of community development or remain equally sympathetic toward the financial and social goals of southern Thai communities. Unlike blanket, universal descriptions of "alternative" tourism (see especially Poon, 1993), this study verifies the complexity, dynamism, and heterogeneity of "alternative" tourism.

The empirical examples presented throughout this thesis point to a host-centred view of "alternative" tourism defined as the following: any tourist-related activity that contributes in some way to the principles of community-based development.[2] In spite of the obvious operational shortcomings of such a definition, it carries several, mostly empirical, advantages. First, the size and even type of tourism operation prove inconsequential to whether community development is promoted through policy and practice. Both large-scale resort complexes and "family style" trekking operations can, in principle at least, make a contribution to community development through generous salaries, charitable human resource programs, or environmental lobbying campaigns. Second, tourism-related community development has little to do with conventional notions of good versus bad tourist "types." The financial contribution made - and social behaviour displayed - towards a host community varies from one individual tourist to the next, and in many cases, it is those packaged tourists so often belittled as insensitive, irresponsible "hordes" who contribute most to community development in southern Thailand. Finally, defining "alternative" tourism according to the developmental potential of discrete activities implies that companies which accomplish community development in certain aspects can also simultaneously retard it in others. The relationship between "alternative" tourism and community development in southern Thailand thus depends on the priorities and outlooks of individual tourists and tourism operators, and *not* on the uncategorical evil or altruism of undifferentiated mass and "alternative" tourism entities, as proposed in much of the tourism literature. Using the structure of the original chart comparing mass and "alternative" tourism in Chapter Three (Figure 3.1 on page 124), a localized model of "alternative" tourism can now be constructed based on the empirical findings and theoretical implications discussed in this

[2] I refer here to the principles of community-development as defined in Chapter Three.

Figure 9.1 Towards a Localized Model of "Alternative" Tourism

Normative "Alternative" Tourism	"Alternative" Tourism in Southern Thailand
Tourism Industry Perspective	
❖ Small scale	❖ Small tour groups but high daily frequency
❖ Flexible and specialized	❖ Routine and pre-planned itineraries
❖ Careful monitoring and growth	❖ Poor monitoring and regulatory framework
❖ Consumer-driven	❖ Driven by principles of *farang* expatriates
❖ Authentic and novel experiences	❖ Mostly novel experiences featuring staged authenticity
Tourist Perspective	
❖ Specialized interests, realistic expectations	❖ Interests based on static, unrealistic notions of authenticity
❖ Aware of local cultural conventions	❖ As culturally unaware as "typical" mass tourists
❖ Cultural motivations	❖ Self-centred motivations based on authenticity and status
❖ Quiet, tactful, and understanding	❖ Often insensitive, intrusive, and demanding
❖ Travel with an open mind	❖ Travel to confirm stereotypes of exotic "Other"
Host Perspective	
❖ Local, community-based control	❖ Foreign control and management
❖ Few leakages or imports	❖ Few leakages, except among adventure travel companies
❖ Indigenous, locally-initiated projects	❖ Locally-*oriented* initiatives of *farang* expatriates
❖ Socially unobtrusive to community	❖ Socially disruptive on an individual basis
❖ Environmentally sustainable	❖ Damages short-term environmental sustainability

chapter (Figure 9.1).

9.4 Finding a Place for "Alternative" Tourism in Southern Thailand: Historical Continuities, Localized Development, and Implications for Policy

As I demonstrated in Chapter Six, mass ecotourism operators in Phuket have established "alternative" means of conducting tourism business, and have also illustrated the importance of local context in influencing the success or failure of "alternative" ideas and the companies these beget. In coming to terms with the lasting effects of "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand, it is necessary to look at three areas of analysis: historical relevance, implications for community development in the southern Thai context, and general policy directions in the immediate future.

The international tourism industry typically displays a short historical attention span in its marketing and planning, but in the case of southern Thailand, "alternative" tourism has

either perpetuated historical patterns or created opportunities to reverse historical circumstances. The growth of "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand has proven historically relevant for three reasons. First, mass ecotourism operators such as Jaidee Kayak have, through charitable human resource policies, alleviated poverty and social marginalization among some Thai and Malay Muslims in the south. The status inversions characteristic of Jaidee employment have allowed those occupying the lower rungs of Thailand's social ladder to overcome obstacles to social mobility. Mass ecotourism has also allowed poor rural rubber tappers and fishermen to earn generous salaries by regional and national standards. This has in turn bolstered future opportunities for enhanced status and material prosperity.

Second, "alternative" tourism has come along at just the right moment for both the existing tourism industry and the economy of southern Thailand. The rejuvenating powers of "alternative" tourism have provided an outlet for "Western" mass tourists looking for exciting and novel travel experiences, and as a result, such "alternatives" may delay the environmental degradation and poor infrastructural planning which have long marred tourism development in Phuket. "Alternative" tourism represents an alternate economic and environmental outlet in a region where former industries such as tin have collapsed and others such as offshore fishing and farmed shrimp cultivation threaten the long-term environmental sustainability of southern Thailand's resources. Third, as with all facets, or consumer niches, of international tourism, the Thai government's promotion of ecotourism and other specialized forms of travel continues a longstanding historical policy of incorporation of the nation's geographical and ethnic perimeters. Phuket's connections to global tourism intermediaries and markets have allowed southern Thailand's tourism industry to develop more independently than those of other regions, but nevertheless, "alternative" tourism has stimulated an already lucrative industry, the revenues from which buoy the Thai state, provide legitimization for central Thai rulers, and continue historical processes of political and economic incorporation.

While this thesis addresses a wide range of issues, the most pressing question remains whether "alternative" tourism contributes to community development, and if so, what makes one form of "alternative" tourism more viable than another? Each of the three examples of "alternative" tourism examined in this thesis - mass ecotourism, backpacking, and adventure travel - have enjoyed disparate levels of success in bringing about community development in southern Thailand. Determining which conditions prove necessary for "alternative" ventures or

ideas to prosper as engines of community development highlights the ways in which localized forms of "alternative" tourism carry site-specific policy implications for southern Thailand. These conditions, or patterns, fall into eight categories: links and connections to mass tourism; types of development promoted; tourist clientele; nature of "alternative" tourism product offered; entrepreneurial acumen and decision-making skill; commitment to principles; linguistic and cultural familiarity; and adherence to local special, cultural, and political conventions.[3]

The future policy implications of localized forms of "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand stem from the latter's utility from a normative and philosophical perspective. By definition, small-scale forms of "alternative" tourism remain limited in their ability to accommodate swelling tourist numbers, generate a substantial number of jobs, or produce record profits, but at the very least, companies such as Jaidee Kayak prove valuable from a practical perspective due to their indirect influence on the current and future "best practices" of other actors in Phuket's mass tourism industry. Tourist demand for novel, authentic, and socially-segregated travel experiences will likely always exist, but from the points of view of local Thai communities, private entrepreneurs, and various public agencies, mass ecotourism represents the best option for those wishing to capitalize on changing tourist demands. Besides requiring the cooperation of operators and community participants, what this entails in practice is a more dedicated commitment on the part of the Thai government to the enforcement of existing laws and regulations. This is especially true since, as illustrated in the preceding chapter, the unsustainable environmental consequences of *financially* viable examples of "alternative" tourism reveal the incompetence and lack of political will prevailing among most public figures in Thailand. Thus, in spite of an intensifying emphasis on rapid mass tourism growth, the Thai government could maximize the long-term benefits of "alternative" tourism by facilitating mass ecotourism while simultaneously bridging the gap between rhetorical policy directions and practical interventions.

Insofar as "pure" environmental preservation is concerned, perhaps the best prospects for sustainability, if not ecotourism per se, centre on those activities which remain concentrated on "typical" mass tourism areas such as Phuket, Pattaya, and Ko Samui rather than on

[3] These patterns are incorporated into Figure 9.2 on page 336.

presumably remote and "untouched" destinations.[4] Since Thailand's tourism market is becoming increasingly Asian, such a mass concentration and geographical focus would spawn unseemly (to some) tourist ghettos, but by integrating and consolidating shopping, entertainment, and "contrived" theme park activities like those found in Singapore and certain parts of Thailand, tourism planners would succeed in confining the environmental damage of rapid tourism growth. Infusing "alternative" principles into the conventional tourism industry would allow the Thai government to refine the environmental ethics of Thai companies. This would enable a quick response to shifting tourist demands and the increasingly competitive position of other Southeast Asian destinations such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam. Until the demands of Asian tourists come eventually to incorporate emerging "Western" preferences for "pristine" but conveniently-located settings, the future of ecotourism in southern Thailand may depend on delaying the proliferation of such activities. However, this is unlikely because of the Thai government's poor record of regulation and legal enforcement. By steering tourism out of natural areas and into circumscribed pockets of mass tourism, the environmental resources upon which future ecotourism will depend can remain relatively safe and available until that time when suppressed corruption, heightened standards, and better levels of enforcement can force operators to follow more responsible practices.

This idea unfortunately rests on the assumption that the political climate in Thailand will in time reflect the entrepreneurial standards, industry limits, and public decrees of "Western" societies, but as I clarified in Chapter Three, theories of "modernization" which postulate universal patterns of historical change paint only a partial and ethnocentric picture. Since the current situation in Ao Phangnga appears gloomy from an environmental standpoint, the only feasible solution in the immediate future would require Jaidee and other mass ecotourism operators to play the Thai game and keep other, less principled companies, out of the area. This could be done by utilizing both official and illicit government connections. But what this would amount to is an environmentally-responsible form of corruption whereby certain operators such as Jaidee and Trekkers willingly maintain environmental, industrial, and community development standards while also protecting an area's resource base through force or "Thai-style" political coercion. However, since virtually *all* mass ecotourism operators in

[4] This is not to say that mass tourism in Thailand promotes sustainability, but rather, by sacrificing the environments of certain mass areas, other areas of the region and country can be kept off-limits to tourists and damaging tourism activities. However, taking such a mass-oriented approach to sustainability in Thailand carries several limitations, as pointed out by Dearden (1992).

Phuket are *farangs* with no rooted political power, the future sustainability, and evolution of "alternative" tourism in general, will probably fall onto the shoulders of such shortsighted and unethical "local" entrepreneurs as the owners of copycat kayaking companies.

Based on the findings and theoretical significance of this research, it is possible to map out ideal policy directions for southern Thailand which, in principle, could work towards optimizing the benefits of such forms of travel not only for the government of Thailand, but also for industry players, tourists, and hosts throughout the region (Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2 Ideal Policy Directions for "Alternative" Tourism in Southern Thailand

	National Government	*Regional and Local Governments*	*Private Operators*
Tourism Industry Perspective	❖ Implement industry safety standards	❖ Enforce environmental regulations at local level	❖ Facilitate links to mass tourism industry
	❖ Encourage the "greening" of mass tourism in Thailand	❖ Facilitate cooperation among individual operators	❖ Offer daily tours and services rather than accommodations
	❖ Grant TAT legal authority over ecotourism matters	❖ Monitor safety standards of "alternative" tourism operators	❖ Limit activities to fixed area to prevent the spread of environmental damage
Tourist Perspective	❖ Coordinate exchanges between tourists and Thais in order to promote cultural understanding	❖ Provide tourists with accurate and updated information on "alternative"tourism operators	❖ Cater to specialized segments of overall mass tourist group
	❖ Promote a balanced view of Thai authenticity, combining traditional and modern elements	❖ Cultivate a more prominent profile among tourists	❖ Charge tourists adequate prices for tours or services
	❖ Boost international marketing profile of ecotourism among foreign tourists	❖ Collect user fees from "alternative" tourists, particularly adventurers and backpackers	❖ Respect and give proper credit to mass ecotourist clientele
Host Perspective	❖ Promote environmental and social sustainability by confining "alternative" tourism areas	❖ Channel revenues from user fees into community development projects	❖ Blend principles of conventional and "alternative" development
	❖ Provide institutional support for management and guide training in ecotourism	❖ Assist communities to set up "alternative" development projects	❖ Integrate philosophical principles into daily practices
	❖ Supply capital investment to local entrepreneurs and communities	❖ Set up ecotourism training and information sessions in local communities	❖ Utilize local connections, play the "local" game, and enhance cultural familiarity

9.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Despite covering a wide range of topics related to community development, global tourism incorporation, and "Western" consumer trends, this study has left certain issues unexplored and others only superficially addressed. Future research could focus on the following areas. First, occasional trips with, and second-hand observations of, copycat kayaking companies proved useful, but future studies would benefit from conducting further research with Thai-owned mass ecotourism companies. This would provide an understanding of how "alternative" ideas such as education, personalized service, community development, and environmental conservation are being adapted within a southern Thai context. Based on my research, it would appear that Thai-owned mass ecotourism companies care little about environmental preservation, long-term sustainability, or social development, but further research would prove valuable in disclosing the various challenges faced by indigenous operators.

Second, East and Southeast Asian tourists, though forming a small percentage of total mass ecotourist customers in Phuket, occupy a critical position in Thailand's overall tourism industry and the continued growth of Asian tourism markets, particularly from China, will have implications for ecotourism companies oriented towards stagnant or even declining tourism markets in Europe and North America. As Asian tourists slowly move towards more specialized and small-scale forms of travel organization, their behaviour, motivations, and cultural expectations will shape the face of ecotourism in the region well into the next century. Contrary to the common perception, held by even those *farangs* running mass ecotourism companies in Phuket, that East and Southeast Asian tourists care only about shopping and frivolous entertainment, the future travel activities of such tourists will likely extend to areas beyond Disney-esque theme parks and entertainment complexes. For these reasons, future research should focus on the preferences, impacts, and travel patterns of Asian tourists in Thailand.

The third potential avenue for future research centres on the social and cultural impacts of "alternative" tourism. In Chapter Seven, I touched on the psychological, social, and sexual consequences of "alternative" tourism in southern Thailand, but it would be interesting to delve deeper into the long-term impacts of such forms of travel on the outlooks and social lives of

Thais. Similarly, further research which empirically evaluates claims regarding "alternative" tourist motivations and behaviour would yield intriguing insights into the relationship between tourism, cultural change, and "modernization" in Thailand.

Lastly, having occurred prior to Thailand's recent fiscal crisis, this research can only draw conclusions based on a previous, and currently outdated, context of continued economic success and tourism growth. Despite the Thai government's pursuit of fortified tourist numbers and revenues through the "Amazing Thailand" campaign, the prolonged fiscal crisis continues to damage Thailand's international touristic image, and will likely pose a threat to the viability of mass forms of "alternative" tourism which depend upon sustained arrivals from "Western" markets. Future research would therefore benefit from examining the ways in which fiscal restructuring, and the consequent social tension it creates, have altered the prospects and daily operations of mass ecotourism operators in Phuket and surrounding areas of southern Thailand.

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APPENDIX ONE. TIMETABLE OF INTERVIEWS

Cedric Carter, Executive Committee Member, Jaidee Kayak, Saturday 3 August 1996, Aboard Jaidee Kayak Escort Boat, Ao Phangnga, Phangnga Province.

Dhum (Krathom Pootrajabunkorn), Lead Guide, Jaidee Kayak, Tuesday 21 September 1996, Aboard Escort Boat, Ao Phangnga, Phangnga Province.

Dave Gann, Tour Leader, Exclusive Explorations, Tuesday 27 August 1996, Tong Toey Rafthouses, Khao Sok National Park, Surat Thani Province.

Rex Gilmore, Founder of Nature Paradise and Marketing Director of Siam Eco Partnership, Saturday 25 May 1996, Pendulum Restaurant, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

Chris Johnson, Tour Leader, Backdoor Adventures, Wednesday 17 July 1996, Lumphini Park, Bangkok.

Jok (Thaitawat Boontharaj), Operations Manager, Jaidee Kayak, Saturday 21 September 1996, Jaidee Kayak Office, Phuket Town, Phuket.

Heather Karras, Tour Leader, Exclusive Explorations, Sunday 2 June 1996, Viengthai Hotel, Rambutri Road, Bangkok.

Niti Kongkrut, Director, Tourism Authority Region Four Office, Wednesday 25 September 1996, TAT Region Four Office, Phuket Town, Phuket.

John Lawson, Tour Leader, Backdoor Adventures, Thursday 1 August 1996, Ko Hong, Krabi.

Nigel Lord, Director and General Manager, Jaidee Kayak, Wednesday 21 August 1996, Jaidee Kayak Office, Phuket Town, Phuket.

Jim Miller, Founder, Jaidee Kayak, Sunday 23 September 1996, Boathouse Restaurant, Kata Beach, Phuket.

Don Strock, Founder and Marketing Director, Trekkers, Sunday 1 September 1996, Jim's Lighthouse Restaurant, Chalong, Phuket.

APPENDIX TWO. INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

ADVENTURERS

Tell me about yourself (where you're from, what you do).

Why do you travel? What do you hope to get out it?

Did you read up on Thailand before coming?

Was it more important in travel preparation than it has been while on vacation?

What do you think of Thai society so far?

Do you know any Thai words?

Do you know much about Thailand's history or politics?

How important has the tour leader been? What's has his role been on this trip?

What does "development" mean to you?

Is tourism good for Thailand?

What do Thais get out of tourism?

What do tourists and you personally get out of it?

Tell me about your trip so far in SE Asia.

How important is environmental conservation to you?

What do you as a tourist feel you can do to minimize your environmental impact on local communities in Thailand?

What kind of tourist would you say you were?

How does your presence in Thailand benefit Thais?

What are the most important reasons for coming on an adventure tour to Thailand (i.e., what attracted you?).

Have you seen the "real" Thailand so far on this holiday?

How important is seeing the "real" Thailand? Why is it important?

What is "real" Thailand anyway?

How would one find authenticity in Thailand (what does it take)?

How does your society compare with Thailand generally? . . in terms of authenticity?

Do you feel like you've met the average Thai?

Do you believe that increased social interaction between tourists and Thais is a good thing? If so, why?

How do you feel about mass tourism and mass tourists?

Do other tourists ever annoy you? Why or why not?

What does alternative tourism, ecotourism, responsible tourism etc mean to you?

How do these differ from mass tourism?

Do you think Thais are becoming Westernized?

If so, why do you think that is, and in which particular ways are they trying to emulate the West?

Are they actually becoming more like Westerners? How do you feel about it?

When you see McDonald's and Coca Cola in Bangkok, and people wearing Western labels, how do you feel - is Thai culture being diminished?

Are you eager to tell your friends about this trip? About seeing the "real" Thailand?

How important is it to you to do non-touristy things (i.e., go to different places than other tourists)?

Do you ever wish you were the first tourist to visit a place? The ONLY tourist at any given time?

Is it important to do things or go places that none of your friends have done or visited?

BACKPACKERS

Tell me about yourself (where you're from, what you do).

Why do you travel? What do you hope to get out it?

Did you know much about Thailand before coming?

What do you think of Thais and Thai society?

Do you know any Thai words?

Do you know much about Thailand's history or politics?

What does "development" mean to you?

Is tourism good for Thailand?

What do Thais get out of tourism?

Tell me about your trip so far in SE Asia.

Is Thailand clean in your opinion?

What do you as a tourist feel you can do to minimize your impact on local communities in Thailand?

What kind of tourist would you say you were (traveller, tourist, what)?

What attracted you to travel to Thailand?

What trip to Thailand is this?

Have you seen the "real" Thailand so far on this holiday?

How important is seeing the "real" Thailand?

Why is it important?

What is "real" Thailand anyway?

How would one find authenticity in Thailand (what does it take)?

How does your society compare with Thailand generally? . . in terms of authenticity?

How do you feel about your own society?

Do you feel like you've met the average Thai?

Do you believe that increased social interaction between tourists and Thais is a good thing? If so, why?

How do you feel about mass tourism and mass tourists?

Do other tourists ever annoy you?

How does a traveller differ from the mass tourist?

Is Thailand Third World?

Do you think Thais are becoming Westernized?

If so, why do you think that is, and in which particular ways are they trying to emulate the West?

Are they actually becoming more like Westerners?

How do you feel about it?

When you see McDonald's and Coca Cola in Bangkok, and people wearing Western labels, how do you feel - is Thai culture being diminished?

Are you eager to tell your friends about this trip? About seeing the "real" Thailand?

How important is it to you to do non-touristy things (i.e., go to different places than other tourists)?

Do you ever wish you were the first tourist to visit a place? The ONLY tourist at any given time?

Is it important to do things or go places that none of your friends have done or visited?

MASS ECOTOURISTS

Have you enjoyed your trip today?

How long is this vacation to Thailand?

Can you tell me where you're from, and what you do back home?

Why did you choose this company over other companies?

Why did you choose this tour instead of a much cheaper one to, say, the Phi Phi Islands?

What motivated you to do sea canoeing generally?

What attracted you to Thailand?

What do you like most about travelling?

Are you familiar with the term ecotourism?

What do you think of Thais and Thai society?

How familiar are you with Thailand's environmental problems?

Would you call yourself an environmentalist? If so, do you leave it behind when you travel?

Is tourism a good thing for Thailand?

Do you consider Thailand a clean country? What it would take to make it better?

Do you think Thais care about the environment?

How would you compare Thailand to your own country?

What do you like most and least about Thailand?

Is Thailand a Third World country to you? Why? If why not, what is a Third World country?

Have you seen the "Real" Thailand?

What is "real" Thai culture?

Do you think you have you met the average Thai?

How important has it been to experience "real" or genuine Thai culture?

Do you generally like other tourists?

What do think of backpackers?

Do you feel that increased social interaction between tourists and Thais is a good thing?

Do you think Thailand is becoming Westernized?

How are they becoming Westernized?

How do you feel about it?

When you see McDonald's and Coca Cola in Bangkok, and people wearing Western labels, how do you feel - is Thai culture being diminished?

Do you like your own society (living in your country)?

Are you eager to tell your friends back home about your trip?

Do you ever wish you could be the first tourist to visit a particular area?

Do you wish you could the only, or one of the only, tourists in a particular area?

Is it important for you to do things or travel to places that none of your friends have been to before?

ADVENTURE TRAVEL COMPANY TOUR LEADERS

Tell me about yourself.

How did you end up working with this company?

What does this company strive for (goals)?

What do you think of Thai society?

Describe your customers.

What are the priorities of a trip like this? (education, fun, authenticity, etc.)

How important is authenticity to this company's customers?

Is tourism good for Thailand?

What is this company doing to promote development in the countries it operates in?

What does "development" mean to you?

How do you feel about mass tourism and mass tourists?

Is increased social interaction between tourists and host a good thing?

What kind of tourism would you say this company promotes?

Do you think Thais are becoming Westernized?

If so, why do you think that is and how do you feel about it?

Are they actually becoming more like "us"?

When you see McDonald's and Coca Cola in Bangkok, and people wearing Western labels, how do you feel - is Thai culture being diminished?

Discuss local economic, political, and social linkages that this company has developed in Thailand.

Outline some of the difficulties of setting up locally-oriented, community development projects.

How important is education to your company and to your customers?

Did you read up on Thailand before coming?

Was it more important in travel preparation than it has been while on vacation?

What do you know of Thailand's environmental problems?

Do you speak any Thai?

What do Thais get out of tourism?

How important is environmental conservation to you?

What do you think tourists can do to minimize your environmental impact on local communities in Thailand?

How does your presence in Thailand benefit Thais?

Define authenticity.

How important is it to you? Why is it important?

Have you seen authentic Thai life?

How would one find authenticity in Thailand (what does it take)?

How would you describe your society in terms of authenticity?

How does your society compare with Thailand generally?

Do you feel like you've met the average Thai?

Do other tourists ever annoy you?

What does alternative tourism, ecotourism, responsible tourism etc mean to you?

How do these differ from mass tourism?

Is Thailand Third World?

How important is it to you to do non-touristy things (i.e., go to different places than other tourists)? Why is it important?

JAIDEE KAYAK GUIDES

What province are you from? What does your family do back home?

How old are you? Married, kids? Education?

What month and year did you start working at Jaidee? Why did you come to work at Jaidee? Do you like working for Jaidee?

Where did you work before Jaidee? Did you like it? Why did you leave?

How much do you make in tips in one month high season and low season?

How has Jaidee changed your life?

How did you learn to speak English? Do you want to make your English better? Why?

What is the most important thing about a Jaidee trip for you (nature adventure, fun, customer service, etc)?

What is the most important thing about a Jaidee trip for TOURISTS (nature adventure, fun, customer service, etc)?

Do you have TAT guide license? Who paid for it?

What training do you do every year? CPR? Who paid? Who trains you?

How did you learn to paddle in the caves?

Who taught you about the history of the area?

Why do tourists come to Thailand?

What is so special in Thailand for tourists to see?

What country have most of the tourists you have come from?

How much to do you know about the tourist countries? Do you know about their lives back home?

Do you like tourists? Why or why not? What do you like and what do you not like?

Do you keep in touch with any farangs (write letters to friends)?

Do you think tourists care about the environment?

What do you think of (people and country) when I mention the following countries? America, Canada, Australia, Germany, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan.

Do you think tourism is good for Thailand? Why or why not? Is tourism good or bad for the nature in Thailand?

Who in Thailand gets the most out of tourism?

Who has the big power for decisions for tourism in Thailand?

What does ecotourism mean to you?

How important is the nature to you?

How important was it before working for Jaidee?

If you tell your friends, "don't make pollution" or "don't throw your cigarette into the sea," what would they say?

What is REAL Thai culture (*watthana Thai tae*)?

Do you like Thailand? What do you like about Thais? Dislike?

Where in Thailand is (real) jing Thai culture (Isaan)?

What is your biggest dream in life?

If you had 15 million Baht, what would you do? How important is money to you?

Do you think Thailand is a rich country or poor one?

How is Thailand different now than 20 years ago?

What do you think Thailand will be like in 20 years? Like America?

When you see McDonald's and Coca Cola in Bangkok, and people wearing Western labels, how do you feel - is Thai culture being diminished?

Are Thai people becoming like farangs or not?

MASS ECOTOURISM COMPANY OWNERS AND MANAGERS

Tell me about yourself - where you're from, education, work experience, how long have you been in Thailand?

Tell me about your company?

Do you operate mostly with tour rep customers or FITS?

How many people have gone on your trips from the beginning (figures).

Any problems with copycat companies? What do you think of cooperation or dialogue with other companies to prevent even more copy companies?

Do you operate mostly overnight trips? Which is more important: day or overnight?

What do you think your customers want?

What are the priorities of your trip? Fun, education, etc?

What kind of tourism does your company promote?

The conference people talked about "10 steps to successful ecotourism" in Thailand - what have you had to do to make it work?

What are your views on development? (i.e., business, and modernization versus community participation and locally-derived development ideas, etc.)

What is your marketing like? Bookings? Only local or international? Internet?

Discuss local economic, political, and social linkages that your company has developed with the local community.

Discuss the difference if any between the "alternative traveller" and the mass tourist. Are they all just variations of the same thing or is there a clear dichotomous split?

What are the environmental consequences of your trips?

Outline some of the difficulties of setting up locally-oriented, community development projects. Mafia?

Are you involved with the Harriers at all? Why or why not?

How are the customers different between high and low seasons?

Roughly how much money does your company contribute to the local economy every month?

How many people do you employ in total?

Training? What kind, cost, who gets it, etc.

What is the process of hiring someone? How are they promoted? Do you favour locals over others?

Outline some of the difficulties of getting educated Thais to work in your company.

What percentage of your employees have been here for more than 6 months? 1 year? 2 years or more?

Any conflicts with employees or partners? How many people fired since you've been here?

How many people go on your trips every day? Do you have a maximum?

Why Thailand? Was it an interest in simply doing something to stay in Thailand, or did you want in particular to bring ecotourism to this particular country?

Any idea how many expatriates live in Phuket?

What is the state of ecotourism in Thailand right now? What does the future look like?

What are the main causes of environmental problems in Thailand?

What are your future plans? How long do you plan to stay in Thailand?

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS (TAT PHUKET DIRECTOR)

Can you tell me a little about yourself, your career with the TAT, how long you've been regional director, etc?

What is the role of the Phuket regional TAT office...what duties do they perform?

How old is the Phuket office?

How many tourists came to Phuket last year?

What percentage were package tourists?

What is the most important market for tourism in Phuket? Which country supplied the most tourists to Phuket? How important are Thai tourists in Phuket (percentage)?

Do you know the population of Phuket province and town, roughly?

Please explain the TAT operating license - do you give permits for specific activities, or just a general license to operate a tourist facility?

What are the TAT's goals for Phuket in the coming future - what you like to see happen with tourism in Phuket in the next 5 to 10 years?

What kind of promotion of Phuket does the TAT do? Local versus international marketing?

How is the TAT budget for Phuket broken down by activities? (i.e., operations, marketing, payroll, training, etc.)

Could you describe the TAT training course?
(A)Who teaches it
(B)How many people enrol each year
(C)How many people pass each year
(D)Roughly how many people have passed (i.e., how many people got their TAT license in Phuket since the beginning)?

Have there been any conflicts between the tourism industry and local communities in Phuket?

How important is ecotourism in Phuket right now? How important is it to the TAT and to you personally?

Is there any money set aside in this regional TAT office for ecotourist development (i.e., like the federal TAT office allocating money to develop Khao Sok)?

Could you tell me about the diving industry in Phuket? Number of operators? Cooperation? What is the TAT doing to promote diving? Seawalker?

I noticed a rock climbing operation in Ao Phangnga. How many years has that been happening?

APPENDIX THREE. MASS ECOTOURIST QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for participating in this research. Please note that since this is an anonymous survey, you are not required to give your name or address. The information gained from this survey will be used for two purposes: a) as data for a Ph.D. dissertation in Geography at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, Canada (the thesis deals with ecotourism and economic development in southern Thailand); b) as marketing information to be used by Jaidee Kayak to better serve its customers. This research is independent from Jaidee Kayak, so please feel free to comment as openly and honestly as possible. Once again, thank you, and please ask if you have any further questions about this survey or its contents.

Nick Kontogeorgopoulos
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Geography
UBC, Vancouver, Canada

1) What is your nationality? _____

2) What is your normal place of residence? _____

3) What is your birthdate? Month _____ Year _____

4) What is your regular occupation? _____

5) Where are you staying while in Phuket?

Which Beach/Town _____ Hotel _____

6) What trip is this for you to Thailand?

❒ 1st ❒ 2nd ❒ 3rd ❒ 4th ❒ 5th or more

7) How long are you staying in Thailand on this trip (in days)? _____

8) What other day trips have you done, or planning to do while in Thailand? _____

_____

9) Do you consider Thailand a clean country generally?

Very clean	Somewhat clean	Neutral	Somewhat dirty	Very dirty
❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

10) Are you on a package holiday?

❒ No ❒ Yes If yes, which company? _____

If yes, did you book this trip through you tour rep?

❒ No ❒ Yes (skip to question 12)

11) If you booked today's tour by yourself, why did you choose Jaidee Kayak over other companies? (Please choose all that apply)

❒ No reason in particular ❒ Recommendation from friend or tourist

❒ Recommendation from agent ❒ Other _____

12) Had you ever heard of Jaidee Kayak before coming to Phuket?

❒ No ❒ Yes If yes, where? _____

13) What attracted you to sea canoeing generally? (Please choose the 3 most important)

❒ Something to do ❒ Adventure ❒ Nature/Ecotourism
❒ Recommendation ❒ Cost ❒ Fun
❒ Authenticity (seeing the "real thing") ❒ Novelty ❒ Other _____

14) Rank from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) the importance of the following to you while on vacation generally. Please be honest!

Preserving the natural environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Seeing and experiencing authentic Thai culture or nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Having adventurous experiences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Doing new things (novelty)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Having fun	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Having an educational experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Experiencing a different culture than your own	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Seeing beautiful scenery or landscapes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

15) Has this trip made you more aware/concerned about the natural environment?

❒ Definitely not ❒ Probably not ❒ Don't know ❒ Probably ❒ Definitely

16) Rate the quality from 1 (lousy) to 10 (outstanding) of the following on this trip:

Food _____
Educational aspects _____
Sequence of the trip _____
Your canoe guide _____
Amount and variety of wildlife, insects, etc. seen _____
Lead guide on boat _____
Authenticity _____
Knowledge of guides _____
Service of guides _____
Safety _____
Fun _____
On-board presentations _____
Adventure _____
Novelty _____

17) Have you looked inside the informational folder?

❒ No ❒ Yes

18) Rank from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) the importance to you of the following on this particular trip.

General service (food, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Being in a pristine environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Learning about the ecology and natural history of this area	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Having fun	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Novelty (doing something you've never done before)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Doing something adventurous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Uniqueness of landscape	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Scenery	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Experiencing authentic Thai nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

19) What was the best part of the trip for you? _____

20) Did you find the lagoons or caves crowded (because of canoes from other companies)?

❒ Very crowded ❒ A bit crowded ❒ Not crowded

21) Would you recommend this trip to others?

❒ Definitely ❒ Probably ❒ Don't know ❒ Probably not ❒ Definitely not

The following are a list of multiple choice questions, Please circle only one answer, and please, no cheating!

22) What is the name of this bay?

(a) Naiharn Bay
(b) Phangnga Bay
(c) Krabi Bay
(d) Ka Toey Bay
(e) Don't know

23) How many islands are in this area?

(a) 25
(b) 50
(c) 60
(d) 160
(e) Don't know

24) What kind of rock do these mountains contain?

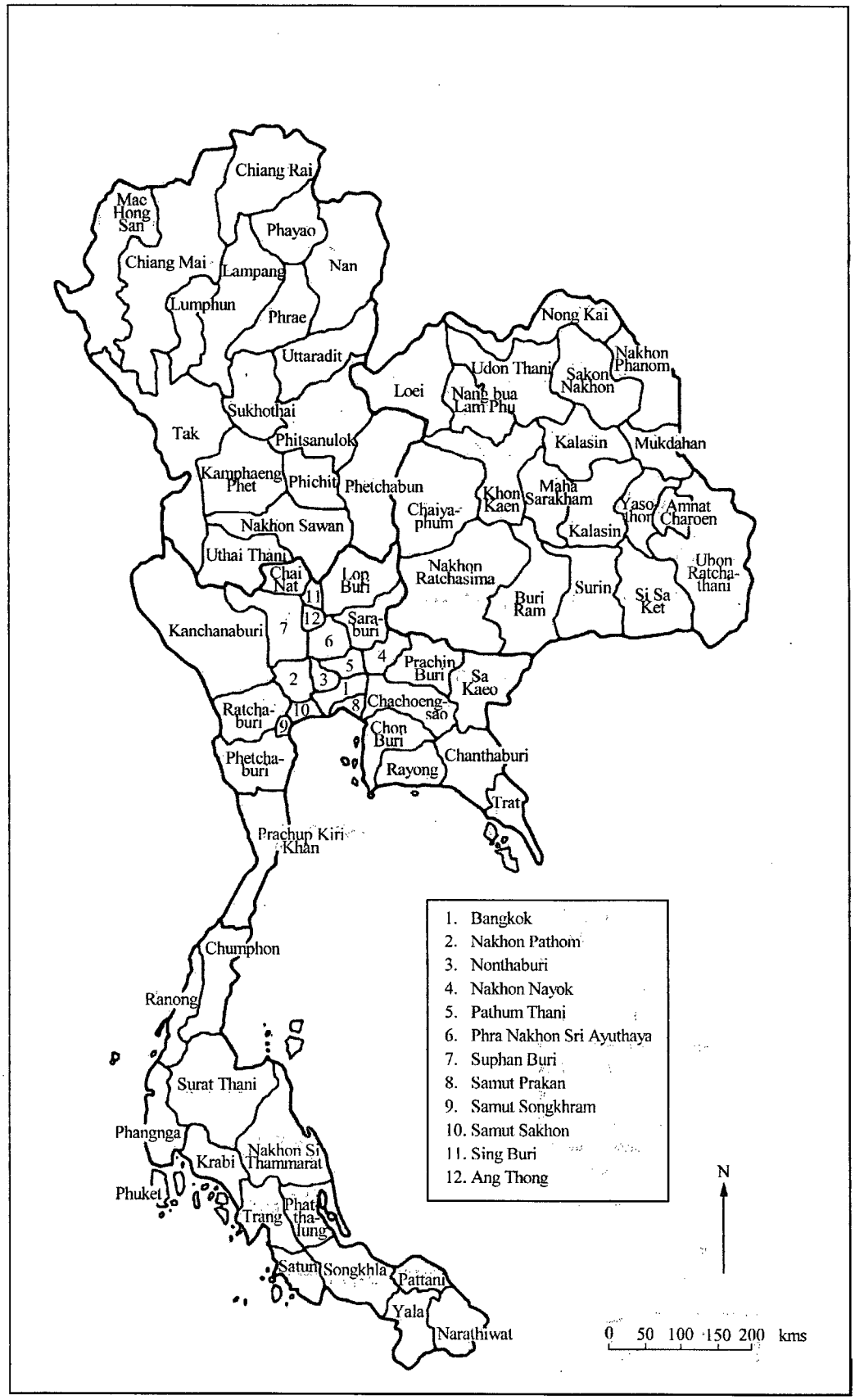
(a) Granite
(b) Limestone
(c) Sandstone
(d) Marble
(e) Don't know

25) What kind of trees are the "walking trees" with the exposed roots?

(a) Southeast Asian Willows
(b) Salt-water Hyacinths
(c) Mangrove trees
(d) Gang Kieuw Wan
(e) Don't know

26) What does "hong" mean?

(a) Tree
(b) Boat
(c) Room
(d) Mountain
(e) Don't know


Chiang Rai
Mae Hong Son
Phayao
Chiang Mai
Lampang
Nan
Lumphun
Phrae
Uttaradit
Nong Khai
Nakhon Phanom
Udon Thani
Sakon Nakhon
Loei
Nong bua Lam Phu
Sukhothai
Tak
Phitsanulok
Kalasin
Mukdahan
Kamphaeng Phet
Phichit
Phetchabun
Khon Kaen
Maha Sarakham
Yasothon
Amnat Charoen
Chaiya-phum
Nakhon Sawan
Kalasin
Uthai Thani
Chai Nat
Lop Buri
Nakhon Ratchasima
Ubon Ratcha-thani
Buri Ram
Surin
Si Sa Ket
Kanchanaburi
Sara-buri
Prachin Buri
Sa Kaeo
Ratcha-buri
Chachoeng-sao
Chon Buri
Phetcha-buri
Rayong
Chanthaburi
Trat
Prachup Kiri Khan
1. Bangkok
2. Nakhon Pathom
3. Nonthaburi
4. Nakhon Nayok
5. Pathum Thani
6. Phra Nakhon Sri Ayuthaya
7. Suphan Buri
8. Samut Prakan
9. Samut Songkhram
10. Samut Sakhon
11. Sing Buri
12. Ang Thong
Chumphon
Ranong
Surat Thani
Phangnga
Nakhon Si Thammarat
Krabi
Phuket
Trang
Phatthalung
Satun
Songkhla
Pattani
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