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ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF PHNOM PENH

The Practice of Cambodian Buddhism before 1970 and Today
a Comparative Case Study of Tep Pranam Pagoda

A Thesis

Presented to the Committee of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Pong Pheakdey Boramy

August 2004

**The Practice of Cambodian Buddhism before the 1970 and Today
a Comparative Case Study of Tep Pranam Pagoda**

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**for the degree of
Master of Arts in Cultural Studies**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis was to carry out a comparative study of two different periods at Tep Pranam pagoda in Tep Pranam village, Vihealaung commune, Ponhea Leu district, Kandal province, which was the basis of studies by Royal University of Fine Arts students (1969) and by Choan and Sarin (1970) before the civil war. The key question now was whether the pagoda could still create community, or whether this was no longer possible following the war, despite the restoration of Buddhism in the country.

According to many foreign and Khmer researchers, pagodas played a crucial role in the community until at least the 1960s. Tep Pranam, under the leadership of the Head monk, Oum Kev, was one of those that helped develop its community by functioning as an educational, social, cultural, moral centre. Nowadays, it is no longer able to function as before; firstly because, during the Democratic Kampuchea period, (1975-1979) many educated monks, pagodas and Buddhist texts were destroyed, and then there was a strict restriction on Buddhism for nearly ten years until the nineties. Secondly, as a result of the low level of education and lack of management skills at the pagoda, there has been a weakening of its capacity to build community in the village. The actions (or inaction) of the monks have been strongly criticised by the villagers, which has led to mistrust and a lessening of support from the community. Finally, the monks have a low level of knowledge because there are no longer any good teachers in the *Pali* primary schools. The school has to use its newly graduating students as teachers. They are poorly qualified to preach morality and *Dhamma* to the people or the secular students in the pagoda, who are considered more educated than themselves. As result, Buddhist beliefs are upheld through custom, rather than through the teaching of monks or in the family. The breakdown of community is evidenced by the presence of criminal elements (“gangsters”) in the village. They provoke conflict not only with the villagers but also with the monks who before had been considered as pious persons beyond reproach. Moreover, the pagoda itself has provoked conflicts between the *Dhammayut* and *Mahanikay* sects pagodas, and between the modern *Mahanikay*, and traditional *Mahanikay* Buddhism. Leadership is now required from the Ministry of Cult and Religion and from monk officials to support the role of the head monk, the education of monks in the province, and eliminate corruption as promised in the *Anusangha Vacchāra*. Funds also are needed for the

recruitment and retention of qualified monk teachers, rather than for the building of new *Vihara*.

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to extend his great appreciation to the many individuals and institutions that made this program possible. First of all, I would like to thank the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), the Center for Advanced Study (CAS), the Heinrich Boell Foundation (HBF), Open Society Institute (OSI), and the Buddhist Institute (BI) that have cooperated to run this unique research training program.

Secondly, I owe my gratitude to Dr. Hema Goonatilake who has worked as my academic supervisor for this thesis. She has always given me good advice and when I had problems she always encouraged me to overcome them. I will always keep her words in my heart when she called me her “Naughty Son”, which gave me hope to try and finish this thesis. Moreover, even when she was sick she still worked on it and made many good comments.

Thirdly, to Erik Davis who spent his valuable time helping me, both his academic contribution and his encouragement. He is very busy with his own projects and his young family too, but he was still happy to read my paper and give me good advice. One of his comments that I will never forget is “Fear is a mind-killer”. If I had not had his help here in Cambodia, I really could not have written this thesis at all. Therefore, my gratitude to him is immeasurable.

Fourth, to Catherine Morris and Teri Shaffer Yamada who spent their valuable time encouraging me and giving me useful texts for my research.

Fifth, I would like to thank Hean Sokhom and Peter Gyallay-Pap, the two main figures who provided us not only with technical support in the program but who also sought financial assistance for all the students to facilitate their individual research projects. I am grateful to Peter Gyallay-Pap in particular for his ongoing valuable advice and extensive guidance in the program, and his encouragement.

Sixth, I would like to convey my profound thanks to Sandra Jones for her competence in editing and giving comments on this English version of the research.

Seventh, my dues and high respects go to all other individuals who played a role in bringing this study into existence.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Heng Kimvan, teaching assistant for the program, who spent the last two years working closely with us. My appreciation goes to all the scholars and researchers who spent their precious time with the students, sharing

their experiences in the field of social and cultural studies. Moreover, my special thanks go to all my eleven classmates in this program and the staff of the Buddhist Institute's *Tripitaka* Commission, who have taught me and encouraged me to finish this thesis.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DK	Democratic Kampuchea
PRK	People's Republic of Kampuchea
RUFA	Royal University of Fine Art

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The research of both foreign and Khmer scholars has shown that the Khmer pagoda (*Wat*) has played a crucial role in creating Khmer community.

Pagodas filled an educational role for the sons of villagers (Gyallay-Pap and Michel, 1990: 56; Yi, 1995: 56). Traditionally, Cambodian villagers sent their sons from the age of 7-10 years to the pagoda to study (Ly, 1970: 1077). There they were taught many subjects such as reading and writing Khmer, the principles of Buddhism, rules of propriety and conduct, various manual arts, numeracy, etc (Gyallay-Pap, monograph: 23¹; Yi, 1995: 56). As a result the literacy rate in Cambodia was high in the last half of the 19th century (Gyallay-Pap, monograph: 25²; Ly, 1970: 1077; Yi, 1995: 56; Martini, 1994: 34). Moreover, according to Ebihara (1968: 41), literacy among adult men correlated directly with having entered the monkhood. Ledgerwood (1992: 36) also agreed with Ebihara. She wrote, “Interestingly, the high literacy rate for men in this village is the result, not of the government campaign, but of the fact that older men in that village had been monks³ and had learned to read in the temple (*Vihara*).” In addition, monks received vocational training. They could study carpentry or construction skills while building schools, dormitories (*Kutis*), and *Vihara*, skills they could use to earn a living when they disrobed (Ly, 1970: 1077; Khing, 2002: 17, 63; Martini, 1995: 43).

Moreover, pagodas functioned not only as educational centres, but also as social communities more generally. There Buddhist teaching, especially about merit making, was used to encourage people to do public work. Martini (1995: 35) wrote that in Cambodia, no project was easier or quicker to raise money for than buildings for the pagoda, such as building a *Vihara*, or *Pali* primary schools. Sam (1987: 35) agreed with him, writing also “Buddhist teachings indicated that contributions to the needs of the public, building of the monasteries, schools, hospitals, rest houses, roads, and bridges, brought the most merit.” Moreover, there they could exchange information about their

¹ quoted from Aymonier, 1900: 42; Napote, 1979: 769; Steinberg 1987: 40.

² quoted from Furnivall, 1943: 13; Steinberg, 1987: 263

³ In this thesis, Monk refers to the Khmer word “*Lok*” or *Lok Sangha*” which means both the *Bhikkhu* (monk) and *Samane* (novice)

problems or the course of their own lives or the community, and they also enhanced their relationships while doing public work together under the leadership of the pagoda.

Because pagodas were the only source of educated people, they also functioned as cultural centres. According to Gyallay-Pap (monograph, p.23) many documents came from the pagodas such as didactic collections of precepts (*Chbab*), poems, folktales, epics, moral tales, legends and canonical (*Jatakas*) and non-canonical (*Pannasa jatakas*) literature. Khemara Yienakamma magazine (1969: 12-23) stated that all boys were taught the above subjects in the pagoda. Lay people also were preached those literatures (Khing, 2002: 22). Moreover, many other subjects including dance were taught to both men and women outside the classroom setting. Therefore, the pagoda was considered the transmitter of Khmer culture to all. (Gyallay-Pap and Michel, 1990: 362)

Pagodas also had another crucial role. They functioned as a religious and moral centre. Cambodian people believed deeply in *Kamma*. They thought that their ugly appearance, poverty, or suffering was because of bad *Kamma*, which they had committed in a previous life. But they believed that if they made a lot of merit, they could have good lives in the next life. Ebihara (1968: 383) quoted the words of an 18 year-old Cambodian girl, “I think I will go to three or four *Kathin*⁴ festivals this year so I will be reborn as a rich American.” Therefore, people were hesitant to commit demerit actions. They went to the pagodas on holiday ceremonies (*Tngai Sil*) to receive the precepts from the monks, such as not killing, not stealing, not lying, not drinking wine, and not fornicating. (see also Ebihara, 1968: 385-398). They could also stay at the pagoda for the day to listen to the preaching of Buddhist morality. On that day they tried to be moral and calm. They were not in conflict with others; they used gentle words and did not drink wine. (Martini, 1995: 46)

While functioning as the moral centre for the people, pagodas also became the link between the people and the king or other leaders. Pagodas provided a symbol of morality, and integrity and legitimacy for the country’s leaders and encouraged the people to respect the law and help defray the expenses of the country (Somboon, 1993:103). But in return the king or senior leaders had to promote a prosperous society and religion and be sure that they observed the ten virtues of a Buddhist king (*Dhammaraja*): charity (*Dana*), morality (*Sila*), liberality (*Pariccaga*), uprightness (*Ajjava*), gentleness

⁴ according to May Ebihara, *Kathin*, is the festival to give gifts to the monks who have come out of retreat, and can be held anytime between the first day of the waning moon of *Asout* (October) and the full moon of *Kaduk* (November). But according Mean Prang and Am Chorn, the gift May Ebihara referred to was only the robes given to the monks (Page 63-78)

(*Maddhava*), self-limitation (*Tapa*), non-anger (*Akhodha*), non-violence (*Ahimsa*), forbearance (*Khanti*), and non-obstruction (*Avirodha*). The leader who did not cling to these virtues was considered unworthy to rule and would, it was believed, lead his kingdom to ruin (Gyallay-Pap, monograph: 18-19). Therefore, according to Sam (1987:7), some Khmer kings and princes entered the monkhood in order to get an education and become good and effective leaders.

All the above actions of creating community were done by many groups who were involved directly with the pagoda, including monks, *Achar*, older people⁵, and pagoda boys. Their work was enhanced by the construction of pagoda buildings, and the use of religious ritual to bind the community together.

Monks were considered the main elements in creating community. They were the composers of legal documents, literature, and customs. (Khing, 2002:22) They taught all the boys to read and write, and study other subjects. Monks in the pagoda read literature aloud for lay people too. All the important actions of the monks occurred through the good leadership of the head monk, whose knowledge and capacity made them respect the strict disciplinary rules of the pagoda and study hard. Therefore, they were believed to be pious and the source of merit making. The people offered them daily offerings of food, material for housing, clothing and medicine (Somboon, 1993:103) and agreed to do public works under their guidance. The villagers tried to do good according to Buddhist morality, taught through preaching, to earn merit for their next lives. Moreover, in order to make their community a developed society, the head monk played another important role as observer and advisor to the king/leader whether he respected the ten virtues of Buddhist king and promoted a prosperous society and religion or not. According to Osborne, "Upon the death of a king, the Buddhist church was represented among the select group which met to determine who should next mount the throne" (Cambodian Institute of Human Rights, 1997:22)⁶. Therefore, Zago (1975: 111) wrote, "Cambodia may be compared to a cart supported by two wheels, one of which is the state and the other Buddhism. The former symbolizes power and the latter religious morality. The two wheels must turn at the same speed in order for the cart, i.e., Cambodia, to advance smoothly on the path of peace and progress" (see Gyallay-Pap, monograph: 47).

⁵ According to the RUFA students (1969), the elderly people here refer to those who shaved their heads, wore white clothes, and held the ten precepts.

⁶ Quoted from Osborne, 1973: 17

Achar acted as a link between the monks and the laity, the religious and the secular worlds. In the pagoda they conducted ceremonies for money raising and led people in reciting sermons. They helped to solve people's problems and also were known to be involved with the guardian spirits (*Neak ta*) of the village.

Some elderly people (*Donchi and Tachi*) shaved their heads, wore white clothes and lived in the pagoda. Among them, elderly women (*Donchi*) took care of the monks. They could also study morality, liturgical texts or meditate with the monks (see also Martini, 44-45).

Pagoda boys were the sons of villagers who sent them to live with the monks. They could study and eat there after the monks, but they also helped to maintain the buildings in the pagoda and helped the *Donchis* to prepare food for the monks. When monks went out for almsgiving their role was to carry the containers.

Buildings also played a key role in the community. Khmer pagoda architecture was part of the heritage, and served a practical purpose in celebrating religious ceremonies and housing the monks, elderly people, pagoda boys, and acting as a safe rest house for travellers.

The murals in the *Vihara* served as another way of educating people about the Buddha's stories, because when the monks preached to the people they could show them the pictures at the same time. Moreover, mural paintings, according to Leclere, were very meaningful to Cambodian people. He observed,

“je regard les visages des enfants autour de moi, ceux des femmes, et je sens qu’ en eux il y a des sensations, des satisfactions de l’ esprit que mon esprit ne peut éprouver”

(I look at the faces of children around me, those of women, and I feel that in them there are sensations, satisfactions of the mind that my mind cannot feel (1899: 468))

Ritual, whether Buddhist or animist (*Neak ta*) in its origin, helped to unify all villagers, because they celebrated it with the same purpose of making their community safe from trouble or epidemics, and more prosperous.

In the 1960s, pagodas still played a crucial role in creating community. One of them was Tep Pranam pagoda in Tep Pranam village, Vihealaung commune, Ponhea Leu district, Kandal province, which functioned in its traditional role of developing its own village. Because the people trusted and supported the pagoda, it could function as a moral and educational centre, which taught the people across the area through preaching (*Desana*) and precept holding (*Kan Sil*). Villagers could earn merit by supporting with

money or in kind public works such as building a *Pali* primary school for monks and building secular schools for villagers' sons which reduced the need for government contributions. This pagoda acted as an artefact collection point where people donated important items or found them through local excavation. It also functioned as the representative of the village if there was conflict with the authorities. In addition, in the 1960's the pagoda allowed 128 secular students from farther afield, who could not afford to rent a house, to live and eat there.

1.2 Problem Statement

Cambodia's political upheaval during the 1970s brought about an almost total eradication of Buddhist practice along with the disappearance of traditional, educational, social and political structures. During the years of civil war and revolution, many pagodas were destroyed. Buddhist texts were burnt or lost⁷. Buddhist monks were disrobed and expelled from the pagodas. They were forced to do manual labour and many were either killed or died of starvation and disease during this time. Tep Pranam pagoda and its monks faced the same fate as other pagodas. Although in 1979, steps were taken to reinstate Buddhism, there were still restrictions during the time of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). For example, a man could not ordain as a monk if he was less than 50 years old, and the ceremonies were strictly controlled and levied. After 1988-89, according to Keyes⁸, major changes began to take place in Cambodia with regard to Buddhism as part of a political strategy (p. 1). From that time, pagodas and the number of people ordained as monks increased; for example, by the year 2000-2001 the number of monks had increased nationally to 53,869 in 3,798 pagodas⁹, nearly reaching pre-war figures¹⁰. Although there are now increasing numbers of monks and pagodas, there is still a question as to whether the pagoda can function as in the nineteen sixties to create community or not.

⁷ The Khmer rouge or American bombs have often been accused of destroying the pagodas, especially the ancient ones. However, during the Sangkhum period, when the economy was growing, the villagers preferred to demolish the ancient, wooden *Viharas* and build new, bigger ones which were made of concrete (see Sam, 1987: 20).

⁸ See Keyes, Charles F. *the Rebirth of Buddhism*. available from <http://www.seasit.nui.edu/khmer/ledgerwood/contents.htm>

⁹ Khlot Thyda (2001: 103) quoted from the Tan Sukhorn. *sthiti dhammaka sasana (the Statistics of the Ministry of cult and religion) 2000-2001*

¹⁰ Ibid, (2001:103) before 1970, there were 65,062 monks and 3,369 pagodas

1.3 Aim of the Study

In order to answer the question above, the aim of this thesis was to carry out a comparative study of Tep Pranam pagoda. This pagoda was the basis of RUFA students (1969) and Choan and Sarin (1970)'s study before the civil war, in the late nineteen-sixties. Analysis of the RUFA students and Choan and Sarin's study was done in order to assess whether the pagoda had helped to create community before, and contemporary research was undertaken to determine whether it still had such a role, or whether this was no longer possible.

1.4 Rationale of the Study

The reason for choosing Tep Pranam pagoda was because the pagoda was studied by RUFA students and Choan and Sarin in the sixties. It was therefore thought straightforward to compare their findings with present day data to analyse the changes and continuities of this pagoda as opposed to other pagodas that had not been previously studied. Moreover, the previous researchers used multiple methodologies such as in-depth interviews, observation, and questionnaires that could be compared precisely with each other. Therefore, in order to compare their work and to achieve good results this researcher decided to use the same methodology and questions. In addition, this pagoda is close to his hometown and so it was easier for him to access some information compared with outside researchers.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

The work done in the sixties at the Tep Pranam pagoda was a baseline to compare with data collected during fieldwork at the pagoda in 2003-2004. Being comparative research, the researcher used the same methods and the questions as before, making the results relatively easy to compare. This thesis can only state results for this one pagoda. Only 15 days of ethnographic research were performed due to time limitations, because the research was done during the period of the monks' vacation, when there were only 18 monks living at the pagoda, which was less than the number of informants for Choan and Sarin, who used a sample size of 57 monks.

1.6 Methodology

Data collection: in order to do this research, the researcher chose 18 monks, one *Achar*, one pagoda committee member or *Achar Rong (Sub-Achar)*, three elderly women

who worked in the pagoda, nine lay people, and three students. He used the same methodology as before, i.e. questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and observation. However, for the questionnaire, the researcher did not include the question “when do the monks become pagoda boys?” But he collected some data from other researchers that answered this question partially. As for the in-depth interview, he could not gain access to the head monk who refused to give interviews and asked the researcher to interview one of the pagoda committee instead, who was a former sub-head monk in the 1960s¹¹. Therefore, the data regarding the head monk mostly comes from the pagoda committee, the elderly women, laities, other monks, and students. For the lay people, it was also difficult to ask some of them for interviews too, as they seem to be afraid of newcomers¹². But fortunately, a twelfth-grade student who lives in the pagoda helped to facilitate an interview, so those lay people began to trust the researcher. In another case, one of the informants who is a teacher at Tep Pranam High School agreed to give some information, but the researcher had to provide her with a *Dhamma*¹³ explanation and documents. He brought one of the staff members of the *Tripitaka* Commission of the Buddhist Institute with him so that this Buddhist scholar could help to answer her questions and facilitate the data collection stage.

When the researcher arrived there and tried to tell them about himself and the reason he had come to Tep Pranam pagoda, one former *Donchi* asked him to help them get back some pagoda land that people had taken after the DK regime because she thought that he worked for the Ministry of Cult and Religion. The sub-head monk also told him that he allowed questions because he hoped that the researcher could ask the Ministry to rebuild the *Vihara* as he and the pagoda committee and elderly women were fed up asking for donations from both King Norodom Sihanouk and Prime Minister Hun Sen. He added that one of the pagoda committee was pro-CPP. He also stated that when there were elections, he always asked the monks to vote for this party but when he then went to ask for donations to build the *Vihara*, politicians never helped him.

Data analysis: in order to analyse the data, the researcher used content analysis to discover changes and continuities. Firstly, he divided the data from RUFA students and

¹¹ It should be noted that he was the right sub head monk in the 1960s, but he disrobed in 1967. After the Pol Pot regime he became a member of the pagoda committee.

¹² When first asked for an interview they immediately said that they knew nothing. However, after the researcher told them he just wanted to ask them their ideas, and because of the confirmation of a 12-grade student, they agreed to give an interview. Their concern may have been due to political problems that made them unwilling to speak out.

¹³ dhamma means the Buddhist doctrine.

Choan and Sarin, and his new data into many categories, mainly buildings, head monk, *Achar*, elderly people, secular students, the monks, and rituals. Secondly, he compared each category to find out the continuities and the changes; then he tried to find the reason for change or continuity in order to reach a conclusion whether that pagoda still can create community as before or not.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Buddhism had its origins in India in the 6th B.C. At the beginning it was purely a regional philosophy. But through the centuries, Buddhism spread over to other countries in Asia and took different forms, absorbing existing native beliefs.

Khmer Buddhism also developed, becoming a unique combination of Buddhism, Hinduism, and local beliefs (such as *Neak ta*), to serve the Khmer people and society's needs. Many scholars such as Ebihara (1968, 363), Ang Choulean (2000), Gyallay-Pap (monograph, 13), Meagher (p.41-43), Harris (forthcoming, 2004, 87-128), Sam (1990), Morris (2004:192), and Zago (1976:109) have written about such local beliefs in their work when they studied Buddhism. For example, there was always a *Neak Ta* shrine in the pagoda, and people who claimed that they were Buddhist were involved with it and the monks or *Achar* were always invited to preside over local ceremonies.

However, this mix of local belief and Buddhism played a crucial role in creating community. For instance, Martini (33-47), Gyallay-Pap and Michel (1990:362), Khing (2002:17, 23, 63), Gyallay-Pap (monograph, p.23; 1996:11), Harris (118-127), Ly (1970:1076-80) agreed that pagodas in the villages became the educational, social, moral, cultural centres for communities and some of them confirmed that this continued, with some decline in urban areas, until 1975. In addition, some scholars such as Gyallay-Pap (1996:8-13; draft, 1991; monograph: 46), Somboon (1993:100-145), Sam (1987), Zago (1976:109-116), Meagher (p.41-48), Morris (2004:195-96) stated that the role of Buddhism was also as a liaison between the people and the king. In other words, the monks helped to legitimise the king or other leaders and convince the people to respect the law of the country, and in return the king or leader had to make society and religion prosperous. But after the introduction of western ideas, especially in politics, economics, and education during the colonial period, there was a negative impact also. As Gyallay-Pap (Draft, 1991) wrote, "At the war's end (World War II) a small number of Francophonized Khmer, including members of the royal family, returned from higher studies in France and entered political life in Phnom Penh. They constituted a new bourgeois "Oknya" or mandarin elite that, with encouragement from the departing French, transformed the country from a Buddhist polity into a "modern", i.e European-type nation state" (see also Gyallay-Pap, 1996:8-13; monograph). Moreover, after the

colonial period, these western ideas affected Buddhism too. For instance, Ebihara, (1968), Sam (1987:23), Zago, (1976: 115-116) noted that young people, especially in the urban areas, preferred to study in secular schools rather than ordain and study in pagoda. Hout (republished, 1968)¹⁴ added that the reason that those young people were not interested in Buddhism was because their parents did not explain Buddhism to them, instead they encouraged them to study secular subjects because it would help them to obtain a high social status quickly. The monks in the pagoda could not function as *Dhamma* teachers any more because students did not stay in the pagoda or were not interested in the *Dhamma*, but only in secular subjects. The existing *Dhamma* books were also difficult for monks to understand. Ly (1971, 680-684) suggested that monks should choose only the rational *Dhamma* and reject the fantastic *Dhamma* in order to preach to adolescents who all preferred scientific subjects. He added that the decline in morality was also due to the promulgation of pornographic magazines (1971, 367-401).

It should be noted too that in the colonial period, the new *Dhammayut* sect which was introduced from Thailand into Cambodia in the 19th century¹⁵ opposed the local *Mahanikay* sect. Harris (forthcoming, 2004) and Sam (1987) wrote that these two sects had major disagreements with each other, although this seldom led to physical conflict. Ebihara (1968) found that villagers were influenced by both sects and some pagodas and monks were discriminated against. This information was interesting, because near the pagoda where fieldwork took place, there are some *Dhammayut* pagodas, which were checked for signs of religious discrimination. The *Mahanikay* sect itself also suffered from internal conflict. Sam (1990), Harris (forthcoming, 2004), Edward (2003), Hout (1970), and the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, wrote that the conflict split the *Mahanikay* into two groups. The first group included traditional Buddhists (*Thor Châs*), who used rituals and magic and the second included modernist Buddhists (*Thor Thmei*), who were supported by the French who wanted to cleanse Buddhism of its older animist beliefs. But according to Martini (1994), this conflict subsided after many monks finished their study at Buddhist schools. However, nowadays, Marston, (p.1) (see also Encyclopaedia, p.109.) it is reported at village level that the older strains of Khmer Buddhist thought such as millenarianism still exist and tensions between modernists (*Samay*) and traditionalists (*Puran*), have re-emerged. It would be interesting in the future to test this data to find out

¹⁴ see also So Hay, 1965: 548

¹⁵ the arrival of the *Dhammayut* order is attributed to the reigns of Ang Duong and Norodom, in 1854 and 1864 (encyclopedia, p.108)

whether there are the same tensions in Tep Pranam pagoda, because one of the pagoda sites mentioned is not far away.

After the fall of Democratic Kampuchea (DK), Buddhism was restored in order to show foreign countries that Cambodia now had freedom of religion (Khing, 2002, 21). But Ly Suvira (1999), Keyes (p.1-3), Gyallay-Pap and Michel (1990), Sam (1987:79-91), Somboon (1993:140-145) stated that in fact Buddhism at that time was strictly controlled by the state. Only in 1988-89 did the government change its behaviour as part of its political strategy. For example, in Act Six of the constitution of the PRK, Buddhism was recognized as the state religion (Houth Ruthy, 1998:89). Little by little the religion developed, supported by local and overseas Khmer people. However, Keyes and the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism¹⁶ added that Buddhism still could not be restored to its previous pre-war status. There is now a significant portion of the population who were just born or were very young during the time of DK and who grew up under the PRK, who have little or no religious orientation or training. Khan (1999) agreed: in his research into the level of Buddhist knowledge among high school students in Phnom Penh, he found that they had a low level of understanding of the subject. Moreover, Kim (2001:62) found that because of living conditions, Buddhism is less important in people's lives today, and as many educated monks died in DK, the pagoda could no longer function as an educational centre. The expenditure needed for a monk's ordination ceremony is large and the local authority also levies charges. Therefore, many young men do not want to be ordained as monks. These facts show clearly that because of the killing of the educated monks, destruction of religious texts in DK, the restriction on Buddhism in the PRK, and the promotion of secular education for the young, plus the charges levied by local authorities, there have been many obstacles standing in the way of pagodas trying to recreate community.

The education of monks continued to decline after the civil war because there were few good teachers and documents left, and Buddhist primary schools were slow to reopen¹⁷. Moreover, Hean (1996:14-16; 2001: 67-77), who researched the education of monks, stated that among the 50,873 monks, there were only 20,000 monks who were able to study at Buddhist schools and therefore there were more than 30,000 monks who did not study at all. There is still a shortage of good teachers to teach at Buddhist schools. For example, there are only 85 official teachers for all the provinces of Cambodia (Ung,

¹⁶ see <http://www.gale.com/pdf/samples/sp657187.pdf>

¹⁷ The Buddhist primary schools reopened in 1989 and Buddhist high schools in 1993

2004) and study time available for Buddhism and other important subjects for the monks is less than for secular subjects. In ‘The Explanation of the Problem Involve with Ministry of Cult and Religion to the Parliament’, Minister Chea Saveun (1999:26-36), complained that although there are increasing numbers of monks in Cambodia, they have low levels of knowledge and capacity to preach the Buddhist doctrine or morality. And some of them, he said, only ordained as monks to obtain money from lay people. Some NGOs have run short courses for monks in villages on human rights, hygiene, health, social services, social development, or poverty alleviation programs such as rice banks and loan credit. But they have had poor results. At the same time, most head monks do not go out and preach the *Dhamma* to the people, to secular students or teachers in the villages. They wait until the people come and invite them. In addition, the government does not help to pay teachers in *Pali* primary schools in the villages. All expenditures must be met by the head monks or pagodas who cannot always pay. So we can see that through lack of education in Buddhism, and little government involvement, it is very difficult for monks to become qualified to preach Buddhism or morality.

Even though the education of the monks has declined, people seem not to care much about it. Kim wrote that the concepts of *Nivarna*, *Kamma*, and merit-making, still play an important role in Cambodian culture. Annuska Derk (1998: 25-28) agreed with him and stated that the victims of trafficking thought that they had had bad experiences because they had done bad *Kamma* in previous lives. The religious ceremonies or rituals such as “sprinkling water (*Sroch Tik*)”, giving alms to the monks, etc., mark the end of their past experiences and promise a new beginning in a reintegrated state.

Although it appears that Buddhism could no longer function as before, Collins (1998) found in his field work in the Battambang and Siem Reap provinces that Buddhism could still be used to create community, and activities undertaken by pagodas were more successful than efforts by the UNDP at decentralization. Gyallay-Pap (Revised, 1991; 1996:8-13) also agreed that Khmer Buddhism could be restored and used to develop Cambodia. Moreover, the work of the Cambodian Institute of Human Rights (1997) promoted Buddhism as a way to encourage democracy in Cambodia. For example, it stated that “reinforcing the traditional Buddhist teachings as they apply to elections, and using the very respected Buddhist monks who are found in virtually every village, can help, along with other measures, to promote elections which are peaceful, honest, and free”.

Furthermore, the Annual National Meeting of the Monks (*Anusangha Vacchāra*) still occurs, which is used to check whether all decisions that the monk officials or the Ministry of Cult and Religion made for the village head monks have been implemented by them. However, what the researcher used primarily to compare his new findings are the two documents of the RUFA students and Choan and Sarin, from 1967, which contain a great deal of information already.

In the end, we can see that in the past there is ample evidence that pagodas could help create community. Since the destruction of Buddhist institutions, educated monks, and religious texts during the years of DK, the restriction on Buddhism in the PRK, the emergence of secular training for the young, the charges levied by local authorities for ordination, and the low level of monks' knowledge, pagodas have struggled to maintain and recreate community. In order to carry out the research, all this literature will act as a background to the examination of one pagoda, in order to find out whether that pagoda really is creating community today.

CHAPTER 3

TEP PRANAM PAGODA IN THE 1960's

This chapter draws on data collected in the 1960's by RUFA students (1969) and Choan and Sarin (1970). They describe the buildings, people in the pagoda, rituals, and the resident monks. The purpose of this chapter is to find out whether, and if so, how, all these elements played a crucial role in creating community, which can then be compared with data from the present. To preview the findings, the building served as a pagoda, a demonstration of Khmer pagoda architecture, which was considered as a fundamental part of Khmer heritage by the government and also by the head monk (during this period there emerged a style of architecture which marked a revolution in the Khmer pagoda form). It was also a place to display Khmer old paintings, a place to earn merit and listen to moral preaching, a meeting place for people to do public work and the resting place of their remains, a school for monks and accommodation for both monks and secular students. The role of the head monk ensured that the pagoda served as an educational, social, moral, and cultural centre for the community. He helped monks respect their disciplinary rules and high level of knowledge which made people trust and support the pagoda and its projects such as constructing buildings in the pagoda, schools, and digging ponds. He made the pagoda the representative of the people to protest against local authorities in the village's interest. Under his control, the pagoda also served as housing for poor secular students. The *Achar* functioned as a liaison between the people and the monks. They helped to teach the monks, to solve the problems of the villagers, and institutionalised both Buddhist and folk ceremonies. Elderly people who came to live and study the liturgical texts, morality, and meditation provided an important role as the cooks for all monks, *Achar* and some students. And the students also made use of the pagoda as their accommodation and a place to gain some basic knowledge of Buddhism. Moreover, the monks' section showed that the pagoda provided a good education for the poor sons of peasants. Finally, rituals helped unite the villagers without provoking conflict amongst the various beliefs.

3.1 Building¹⁸

All buildings in Tep Pranam pagoda were built to serve different purposes. The *Vihara* (see Appendix: Figure 1) served as a place for preaching and a place for celebrating large ceremonies. It was constructed on the site of a former sanctuary that was made of laterite. It was fairly small, measuring 22 metres by 11. The body of this *Vihara* was made of masonry and its roof was covered with enamelled tiles. The outside and inside columns were in wood, and its two triangular wooden tympana were elaborately decorated.

However, what was most attractive and unforgettable for visitors were the murals¹⁹ on the north, east and south walls. The subjects were the Buddhist cosmology, some episodes in the life of the Buddha and contemporary kings. The style of picture was classic, but the scene of the palace was executed with a sense of humour. Moreover they represented the people who were clothed in the fashion of the day (1910). This *Vihara* was considered a heritage building by the head monk and the government. Nevertheless, it was demolished by the people in 1969. The exact reason why they won is not known. According to Choan and Sarin, the people persuaded Ven. Oum Kev, the head monk, to destroy the *Vihara*, as they had wanted to build a new one like others in the same district from 1965 (this research was performed in 1967), but the head monk had not agreed and tried to explain to them,

“ il faut essayer de garder les oeuvres anciennes qui representent pour eux, les Khmers , un riche heritage, et je leur declare aussi que l’administration laique est du meme avis. Il faut donc trouver un moyen de restaurer ce monument”(1969: 132)

(The ancient works must be preserved; they represent us, the Khmers, a rich heritage, and I declared to them that the civil administration also agreed with this idea. Therefore, we should find the means to restore this *Vihara*.)

1 For more details, Please read RUFA students et al.1969. *Le monastere Bouddhique de Tep Pranam a Oudong*, in Bulletin L’ Ecole Francaise D’ extreme-Orient, Tome LVI, Paris. Page 29-56.

¹⁹ I could not access these paintings, however, I learnt that Madeline Gitaue, a famous French scholar who specialized in Khmer paintings, wrote and published about them. In one of her articles “Note sur quelques pieces en bronze recemment decouvertes a Vatt Deb Pranamy d’ Oudong,” in Arts Asiatiques tome XXIV 1971, P 149. She wrote, « en mars 1969 a Oudong on abattait le sanctuaire du monastere de deprepranamy, destruction qu’on ne saurait trop deplorer car ce brah vihar etait decore de peintures murales d’un indeniable interet. » (In March, 1969 at Oudong, they demolished the sanctuary of the Tep Pranam Pagoda, this destruction we regret so much because this *Vihara* was decorated with murals which were of undeniable interest)

But in a footnote to their research paper, they wrote that at the beginning of 1969 the people won and demolished the *Vihara*. There were other buildings too in this pagoda. There were 22 dormitories. Some of them were vast single storey buildings made of concrete, which had many rooms. These dormitories served as accommodation for the 80 monks and 128 secular students who came from poor families, and for five elderly people, as well as a storage place for materials. The pagoda also had other buildings, which were big and made of concrete too, primarily an eating hall (*Sala Chan*) for monks and a kitchen. Two *Pali* primary schools (see appendix: figure 5) served as schools for the monks. The library (*Hotrai*) (see appendix: figure 3) was a documentation centre as well as a storage place for artefacts, which the head monk collected from the people or had found during excavations in the pagoda. The Preaching Hall or hall of precept observation (*Dhamma Sala*) served as the place to preach to the people on morality and to earn merit, a meeting place for people to exchange their daily experiences or news, and a place for mutual help or collaboration in public works. However, one of those buildings was built in a very different style to that of Khmer pagodas. It had one floor and a terrace as its roof (p. 38). There were also 25 *Cetiya*s (*Cedeis*), which had different forms, to keep the remains of people who had supported the pagoda, both materially and in kind acts.

Therefore, the various roles of buildings helped to facilitate the work of the pagoda in creating community. If there were no such buildings, these moral, educational, social, and cultural roles would not survive. However, after the demolition and when new buildings were constructed not following Khmer-pagoda architecture, the pagoda's role in Khmer cultural heritage, according to the head monk and the government, seemed to change.

3.2 People in the Pagoda

3.2.1 Head Monk

The head monk of the Tep Pranam pagoda during the sixties, Oum Kev, was an influential figure in the community. His work helped make the pagoda prestigious and popular, both rich and poor in the village, and outside officials tended to support the pagoda and its projects.

He had a deep knowledge of the *Dhamma* and was very popular among the people in the area. For example, he was only 24 years old when he became head monk, through his knowledge and capacity; at that time he was living at another pagoda, Mahamontrey in Phnom Penh. People often came to visit him. He used the *Dhamma* to explain to them

during his preaching or in private conversation. His teaching was not only religious, but also linked in with daily life. For instance, before building secular schools²⁰ (see appendix: figure 7) he was opposed by some people, but they all agreed to the project after he explained that both secular and Buddhist schools were equally important. Like the wheels of a cart, if we want it to go straight, we need to make the two wheels move equally and together (Choan and Sarin, p.131).

He was popular in leading people in the construction of many buildings in the pagoda, Tep Pranam schools, digging ponds etc as described above. Many people came to *Tngai Sil* and hundreds of people came to the big ceremonies, including people from nearby villages, tradesmen, officials, the royal family²¹ including King Norodom Sihanouk²² and high ranking officials. They donated not only money to construct buildings, but also land and houses.²³

In order to make this pagoda a beautiful and well-ordered place, he grew many trees, and was responsible for all the property of the pagoda, assisted by one lay secretary, and the two sub head monks (*Kru Sout*). Money was kept in an iron coffer at his residence. He appointed monks as chiefs of residences (*Me Kut*) to control the other monks who lived in their residences. Two monks were appointed as the secular students' controllers²⁴. He also asked some elderly women (*Donchis*) who came and lived in the pagoda to prepare food for around 80 monks. The pagoda paid for all the daily expenditure on food.

When he wanted to start a new project, he always discussed it with other people, especially the head *Achar* (*Achar Thom*) in order to avoid any opposition when the work started. Therefore, because of the unity between the pagoda and people, when there was a shortage of money while constructing buildings in the pagoda he just postponed the work

²⁰ These schools still remain and are used nowadays. (see Appendix: Figure 8)

²¹ Princesses Khun Yeap, the widow of king Suramarit made the *Kathin* to this pagoda once and gave the pagoda money to build other buildings.

²² King Sihanouk gave money to build the Tep Pranam secondary school in 1962 and 1963, which was a pagoda project.

²³ According to one old man, his sister, after listening to the Ven. Oum Kev's preaching, wanted to make merit, but she did not have any money. Therefore, she offered some land, which was close to the pagoda to him. Mr Kim Seng at Oudong village offered his house in Phnom Penh, which was given by his mother as the heir, to the pagoda too.

²⁴ Here there are some problems, because the writers Choan and Sairn, wrote that the chief monk appointed two monks as 'controller des enfants de la pagoda', but he was maybe confused because on page 142 he wrote that it was noticeable that the children were often secular students who studied in the secular secondary or high school.

for a few weeks to celebrate the *Phka*²⁵ or preaching ceremony to collect the money and then continued his project without further problems.

Moreover his interest in education led to the creation of a *Pali* primary school (see Appendix: figure 5), in which there were many good teachers for the monks who were the sons of poor villagers. This action made the pagoda very famous as an educational centre where monks came from 10 provinces to study. Because of his knowledge and good management in making the monks respect their disciplinary rules, there were some elderly people who also came to stay and study the liturgical texts, meditation, and morality with the monks in the retreat season (p.52). As a result they also gained respect from the villagers as pious and educated persons. The head monk also encouraged the monks to teach illiterate people following King Norodom Sihanouk's declaration.²⁶

The head monk asked the other monks, under skilled guidance, to help construct buildings and secular schools. This work gave the monks skills as building constructors or carpenters, which they could use to earn a living after they disrobed²⁷ (see Appendix: figure 9).

He also created a museum at his residence in which there were many artefacts, most of them excavated from the pagoda²⁸, and some donated by the people. The reason that people trusted him and offered him the artefacts was that the Ven. Oum Kev paid attention to them. For example, when people were sick, he always went and visited them²⁹.

His kindness, good management, capacity, and knowledge made him very influential with villagers in the area and helped him in solving some of their problems, which the secular administrators could not do. For example, once the authorities wanted to build a school on land on which there was a forest and *Cedeis*³⁰, which belonged to the

²⁵ According to May Ebiara, *Phka* ceremony (literally "ceremony of flowers") is a festival to raise money for the temple. (p. 407)

²⁶ According to Yan Sam, the participation of the monks in eliminating illiteracy in Cambodia was rewarded with a Mohammed Raza Palevi Gold Medal from UNESCO in the late 1960's. (p.31)

²⁷ MaLon, one of the present pagoda committee, who previously was the right sub head monk (*Krou Sout Sdam*), became a skilled constructor and still earns his living by this skill too.

²⁸ According to Choan and Sarin, there was an excavation where monks found some ancient Buddha' statues in the old *Cedei*. (Mr Malon and one old woman who lived there before 1970 agreed with them too). And according to Madeline Giteau (1971), when they demolished the old *Vihara* in 1969 they discovered a cache of ancient bronzes. (p.149)

²⁹ According to the interview with Malon

³⁰ According to You Un, (1959:1439) the reason that Khmer people enshrined the ashes of their relatives in *Cedeis* was that in the past Khmer ancestors built *Cedeis* to celebrate Buddhism and because they were the owners, they asked for permission from the monks to place the ashes of their relatives in these *Cedeis*. And the next generation followed the practice of their ancestors. He added that, according to Buddhist manuscripts, *Cedeis* allow enshrining the ashes of only four kinds of persons namely, the King, Buddha,

villagers. The authorities wanted to destroy all the *Cedeis*, but the villagers did not agree to give the land to them. This conflict continuously postponed the work.

Finally, the authorities sent in tractors to remove all the *Cedeis*. The villagers went to Ven. Oum Kev and asked for his help. He went to the authorities and opposed the project. He declared that the authorities should not remove the *Cedeis*, but just remove the trees which surrounded them. After that, they all agreed, the people were happy, and the authorities could use the land to continue their work building schools.

As for the 128 students at the secular school who came from far away, the head monk allowed them to stay in the *Kutis* with the monks and some of them could also eat after the monks. If there was not enough accommodation for them, he allowed them to construct buildings themselves and in the evening he taught them basic Buddhism³¹.

But what was more interesting was that the head monk balanced modern Buddhism and traditional Buddhism. As described above, he required the monks to respect their disciplinary rules strictly, but he did not reject their participation in folk ceremonies (*Neak Ta*) in which at that time people believed. He worked for unity in the community.

In brief, the role of the head monk, Oum Kev, was important in helping the pagoda develop community. Because of his actions, the pagoda became an educational centre, a place for monks who were the sons of the poor, and somewhere to provide moral teaching and create the mutual help and collaboration needed to develop the pagoda and the community. It became the storage place of artefacts. Moreover, it helped to eliminate local illiteracy. As a result, his actions were considered by Choan and Sarin as a good model for head monks in Cambodia.

3.2.2 Achar

Tep Pranam pagoda had two *Achars*. They served as a liaison between the people and the monks. The *Achar Thom* at first received his instructions and advice from his uncle who had been the former head monk of Tep Pranam pagoda. He specialized in the *Dhamma* and the preparation of Buddhist religious ceremonies or rites. He was old and lived far from the pagoda, so he came only on *Tngai Sil*, 4 days per month. He would also come if the head monk wanted to discuss things with him or there were major ceremonies

Paccekebuddha, and *Arahant*. Therefore, in order not to break this custom, Khmer Buddhists enshrined Buddha statues in each *Cedeis*.

³¹interview with Malon

such as *Phka*, *Kathin* etc. He led the people in chanting the liturgical texts and asked them to support the pagoda and the monks' education. During the pagoda ceremonies, he mixed with people who came from far away and was responsible for their refreshments.

He was invited to preside over folk ceremonies. For instance, in order to honour the guardian spirits, people invited him to preside over their rituals. However, he was not a healer, prophet or magician. He also separated himself from political roles and did not interfere in the village's administration.

As for the second *Achar* (*Achar Rong*) who was the brother in law of the *Achar Thom*, he also specialized in the *Dhamma*. He had a certificate from the *Pali* High School. He taught at the Tep Pranam *Pali* primary school, giving lessons in many subjects such as *Pali* language, history and geography of Southeast Asia, hygiene, civic instruction etc. At the beginning he did not receive a salary but later he received 300 riels per month from the government. He also took the place of *Achar Thom*, when he was absent, to lead the people in making merit through funding or spiritual support. His other role was to help to solve conflicts between people or between monks. Moreover, he also received high-status people or religious persons who came to visit the pagoda. Like the *Achar Thom*, he was not a healer, prophet, or magician.

In short, the role of the *Achar* promoted community. They encouraged good relationships with the villagers in order to build trust in the pagoda so that they could help support it or its projects. Moreover, they also helped to preside over folk ceremonies without stating that it was outside or inside Buddhist belief; and so encouraged unity in the community. They helped to solve conflicts between monks, which could spoil the reputation of the pagoda; and they solved conflicts between the people more effectively than the local authorities, because they were considered to be pious old men (*Chās Tom*).

3.2.3 Elderly people³²

In the year that the RUFA students did their research, there were nine elderly people, seven women (*Donchi*), and two men (*Tachi*). They studied the liturgical texts, morality, and meditation in the retreat season with the monks. They all observed the 10 precepts strictly. They shaved their heads and wore white clothes. They did not have an

³²It should be noted that in the RUFA students' research, this point was observed by two different students. The first student wrote about three elderly women, whom he considered *Bhikkhunis* because they acted as *Bhikkhunis* and studied the *Dhamma* with the monks. They lived at the North West end of the pagoda. The second student gave similar information but it was more detailed than the first student and he did not state that the elderly women were *Bhikkhunis*. In Cambodia they could not be *Bhikkhunis*. Therefore, I used the information from the second student.

evening meal and they practiced the *Samana Kamathana*. Among them, the three elderly women had another role as cooks and preparers of food for the monks, and were sometimes helped by another woman. In general the main reason for them becoming *Donchi* was to spend the evening of their life in a religious environment to gain merit while helping to take care of the monks. However, their work was considered very important, because if not for them, the great number of the monks, some students, and *Achar* would not have enough food to eat. They would have had difficulty in studying and other vital work. Moreover, what surprised the RUFA students was that of the nine elderly people, four elderly women returned home to function as farmers or housewives again. Therefore, they were able to transmit moral teaching to their family too.

The two old men often worked as cleaners or maintainers of the pagoda. The reason that all the elderly decided to come and study in this pagoda was because they thought that the monks were faithful in their respect for their disciplinary rules. Moreover, both the elderly people and the other laity could receive the moral preaching from the monks.

Finally, the pagoda helped to provide elderly people with moral teaching, especially to elderly women who played an important role in taking care of the monks, which freed them to work with the community. Moreover, some elderly women themselves could be the mentors of morality to their family after they returned home.

3.2.4 Secular Students

There were 128 secular students in Tep Pranam pagoda. This showed the importance of the pagoda in helping poorer students. The students stayed at the pagoda without payment. The head monk placed them in the *Kutis*. If there was not enough accommodation, they could build a place for themselves, which cost from 500 riels to 1000 riels. But there were only 9 students who lived in the shelters because the students preferred to live in the *Kutis* with the monks. In addition, in the evenings the head monk taught them basic Buddhism.³³

Because of the great numbers of students, the pagoda could only provide food for some of them. Most of them had to buy food and cook it themselves. Some students bought food in the shops near the pagoda. But most of them bought what they needed at the Oudong market and cooked it for themselves. They ate their food together or

³³ interview with Malon.

individually. However, during the big ceremonies in the pagoda they had a lot of food and sweets donated by visitors.

The reason that they came to live in this pagoda was that in their villages there were no schools after primary school, and they did not have the money to pay for rent, so the pagoda was a comfortable place, which had pleasant facilities for them. In return they all had to do some jobs such as cleaning and maintaining the pagoda, and buying food for the elderly women to prepare for the monks.

The presence of the 128 students seems to show that the pagoda helped to forge a wider community, because it provided a place for a great number of poor students and food for some students, who lived far away, for many years, which reduced the financial burden on their parents. If there had been no pagoda, many of the students would not have been able to continue their studies. Moreover, it also helped to give them a basic knowledge of Buddhist doctrine and a model of behaviour for the future.

3.3 The Monks

This section includes information from the documents of Choan and Sarin. Only key information was used which could be compared with new data. These sections include the backgrounds of the monks, their social status, when the monks became pagoda boys, the number of children in the family, place of ordination, their role, interest in key subjects, the reason to choose Tep Pranam pagoda, if they wanted to remain as monks for life, and when they planned to disrobe. The sample size was 57 monks.

Tep Pranam pagoda played a crucial role in providing a good education to the sons of the poor, which helped them to become qualified to preach to the people. After they disrobed they could use what they had learnt to lead their lives in righteous ways in society.

Because of its reputation and good teaching, there were many monks who came from 10 provinces, 15 from Kandal, 13 from Kompong Speu, 11 from Kompong Chnnang, 5 from Pursat, 4 from Kompong Cham, 3 from Kompot, 3 from Battambang, 1 from Siem Reap, 1 from Takeo and 1 from Prey Veng. But among them, the three provinces, Kandal, Kompong Chnnang, and Kampong Speu which were near the pagoda provided more monks than other provinces.

Table 3.1 Social Background of the Monks

Job	Number
Peasants	54
Chamkar (Farmer)	1
Chamkar and Peasant	1
Extractor of palm juice	1

Table 3.2 Number of Children in Family

Number of Children	Number of Families	Total Children
10 children	1	10 X 1 = 10
9	3	9 X 3 = 27
8	8	8 X 8 = 64
7	11	7 X 11 = 77
6	15	6 X 15 = 90
5	5	5 X 5 = 25
4	7	4 X 7 = 28
3	5	3 X 5 = 15
2	0	2 X 0 = 0
1	2	1 X 2 = 2
Total= 338		

This pagoda in the 1960s became a centre for the development of human resources among the sons of poor peasants. For example, the monks of Choan and Sarin's sample show that they were all the sons of peasants, except three: one was the son of a farmer and a peasant, another was the son of a farmer, the last was the son of an extractor of palm juice.

Apart from these documents, Sunnary added more information to the table 3.1 that the peasants were more conservative than in urban areas. They sent their sons to be ordained as monks for several years. They were all very proud because they thought that their monk sons could transfer merit to them. After they disrobed, the monks found that it was easy to find wives, and the skills such as carpentry or construction that they had studied while being monks could be used to earn a living (see also Sam, 1987). In addition, in 1962 the diplomas issued by the Buddhist schools and the diplomas issued by secular schools were officially recognized as equal. These factors promoted an increasing number of ordinations after a drop in ordinations in the middle of the century³⁴. However, according to Dam Choeun, there were two other reasons to send one's sons to the pagoda.

³⁴According to Sam (1987:23) in the 50's and 60's, the numbers of monks reduced if compared with the general population, although the absolute numbers in 1967 had increased.

Firstly, there was a problem of demographics. There were increasing numbers of children. As seen in the Table 3.2 there was on average six children in each family, which was a big pressure on poor families. Therefore, they sent sons to the pagoda for practical reasons such as to stop land disputes among the children and the landholdings reducing in size. Secondly, they did not have the ability to send all their children to secular schools because of the high expenditure on study material, clothes etc. For example, when each student entered high school, they had to pay around 1000 to 4000 riels to help construct school buildings, and buy school furniture. Moreover, they had to spend more money on books, notebooks, other supplies, and a school uniform as well as the uniform of the Khmer Young Royalist (*Member de Jeunesse Royalist Khmère*), which was a big financial outlay for them.³⁵ Therefore, a better way for them was to send some of their children to secular schools and some to the pagoda where they could get free meals, clothes, and books, as well as accommodation.

Table 3.3 Age of Becoming a Pagoda Boy³⁶

Age	Number of Pagoda Boys	Age	Number of Pagoda Boys
6years old	1	14	4
8	3	15	7
9	3	16	4
10	6	17	5
12	6	18	1
13	6	19	1

According to Indochinese Theravada Buddhism, people sent their sons to live as pagoda boys for some years before they ordained as monks. There they received free teaching, food, and accommodation. But they had to give service to the pagoda. For instance, they had to clean the yard, draw water, and hold the container for alms giving to the monks. Since the advent of secular schools in Cambodia, there were two groups of boys in the pagoda. The first was the young boys who came to study Buddhist doctrine for some years and then became ordained as monks; the other was the group of students who came to stay at the pagoda but who studied at secular schools³⁷. In the 1960s, of the 57 monks who lived in Tep Pranam pagoda aged 15 years old or more, most had been

³⁵We learnt from the schoolboys at Tep Pranam pagoda that they had 360 riels per month to spend on food.

³⁶ In the Choan and Sarin' study, there was one monk who responded that he was a pagoda boy when he was 3 years old, but Choan and Sarin rejected this response because they thought that it was unlikely.

³⁷In Tep Pranam pagoda, the researchers at that time noticed that most of the boys who came to live at the pagoda were secular students only.

pagoda boys for a short period only. Of the sample, one monk was a pagoda boy for only a month, and six of them had not been pagoda boys at all, and two did not respond. This indicated apparently that at that time there was a new movement that had evolved from tradition, which had required young men to come and live as pagoda boys for some years, to a new trend where they could ordain as monks without being pagoda boys first. Moreover, the requirement of the commune leaders to pose questions about *Dhamma Vinaya*³⁸ before ordination³⁹ did not happen in some areas of Cambodia at that time.

Table 3.4 Place of Ordination

Places	Number
Pagoda of their village	13
Pagoda where they were pagoda boys	11
Different pagoda from the one where they become pagoda boy	3
Tep Pranam pagoda	24

Most peasant families chose to ordain their children at the pagoda which was in or near their birthplace because it was an important ceremony in which family, friends, and relatives of the future monk had to join, and they did not have much money to spend on travelling to distant pagodas far from their village.

Among the 57 monks, seven served as cleaners, 2 controllers, 1 teacher, and 1 manual worker. The other 30 monks, or three quarters of them, responded that they did not do any work, except fulfilling their study and religious roles, because all the work such as cleaning and maintenance of the pagoda was done by secular students who lived in the pagoda. Normally in Buddhist countries, cleaning the pagoda grounds is part of the normal duties for monks and is not considered as a special ‘role’. However, the RUFA students clearly identified such work as a special role (*function particuliere*) and they stated that they were not sure whether only 7 monks above performed this task everyday, or there was a schedule for other student monks too to work in turn. Although Choan and Sarin claimed that not many monks worked, we found currently that many monks were helping to construct buildings in the pagoda including secular schools.

³⁸ Vinaya means Monk’s disciplinary rules

³⁹ According to Khlot, before and a short time after Cambodia gained independence from the French, those who wanted to ordain as monks had to live firstly in the pagoda for many months to study the *Dhamma Vinaya*. Then if they thought that they knew the *Dhamma Vinaya* well enough, they had to take a test with the commune leader before they could be ordained as monks. If the commune leader found that they knew enough they would issue a permission letter called *Padenhien*

As for interest in their studies, they seemed to enjoy the study of Buddhism much more than other subjects such as mathematics etc. Fifty-four liked to study *Pali*, 45 the *Vinaya*, and 38 the *Dhamma*, with only 21 enjoying other subjects. This shows that they all valued studying *Pali*, which was the most important subject at Tep Pranam pagoda. And the *Vinaya* was the second most important subject among them because the monks believed that those who knew the *Vinaya* always gained the respect of the people.

Table 3.5 shows that some students regarded Tep Pranam pagoda as an important centre for the teaching of *Pali* language, or the teaching of *Pali* in this pagoda was outstanding or they may have wanted to study *Pali* with a particular famous teacher.

Table 3.5 Reason to Choose Tep Pranam Pagoda

Response	Number
A) The proximity to their birth place	2
B) Quality of teaching	
-Tep Pranam has one school	1
-continue my study	22
-continue to study Buddhism	5
-continue to study <i>Pali</i>	13
-study the religious texts	
(<i>Pariyatta Dhamma</i>)	4
-study the doctrine (<i>Dhamma</i>)	2
-to study the disciplinary rules (<i>Vinaya</i>)	6
-Tep Pranam is an important educational centre	3
-Tep Pranam is a big centre for teaching <i>Pali</i>	3
-Teaching <i>Pali</i> in this pagoda is outstanding	1
-Tep Pranam made surprising progress	1
-Tep Pranam is the educational centre which made great progress in teaching secular subjects and Buddhism	1
-Tep Pranam is very famous for its teaching	2
-Tep Pranam has a lot of excellent students	1
-Tep Pranam has good teachers	2
-Continue my study near a good teacher who teaches well	1
-To pursue my <i>Pali</i> study near a famous teacher	1
C) Quality of the chief monk	
-The head monk has good sense and maintains vigilance towards all religious persons who stay at the pagoda	1
-I like his personality very much	1
-The head monk arranges and controls everything very well	1
-The head monk is a person with a good heart	1
-The head monk is very gentle and friendly	1
D) Quality of the monastery	
-It feels very good	1

In table 3.5 it is clearly demonstrated that they all thought that Tep Pranam pagoda had high quality teaching and the head monk was a very respectful, friendly, and educated man.

Table 3.6 Remain as Monks for Life?

Response	Number
No	34
Yes	4
Not decided yet	16
Don't want to talk about it	1
No response	2

Most monks did not intend to remain in the monkhood for the rest of their lives. They ordained only in order to study⁴⁰. For example, there were only 4 monks who definitely wanted to remain so for their whole lives.

Table 3.7 When Are You Planning to Disrobe?

Response	Number
Never	4
Not decided yet	36
Don't want to talk about it	1
In one or two year more	3
In four or five year more	9
After getting diploma (Buddhist high school or University)	3
No response	1

According to Table 3.7, most had not decided when to leave the monkhood, but those who had made a decision usually wanted to stay for 4,5 years to finish their studies before they disrobed.

⁴⁰ According to Francois Martini (1994), from 1949 he had noted that monks in Cambodia did not want to remain ordained for life. They wanted to be monks for one to three years only.

Table 3.8 After Disrobing, what Kind of Job do You want to do?

Job	Number
Peasants	34
Shopkeeper	5
Not decided yet	2
No response	15
Civil servant	1
Deputy	1

When they disrobed, most of them did not expect to use their knowledge to gain a higher status in society: for example 34 monks wanted to be peasants and 5 monks wanted to be small businessmen, 1 wanted to be an official, and another wanted to be a deputy.

In sum, the pagoda was an educational centre for monks who were the sons of peasants who could not afford to send them to study in secular schools. Pagodas tried to provide good, famous teachers for the monks to become qualified in preaching the morality or Buddhism to the people. The pagoda turned them into a good resource for eliminating illiteracy amongst the villagers. As a result, the participation of monks from this pagoda, as well as other pagodas in eliminating illiteracy amongst Cambodian people helped the government conserve its budget and also gained a Mohammed Raza Palevi gold medal from UNESCO in 1969. However, most of the monks wanted to return to a peasant life after disrobing, where they could use their knowledge to lead their lives righteously and help to pass on their knowledge to their children.

3.4 Ritual

Tep Pranam was the shelter for two guardian spirits (*Neak Ta*), which have been part of the Khmer belief system for thousand of years. This belief in *Neak ta* was thought by the people to help the village prosper if they celebrated the rituals well, but the village would be ruined if they did not keep them. Tep Pranam pagoda never rejected or opposed this belief, which might sow disunity in the community. But it took the belief under its control and the monks and *Achar* became important persons in legitimising it.

The first guardian spirit was called *Neak Ta Kong* or *Neak Ta Tep*, the female *Neak Ta* was called *Trachoeul Doh Kral*.

Neak Ta Tep sheltered in a shrine under the *Bodhi* Tree. The people who passed this place had to show him respect and make offerings to him such as fruit, flowers, and

incense. If not he would make them sick. *Trachoeul Doh Kral* was placed in front of the office of the Director of Tep Pranam high school. This spirit had the power to make people sick if they looked down on her, such as touching her bust or saying rude words to her, and would bring success to those who respected her. For example the football team always went to worship her before they had a game.

People respected the two *Neak Tas* because they believed that the spirits had supernatural powers, which helped to gain fulfilment of their wishes or give them happiness, but the spirits would make them ill if they broke a promise or did not respect them properly. Therefore, during the final day of the Khmer New year, the villagers played music in the afternoon to them and in the evening the monks recited the *Mantra* to the spirits in the *Vihara*. Then the people piled up a small sand mountain and made offerings to the monks. They did this every year because they thought that if they did not, there would be sickness or other trouble in the village. Moreover, when there was an epidemic in the village they performed another ritual to ask the guardian spirits to help them. And when there was drought there was yet another ceremony where they brought the two guardian spirits outside to make rain. They played music and poured water over them. There was another spirit, named *Kaccayana Thera (Preah Kam Chay)* who was considered to have supernatural powers to attract girls, and his picture helped those who wore it to be invulnerable. However, according to the RUFA students the guardian spirits had lost a lot of their natural powers by this time, though people still made offerings to them.

So Tep Pranam did not reject the beliefs in *Neak Ta*. But it used these beliefs to make the pagoda more popular amongst the people. Every year they came to the pagoda to celebrate these ceremonies and the *Achar* and the monks presided over them and the villagers' offerings. Moreover, ritual helped to foster unity among the villagers because they celebrated it together, with the same purpose of protecting them from troubles or epidemics, and making them more prosperous.

Conclusion

Tep Pranam pagoda helped to create community through the work of its head monk, *Achar*, elderly persons, and students, plus its monks, its rituals, and buildings. The head monk was a very important person to encourage this process. He helped to create a *Pali* primary school with good teachers for the monks so that they could preach to the people. He helped to lead people in many public works such as building secular schools.

He helped to collect and preserve artifacts from the villagers. He could solve conflicts between the villagers and the authorities effectively and made the pagoda available as accommodation for poor students.

Achar also contributed to the role of the pagoda too. They functioned as a liaison between the people and the monks. They helped to lead the village in their ceremonies- both Buddhist and folk. And they helped to solve conflict also.

The pagoda provided elderly people and the laity with moral guidance, through which some elderly women could teach their children when they returned to their daily lives.

The presence of a large number of students from poor families showed that the pagoda played a most important role in offering accommodation to them, and some of them could eat there also. If there had been no pagoda, they would probably not have place to stay and continue their study at all. It also shows that the pagoda helped to reduce the problem of abandonment of study by the poor and helped to reduce their reliance on government funds. All students who lived at the pagoda received at least some basic Buddhism, which would teach them how to live in a righteous way.

Moreover, it was clear that the pagoda helped to provide good teachers and an education for the monks. It helped to improve the ability of the monks to preach to the people. Over time, these monks became more effective teachers for the people to read and write than secular teachers, at little cost to the government. When they disrobed, however, most of them wanted to return to the peasant life, where they could use their knowledge to lead better lives and pass this learning on to their children, which would build a strong framework of morality in the society.

As for the rituals of the *Neak Ta* in the pagoda, it was shown that the pagoda helped to maintain these beliefs to unify the community. It did not want to provoke conflict between pure Buddhism and more traditional beliefs. But it helped to make the monks respect their disciplinary rules strictly, and this was praised by the elderly, especially when the old people's participation in folk ceremonies was not criticised. In addition, the monks and *Achar* used these ceremonies to popularise these folk beliefs. In return, they became well respected and received offerings and other support from the villagers. These actions could be considered as a unifying process, which allowed everybody to believe what they wanted, while worshipping together.

Therefore, in viewing the combined roles of these elements of pagoda life, Tep Pranam pagoda was indeed the centre of its community.

CHAPTER 4

TEP PRANAM PAGODA IN 2003-2004

As seen in Chapter 3, the educational level of the monks and the respect given them by the people were important in creating community. Because educated lay people, monks, and Buddhist texts were destroyed during the DK era, and many people, especially young persons, no longer have religious training, there is a question as to whether pagodas in the 21st century can still create community. In order to answer this question, research was done at Tep Pranam pagoda in 2003-2004 to compare the current data with the results of research in the sixties to assess changes and continuities.

Since the 1970's, following the overthrow of the King, Cambodia has been through many episodes of war. Tep Pranam pagoda and its nearby areas were affected by fighting between Viet Cong (*Yeak Kon*), communist Vietnamese soldiers and the soldiers of the Lon Nol's government from 1971. Lon Nol's government armies used Tep Pranam High School, close to Tep Pranam pagoda, as a warehouse for guns, ammunition, and as a position for cannon, which they fired from that place. They were often attacked by guerrillas; for example, the Viet Cong fired on a school building and killed 11 commandos living inside it on 18 March 1973⁴¹. One woman who at that time had just had a baby told that there was an artillery shell shot into the school. It did not explode, but it made a bad smell, which made her sick (*Tous*). During the fighting in 1971-1973, people used the pagoda as a refuge with their animals. Although the pagoda was protected by the Geneva Conventions, the fighting caused damage to the buildings and killed people and animals inside.⁴²

When the Khmer Rouge entered this area in 1973, the people including Ven. Oum Kev, the head monk, fled to other areas.⁴³ Tep Pranam pagoda was left with the corpses of people and animals inside. Tep Pranam High School was used as a hospital and the football field was used as a cemetery. Unfortunately, in 1977, all the buildings of the pagoda were destroyed because the masonry was needed to pave the road to Phnom Penh⁴⁴. After 1979 only fragments of the stone work and the foundation of the *Vihara*

⁴¹ Interview with the Director of the Tep Pranam high school

⁴² Interview with an old woman.

⁴³ Malon stated that he tried to ask other people about Ven. Oum Kev's whereabouts but he was told that he had probably been killed in 1973.

⁴⁴ Before it had a bridge but in the civil war this was destroyed

were left. The Vietnamese army used the pagoda as a military position and the Tep Pranam High School as a hospital⁴⁵.

This pagoda was abandoned and not rebuilt. Some of its land was taken by the people to build their houses on⁴⁶. In 1984 Ven. Oum Tit, the brother of Ven. Oum Kev, who was the head monk of Mahamontrey pagoda in Phnom Penh went to meet Malon who used to be his former student and was the right sub-head monk (*Krusout Sdam*) in Tep Pranam pagoda. They discussed the rebuilding of a shelter for a fragment of the Buddha statue. Malon went to ask the area governor to discuss with the Vietnamese army whether they would allow rebuilding. Fifteen days later, the area governor gave his permission. As a result, Malon contacted his former students to help build one small shelter, called *Ponli*.

In 1985, there was a 70 year-old man, named Kan, a tricycle maker, who decided to ordain as a novice. Malon invited him to stay in a hut at the Tep Pranam pagoda. Since that time Ven. Kan and Malon together tried to persuade people, especially the former students, to donate money or wooden pillars to build a dining hall for the monks. It took four years to finish this work⁴⁷. During that time the pagoda, as well as other pagodas in Cambodia, were strictly controlled by the government. It did not allow people to ordain as monks before the age of 50. It also created a committee called the Village-Commune Front (*Ranase Bhum Khum*) to control the pagodas. When the monks were invited by the people to recite the liturgical text, or when there was a ceremony, they had to tell the Front who would take some portion of the money in order to help rebuild the nation. According to *Achar* of this pagoda, they also asked the pagoda to donate beds, mosquito nets, blankets, mats, white cotton sheets, plates and pots for the hospital and asked him to go into the street and persuade people to donate money to build roads and schools. In 1989 the government removed its restrictions on Buddhism⁴⁸. For example, in 1994 Mrs

⁴⁵ Interview with Malon and the Director of Tep Pranam High School.

⁴⁶ According to Malon, the place where they enshrined the Buddha' statue in the dining hall was the former toilet. And the reason that they got their land back was because the people moved to live elsewhere and the pagoda bought the land back. He complained that the village leader had not helped explain to the people that they should return the land to the pagoda because the leader thought that the pagoda only needed a small section of land anyway.

⁴⁷ According to Malon, it was difficult to convince the people at that time, because they no longer believed in Buddhism and they were also poor. In addition, Ven. Oum Tit who had tried to ask for funds from people in Phnom Penh also had problems, because Ven. Tep Vong examined the accounts strictly and came to Tep Pranam pagoda, because he suspected that Ven Oum Tit might have stolen money to build Tep Pranam pagoda.

⁴⁸ According to Keyes, major changes began to take place in Cambodia with regard to religion in 1988-89. During the process of political reform that would eventually lead to competing political parties, the PRK (renamed the State of Cambodia (SOC) in 1989), was trying to shed its communist linkages. (p. 1)

Leang⁴⁹ and her relatives who lived in France were able to donate funds to finish the dining hall.

Because of the destruction of the pagoda, the killing of educated monks during the DK era, and the restrictions of the PRK government on Buddhism, the pagoda seems to be finding it hard to rebuild either its buildings or its sense of community in the village.

4.1 Buildings

The *Vihara* of Tep Pranam pagoda is not yet finished, but it is a big and tall building. Its height is 10.03 metres (excluding the roof), 33 metres long, and 16 metres wide (see Appendix: Figure 2). This *Vihara* replaced the former *Vihara*⁵⁰, which was destroyed because it was too small to hold everyone who came to the pagoda, and the wooden columns of the roof had been destroyed by insects. According to Malon, up till now this building and the Buddha's statue has cost \$US44,000⁵¹. He decided to build a big *Vihara* based on the donations received, so that the donors could see what the pagoda had done with their money and could not accuse him and his colleagues of stealing it.⁵² Such construction also affected the education of the monks. This year he could only open the first and third grades of the *Pali* primary school, because he has to reduce the expenditure on food for the monks. Rice that the monks received in far villages as alms⁵³ was sold to build the *Vihara* if it was surplus to immediate requirements. Moreover, due to the irregular receipt of money for the pagoda, he could only hire unskilled constructors. In other words, when the pagoda has money, it can hire them; if not it has to stop and wait until the money comes from big ceremonies like *Kathin*.

The dining hall was built with wooden pillars inside and concrete pillars outside. Its roof is tiled, but the frontage is zinc. It contains one big statue and other small ones. The area behind the altar was used by poor people to put the ashes of their relatives, if they did not have enough money to build a *Cedei*. Next to the Statue of the Buddha, there is a coffin, in which resides the corpse of the former head monk. There is a mirror

⁴⁹ She lives near the pagoda and is a member of the pagoda committee.

⁵⁰ Its roof was tiled and it had wooden columns. Its height was 4.5 metres; its length 19 metres; its width 9 metres.

⁵¹ Most of the money comes from overseas Khmer people who used to live in or were ordained as monks in the 1960s and Malon hopes that this year, his relative in USA and Malaya will make the *Kathin* to his pagoda and that they will receive \$US10,000 to finish the *Vihara*.

⁵² This statement fits with the research by William Collins (1998). He interviewed one old man (*Chas Tom*) in Banan, Battambang province. This man told him that he has to overcome people's suspicions by showing evidence to the villagers (Page: 31) Moreover, an old man in Siem Riep told him, "In order to get people to trust you with their money, you have to get something done with it that they can see with their own eyes..."

⁵³ Monks in this pagoda are invited to remote villages to ask for rice from villagers yearly.

cupboard, where the *Tripitakas* are placed, but it is locked and monks cannot open it to access them. The hall has four rooms. Of these, three serve as *Kutis*; another is a warehouse for utensils. The utensils look dirty. They use them only for large ceremonies or when people come to borrow them for their own ceremonies when they have no money to hire utensils themselves. This building serves as a place for ceremony celebrations and taking of the precepts by the laity.

The residence for the head monk was built by Mrs Leang and her family. There are two rooms. The front one is for the head monk and the second for another monk. The second room is dark and looked unhygienic with many mosquitoes.

There are four *Kutis* made of wood, the first is for an old lady who came to live in this pagoda as a cook. She rarely sleeps there at night; usually sleeping in the nearby house of a villager. The second was used by one of the monks. But he was apparently not a good man, so the pagoda asked him to leave. And now a coffin is placed there. The third one is for monks and pagoda boys. It also looks dirty. The fourth one is for a cook.

There is a kitchen where four older women cook food for monks. It also serves as a warehouse for wood and utensils.

-Hotrai⁵⁴: made of concrete. (see Appendix: Figure 4) This library is not functioning at present. Many books were lost and the rest were locked up in a mirror-cupboard⁵⁵ (see Appendix: Figure 11). It is also dirty. It serves as a sleeping room for the monks and the secular students, together with their clothes and books. In this building there are some statues of the Buddha, and pictures of deceased people. Behind the altar are placed the ashes of their relatives⁵⁶.

-*Sala Pali Rong*: this is the *Pali* primary school in which there are three classes (see Appendix: Figure 6). It was built by people nearby and a Malaysian man. It was made of concrete and it has a terrace as its roof.

There is one wooden dormitory, which used to serve as a sleeping place for the monks but now is for high school students. It is a mess and looks ruined. Another hut was built by the students with their own money. It cost 50,000 riels, and the cabin of a broken down van in which a student lives also looks dirty.

⁵⁴ Mrs Leang and her family participated in constructing this building too. It is used as a branch of the library of the Buddhist Institute.

⁵⁵ I saw one monk using a small knife to open it. Maybe he was interested in reading those books.

⁵⁶ During the New Year, I saw some people came to pay their respects and ask to check whether the ashes still remain.

There is one hut, which serves as the shelter for the corpse cart. Previously, this cart had an engine, but it broke down and now they must push or pull it when it carries a corpse. When there is a death the villagers come to borrow it. Some people do not pay for this service, some give about 3,000 riels, and some give food to the monks instead.

There is a concrete crematorium, which many people use to burn corpses⁵⁷. There are three more buildings, two of which serve as sleeping places for monks.

There are also many *Cedeis*. They take many different forms. But there are two basic kinds: one is the *Cedei* that contains the ashes of those considered to be Khmer, and the other contains bones considered as Sino-Khmer. However, both kinds are still in the Khmer style and have Buddha statues in the *Cedei*. There is also a pond, which is surrounded by concrete.

In the yard of the pagoda, there are fruit trees such as mango, banana, jackfruit, pineapple, coconut palms, milk trees etc. These trees are targets for local criminals who steal the fruit (such as coconuts) to eat or mix with wine and attempt to assault the monks when they try to ban them from the pagoda. When the monks accuse them, they curse the monks with “*Ā Tra Ngol*”⁵⁸, when did you plant it?” and use knives to cut down many banana trees. Malon told that they also steal clothes from the students, their shoes or money⁵⁹, cut the iron bars (see Appendix: Figure 13) and the door of the *Cedeis* and had even cut iron off the *Vihara* when its price had risen to 700 riels per kilo. They also destroyed the concrete lion in front of a *Cedei*. The young monks and high school students are frightened of them. Monks keep slingshots (*Chum Peam*) under their beds to protect themselves against gangsters. The criminals had also come into the pagoda, cut the lock of the toilet and defecated without cleaning it. The monks, the students, *Achar*, pagoda committee, and elderly women stated that gangsters smoke addictive drugs (*Yama*) in the *Vihara*. They play football there also or play *Chhuh Vong*⁶⁰ in the yard of the *Cedei* too. Another time one gangster was drunk and he attempted to rape a young mentally ill girl near the crematorium. The students and the monks at first felt afraid when they heard the girl crying. They thought that it was the sound of a ghost but after they all

⁵⁷ During my visiting in *Visakha Buja*’s day I saw one cremation. However, in Cambodia there is a prohibition on cremation on a holyday ceremony and Tuesday, but at that time was Monday, so they could not wait until Wednesday, they had to choose the holyday ceremony. The *Achar Yogi* serves as the corpse burner and rite preparer. He received 30000riel of which he had spent nearly 5000riels to buy gasoline (two litres), but on that day his money was stolen.

⁵⁸ *Ā* is a suffix and is a rude word if the young call the older or respected person, *Trangol* means a bold person

⁵⁹ In the pagoda the researcher was told to be careful with his bicycle and other property too.

⁶⁰ *Chhuh Vong* means to kick the shoes to hit money out of a rectangle traced on the ground.

gathered they went there together. The gangster ran away⁶¹. However, when they brought all these matters to the attention of the police, nothing was done. They were disappointed. One of the committee is a village leader who had been cursed by the gangsters as a Vietnamese puppet (*A Yang Yaun*).

The environment outside the pagoda should be noted too; the house opposite the pagoda is a restaurant in which they show pornographic films. The Director of the high school asked the police to intervene but nothing happened because the owner of the restaurant is also a policeman. The two sisters of the owner of the restaurant, one of whom is a teacher at Tep Pranam High School, used to come and ask Malon to help give her advice, but he now refuses to help them⁶². Moreover, Malon also said that around the pagoda there were many such establishments. The researcher observed that there were also video games and snooker tables. The students also like to play volleyball. And one of the volleyball courts near the pagoda serves as a place for martial arts training. One elderly woman stated that the students and the gangsters used to chase and slash each other in the village⁶³. In other cases the pagoda was used as a place for villagers to keep cows (sometimes pigs) in the afternoon (see Appendix: Figure 12). Although there were some prohibitions on this from the head monk, *Achar*, pagoda committees, and elderly women, these prohibitions did not work and made the villagers angry. Now the villagers allow their animals to roam freely because the *Achar* or head monk are too tired to stop them.

The buildings do not seem to help to create much of a community. The *Vihara*, which is the place to perform ceremonies or preaching is not yet finished and has cost a lot of money. Some buildings do not look like Khmer pagodas, but are dirty, and cannot provide reasonable accommodation for students.

⁶¹ The students at the pagoda know this man well.

⁶² According to him when the two sisters asked him to help he replied, “ why do you not ask your uncle (an *Achar* in another pagoda) to give advice to your brother?”. They replied that he did not listen to the *Achar*, so Malon told them if your brother does not listen to the *Achar*, who is his relative, how I can help?

⁶³ From the researcher’s experience, in the village near this area there are now at least 20 Karaoke bars and brothels, since the development of the Oudong Mountain. The daughters of the poor are sent to work there. Some sell their virginity for \$US350 to \$US400. One of the karaoke owners stated that rich people including officials from Phnom Penh often come and ask for this service. Moreover, there is a music group in the village, where there is often conflict or fighting amongst the criminals.

4.2 People in the pagoda

4.2.1 Head Monk

The head monk performs few jobs at the pagoda. He was a monk prior to DK then disrobed and married, but during DK his wife died. After DK, he lived with his children, then decided to ordain as a monk. After the head monk of the Tep Pranam pagoda died, he was invited from his own pagoda to be the head monk. During my visit, the researcher observed him resting in his hammock blowing the mosquitoes and flies away. The monks stated that he was sick. According to Malon, the elderly women, the students, and the monks, he is an aggressive person. He curses whoever frees their cows or pigs into the pagoda. He curses the elderly women who tear his banana leaves, and the monks who cut down his bananas or gather coconuts. An elderly woman told me that his children in Phnom Penh often come to see him and give him advice. According to the students, he is aggressive, but he can also be kind. After he curses the monks, he gives them bananas or drinks. According to Malon, the head monk has asked him (Malon) to do his work such as managing the education of the monks, their numbers, finding supporters for the pagoda, controlling the construction of the *Vihara* and other buildings etc., so that is why the pagoda committee including Malon decided to take responsibility for all his work and ask him only to be a respectful monk⁶⁴ in the pagoda. Moreover, he does not take part in the education of the monks. One student, who came to live here in 1999, told the researcher that the head monk has study materials to give to the monks, but if the teacher monks who came from Kampuchea Krom had not given him this idea he would not have thought of it himself. For example, before 2000, the teacher monks of Kampuchea Krom declared the results of the monks' final exam in each class in a ceremony for the people⁶⁵, where the head monk gave books to the students. But after those teacher monks left the pagoda, this did not happen again. Moreover, he did not give good advice to the monks. Instead, he urged the monks to use violence; for instance, when a group of men came to destroy the toilet lock and defecate without cleaning it, he told them to beat the men to death - he would take personal responsibility for it. Another time, a monk entered his room to ask to watch TV and was nearly knifed by the head monk.⁶⁶ However, he also presides over major ceremonies. He receives money and gives blessings to the people. He, the *Achar*,

⁶⁴When visiting this pagoda the researcher asked the head monk for an interview, but this was refused and he was told that Malon would know everything.

⁶⁵People were invited to listen to the results and they could give books or other gifts as a reward to the monks.

⁶⁶Buddha allowed the monks to use a knife, but not to kill or oppress people with it.

the pagoda committees, and the elderly women lead the *kathin* to the poorer pagodas. He helps to pay for the electricity and he used to lend money, but it was never repaid. Instead, people brought food instead of money. He gave robes to one boy so that he could be ordained as a monk. But he may not be considered a respectful person in the pagoda, as during the field visit someone came to borrow the corpse cart but did not want to get permission from the head monk. He only wanted to ask permission from the elderly women and pagoda committee members and the *Achar Yogi*. The head monk enjoys planting trees such as bananas and potatoes. His planting rarely attracts help from the monks because he accuses them of doing nothing unless he does the work himself.⁶⁷ Malon also stated that the head monk knew nothing about management, but just did some of the work himself. He does not ask for help from the other monks and gets sick from his work⁶⁸. He sometimes performs the water blessing for other people. For example, before the Khmer New Year's day some people heard that people with *Chong Chnam*⁶⁹ had to have the water blessing from seven pagodas or would die, and people came even from Phnom Penh to ask him for a water blessing⁷⁰.

So the actions of the present head monk help very little to restore his pagoda's roles as the educational, social, cultural, and moral centre of the village. He does not know what he should do to be a good head monk at all. Because of his lack of education and his inability to manage the pagoda or improve the education of the monks, they cannot become qualified in preaching morality or Buddhism to the villagers.

There are two further key roles in this pagoda. The first is the *Achar* and the other is the pagoda committee.

4.2.2 Achar

The current *Achar* gained his position during the PRK. At that time he was on the staff of the Ministry of Cult and Religion, but he was unpaid, helping to raise money from the people to build streets, bridges, and schools. However, after 1993, when Cambodia

⁶⁷ Interview with one monk: when the researcher observed the head monk working with no help he asked why this was happening? The reply was that they had gone to help him several times but the head monk always complained.

⁶⁸ When he gets sick he uses the money received from the major ceremonies.

⁶⁹ Khmer people believe that they are born in a year of a 12-year cycle. Chong Chnam means one's birth year is the same as the coming year. Chong Chnam also means, for funeral ceremonies, that if one has the same birth year as the birth year of the deceased, one is forbidden by the family from joining, because relatives are afraid that the ghost will be able to do them harm.

⁷⁰ Interview with a monk, who is his grand son.

had a new government and started monthly salaries for its staff, the Ministry dismissed him.

He specialises in many ceremony preparations such as the ceremony of increasing age (*Cham Reun Breah Jun*)⁷¹, funerals, the seven day ceremony, 100 day ceremony, accompanying the procession of the Buddha (*Hea Breah*), weddings etc. He is now very famous in the area, and many people ask him to preside over ceremonies. As for this pagoda, he is available only on *Tngai sil* or for major ceremonies. His role is to appeal to the people to come and join the ceremony, to give offerings, to lead the people in reciting the liturgical texts, and give blessings to people who give offerings to the pagoda. He is well known outside the pagoda; but one of the elderly women told the researcher that he rarely comes to the pagoda; he is always elsewhere making his own money. If he comes he just wants to eat and then go home. Moreover, some monks seem not to like this *Achar*, because he often uses bad words or shouts at them. For example, one monk stated that when the *Achar* asks the monks to work, and a monk talks with someone, the *Achar* gets angry with them for speaking. Once when he asked a monk to go and take the cart to carry a big jar, the monk went but it was being used by another person to carry rubbish. So he reported back that other people were using it. The *Achar* shouted at him, “Go and take it anyway!” Another time, two monks reported that when some Khmer-Americans came to ask him to offer prayers for the dead (*Bangskol*), the *Achar* did not pass the money received to the monks. Moreover, the students also say that he shouts at them and he never teaches them.

Therefore, the *Achar* seems to partially help in creating the community. For instance, he helps to lead the people in worship and support the pagoda, which might help to pay for the students monks’ food. However, in order to make money himself he has better relationships with people outside than with the monks at the pagoda. He does not help to manage the pagoda or to improve the education of the monks. This has led to disunity amongst the monks, the elderly women and the pagoda committees.

4.2.3 Pagoda Committee

There are six members of the pagoda committee, including one older woman, Mrs Leang, who is responsible for the monks’ food. They all are responsible for the construction of buildings, and the *Pali* primary school. However, there are only three

⁷¹ Literally birthday, but children, especially the rich, celebrate this ceremony for elderly parents to show their gratitude.

people who are active in their work, Malon, Hout, and Mrs Leang. This section focuses on the action of Malon who is considered *Achar Rong* because in the absence of the *Achar*, he takes on his role also, and is very influential in the pagoda.

Malon was the former right sub-head monk in this pagoda in the 1960s. But in 1967, he disrobed and came to work in Phnom Penh. However, he tried his best to rebuild this pagoda with Ven Oum Tit from the PRK period onwards.

He specialises in *Dhamma* and is popular in the pagoda. The elderly women, monks, and students respect him very much. Outside the pagoda, he is also famous in preparing ceremonies; and he is a skilled builder. He is a member of three pagodas: Prang, Knung Vang, and Tep Pranam itself.⁷² For the laity, he advises them only when the Achar is not at the pagoda.

Even though he is very busy, he comes to the pagoda everyday. He is the pillar of the pagoda, and the community. He receives guests, is construction manager for the *Vihara*, finds teachers for the *Pali* primary school, money to prepare food for the monks, and supporters to build the *Vihara*. Some other members, *Achar*, and the head monk often are indifferent to the work of the pagoda. However, he always reports back to the head monk regarding the work and decisions in the pagoda.

But he also admitted that he is old and busy with his job and the affairs of the pagoda, and he cannot lead the monks to observe their disciplinary rules strictly. That's why the people criticize them. For example, the monks like to play together, laugh loudly, and wear unsuitable robes outside the *Kutis*, which the disciplinary rules does not allow. For example, they wear thin robes, which are allowed only when bathing, and stand near the road, which is very immodest.⁷³

Moreover, to avoid money disputes in the pagoda he and the other members decided to choose one pagoda committee member, Mrs Leang, who is rich, to keep the pagoda money. When they need to spend money on the pagoda's affairs, they have to have a handwritten list of expenditure, which is known publicly.

⁷² However, the other two pagoda committees accuse him of coming to attract their pagoda supporters for his pagoda, Tep Pranam.

⁷³ It should be noted that the sub-head monk controlled all the education or the *Vinaya* of the monks, but during fieldwork, he reported that he was not as strict as the former sub head monk from Kampuchea Krom. The pagoda lost its reputation and the some people criticized them after 2000 when the sub head monk from Kampuchea Krom left this pagoda. (Interview with a group of 12 grade students who have lived there since 1999). It was regretted that the researcher could not access directly people who criticized the monks, because the students wanted to hide. Malon also told me that some people around the pagoda want to spoil the reputation of the pagoda by spreading gossip about the mistakes made by the monks in reciting, but they refuse to tell him directly which monks have made errors so that he can educate them.)

Moreover, they ask people to give money to the pagoda to prepare food for the monks who come to study in the pagoda. People are asked for 500 riels per month or 6000 riels yearly⁷⁴. During the ceremonies such as the New Year or the *Bjum Bin*, the people also can offer money for the monks' food too. For the rich if they would like to make merit they can pay a one-off amount of between 8000 to 15000 riels⁷⁵. But it is still not enough, so he has to take the money from *Tngai Sil* (around 20,000 riels) and the money, which he has received to build the *Vihara*, to prepare food for the monks.

It should be noted that in this area there is conflict between the Buddhist sects also. Not far from the pagoda are two *Dhammayut* pagodas. Some people in this area are pro-*Dhammayut* and some pro-*Mahanikay*. According to the monks in Tep Pranam pagoda when they went to one village nearby, few people give alms because most of them are pro-*Dhammayut*. But Malon made friends with one pagoda committee member from a *Dhammayut* pagoda in a remote area. And they both told me that now they don't discriminate, but try to find the best way to educate the monks. Malon is not quick to say that either *Dhammayut* or *Mahanikay* is better than the other. They have to look at the action of the monks in these two sects: which one's disciplinary rules is loose and which is tight. However, it was noted that the people in Tep Pranam pagoda and two nearby *Dhammayut* pagodas say bad things about each other. For example, Malon told the researcher that one *Achar* from the *Dhammayut* pagoda told him that in this *Dhammayut* pagoda there are three monks who have had affairs with girls, and that's why lightning struck the summit of the *Vihara* twice. In addition, his pagoda and six other nearby *Mahanikay* pagodas created a joint program of alms giving every year, or the ceremony of accompanying the procession of Buddha (*Hea Breah*), but they did not allow the *Dhammayut* pagodas to join them. There is discrimination among the *Mahanikay* pagodas too. Malon told the researcher that he dislikes a head monk⁷⁶ who criticises Ven. Choun Nath, saying that he is now in hell because he translated the Buddha's words of *Pali* into the Khmer language.

Malon appears orthodox and has been influenced by higher-ranking monks in the *Mahanikay* sect in Phnom Penh. He rejects the role of monks in preaching the *Dhamma* to help in AIDS reduction programs, because in that preaching, the monks teach the people to have sex using condoms, but in his opinion, Buddha did not allow the monks to

⁷⁴ Each month, pagoda receives only around 7000 to 8000 riels.

⁷⁵ However, they do not often pay for the food of the monks.

⁷⁶ He also is a higher-ranking monk.

encourage people to have sex at all. He also did not agree with monks growing trees because he thinks that this action is against the Buddha's disciplinary rules. And nowadays there is an Environment Ministry, so the monks do not need to do a job that secular people can do but should concentrate on their religious roles. The *Achar*, or elderly women can plant the trees instead.

He is also very worried about the education of the monks. He said that his pagoda is small and poor. It cannot develop resources for the monks and he could not find good teachers to teach at his schools. But he felt very proud that his pagoda was better than the millionaire pagodas, or "*Wat Sethei*", belonging to higher-ranking monks, which did not help to develop their resources by building schools at all. They just attempted to construct bigger and better buildings in the pagodas. Even the storage areas for machinery are decorated. But, he complained that it is difficult to train some young monks who come to study in Tep Pranam pagoda because they do not study the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* much, and some who know the teaching ignore it⁷⁷.

Moreover, he told the researcher that elderly people around the pagoda come to the pagoda every *Tngai Sil* but go home immediately after receiving the precepts or eating breakfast after the monks. Most of them did not know much about Buddhism. He told the researcher his experience when he went to the remoter areas that many people did not know about Buddhism - they believed only because of their parents. He added that in the future Buddhism would certainly decline. He gave the researcher one example, "If Christianity⁷⁸ comes and asks, 'what does your god Buddha teach you?' the people answer, 'I don't know'. Christianity will say 'Oh, so your god is weaker than my god. Take the 5000 riels my god offers you.'".

He explained that he enjoys his culture and heritage very much. He gave an example: when he saw young boys kicking a stone wall of a building on Oudong Mountain, he tried to explain to them not to do so because it was their heritage from their ancestors. But what was surprising was when asked why he left ancient statues⁷⁹ (see Appendix: Figure 10) and the *Sima* under a tree in the rain and the wind? Was he not afraid that thieves would steal them? He replied "Why would they steal them when they are all broken?"

⁷⁷ According to Hean, more than 30,000 monks have not studied at Buddhist schools either.

⁷⁸ It should be noted that there is one church in Breah Sre village, which takes only 15 to 20 minutes by motorbike from Tep Pranam pagoda.

⁷⁹ They were sculpted in sandstone and probably date from the foundation of the first pagoda, in the sixteenth century.

When asked about the accounts of the income and expenditure of the pagoda, the list of students' scores, the number of monks, and the date of construction of the buildings, he said that he had lost them. One book listing the income of the *Kathin* ceremony was found in the room of one of the monks. The pagoda did not appear to have an organised system for its documents.

The district staff of the Ministry of Cult and Religion rarely visit the pagoda. They go there when they need to know the number of the monks in the pagoda, give information about examinations in Phnom Penh, hand out application forms⁸⁰, or give invitations to the head monk or *Achar* to listen to the decisions of the *Anusangha Vachāra*. The sub or head monk of the province does not visit, advise or examine the pagoda either.

Consequently, Malon is in charge of the head monk's work. He tries to restore the pagoda's roles, but it is still not functioning as an educational, social, cultural, or moral centre. For instance, it helps to provide an education for the monks, but this is a poor education, which does not give the monks enough training to preach to the people about morality or Buddhism. There are few good teachers in the provincial pagoda schools. Moreover, because he is very busy with his work and his family, he cannot help to control the monks; therefore, the monks break their disciplinary rules and are criticised by the villagers. The senior people in the pagoda do not have an understanding of the management of documents. The pagoda also tends to sow disunity among the villagers by encouraging religious discrimination.

4.2.4 Elderly People

Today, there are no old people shaving their heads, wearing white clothes or coming to study the liturgical text meditation and the morality at the Pagoda. There are only five elderly women who function as cooks for the monks. Among them, there are two elderly women who live permanently at the pagoda, and three other elderly women who return home in the afternoon.

The two elderly women who stay at the pagoda get up very early in the morning to cook porridge for the monks, and around 9 o'clock, the other three women come to the pagoda with food. Then they cook together the rice and other food, and boil the tea.

⁸⁰ According to *Achar*, some monks accused a staff member of the Ministry of Cult and Religion of corruption because he sold application forms at a high price.

After cooking, they have to wash up the plates, and spoons⁸¹, and prepare food for the monks again.

One woman takes her own meals at home with her family, the rest have meals with the *Achar*, Malon, and the students⁸², after the monks. The elderly women do the dishes, but sometime are helped by the secular students.

On *Tngai Sil*, they have to work harder; for example in the morning they clean up the plates, spoons, pots, and prepare the food which the people have brought to the pagoda for the monks, and they have to do many dishes too. During the big ceremonies, they are responsible for cooking, pot and plate preparation, cleaning the floor, rolling the mats, but for doing dishes, they hire one or two villagers. They do this work without payment, but for merit.

Some of them help by offering money, clothes, advice, and food for the students who live at the pagoda too. Therefore, they gain the respect of the students.

Notably there is one elderly woman⁸³ who was ordained as *Donchi* and wants to create a course to teach women at the pagoda. However, her plan was rejected by one of the pagoda committee members, who is also the village leader, because he could not find other elderly women to come to study with her. But from interviews it appears that there are some people who want this service.

The pagoda does not appear to be helping to provide moral education to the elderly women and refuses to allow them run a course on *Dhamma* to teach them themselves. The elderly women's roles and knowledge seem to be considered unimportant in the pagoda.

4.2.5 Laity

Most of the people who come to Tep Pranam pagoda are elderly women. They all come to observe the precepts on *Tngai Sil*, and bring with them food, including Khmer noodles, fruits, dessert etc. They cannot stay at the pagoda for long. After the monks give the precepts to them, they return to their homes because they are very busy with their

⁸¹ They try to make everything clean for the monks. However, some young boys who want to help, are not allowed because the women think that they will not clean well enough.

⁸² Sometimes when there is building work in the pagoda, the builders eat their meals with them too.

⁸³ She ordained as *Donchi* in the Koh pagoda near Oudong Mountain, but now she has left that pagoda and lives with her daughter.

businesses or in taking care of their grandchildren⁸⁴. However, some stay there to have breakfast after the monks and then return home.

According to the nine interviewees, it is noticeable that the elderly women have not received advice from the monks⁸⁵. Some people, who listen to the *Dhamma* preaching on the radio, know *Dhamma* quite well and know that Khmer Buddhism was different in the past and believe that young people do not have the same morality today as in the past. They believe that Buddhism can help make Cambodia develop and become peaceful. They also recognise the monks' mistakes when they recite. But others, who do not listen to preaching on the radio, seem not to know *Dhamma*. They think that when they observe the precepts, they can gain merit for their future life, not be poor, have happiness or can go to *Nirvana*. And they do not know whether Buddhism has changed or not; they think that it is the same as ever. Moreover, neither of these groups knows *Pali* or the meaning of the liturgical texts that they recite. However, the group that listens to the radio receives the *Dhamma* preaching in Khmer, and the group that does not listen to the radio cannot receive *Dhamma* preaching at the pagoda, as it is in *Pali*. They often ask someone to write the *Pali* liturgical text in Khmer so that they can memorise them. However, it is noticeable that there is an education gap too. For example, illiterate people also have some problems in memorising the liturgical text and *Dhamma*, and they forget it quickly. One teacher at the Tep Pranam high school who listens to the preaching on the air and reads some books of *Tripitaka*, and teaches her children successfully to know the five precepts, told the researcher that she used to test the elderly women who came to observe the precepts. They appeared to know only a little *Dhamma* and the liturgical texts and they got angry with her when she asked them about it.

In another case, Malon and one elderly woman who is a former *Donchi* stated that many elderly women know a little of the *Dhamma*. So that's why the former *Donchi* wanted to run a *Dhamma* course for them, but her plan was refused.

It is remarkable that both groups, the ones that listen to the radio and the ones who don't, did not worry about the mistakes or the daily routine of the monks in the pagoda at

⁸⁴Some elderly women told me that they have to help to look after their grandchildren because their children, who go to sell goods in the market, give them money for the pagoda. Kim also notes at this point that people maybe have less time now for pagoda affairs. They could give more money to the pagoda however.

⁸⁵In Tep Pranam pagoda there is no preaching (*Desana*). Moreover, during the *Visakha Buja*, one elderly woman who visited this pagoda complained that the monks there did not preach the *Dhamma*, but the monks in the *Dhammayut* pagoda nearby preached from the evening to the morning.

all. They came to the pagoda because it was near their house, they wanted to earn merit or follow the Buddha's teaching or because their parents used to go to the pagoda.

Therefore, the pagoda does not actively help to create community, in that it does not provide teaching in Buddhism or morality to the laity. It lets the traditions of the laity drive the functions of the pagoda, rather than Buddhist teaching. This means that they are unable to transmit any moral teaching to the children of the village through the laity.

4.2.6 Secular Students

There are currently only eight secular students living at the pagoda. After DK there were more students living here, most of them from Aukong village, but since a school was built in the village, the students prefer to study there.

The eight students living at the pagoda came because they had left their village before the new school was built, and they did not have any relatives near the Tep Pranam high school, so they had to live at the pagoda. Two of them live with the monks; five live in the huts and one lives in the cabin of a derelict van near the *Pali* primary school. One has built a hut for himself, which cost 50,000riel, because there was not enough accommodation. Among the eight students, four students ate after the monks, but one of the four decided not to eat there anymore because he thought that he was adding to the elderly women's work. He was also afraid of the other students being jealous of him, because he could afford to buy food for himself.

For the students who eat after the monks, they can eat breakfast and lunch, and if there is food leftover they can warm it and eat again. If there is none left they have to cook rice in the evening and buy food from a small market near the pagoda. One of them said that when he helps the elderly women, they give him a little money or clothes or rice, which helps to reduce the cost for his parents. Other students, who do not eat with the monks, have to cook or buy food to eat. One 12th-grade student, in the morning, eats Chinese noodles, or cold rice with soy sauce, which costs 500 riels; in the afternoon, he spends 700 riels of which 500riels is for mixed rice and 200 riels for dessert; in the evening, he cooks rice and buys food from the market. However, he has to spend 3,000 riels per day to study a private course to take the final exam to get his high school certificate. In the evening they all eat together.

It should be noted that they do not get advice from the monks because the monks think that the students have a greater knowledge than them. During the field visit, one of them caused some conflict and fought with other villagers when he went to a dance and

dared not go to his house because he was afraid his parents would beat him. Another wore earrings and appeared to be a gangster.

Accordingly, this section on students shows that the pagoda has not provided much in the way of accommodation and food for the students, and also does not help to teach them Buddhism, as the monks believe the students know more than themselves.

4.3 The Monks

The eighteen monks came from only 3 provinces, which are close to the pagoda. Kandal province provided 8 monks, of whom 3 lived in Phnom Penh. Kompong Speu provided 4 monks, and Kompong Chhnang provided 6 monks.

Table 4.1 Social Backgrounds of Monks

Job	Number
Peasants	15
At home	1
No parents	1
Bread seller	1

Table 4.2 Number of children in Family

Number of Children	Number of Family	Total children
10 children	1	10 X 1 = 10
9	3	9 X 3 = 27
8	2	8 X 2 = 16
7	2	7 X 2 = 14
6	2	6 X 2 = 12
5	3	5 X 3 = 15
4	2	4 X 2 = 8
3	2	3 X 2 = 6
2	1	2 X 1 = 2
1	0	1 X 0 = 0
Total: = 110		

According to Table 4.1, among these monks, 15 monks were the sons of the peasants, two of them had a single mother, and one had a single father. One monk is an orphan who lives with his uncle. Another monk has parents who are unemployed. And the last is the son of a single mother who is a street bread seller. As this data in Table 4.1 shows, some parents are widows or widowers which might have made them decide to send their sons to become monks, especially when we see that from the Table 4.2 that the

average number of children in the family has now risen to over 6 children in one family. Whether Cambodian people still send their children to live for many years in the pagoda as in the past before they become monks, remains unanswered. But according to the information bulletin from the CAS (August- September, 2003) entitled “Monk Ordination in Cambodia” using five provinces for their sample, “nowadays the term of the monks’ stay in the pagoda is not long like in the past, they often stay for only one month or half a month, and some stay for one or two weeks only. Therefore, it is so difficult for them to hold the disciplinary rules after they became monks.” (informal translation from Khmer language). However, the fieldwork suggests that boys still go to live as pagoda boys, because when talking with some of the monks they confirmed that they lived as pagoda boys before they ordained as monks. But there may be only a few. Most of them came to stay for a short time at the pagoda before ordination, because they only had to study *Dhamma Bous* and *Dhamma Ajja*. Moreover, it was noted that before they can be ordained they have to ask permission from the village and commune leaders⁸⁶. Asking for permission can create problems. As discussed with some monks, the researcher found that in some places the village or commune leader puts financial pressure on future monks. Some monks stated that they had to pay 50,000riels and some had to pay 100,000 riels or a carton of cigarettes, and some paid as much as 20,000 riels. In addition, they also had to pay 10,000-12,000 riels for an identity card for the monks called *Sanghadika* for the *Samane* (novices) and *Chaya* for the *Bhikkhu* (monks). Poor parents have to wait until the pagoda has many people (anything from 6-17) who want to ordain, because they cannot afford to ordain one monk at a time. For instance, in order to celebrate the ordination ceremony they have to spend money on food and drink for their guests and the monks, money for the *Upajjhaya*, the monks, *Achar*, etc. and they also have expenditure on robes and an umbrella, probably costing 35,000 to 40,000riel. Then the bowl costs between \$5 and \$17 and they also have to pay for a blanket, mat, pillow etc. (see also CAS, 2003). In the case of venerable Sok, his godmother had to wait until the pagoda nearby ordained 15 monks. She said, “I don’t have a lot of money because I live in the pagoda. I have only 90,000 riel and two *Tau* of rice to join with them and the robe the head monk gives him

⁸⁶ According to Circular of Ordination (1994:112) in 1993 the commune leader is required to test the *Dhamma Vinaya* knowledge of the boys. If they do not know *Dhamma Vinaya* then they cannot be ordained, but it does not work like this now, they just pay for the commune leader to stamp their *Sanghadika* or *Chaya* cards. Therefore they can become ordained and travel freely.

for free.” So the ordination of monks does not happen when the parents wish, they have to wait, due to their lack of money⁸⁷.

In Tep Pranam pagoda there are two pagoda boys. One of them is a relative of Malon. His father died and his mother had to work so she asked Malon to allow him to stay at the pagoda. This young boy had been sent to study at a secular school but he went for walks instead or gathered fruit with his friends or played football until nighttime. When his mother comes to visit him at the pagoda he accuses the elderly women of not feeding him properly. The other is the younger brother of a monk who used to live at the pagoda. This monk brought him here because he wanted him to study at the Tep Pranam primary school near the pagoda. Malon, and the old women appear very busy; and so cannot give the boys much of their time. And the monks also do not help them either. If the monks want them to stay in the pagoda they just force them and tell them to boil the water. If they do not obey, the monks hit them. They both live in unhygienic conditions. Sometimes they sleep without a mosquito net. They are thin and wear dirty clothes because they go out walking and play a lot and often do not come to dinner on time.

But they all make some money when there is big ceremony. For example, on New Year’s Day they help to place sand on trays for people to pile up as sand mountains.⁸⁸ They are paid 500 riels for one tray. So they can make probably 10,000-20,000 riels. And sometimes when people gather they give alms for 100-150 monks. The boys ask the monks to take them with them so they can get a small amount of these alms too.

Some students and old women were asked about the young boys in the village. They stated that some young boys like to go out walking or gathering fruit etc., but when there is a ceremony in the pagoda they come and eat or sometimes take food back to their houses; and occasionally they go to the big almsgiving with the monks, so that they can get some portion of the alms. They did not want to live in the pagoda as pagoda boys but only wanted to eat there because this gave them more freedom. However, from observation, these boys do not really benefit from the pagoda because monks neither take

⁸⁷ Keyes quotes Kim that in his research village in Siem Reap province; very few young men became monks, in part because of the expense. The local government officials charged fees to allow ordinations, and the ordination itself was very expensive (Kim, personal communication)

⁸⁸ During Khmer New Year the *Achar* builds a sand mountain. This pile of sand is an image of Meru Mountain. They do this because they believe that the world each year is in danger of destruction so in order to ensure that this does not happen they build a mountain of sand, and hope the world will become normal as in the beginning. But some people, especially Buddhists, say it is the symbol of the Stupa in which they enshrine the Buddha’s relics. They believe that when they pile sand they will gain merit.

care of them nor give them lessons. They look no different from the ordinary children who live in the village.

Table 4.3 Place of Ordination

Place	Number
-Pagoda of their village	6
-Pagoda of their commune	3
-Pagoda of their district	2
-Pagoda in different district	2
-Pagoda in different province, but close to their village	2

For the place of ordination, (Table 4.4) we see that most monks chose the pagoda that is nearest their village or close by. Of the 18 monks, 6 chose the pagoda in their village, 3 monks chose the pagoda in their commune, 2 monks chose the pagoda in their district and 4 monks choose pagoda out of their district but in the same province. And 2 monks chose the pagoda in a different province, but near their village, actually within about 500 metres. It was found that many monks wanted to be ordained in the pagoda near their village, because their parents could still take care and support them with food or milk, sugar, or tea, especially at the beginning when they found it hard to adjust to new routines such as not having dinner. This was verified by one monk who is a sub-head monk. He said that at first he could not stand the food; there was only soaked cucumber, as his parents had always cooked good food for him.

Among the 18 monks, two are teacher monks, 13 are cleaners and the final three don't do anything. The reason that many monks were cleaners was because of the schedule of the pagoda where the sub-head monk requires them to get up in the early morning to clean the pagoda yard. But according to a fifteen day observation during fieldwork, they cleaned the yard of the pagoda only twice. This was apparently because it was the monks' vacation time and that the sub-head monk relaxes the rules during this time. But some monks were also observed helping to fix a leaky basin, cutting trees, filling the large jars with water when the machine had broken, and boiling water.

Among the 18 monks, fifteen said that they liked the *Pali* language very much, 1 the *Vinaya*, and 3 *Dhamma*. None of them liked other subjects outside Buddhism such as mathematics, history or geography. The researcher was informed that the monks gathered together at 7 pm to recite their lessons until 10 pm during the academic year. But when

talking with one young monk, he seemed to know very little. So their knowledge was tested by choosing one monk who had passed the *Pali* primary school exam in Phnom Penh and who had been appointed as the *Vinaya* teacher in the pagoda. A member of the *Tripitaka* commission of the Buddhist Institute was asked to choose the questions. He quoted one sentence from the *Dhammapada* part 1 which had been studied in the first year in order to ask the monk an easy piece of translation: “*Nanu te puttana matdhakundalinamena mayi manam pasadetva attano sagge nibavattabhavo kathitoti*”. This monk could only identify one word “*Manam*”. He was then asked a question about the *Vinaya*. “If a novice has dinner, what kind of mistake has he made?” he answered that it was “*Nasananga Dap*” (*Dasa Nasananga*) but the correct answer was “*Dandakamma Dap*” (*Dasa Dandakamma*). Although this was a poor result, it cannot lead to the conclusion that all the monks have a poor knowledge of Buddhist writings. And in his case, maybe in the period of 5-month vacations he had not reviewed his lessons or the wrong question was asked⁸⁹, because it was from a lesson studied in their first year. So he may have forgotten. But this monk had finished his third year study this year and passed his exam in Phnom Penh one or two months ago, so it is strange that he had not reviewed it before the exam. According to the student who studies in the 12th grade at Tep Pranam high school, and who went with the monks who took the exam in Phnom Penh, when they came back from the exam he asked them whether it had been easy or difficult. The monks told him that the examiner helped do the exam for them. According to the teacher at Tep Pranam High School whose house is opposite the pagoda, she had seen the monks try to study hard in the academic year but when they have a vacation they do not study at all. When she asked them, “Have you ever read the *Tripitaka*?” they told her “no” because it is kept in the glass-fronted cupboard which is locked by the head monk. From her observation they like to play, laugh, and listen to music. The pagoda committee member, Malon, also said that he could not find good teachers for his pagoda after the monk teachers from Kampuchea Krom left; therefore he decided to choose monks who had just finished their study as teachers. He admitted that they were all weak but he paid one teacher 100,000 riels per month to specialise in *Pali* and *Dhamma* to review and help to strengthen the monks’ ability in the third level. Moreover, since the teacher monks from

⁸⁹ Before fieldwork the researcher met Venerable Seng Sumuny, sub-director of the Buddhist University. He said that if the education of the monks was to be tested, it had to be done strictly, because the monks cheated. When he writes the questions for the final exam for the monks he always uses short *Pali* sentences, which are not in the books, so the monks cannot cheat. But the case of the Tep Pranam pagoda is different, as they all study *Pali* by memorising, hence the choice of sentences from old lessons, which should have been easier for them.

Kampuchea Krom had left, the education of the monks and the *Vinaya* had declined. The next teacher, the sub-head monk, did not prepare questions to test the learning of the monks. He did not make a list of marks, nor declare the result of the final exam in front of the people. He said that if the monks wanted to learn then they should study; if they didn't want to know, then they shouldn't bother; it was up to them. When one monk was asked why he did not seem to know the lines, he replied, "can you memorise and remember five pages of lesson per day?" and he complained that he could not sleep enough; one of his friends transferred to another pagoda because he could not stand it"⁹⁰

Moreover, the one who chose the *Vinaya* was the sub-head monk. He chose this probably because he thought that in order to control the monks he had to know the *Vinaya*. However, the other monks do not like this subject. It was clearly observed that they tend instead to play together, chat, and go to listen to music or comic stories in the room of sub-head monk. During fieldwork they did not watch TV but they apparently do watch TV from time to time. And this behaviour has made some people very critical of them. (According to Malon and the 12th-grade student.) Moreover, they rarely clean their bedrooms or their robes⁹¹. They leave their nails long and dirty. They do this because they want to protect themselves when they are playing with the other monks who are taller than them.⁹² They do not perform the monk's daily routine properly, they get up at 6 am,⁹³, go to wash⁹⁴, then have porridge which the old ladies have prepared for them. Then they do not do anything; they just go to chat, play or stay in their *Kutis*⁹⁵. At 10.30 or 11am they strike the bell for lunch, so they come in to eat their meal. They then return to their *Kutis* to sleep. When they get up they go to other *Kutis* or sit under a tree near the *Hotria*. In the evening they have a bath and go to worship and chant in front of the Buddha together. Then they go to other *Kutis*, especially to the *Kutis* of the sub head monk to listen to music or the radio.⁹⁶ Moreover, a trader comes to the pagoda by motorbike with many items, such as radios. If the monks do not have money they can

⁹⁰ This pagoda was visited again at the end of May 2004. The sub head monk had disrobed and the pagoda committees had gone to Phnom Penh to ask monks from Kampuchea Krom to teach at this school again. They all tried to revise the *Vinaya*, including monks who came to study some years ago and other new monks, as up to 10 monks had run away from the pagoda because they thought that it was too strict.

⁹¹ Two monks left dirty plates which they used as sugar bowls

⁹² There were many traces of nails on the hands of some monks.

⁹³ Some times they got up at 4 or 5 am because they had to clean the yard of the pagoda. But during the field visit, they cleaned only twice in 15 days.

⁹⁴ If the weather is cold they do not have a bath at all.

⁹⁵ During fieldwork I found that they also were asked to cut down trees or carry water or sometimes repair the leaky basins. But this is only some monks.

⁹⁶ Some of them also have their own radio.

exchange their robes for his goods. Apparently some monks exchange their robes for body or skin-whitening cream etc. When asked what they needed the cream for, one monk stated that he worked in the sunshine so he needed to apply it in order not to make his skin burn. Another monk also applied skin whitening cream to his face but when observed he tried to rub it off⁹⁷. When other monks were asked why they didn't keep their robes to wear; they said that the robes that the people offer them now are too thin for them to wear comfortably.

The former *Donchi* who works as a cook said that she had seen a monk stealing and hiding rice, so she accused him of breaking the disciplinary rules. And some monks certainly want better food. For example, some monks including the sub-head monk complained that they often eat soup from the banana tree, and so had no energy to study. And some monks liked to talk and ask the researcher about girls. Moreover, the monks in this pagoda seem in constant need of money. For example during the Khmer New Year, many monks went to the pagoda in their hometown because they think that at Tep Pranam pagoda they will get little money. If they go to their hometown pagoda the people distribute their money so that each monk can receive 40,000 to 50,000 riels.

During the Khmer New Year, one monk decided to stay at the pagoda with some others because at his pagoda nobody collected money to offer the monks, and he obtained some money⁹⁸. The people and the pagoda offered around 20,000 riels to each monk who were living at the pagoda. Moreover, on *Visakha Buja's* day Malon got angry with the monks. They were invited to receive alms at Oudong Mountain⁹⁹, and they were all offered some Chinese noodles and other food but they did not share with each other. They went off to eat their own food in their *Kutis* and some monks returned to their own village pagodas with the noodles instead.

The reason that there are only two monks who choose to study *Dhamma* is unclear. But according to observation, in this pagoda there is no preaching of the *Dhamma*, because the monks have little knowledge of Buddhism and no one comes to

⁹⁷ According to the Buddha's disciplinary rules, Monks could not use fragrance.

⁹⁸ During the Khmer New Year monks can usually expect to receive 20000 to 30000riel. But they can get this amount because there are few monks living at the pagoda. The researcher was told that all the monks were sent to outside ceremonies equally. However, there is some bias also, because the sub head monk always sends monks he knows well to the ceremonies. There is some gap between the monks who live in the pagoda and the monks who stay there for part of the year only. If there are ceremonies outside the pagoda, they preferred to send the monks who had lived in the pagoda for some years rather than the new monks that the sub-head monk did not have a good relationship with.

⁹⁹ There are some who criticise the city monks who did not even receive an invitation but still went there and tried to push the young monks, who had an invitation, out of the way, to get alms for themselves (quote from many monks, and the old lady when they reported back to the pagoda committee).

listen to *Dhamma* teaching. During the Khmer New Year one monk who was newly ordained was invited by the *Achar* to chant the liturgical texts with other monks for the people. He tried to imitate other monks, and during the *Visakha Buja*'s day, one elderly woman stated that some monks had forgotten sections of liturgical verses. Some of them just sat and were not reciting at all.

The reason that the monks do not enjoy other subject outside of Buddhism such as mathematics, geography and history, dictation, and Khmer Grammar was also difficult to ascertain. There is no evidence, but the sub-head monk stated that it was difficult to teach the monks at all because they could not read Khmer well and he had to teach them how to read or spell again. The monks are interested in the English language, but the sub-head monk prohibits the study of English because he thought that those monks would not try to study their Buddhist lessons. If they attempted to study English they would be thrown out of the pagoda. But during the return visit in May 2004 the new sub-head monk now allows the monks to study English, and there is one private English course created in the *Pali* primary school which all the monks study. This shows clearly that they are all interested in English and that the new sub-head monk has responded to their needs.

Table 4.4 Reasons to Choose Tep Pranam Pagoda

Response	Number
No schools at their pagoda and want to study	8
This pagoda is famous for having strong teachers from Kampuchea Krom	3
Want to study <i>Pali</i>	6
Staying	1

According to Table 4.4 most monks come to stay in Tep Pranam pagoda because there are no schools at their pagoda and they want to study *Pali* language. Also they believe that at this pagoda there are very good teachers¹⁰⁰ from Kampuchea Krom.

¹⁰⁰ However, those Kampuchea Krom monk teachers left Tep Pranam pagoda in 2000.

Table 4.5 Want to Remain as Monk for Life?

Response	Number
No	16
Yes	2

Among the 18 monks there are only two monks who want to stay as monks and another 16 monks do not want to remain as monks. None were undecided, unlike the sixties survey.

Table 4.6 When are You planning to disrobe?

Response	Number
No decision	8
Want to study more	1
In 4,5 years	5
After disrobe	1
After learning English	1

Among these monks, eight of them have not made a decision yet, but the others seem not to intend to disrobe yet, they want to stay a few more years, at least to finish their studies.

Table 4.7 After Disrobing, what Kind of Job do You want to do?

Job	Number	Job	Number
Good peasants	3	Staff of NGOs or Company	3
No idea	1	Teacher of general knowledge	4
Pali teacher	1	Shopkeeper	2
Police	1	Leader of Buddhist affairs	1

Most of them seemed not to want to use their studies to earn their living. Among them there are only two who want to have a job involved with Buddhism. The first wants to be a teacher of *Pali*. Another wants to be a leader of Buddhism. However others want to do other jobs not involved with Buddhism. Among them three monks want to become peasants and four of them want to be a teacher of general knowledge. Two want to be Shopkeepers; 3 want to be workers for an NGO or Company, and the last wants to be a

policeman. Compared with the previous research, the range of jobs has grown, when most wished to return to a peasant life.

In brief, the pagoda helps to provide an education to the monks who are the sons of the poor, but it is a weak education, which the monks cannot use to preach morality or Buddhism to the people. Instead, they themselves do not appear to be studying hard. They also break the monks' disciplinary rules and appear unhygienic.

4.4 Rituals

In Tep Pranam pagoda now there is a shrine which shelters a guardian spirit named *Yay Tep* (grandmother Tep). *Yay Tep* was enshrined by one old man who is a *Pin Peat* musician. He apparently played *Pin Peat* music every Khmer New Year. But this year he did not play *Pin Peat*. The shrine looks very quiet and no one was making offerings to her. None of the monks seem to talk about this spirit. But behind the pagoda there is a house, which belongs to a woman who believes that she was helped by the spirit. She is a prophet, magician, and healer (*Kru*). Some people go there every Sunday with offerings such as pregnant eggs or beer, or money to ask her to heal them because they are under the spell of step wives or to help them to do good business. For example, one woman goes to ask the *Kru* to help make her business as an abortionist prosper¹⁰¹ However, when the *Achar* and the pagoda committee were asked, they stated that the pagoda is not involved with the supernatural at all. Others said that it does not involve itself with supernatural powers, although many years ago there was one monk who used a love charm on the wife of a villager and he then disrobed and they ran away together. Also, many years ago there was a monk from Kampuchea Krom, who was known to have healed somebody by blessing water. A former *Donchi* who is a cook at the pagoda, told me that she had a granddaughter who had an obsessive, compulsive disorder. She brought her to ask the monks to heal her and she was cured.

In short, the pagoda does not officially involve itself with guardian spirits. However, it allows people to believe in some persons known as *Kru* who thinks more of money than offerings of flowers, and bananas, which the guardian spirit requires. Here the pagoda does not help to guard the people's interest.

¹⁰¹ Interview with a nurse

Conclusion

The incomplete *Vihara* looks enormous and, from the latest information, has taken a lot of time and money. Some of other buildings in the pagoda are also being constructed in the new trend, which looks unlike Khmer pagoda style buildings (see Appendix). However, what is interesting is the role of the head monk, who does not have a great knowledge of Buddhism or good management. He did not do much work and is considered only a respectful representative of the pagoda. Malon, and the pagoda committee, are in charge of all the work such as controlling the education of the monks, the number of monks, finding supporters for the pagoda, and controlling the construction of the *Vihara* and other buildings. The pagoda does not give a moral education to the villagers anymore because the monks do not have the knowledge. As for its social role, the pagoda seems unable to fulfil this role anymore; they are hard at work trying to find support to construct buildings. For the villagers, the pagoda is still the place where they earn merit.

The education of monks has declined. They have little knowledge of *Pali*, *Dhamma*, *Vinaya*. They commit offences against the monks' disciplinary rules and are criticised by some people. However, they seem not to want to be peasants but to do other jobs such become NGO staff, teachers, and Shopkeepers. As for guardian spirits, there is one, *Yay Tep*, but she is sadly neglected, people seem to ask for help from the *Kru* instead. In addition, the pagoda has had to deal with gangsters and pornographic film problems. There is also some discrimination between the *Dhammayut* and the *Mahanikaya* sects. They criticise each other publicly and the villagers are also influenced by this split. Within *Mahanikaya* itself there are also problems. The Tep Pranam pagoda, which is pro Choun Nath, criticises the head monk of another pagoda who has criticised the translation of the Buddha's words into Khmer. There is also the emergence of the challenge of Christianity, which might become a serious problem in the future.

CHAPTER 5

COMPARISON OF TEP PRANAM PAGODA IN THE 1960s AND 2003-2004

The pagoda, traditionally, has played a crucial role in creating community. It has functioned as an educational, social, moral, and cultural centre. And until at least the 1960s, pagodas still fulfilled this role. For example, as an educational centre, it provided schools and good teachers for the monks who were sons of poor villagers, so they all could function as preachers of morality for villagers. In its social role, Tep Pranam pagoda served as a meeting place for all the people in the village to discuss what was happening in their lives or in the community, as a place for collaborative or mutual help to create public works under the supervision of the monks such as building schools for their children without waiting for aid from the central government. As a moral centre, the pagoda provided moral preaching to people to behave honestly and righteously to each other in society, which gave the community unity and security. As a cultural centre, it was a collection point and preservation of the village's artifacts. Moreover, buildings represented the traditional Khmer pagoda-styled architecture, which is considered as part of the heritage by the government and head monk, and as the place to display murals. It also has a role with the elderly, helping to preserve and transmit the culture to younger generations, for example, *Achar*, who specialised in folk ceremonies (*Neak Ta*). Therefore, we can see clearly that the pagoda until the 1960s helped to create community. However, the educated monks and religious texts were destroyed during the DK period, and Buddhism was restricted under the control of PRK, and nowadays has seen the emergence of young people who have not received religious training. It is unclear whether the pagoda still creates community. It can be seen that the pagoda created community because it functioned as a centre of village life. This might have been because of its buildings, or the actions of the head monk, the *Achar*, the elderly persons, monks, or students, or even its rituals, which brought villagers together at certain times. In order to answer this hard question this chapter attempts to compare the role of these elements in the 1960s and in 2003-2004.

Buildings in the pagoda play a crucial role in creating community. They are all part of the pagoda and serve different important functions. For example, in Tep Pranam pagoda in the 1960s, the old *Vihara* served for preaching morality, ceremonies, a place to

display old murals, and was a meeting place for villagers. Other buildings served as schools for monks, dormitories for many monks and students, an eating place for the monks, students, *Achar*, and elderly people, a library, a museum, and a place to keep the remains of the dead. However, the buildings nowadays, are different from the 1960s, primarily because of their look, and also because their functions have been reduced. The incomplete *Vihara* cannot yet serve as the centre for ceremonies or the preaching of morality to the people. Some monks' dormitories are dirty. On the other hand, they cannot even provide enough habitable accommodation for eight students. There is a library, which is a provincial branch of the Buddhist Institute library, but it does not function well as there are no controls on the borrowing and returning of books. There is no one with overall responsibility for the library. Many books have been lost. This needs remedying by the staff of the Buddhist Institute as well as locally. According to the Joint Declaration of Seminar on the Intensification of Buddhist Practices (1999:103) and the 7th (1998:104-105), 9th (2000:94), 12th (2003:77-78) *Anusangha Vacchāra*, the plan of Ministry of Cult and Religion is to create more libraries in each pagoda in Cambodia for people and monks but it appears to have failed because the Ministry and its local staff do not appear to have helped the existing library at all.

It was noticeable that the problem of demolishing the old *Vihara* demonstrated the disagreements between the head monk with government and the villagers over the concept of "Heritage". For the head monk and the government considered the old *Vihara* as Khmer heritage and wanted to conserve it. But the villagers did not consider it a heritage building. They only thought that it was old, and when they had the money they wanted to demolish it to build a new one, which is still considered the principal means of acquiring merit¹⁰². Equally interesting is the story of the *Cedeis*, which the head monk and government did not consider heritage, and the government planned to demolish to build schools. This was opposed by the people. The people seemed to think that the *Cedeis* were more important than the *Vihara*. These two stories showed us that the concept of "Heritage" and its importance has a very unclear meaning at the grass roots level. Moreover, this problem was clearly shown in the circular of the Ministry of Education and Fine Art, on 7 September, 1963, where Kūv Si Âuy stated that he often received information from the provincial temple guardians that regardless of the appeals of the Ministry made through brochures, declarations on the national radio, etc., to

¹⁰² See Edwards, 2003: 119

prevent people destroying temples and artefacts, there were still temples being destroyed and ancient artefacts looted. It was found that people often took pieces of ancient stone and used them as whetstones or as a bridge to their house during the rainy season.

Nowadays, the situation appears the same: people still do not care much about the *Vihara* building itself. When there is little money, they build a small one. But when there is more available, they demolish the old, and build a new, big *Vihara*. They also wanted to destroy the old murals because they wanted artists to draw new murals for making merit. But through the advice of Yos Sam El, they have now put the old pictures in the eating hall (*Sala Chan*). Moreover, people in pagoda including the head monk, do not know the value of the artefacts. For example, ancient statues have been placed under a tree with no maintenance despite the appeals of the Joint Declaration of Meeting of the *Mahanikay* Higher Rank Monk Officials (1998:86) and the 7th (1998:105), 8th (1999:91), 9th (2000:91), 11th (2002:100) *Anusangha Vachāra*. It is clear that people in the pagoda have little knowledge of artefacts, and neither the head monk of the province nor the staff of the Ministry of Cult and Religion appear to have helped to explain the situation clearly to the people.

As for other buildings in the Pagoda, in the 1960s, there were more buildings than now. This shows the development and popularity of the pagoda at that time, which had many supporters to donate money to build. The evolution of the Khmer pagoda architecture was also interesting. In the 1960s, in this pagoda, there was one building which had a terrace as a roof, and today there are two buildings which have terraces as roofs: the *Pali* primary school, and the *Hotria* which is not considered Khmer pagoda roofs: the *Pali* primary school, and the *Hotria* which is not considered Khmer pagoda architecture. If we look at the Joint Declaration of Seminar on the Intensification of Buddhist Practices (1999: 103) and the 9th (2000:94), 12th (2003:78) *Anusangha Vachāra*, the Minister of Cult and Religion advised the head monks to build all buildings in pagodas in the Khmer pagoda style. But this did not work at the grass roots level. That is, neither the staff of the Ministry of Cult and Religion, the head monks of district or province nor the head monk himself helped to explain the decision of the *Anusangha Vachāra* to the pagoda committee responsible for the construction of pagoda buildings.

Therefore, in the 1960s the buildings in Tep Pranam pagoda not only served as accommodation for monks, students and elderly people, but were also built to serve the needs of the community. However, the buildings are not adequate for today's needs. That is, they reduce its ability to help create community. Over time, there has been an

emergence of new style buildings, which are not considered Khmer pagoda architecture, in spite of official declarations against building in different styles.

In general, Cambodian people believe in the concept of *Kamma*. They think that in order to be prosperous in their next lives, they have to make merit through gifts to a pious monk because he can bring them a lot of merit and will not waste their donation, but use it to develop the pagoda or community. In the pagoda, among the pious monks, the head monk is generally considered the most pious, educated person. Therefore, people tend to support him and his projects. However, in order to demonstrate his piety and education, he must lead the monks in their disciplinary rules and plan developments in the pagoda and village.

The head monk of Tep Pranam pagoda in the 1960s was an educated, qualified person. He helped to create a *Pali* primary school and provide good teachers for monks who were sons of poor villagers who could not afford to pay for secular schools. They could return as educated men to their villages after they disrobed. This action helped to reduce illiteracy in villages and expenditures of government. He also helped to create liturgical texts, taught morality and meditation courses for the elderly people, which they could use to teach their children when they return to their daily lives.

He built many buildings in the pagoda, which functioned as meeting places for people and helped people to do public works, such as constructing pagoda buildings, the Tep Pranam schools, and digging ponds.

For villagers, he was a mentor of morality, and he taught the importance of Buddhism through preaching every *Tngai Sil*, at other ceremonies or in private conversation with people who came to visit him every day. In this way they would conduct themselves well in their community by helping each other, and being honest, so that they could trust each other, which would unify the community. He helped to prevent Tep Pranam's old *Vihara* with its interesting murals, being immediately destroyed, even though in the end he failed to keep the old *Vihara* standing. He also helped to create a museum in his residence to keep the artefacts that people donated or were discovered in the pagoda.

He also was very kind to the villagers. When they were sick he always went to visit. He also encouraged monks to teach them how to write and read. Moreover, he housed a great number of students and some of them could also eat there after the monks, so that they could continue their studies because they did not need to spend much on rent

or food. And when the people were in conflict with the authorities that wanted to demolish their *Cedeis*, he was their representative in negotiations. As a result people could keep their *Cedeis* in the same place. If we look at the *Anusangha Vacchāra* in the 22nd (1966: 104-105) and 26th (1970:115) the Royal government and the Ministry of Cult and Religion praised and thanked all the head monks and the monk officials such as the head monks of districts and provinces that helped the government in all ways such as eradicating the illiteracy of the people; constructing schools and libraries, hospitals, roads and bridges, and railway stations, educating students; digging ponds, wells, embankments, planting and protecting the forests; and preaching to people. In this way the actions of Ven. Oum Kev were praised and thanked by the government too.

The head monk nowadays does not have a high level of knowledge or capacity. Malon is in charge of his entire role, which in the 1960s was the work of the head monk. He does not help to provide tuition, nor does he manage the education of monks or insist that they respect their disciplinary rules. As a result, monks have a low level of knowledge and break their disciplinary rules, which people notice and criticise. The mistakes of monks and the indifference of the head monk have made people lose trust in the pagoda and they join in the pagoda's projects very little. As nine interviewees who come to this pagoda every *Tngai Sil* said, they come because it is near their houses or their parents used to come to this pagoda or they want to earn merit, but they never cited the qualities of the head monk as reasons for coming to the pagoda. Moreover, the monks also say that they come to study there because of the fame of good teachers from Kampuchea Krom or because there are no schools in their pagoda; they never say that it is due to the kindness or popularity of the head monk.

He does not lead the people in public works. Even though the *Vihara* is the most important building of the pagoda, it is still incomplete, it has taken four years already and most of the money comes from overseas Khmer people who used to live there or were ordained as monks in the 1960s.

He does not preach himself, nor encourage monks to preach morality to villagers. The elderly women, who come and cook food for the monks every day, never get liturgical moral and meditation training. Although one elderly woman wanted to run a *Dhamma* course for them, the head monk never cared to turn it into a reality. Consequently, they believe in Buddhism only because their parents did or through custom, they cannot explain Buddhist morality to their children who study in secular schools, and their children are considered as more intelligent persons than their parents.

This results in the presence of criminal elements in the village, who not only make conflict with the other villagers in the community, but also curse or want to hit the monks who were previously considered as pious, respected persons. Moreover, some people around pagoda do not think of morality anymore, they value possessions or money rather than keeping moral life. Some run restaurants showing pornographic films; some run computer game establishments, or snooker halls where students or young people go to play and bet; some villagers free their cows or pigs or throw their rubbish near or in the pagoda which before was held to be a sacred place. In addition, the head monk does not explain to the people the importance of listening or discussing the *Dhamma* with the monks or *Achar*, the pagoda committees, and the elderly women. For instance, people, especially elderly women do not want to stay in the pagoda for long; they have to return back to their businesses or look after their grandchildren. They think that it is enough for them to earn merit by offering food or money to the pagoda.

The head monk can be unkind. In the pagoda he curses the elderly women, monks who tear or cut his banana leaves or fruit, and encourages the students and monks to use violence against those who threaten them; monks have created slingshots to defend themselves. Moreover, the actions of the present head monk demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the decision of the Joint Declaration of the Seminar on the Intensification of the Buddhist Practices (1999: 64), the Joint Declaration of Meeting of the *Mahanikay* High Rank Monk Officials (1998:86-87), and 7th (1998:104-105), 8th 1999:64), 9th (2000:91-95), 11th (2002:97-100), 12th (2003:77) *Anusangha Vacchāra*. Similarly, the inattention of the staff of the Ministry of Cult and Religion and the head monk of the districts and provinces who were responsible for encouraging the head monk to function well, need to be noted.

The head monk is the key person in leading the work of the pagoda and the village in order to create community. In order to achieve this, he must be educated, pious and kind to people; so that people support him and his projects. People respected Venerable Oum Kev and supported his work. He was considered a model for all monks in Cambodia by Choan and Sarin, and also according to the 22nd, and 26th *Anusangha Vacchāra*. But if the head monk is not pious or educated and does not help to lead other monks to be pious and educated, people will not support his pagoda or his projects. And when there is no support from the villagers, there will be no development in the pagoda or the village. The present head monk of Tep Pranam pagoda receives little support from the people because he does not help with the development of the pagoda or the village. Decisions are also

made nationally that do not take into account the level of education or ability of the head monks in the provinces.

In general, monks cannot themselves go and contact or collect from people directly. They need a person to arrange this work. This is the *Achar* who is pious and devotes himself to serve the monks and villagers. He is considered a respectful person by the villagers.

In the 1960s Tep Pranam pagoda had two *Achar*. The *Achar Thom* helped to conduct ceremonies in the pagoda to raise money for pagoda projects and for people to make merit. He also conducted folk ceremonies, which people believed, without discrimination. He helped to forge good relationships with people who came to the pagoda. For example, he made contact with people who came from far away and served them food and drink. *Achar Rong* taught in the *Pali* primary school in Tep Pranam pagoda. They were regarded as pious, educated people. When there was conflict in the pagoda he helped to solve it, and when there was a conflict in the community, people asked him to help to solve their problem rather than going to a secular judge who they did not trust, whether honest or not.

Nowadays there are also two *Achar*. The *Achar* or *Achar Thom* helps to conduct Buddhist ceremonies, but the folk ceremonies are not celebrated because *Neak Ta* beliefs in the village do not appear to be as strong as previously. He appears not to help the pagoda much, spending his time earning money for his family rather than helping manage the pagoda or giving advice to monks. The elderly women, monks, and students dislike him because he only meets with them at mealtimes and shouts at the younger monks. Moreover, he appears not to be considered as a pious person any more, because when people have conflicts they now go to court although they know that some are corrupt. On the other hand, his actions to help people celebrate ceremonies in their houses are often paid in money. As for Malon, who is a pagoda committee member and *Achar Rong*, he is very popular inside and outside the pagoda. He has taken charge of all the head monk's work. He spends most of his time helping to restore the pagoda and provide an education for the monks. But he cannot provide good teachers because the pagoda cannot pay them well, nor does the government provide this service. Moreover, because he is busy with his job and his family, he cannot help manage the monks; therefore, they break the disciplinary rules and are criticised by the villagers. He is also quite conservative. He does not like monks who grow trees or preach about AIDS because he regards these as

against the Buddha's disciplinary rules, and he opposes one head monk who criticised his favorite Patriarch, Choun Nath. He denigrates the nearby *Dhammayut* pagoda and criticises Christianity. His actions are received well by his supporters, but it sows disunity in the community through religious discrimination and accusations. Moreover, these actions go against the advice of the 7th (1998:100), 8th (1999:90), 9th (2000:95) *Anusangha Vacchāra* that advised monks of both sects to come together, and allow the people to believe in whichever sect they liked, and for the monks or people in the pagoda to stop criticising each other.

He is considered as a pious person by people who asked his advice on what to say to a relative who owns a restaurant showing pornographic films, even though he was unable to help them in the end.

Neither *Achar* has had any training in document organisation, and there are few documents left regarding the pagoda or the monks. This problem also shows that the 8th (1999:87), 9th (2000: 93), 11th (2002:98) *Anusangha Vacchāra* has not worked at the grass root level because those *Anusangha Vacchāra* advised the head monks, *Achar*, and pagoda committees to ensure that their documentation is kept well-organized

So we can see that *Achar* play an important role in pagoda and village. They help provide services to the villagers and monks. In order to encourage people to support the pagoda, they bring information to them and conduct ceremonies to receive that support. Their work should ensure a good relationship between the people and the monks. However, if they are not pious and think only of their own interest, they will have problems with the monks or other people in the pagoda as is happening today in Tep Pranam pagoda. This makes for disunity and therefore, the pagoda cannot create community if it is not unified itself. If the *Achar* gives his favour only to his own pagoda like Malon, a pagoda committee or *Achar Rong*, this also makes for disunity with other pagodas. Moreover, the problem in Tep Pranam pagoda nowadays also demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the *Anusangha Vacchāra*. This stated that the head monks of districts and provinces, and staff of the Ministry of Cult and Religion were to help unify the local pagodas, and run courses on the care of artefacts and administration for the *Achar* or pagoda committees, so that they could control the pagodas' work properly.

In order to help unify the people, collaborate with them, and act righteously, the pagoda preaches morality and Buddhism to them. Therefore, they can continue to transfer their Buddhist knowledge or morality to their children or grandchildren.

In the 1960s, in Tep Pranam pagoda there were nine elderly people. Among them there were seven elderly women (*Donchi*), who functioned as cooks for monks, *Achar*, and students. Their work was very important, because people needed food from early morning to afternoon to study or preach or fulfil other work. Once the monks went out to ask for alms, there were not enough people to do all the preparation for nearly 80 monks and some students without them. In order to repay their good deeds, the monks taught them morality, liturgical texts, and meditation. In addition, among seven elderly women, there were four who returned back to their lives as house wives or farmers with knowledge at least of morality, so they could teach their children or grandchildren. For the laity, they received sermons on Buddhism or morality every *Tngai Sil* or in private conversation with head monks

Nowadays there are none of those elderly women (*Donchi*) or elderly men (*Tachi*) anymore in Tep Pranam pagoda. There are some elderly women who have the same important work to do as the elderly women in the 1960s who were cooks for the pagoda. These elderly women and the laity do not receive sermons or meditation from the monks as before, because there are no educated monks who have the ability to teach them. However, there is one former *Donchi* who wants to run *Dhamma* courses for elderly women and other laity, although this is currently not able to start. This shows clearly that the role of present elderly women is considered of lesser importance than the role of the elderly women in the 1960s, and it shows the inaction of the 9th (2000: 94) and 11th (2002:97-100) *Anusangha Vacchāra* and the Joint Declaration of Meeting of the *Mahanikay* High Ranking Monk Officials (1998:86) that advised the pagodas to provide Buddhist preaching to them. Moreover, if we look at ceremonies, especially the *Tngai Sil*, there are more women attendees than men. For example, one *Tngai Sil* attended by the researcher showed only 8 elderly men in attendance, including *Achar*, and members of the pagoda committee, but 25 elderly women. There is no course of *Dhamma* or meditation for them; this is a great loss for the pagoda, because if they know *Dhamma* they could function as mentors of morality to their young grandchildren and help them to respect monks and the pagoda like the elderly women in the 1960s. For instance, as discussed above, because of the loss of the transmission of moral teaching from the monks or elderly women and laity to their children or grandchildren some young people have become criminals and no longer respect their parents or monks. So we can see that women join to create community too. They could not only study with the monks, but also could transmit their knowledge of morality and basic Buddhism. But if they just serve the

monks their food, the pagoda loses another opportunity to create community with good mothers or good grandmothers in providing moral training to their families.

While Khmer pagodas provide teaching in religion to monks and laypeople, boys now prefer to attend secular schools. At these schools they do not receive formal moral training. But the poor still have to stay at the pagoda, which provides housing and food for them. The pagoda provides them with some moral teaching and in return they do work around the pagoda.

In the 1960s, 128 students at Tep Pranam schools came to live at the pagoda. This was cheap for their parents, and at night, the boys also received teaching in basic Buddhism from the head monk, so that they could behave righteously, and when they left the pagoda with their knowledge of Buddhism, they could pass this on to their children. In return they did some jobs around the pagoda such as cleaning or maintaining it. This work could be considered as training for them not to be lazy. Nowadays there are eight students who live at the pagoda but do not study there, because in their village the government has created a school for the children of villagers. Moreover, the pagoda can provide food for only three students; the others have to use their parents' money. Regarding housing, the pagoda cannot provide enough places for them as in the 1960s, so one student has to live in the cabin of a broken van. The students are considered more educated than the monks. One of the students has caused some conflict with other villagers. Another behaves like a criminal. There are several (the 9th (2000:94), and 11th (2002:98)) advices, which recommend monks to help teach students in the pagoda.

Consequently, the pagoda can encourage the students to create community. In the past they could live, sleep and study basic Buddhism, and become educated and polite persons in their community, but as the pagoda does not provide basic Buddhist teaching anymore to the students, they are no different from students who live outside the pagoda. Moreover, it shows the inattention of the head monk and the head monk of district and province and the staff of Ministry of Cult and Religions who have not been able to strengthen the *Anusangha Vacchāra*.

Khmer Buddhism involves many rituals. There were believed to be guardian spirits at the pagoda. In the 1960s there were two guardian spirits. Every Khmer New year, villagers came together to celebrate the ritual of these guardian spirits and invited the monks and *Achar* to lead it. They conducted rituals in order keep their village free

from trouble, epidemics, and to make it prosperous. There was a unity of thinking about the general interest of the village.

However, nowadays, there is only one guardian spirit in pagoda, but nobody celebrates rituals for her anymore. In the village, the general interest seems to have been superceded by personal interests. Moreover, if one needs a traditional healer or *Kru* to treat an illness or make a business do well, one goes to a *Kru* who lives near the pagoda. This shows clearly that villagers do not have unity in their village. Moreover, the healer expects payment, and does not teach people about morality. For example, one woman goes to ask the woman (*Kru*) to help to make her business as an abortionist do well. In addition, it also shows the inaction of the 11th *Anusangha Vacchāra* (2002:98) and the Speech of the Minister of Cult and Religion, Chea Saveun (1999:84-85), that encourages monks to tell people not to believe in *Kru* who cheat people out of their money¹⁰³.

Consequently, we can see that ritual can play an important role in unifying villagers. But if there are no agreed forms anymore then people think of their own interest rather than the interest of the whole village and can waste their money on *Kru*. This is an instance of disunity in the village.

In order to understand more why the monks in Tep Pranam pagoda in the 1960s were qualified in preaching and leading people to support their pagoda, but the monks in Tep Pranam pagoda nowadays are no longer qualified in the same way. It is useful to compare different sections of the questionnaires.

Student monks in the 1960s came from ten different provinces of Cambodia, but now the monks come from only 3 provinces to study here. This shows clearly that pagoda has lost its nation wide reputation and can no longer provide good teaching to its monks. It may also mean that there are other options for boys' education, especially in secular schools.

Table 3.1 and 4.1 showed that in the 60's, they all came from peasant families. But nowadays, they are not only peasants but among them, two have single mothers and one has single father, another has single mother who is a bread seller. We can see that the way of living of the monks nowadays appears more difficult than that of the monks in the 1960s, because they are not only poor but orphans too. This is an indicator of the major upheaval Cambodia experienced during the civil war period, where some people became

¹⁰³ He gave an example that one *Kru* told the people that the king of death wanted to kill all the young girls whose hair was long.

single mothers or fathers, placing more pressure on their impoverished situations¹⁰⁴. Moreover, Table 3.2 and 4.2 showed that in the 1960s among the family of the 57 monks there were 5.9 = 6 children in one family, and now the average number of children has risen to more than 6 children in each family of the 18 monks. So the number of the children has increased slightly and still causes problems. Therefore, we can see that both in the 1960s and nowadays, the pagoda is the place of education for the sons of the poor who cannot afford to study at secular schools.

According to Table 3.3, of 57 monks, there were only 18 coming to live as pagoda boys for a short period. However, nowadays, according to the data of CAS, there are few monks who come to live to study the *Dhamma Vinaya*; therefore, it is difficult for them to keep the disciplinary rules after they become monks. Moreover, the commune or village leaders charge for the ordination of future monks, from 20,000 to 100,000 riels each. There is also the cost of the ceremony itself. Therefore, many have to wait until there are several future monks coming to ordain together at the pagoda. This is an obstacle for young poor men who want to ordain. And if we look at the Circular of the Ordination, the Pagoda and Monk Management (Ly Suvira, 1999: 17-20), it criticised the authorities that took advantage of the future monks; however, this problem still continues. There are still major obstacles for the sons of the poor to access an education. It therefore means that the literacy rate remains low: according to the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (2000:70), the literacy rate of young people in Cambodia is currently only 37.1%.

According to Table 3.4 and 4.3, people in the 1960s preferred to ordain their children at the pagoda in their village or a nearby village because it was a very important ceremony in which the relatives and friends of the family of the future monks could join, and they would not have to pay for travel. And nowadays, this does not happen so much, which is different from before, but one other reason today is that the family of the monk can prepare special food or give other things such as milk or sugar, because the monks dislike the food in the pagoda or find going without an evening meal difficult at first.

In the 1960s, there was not such a problem about cleaning or maintaining the pagoda, because there were many students to help do this work. If there were some construction projects they helped in order to reduce expenditure. They were also there for their studies and religious roles. But nowadays, although the monks are supposed to get up in the early morning to clean the yard of the pagoda there appears to be some

¹⁰⁴ According to Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (2000: VI) almost 40% of Cambodian households still live below the poverty line

loosening of this rule. But sometime they help cut down trees or draw water or help in construction work. They do not do anything for the rest of the time. For their religious role they worship and recite the liturgical texts only in the evening.

In the 1960s, the monks enjoyed studying the *Pali* language more than other subjects. Although there is no clear evidence of their level of education, there are some indications, which show that at that time the pagoda had good teachers who graduated from the *Pali* high school. For example, the *Achar Rong* finished the *Pali* high school and specialized in many subjects such as Buddhism, geography and the history of Southeast Asia. There were many old people who came to study the morality, liturgical texts, and meditation with the monks during the retreat season too, because those monks had high knowledge and respected disciplinary rules. The head monk was qualified. Moreover, the government and the Ministry of Cult and Religions supported the education of the monks in the provinces too; for example, according to the 22nd *Anusangha Vacchāra* (1966:101) there were 745 qualified official monk teachers throughout the country in 1966. This is the reason that the monks of Tep Pranam pagoda in the 1960s were qualified to preach to the people the Buddhist morals and meant that the people were happy to support their pagoda. The number of monks today who are interested in *Pali* is still high. There are 15 who like to study *Pali*, but none appeared to know this subject well, because their teachers also did not appear knowledgeable. The teachers are former students at the pagoda. When they finished their study, the pagoda committee asked them to teach because they could not find other teachers. Moreover, monks appeared not to study at all during their nearly five-month vacation. As for the *Vinaya*, there is only one monk who enjoys studying it. He is the right sub-head monk. Other monks did not want to study it at all. So that's why they only know a little of the *Vinaya*.

Today many monks offend against the disciplinary rules. For example, they all like to play or listen to the radio or tapes, and sometimes watch TV; they leave their nails long and dirty to defend themselves from other monks. Their rooms are unhygienic, and they exchange their robes, which the people donate to them, for body or skin whitening cream etc. This leads to criticism from the villagers. As for the *Dhamma* there are only two monks that like to study it. Most monks study only enough liturgical texts to recite when invited to join people's ceremonies or recite in pagoda ceremonies. But some monks forget sections of liturgical verses when they recite. The pagoda senior monks think that the monks do not know the *Dhamma* well too, so they do not allow the monks to preach the *Dhamma* during the *Tngai Sil* or pagoda ceremonies. As for other subjects

outside Buddhism no one seems to study them at all. But it should be noted they all want to study English. Despite the 7th (1998:104), 8th (1999:91), 9th (2000:94), 11th (2002:98), 12th (2003:82-83) and the Meeting of the Affairs of Ministry of Cult and Religions with its City and Provincial Staffs (2002:88-99), the Joint Declaration of Meeting of the *Mahanikay* High Rank Monk Officials (1998:86), and the Joint Declaration of the Seminar on the Intensification of the Buddhist Practices (1999:102), which were determined to improve the education of the provincial monks, they do not appear to have worked if we consider the education of monks in Tep Pranam pagoda. According to the ‘Explanation of the Problem Involving the Ministry of Cult and Religions’ reported to Parliament (p.26-36), Minister Chea Saveun complained about the low level of education of the monks and he asked the government to help to pay for the recruitment of qualified monks to teach at Buddhist schools throughout the country. This plea in 1999 does not seem to have been heard. Moreover, recently Ven. Seng Sumuni, the sub-director of the Buddhist University suggested recruiting 300 qualified monks as teachers each year because currently there are only 85 official teacher monks throughout the country, who are paid by the government. However, the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Cult and Religions stated that the Ministry couldn’t pay for more than 85 teacher monks. In addition, from the evidence of the monks at Tep Pranam pagoda, there is corruption amongst examiners, and the same story has been heard in the examination for provincial teachers too (Ung, 2004:6) which has meant that the Ministry had unqualified teachers at Buddhist schools. Therefore, the monks at Tep Pranam pagoda today cannot be as qualified to preach to the people as the monks in the 1960s.

Tables 3.5 and 4.4 show that in 1960s monks came to live in Tep Pranam pagoda because they thought that it had high quality teachers and the head monk had high intellectual capacity, but now the monks come to study because there are no schools at their own pagoda, they want to study *Pali* or because they think that there are still some famous teacher there from Kampuchea Krom¹⁰⁵.

In Tables 3.6 and 4.5, a few monks both in the 1960s and nowadays want to remain as monks for life; for instance, in the 1960s there were 4, or 7% who wanted to remain monks, and nowadays there are 2 or 11% that want to remain monks for life. It shows that there are still few monks in Cambodia who want to remain as monks. However, in Tables 3.7 and 4.6 the monks in the 1960s who did not want to be monks for

¹⁰⁵ The Kampuchea Krom monk teachers left the pagoda in 2000.

life wanted to stay for 4 or 5 years to finish their study before they disrobed. Nowadays it seems the same because they want to remain as monks long enough to finish their *Pali* primary school. But according to Tables 3.8 and 4.7 what surprised the researcher was that among the 41 respondents in 1960s, 34 or 82% wanted to be peasants after they disrobed. But nowadays, among 18 respondents, there are only 3 monks or 16% of them who want to be peasants; others want to do other jobs which can help them make more money than peasants, mainly teachers, staff of NGOs or companies, Shopkeepers, etc.

Consequently, Tep Pranam pagoda then and now still plays a crucial role as the educational centre for the sons of the poor who cannot afford to study in secular schools. But nowadays, the local authorities charge future monks, and the ordination ceremony is very expensive. This is a major obstacle for sons of the poor to access an education. Moreover, this problem is one reason for the high illiteracy rate of young people today. There is currently a poor education being offered because there are not many good teachers in the *Pali* schools. The pagoda cannot afford to hire good teachers for its school. It can only get teachers from the students who have just finished their study at its school. Ministry of Cult and Religions and monk officials need to work together to improve the education of the monks in the provinces and eliminate corruption in the examination system as they promised in the *Anusanghavadhāra*., The government nowadays does not help to pay for the recruitment of qualified monks to teach in the provinces either. Finally the low level of education and the weak management of the head monk or the sub-head monk allows the monks to relax their studies and disciplinary rules. These actions leave them open to criticism from local people.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As described in Chapters 1 and 3, pagodas created community until the 1960s by functioning as an educational, social, moral, and cultural centre. Tep Pranam pagoda was one of those pagodas, which helped to develop its community in the 1960s. This was acknowledged at government level and internationally. It served to mobilise people through various projects such as the construction of schools and libraries, digging ponds, wells; planting the forests and protecting the old *Vihara*; it educated monk students who were the poor sons of the villagers, and preached to people to behave in a righteous way, and act well towards other villagers; it provided food and accommodation to a great number of students to continue their study in secular schools; and helped to reduce the illiterate rate in the village. All this work helped to conserve the government budget and develop the country. The pagoda became prestigious because of the people in the pagoda, especially the head monk. He was educated and qualified. He helped to lead the people inside the pagoda to be pious and educated so that they could function as mentors of morality or Buddhism, and as effective teachers. Moreover, he extended his role outside the pagoda. He helped to persuade people to build secular schools. And he provided accommodation and food for many secular students. He showed that if the people helped to support the pagoda, they supported their own sons too. He also helped to solve village disputes with the authorities.

It is regrettable, from the evidence in preceding chapters that, Tep Pranam pagoda no longer functions well in creating community because during the DK period, many educated monks and the religious texts were destroyed; and PRK restricted the Buddhism for nearly 10 years, and nowadays has seen the emergence of young people who have not received religious training.. Moreover, the head monk of Tep Pranam pagoda nowadays is uneducated and unqualified and the monks under his control neither respect their disciplinary rules nor study hard. They spend most of their time chatting or watching TV. They have no role models to emulate. The head monk is unable to guide and inspire the student monks or the laity. This leads to criticism locally. He does not lead the people to do public works as his predecessor did. Malon tries to make this pagoda an educational center, but there are no qualified teachers. As a result, the monks are not qualified to preach to people about morality or Buddhism. This may be the case in many pagodas,

given the role of radio in performing this task. The people believe in Buddhism because of their parents or custom; they do not understand its importance. Moreover, the position of monks as pious and educated persons is threatened by criminals in the village.

In their community, there is some religious discrimination between the *Dhammayut* and *Mahanikay* pagodas, and between the modern *Mahanikay* and the traditional *Mahanikay* Buddhism. The people at different pagodas do not try to unify the people, but they do try to influence the villagers to discriminate and criticise each other.

The people in the pagoda are poor at administrative affairs, including the preservation of artifacts, books and accounts. Some pagoda buildings no longer represent Khmer pagoda architecture. If this trend continues, little by little, Khmer pagoda architecture will disappear from pagodas like Khmer house architecture has disappeared largely from the city. Eventually no one will be able to see which is the pagoda and which is an ordinary house. These problems above have arisen partly because monk officials and the Ministry of Cult and Religions tend to issue declarations to help to restore Buddhism more than trying to strengthen the religion at the grass roots level. And the government refuses to recruit qualified monks for Buddhist schools in the provinces.

Therefore, we can conclude that the pagoda can function as an educational, social, cultural, and moral centre mainly through the people in the pagoda, primarily the head monk. He must be pious, educated, and help the monks under his control to study hard and respect their disciplinary rules. Head monk must be kindly and pay attention to the villagers in order to protect the interest of the community. He has to help teach the students in the pagoda morality and Buddhism and encourage the parents to teach their children good behaviour. Therefore, the actions of the head monk can ensure that the pagoda becomes a centre again; firstly to help to unite people in the family and then help to unite all the families as a community. At that time, when the community has unity, there will be development and even if other powerful want to take advantage of their community they would fail. However, if the head monk does not do all of this, there will be problems in the community. Each person tends to put their own interests above those of the community, and they do not consider that their actions could have a negative impact on others. And when there are problems in the village community, there will be problems in society as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the evidence given, the Buddhist Institute needs to take action to improve its branch libraries in the provinces, because they are not working properly and many books have been lost. Perhaps one person needs to have responsibility at the pagoda for the library, working closely with, and being trained by, the Buddhist Institute.

The Ministry of Cult and Religion needs to reform its strategy. It should not only issue declarations but also encourage its staff to work with the head monks of the provinces and districts to help to teach the people in the pagoda, especially the head monk, to manage their pagoda well. If the Ministry delays further and does not work to strengthen the functions of local pagodas, little by little those pagodas will lose their good reputations and the proverb of the Khmer Rouge will come true, that, “monks are parasites on the villagers” and Buddhist culture will decline rapidly in the country.

Given that pagodas in the 1960’s helped to develop Cambodia successfully, and efficiently, through literacy campaigns, building infrastructure and religious teaching, the government might now rethink the role of the pagoda nationally and help to revitalise the important role of Buddhism in developing the nation.

APPENDIX



Figure1: The Old Vihara in the 1960s, which Was Considered a Heritage Building by the Head Monk and Government



Figure 2: The New Vihara Today



Figure 3: The Hotria or Library and Museum in the 1960s



Figure 4: The Hotria Today



Figure 5: The Pali Primary Schools in the 1960s



Figure 6: The Pali Primary School Today

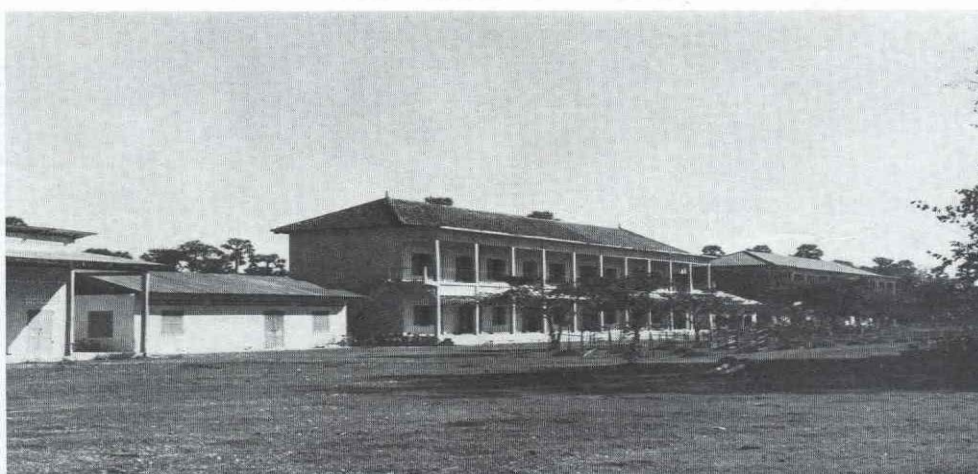
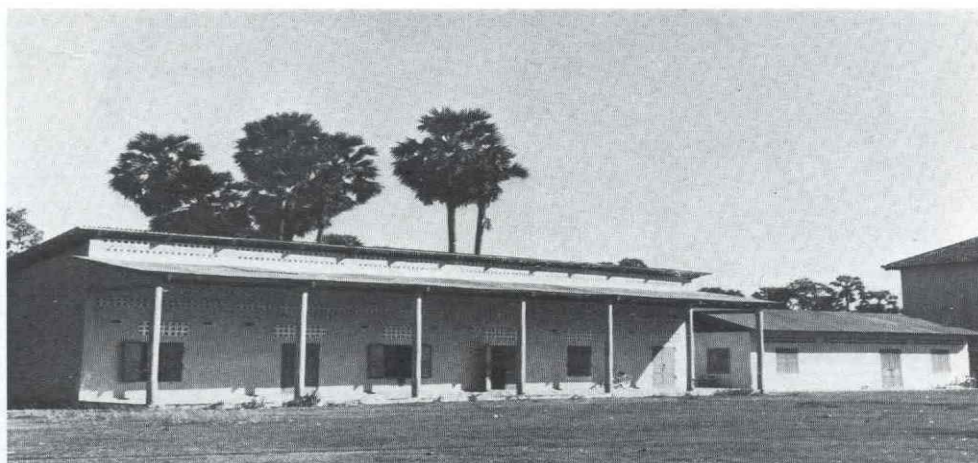


Figure 7: The Secular Schools that Head Monk Oum Kev Led People to Build



Figure 8: These Schools still remain and are in Use Today



Figure 9: The Monks in the 1960's doing Carpentry Work



Figure 10: Ancient Statues Believed to Date from the 16th Century
Left under the Trees

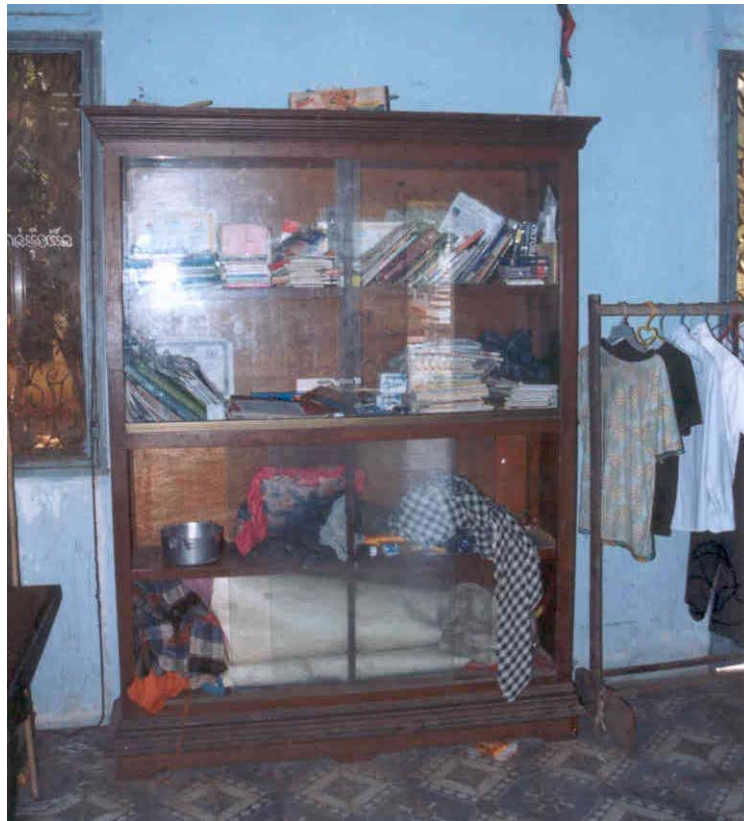


Figure 11: Many Books in the Library Were Lost



Figure 12: The Cows Are Freed in the Pagoda



Figure 13: Traces of Thieves who cut Iron off the Vihara



Figure 14: The broken Van which a Student uses to live in

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