A WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BUDDHIST COMMUNITY:
CHARISMA IN CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

Today the religion of Buddhism is enjoying much worldwide attention. In Asia, movements of reform are gaining strength and in Western society different forms of Buddhism are emerging.

This research records the establishment of a Theravada Buddhist community in Western Australia. Migrants and refugees from traditional Buddhist countries join together with many Westerners 'new' to Buddhism to support an ordained community.

My central argument in this thesis is that this monastic leadership is the principal element of continuity of the religion. As Western monks, they are largely responsible for the transmission of the practice of Buddhism from one culture to another. They have the language, societal knowledge, education and expertise of Western society into which Buddhism is being introduced and hence preserve the teaching and practice of the religion in a new society.

I further argue that the leadership of the Western monks not only ensures continuity of tradition but also cohesiveness within a diverse community. The ordained community acts as a pivot around which contrasting forces converge. The interaction that occurs between ordained/non-ordained, male/female, East/West, traditional and 'new' Buddhists, creates a vibrant living community.

A quality of 'charisma' manifest in the ordained leadership is identified as the catalyst that enables Buddhism to take root in a new society. As Buddhist teaching is transferred from master to disciple, personal charisma, charisma of office and lineage charisma result in the establishment of a forest monastery in Western Australia. Charisma persists because of the monastic adherence to the austere and rigorous practice of this tradition.
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NOTES AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

English language Buddhist terms are used most of the time, for example, monk instead of bhikkhu, Nirvana instead of Nibanna.

The non-English terminology will be highlighted only when used the first time in the text.

A Glossary is provided to limit lengthy explanations throughout the text.

'Kampuchea(n)' the official term for that country is used throughout the thesis, whereas Burma is used instead of the official new name 'Myanmar' for that ethnic group.

Traditional or 'born' Buddhists: A term used to denote those lay people (and their children) who are Buddhists from birth. In this thesis it mostly concerns families from South East Asian Buddhist countries.

Westerners. I use this term to denote those members of the lay community born and raised in a Western culture (Australians; European and North American migrants). Traditional Buddhists often call Westerners, those 'new' to Buddhism.

Ajahn (Engl.) Honorific term for a graduate or honoured teacher or lecturer. Used for both monks and lay people or acharn (Thai)

Arahant saint – one who has reached the final stage of Enlightenment

Bia Sema An upright stone slab placed at the four corners and midpoint of each side of a bot (see bot) – designating sacred area

Bhikkhu Ordained monk

Bhikkhuni Ordained nun

Bodhi Tree (ficus religiosa). A tree growing in the monastery donated by Sri Lankans. It was a cutting from the Bodhi tree in Sri Lanka, which grew from a cutting from the original sacred tree under which the Buddha attained Enlightenment.

Bot Popular word for ubosot; building specially consecrated for performing the most important ceremonies of the Sangha

Chedi A religious monument, a 'memorial'; originally a funeral mound.

Dana 'Charity' or process of 'giving' implies generosity, sometimes taken to mean food-offering

Dhamma Law, truth, reality, natural order of the cosmos; in Theravada Buddhism, also used as the teaching of the Buddha as contained in the Pali scripture based on that natural order.
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<td>Dhammacakkra</td>
<td>Disc or wheel symbol. Represents the Wheel of the Law which the Buddha set into motion when he preached the first sermon.</td>
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<td>Dhammayut</td>
<td>Reformist and smaller sect of the Thai Sangha.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dukkha</td>
<td>Literally means 'suffering': that life is 'unsatisfactory', the first of the four Noble Truths.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hinayana</td>
<td>Yana, 'way', or 'vehicle' Hina, 'lesser'; derogatory term applied to one branch of Buddhism by another branch (see Mahayana); claimed to be closer to the original teachings; at one time there were many sects in the Hinayana branch but today only one remains (Theravada).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jataka</td>
<td>'Birth Stories'; collection of 547 tales of previous lives of the Buddha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karma</td>
<td>'Action' or 'doing'; both Buddhists and Hindus accept the idea of an endless chain of rebirths based upon cause and effect, one's new birth dependent upon the cumulative effect of one's actions in past lives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kathin</td>
<td>(Thod Kathin). Ceremony to present new robes to the Sangha at the end of Lent (rainy season).</td>
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<td>Kuti</td>
<td>Small huts or living quarters large enough for individual members of the Sangha.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mahayana</td>
<td>the 'great way,' 'greater Vehicle;' a major branch of Buddhism which separated from the Hinayana about the second century A.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mahanikaya</td>
<td>The largest and oldest sect in the Thai Sangha.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maechii</td>
<td>Thai nun living by ascetic rules.</td>
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<td>Nirvana</td>
<td>State of release from earthly bonds, offerings and delusion, an escape from the necessity for rebirth; a state of being which is indescribable, not identical to nothingness or annihilation.</td>
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<td>Pali</td>
<td>Language used in sacred texts.</td>
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<td>Pha Pa</td>
<td>Individual or group merit-making act not necessarily during lent (rainy season).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phansa</td>
<td>(Vassa). Buddhist 'lent', an annual three-month rainy season retreat when monks remain based at one monastery.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samsara</td>
<td>The cycle of perpetual flux, literally meaning &quot;to wander through intensely&quot;. Is used to designate the cycle of transmigration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samadhi</td>
<td>Concentration meditation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samanera</td>
<td>Novice, term for one year training period before full ordination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangha</td>
<td>Literally means 'group'. This term has been generally accepted as the ordained Buddhists.</td>
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<td>Term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sangha–Arya</td>
<td>Literally 'Noble Persons': a class name for those more spiritually aware or spiritually elect group.</td>
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<td>Theravada</td>
<td>Thera, 'elders'; vada 'words or school' literally 'The School or Teaching of the Elders' only remaining Hinayana sect today, its texts in the Pali language, practised in much of Southeast Asia.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vihara (wihan)</td>
<td>Originally an abode for monks, gradually extended to include a meeting place for monks; in Thailand a building in which religious services are held both for monks and lay people. In Western Australia, the major building of the Town Centre complex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinaya</td>
<td>The code of monastic discipline as laid down in the Vinayapitaka.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vipassana</td>
<td>Insight meditation, a form of meditation aiming for liberating insight into reality.</td>
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I gained an initial understanding of Buddhism in Thailand over a twelve-month period ending in September, 1983. During this time I endeavoured to discern Buddhism as a universal teaching, both separate to, and as part of, Thai culture.

I observed many forms of practice in different areas of Thailand, including the capital city of Bangkok. The whole spectrum of Buddhism from village folk animist-Buddhist practices to new radical forms of Buddhism was experienced by visiting monks and monasteries throughout Thailand. (Return visits in 1986, 1987 and 1989 helped me keep abreast of developments in Buddhism.) I gained further insight through voluntary work at the National Museum in Bangkok, through membership of the Siam Society and through personal contacts with many Thai people.

When I returned to Western Australia in September, 1983, I found further opportunity for study in the form of an emerging Buddhist community under the leadership of Western monks who had trained in Thailand. Although I only enrolled in a postgraduate degree at the beginning of 1986, I spent a period of five years engaged in participant observation and note taking concerning the development and dynamics of this community. After particular events I took brief notes often sitting in the car nearby. More extensive writing up took place later. I have observed all significant facets of Buddhist practice involving the diverse lay membership in Western Australia. I have visited private homes, made weekly visits to the town centre in Nollamara and stayed at the forest monastery in Serpentine. Many overseas Buddhists visiting the community have also stayed in my home providing extra hours of valuable discussion. I have analysed documents, publications, cassette tapes and literature from the community.
My ability to obtain information derived from the development of a good personal relationship with the Sangha (body of ordained men and women) and many friendships with individual members of all ethnic groups involved. Many Western members of the community were personal friends. Respondents in this study, including the monks, related information and stories because they knew that I had travelled extensively and lived in a Buddhist country. My knowledge of Thailand denoted that I was suitable and acceptable, not only to receive information but to exchange ideas on the decisions that were being made as Buddhism established in Western Australia. My position as neutral listener was accepted by both traditional Buddhists and Westerners new to Buddhism. Both viewed my role and background as creating an 'independent' member in the community.

At times, the closeness between myself and those who were the object of the study, presented objective difficulties that needed to be addressed. Another problem encountered was the continuous and rapid rate of change occurring in the community, in particular the ever increasing number of lay followers.

My occupation as a teacher of English language to overseas Asian students added value by providing more information on Buddhists in Western Australia. The South East Asians in the Buddhist community and parents of students I taught, viewed my teaching profession as a sign of status and respectability.

Many in the Buddhist community consider that a decision to do research that involves study and involvement with Buddhist teaching, monks and monasteries, is not only a profitable acquisition of acknowledge but also a great field of merit.

I must acknowledge that involvement with the community, and the teachings around which it evolves, have been invaluable to me personally.
I would like to sincerely thank all members of the Buddhist community of Western Australia for their time and the valuable comments they offered during the period of this research.

I am also indebted to the Department of Anthropology, University of Western Australia for the support given and in particular my supervisors Dr John Gordon and Dr Michael Pinches for their encouragement and guidance.
SECTION I

BACKGROUND

In order to discuss the emergence of a traditional Theravada Buddhist community in Western Australia this section provides a brief background of the religion's traditional structure and its Thai heritage. The concept of charisma is used as an explanatory framework to show how the organisational structure of the Western Australia Buddhist community evolves. The leadership of an ordained monastic community illustrates the operation of different facets of charisma, which, together with the convergence of different lay Buddhist practitioners at a particular time and place, creates a dynamic Buddhist community.
CHAPTER I
THE PERSPECTIVE

1.1 Introduction

Buddhism is the Western term for the religion founded on the teachings of the Buddha. The teaching (Dhamma) began over two-and-a-half thousand years ago. When Siddhattha Gotama experienced Enlightenment, a self-realisation, or understanding of the nature of existence, he set in motion the Wheel of the Law (Dhammacakkra) for others to follow. This doctrine outlines a practical path situated midway between the extremes of asceticism and self indulgence. Any individual who lives a simple, moderate lifestyle, and applies the reflective thought of conscious awareness and meditation, can achieve this wisdom or understanding, that is, 'Buddhahood' (individual Enlightenment).

From its inception traders, immigrants and pilgrims spread the Buddha's teachings to many countries and the religion developed different schools and styles. Buddhist practice that evolved from the teaching transforms and adapts in the many cultures in which it takes root. Because the religion preaches tolerance, wherever it goes, it takes on local colour from the other religions and cultures it meets. Throughout its history the Sangha was at the centre of the development of Buddhism in a new society.

In Western countries interest in Buddhist teaching is rapidly increasing as it appeals to the individual as a means of personal liberation. In the West, as in Asia, Buddhism is now evolving as a cultural phenomenon. In the past few decades traditional Buddhist communities, rather than just individual followers, have grown in number. In a traditional community lay Buddhists support the Sangha who live a monastic life, where they study, practise and teach the Dhamma. As individuals, members of the Sangha seek the path of self-enlightenment and at the same time help
others in the lay community towards the same goal. However, as Buddhism enters the West the question arises: why has the traditional dichotomy between ordained and non-ordained followers perpetuated?

Most of the monastic communities in the West represent Buddhist traditions from Asia, for example Tibet, Vietnam or Thailand, led by their own Sangha. The majority of Western Buddhists adhere to communities led by lay people, not necessarily ordained men and women (Snelling, 1987, Morreale, 1988). That is, they are lay-oriented communities (see Chapter 1.2). Fields (1986:390) concludes in his history of American Buddhism that it is "hammering out its own shape: an emphasis on community in place of monastery, house-holder in place of monk." Similarly Kornfield (1988:xv) believes the challenge of Buddhism in America lies in the direction of lay-oriented communities. Many of the young Western men and women who have spent many years as ordained Buddhist monks or nuns in Asia, disrobe on returning to the West.

In Western Australia the Theravada Buddhist monastic community that is the focus of my study contrasts with this trend. Western monks who have returned to their own society, have continued their monastic practice here and in so doing have created an opportunity for others to join the Sangha. A ceremony ordaining the first Australian-born Theravada Buddhist monk on Australian soil was held on March 23, 1987 at the Bodhinyana monastery, Serpentine, Western Australia. A ceremony at the monastery held beforehand consecrating the new ubosot (ordination hall) enabled this historic ordination to take place. A young 25-year old local University science graduate donned the yellow robe, adopted a Pali name and became a member of the Buddhist Sangha, one of the oldest monastic traditions of the world.
The historical Buddhism of 2,600 years is now a thriving and fast growing reality in Western Australia. The combination of two factors: increased Asian migration and increased interest on the part of Westerners in religions outside their own culture, results in the growth of this community. The Western monks who returned to their own culture after many years training in North East Thailand came from a tradition of meditating forest monastery monks. They are supported by many Buddhists from traditional Buddhist countries (Thailand, Sri Lanka, Kampuchea, Burma and other Asians) and also by many Westerners who are 'newcomers' to Buddhism. The Sangha leadership inherited from, and grounded in a forest monastery tradition, helps transcend the potentially divisive differences among members from varying traditions due to diverse backgrounds and expectations. The Sangha is the central core around which a wide spectrum of Buddhist practice occurs within the one community.

When Buddhism reached Sri Lanka in the third century B.C., the King asked "When will the roots go deep?" The reply by the son of the Indian Emperor Asoka, Mahinda Thera, is often quoted: "When a son born in Sri Lanka, of Sri Lankan parents, becomes a monk in Sri Lanka, studies the Vinaya in Sri Lanka and recites it in Sri Lankan, then the roots of the Sasana (Buddhism) are deep set" (Rahula:1978:55). This criterion is now met in Western Australia. The Australian monk described above was born just a few kilometres away from the Buddhist monastery where he entered the monastic order and studied and recited the Vinaya (rules and regulations for the ordained). In Western Australia, members of the Sangha have the same cultural background and language as the new society into which Buddhism has been introduced.

My central argument is that as Theravada Buddhism enters Western Australia the emerging Western Sangha order is the principle element of continuity of the religion. The members of the Sangha are not the only
agents responsible for the spread of the religion but they do act as major catalysts in this process. I argue that members of the Western Sangha are the professional leaders who:

(a) preserve the 'core' teaching and practice of the religion;
(b) transmit Buddhism from one culture to another;
(c) sustain the links necessary between 'old' and 'new' Buddhist communities (Thailand and Western Australia);
(d) facilitate the dynamic integration of 'old' and 'new', Eastern and Western in a new community;
(e) enable a wide spectrum of practice of the religion to occur

I extend this argument to further suggest that the Sangha plays the same facilitating role in contemporary Western Australia as it always has as Buddhism has spread from one country to another throughout its history.

Western Buddhists who support this monastic community consider the order of a Sangha relevant to Western society and the twentieth century. I found that this support of the Sangha in Western Australia adds credence to past studies that portray the Sangha as constituting the leaders of evolving communities and the 'professionals' in Buddhists practice (see Chapter 1.1.3). In addition, the present research, by recording the Sangha's role at very early stages of Buddhism's entry in a new society, provides a rare illustration of how the process of acceptance of Buddhism in a new setting occurs. This thesis presents a descriptive account of a Western Australian Theravada Buddhist community that evolves around the presence of a traditional Sangha. Rather than comparing this Sangha-led community with a lay-oriented community, I describe in detail the unique Western Sangha leadership and the associated organisational structure providing an account of the Sangha's vital role in this evolutionary process.

Furthermore my thesis supports Katz' (1978:34) hypothesis "that Buddhism could not take a firm footing in the West unless a true dialogue is entered
upon" (see Chapter 6, 7 and 8). He suggests that "one-way missionary activity might serve to introduce Dhamma (Buddhist teaching), but only true dialogical meeting can establish it." The development of a Western Sangha described in this thesis is a key factor in this dialogue as it sustains the links between 'old' and 'new' Buddhist communities: Thailand and Western Australia respectively.

Initial support for emerging Buddhist communities in another culture can be, and often is, reciprocated when deterioration of the religion occurs in the country of origin. China maintained a relationship with India via Buddhism for many centuries (I-ching, 1986:xviii). Japan and Korea, whose monks visited China, also valued Buddhism as an avenue for international dialogue. Sri Lanka and Thailand gave each other mutual support when needed for the re-establishment of legitimacy in religious practice in Buddhist communities. More recently, the sacred point of reference for the emerging Zen Buddhist tradition in America, was Japan (Prebish, 1978b:157). In this Western Australian community, Buddhist pilgrim activity creates social and economic links between Thailand and Western Australia. These links have political significance as they offer support to 'reform' movements in Thai Buddhism (see Chapter 7).

The Sangha provides the continuity of leadership necessary as Buddhism enters Western society. The Sangha also encounters both challenge and change as it establishes itself in a new culture. In this thesis the concept of 'charisma' is used to identify the qualities that are perceived to inhere in the Sangha. I will maintain that it is this perception of charisma which accounts for the strengths of the Sangha as the leaders in the community. It assists in the preservation of Buddhist teaching, in the transmission of the religion and in the maintenance of links between 'old' and 'new' Buddhist traditions, such that a well founded and deeply rooted community is established in the new setting.
1.2 Charisma

Weber (1947:359) defined charisma as follows:

"The term 'charisma' will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader...

How the quality in question would be ultimately judged from any ethical, aesthetic, or other point of view is naturally entirely indifferent for purposes of definition. What is alone important is how the individual is actually regarded by those subject to charismatic authority by his 'followers' or 'disciples'."

In society today charisma is understood to be an unusual quality in a person that attracts followers: it can be present in popstars and prominent politicians as well as religious leaders. For decades many Westerners have read about Buddhism in books and been attracted to its teachings, but in this community in Western Australia a quality of charisma operates in the leadership offering its followers a different way to think and a different way to act. It is a religious leadership that transforms people and their approach to life.

Throughout the thesis I put forward a number of reasons why traditional Buddhists and 'newcomers' to Buddhism support the Western Sangha. Westerners throughout the world are attracted to Buddhism for a variety of reasons, and I do not suggest that 'charisma' is the only factor behind this interest. Buddhism is seen as one of a number of Eastern spiritual traditions which appeal to Westerners who are in search of meaning to their life experience and are looking for a "system for understanding and promoting deep personal change" (Claxton, 1987:9). The Buddhist ideology provides one solution to a variety of personal and collective predicaments.
present in today's world. It provides 'new ideas' that meet the needs and aspirations of the lay people as testified by many 'newcomers' who speak of an individual 'crisis' which they see as related in turn to 'crises' in the world system, and believe that Buddhist teachings are relevant (see Chapter 6.2).

Although many offer such rationales for their participation in the Western Australian community under discussion, I propose that the lay Buddhist's interest is captured and held as much by the charisma operating through the leadership as by the philosophic dimensions of Buddhist thought. At all times the pivot around which this diverse lay community functions is the Sangha. Many 'newcomer' Buddhists do not only apply a new philosophical and psychological approach to life but adopt Buddhism as a religion. They enter into a relationship with the Sangha, engage in Buddhist ritual and in so doing come into contact with other lay Buddhists. It is this process of adopting or maintaining religious commitment that is the focus of the present thesis. In this process I view charisma as the rationale underlying the social structure that evolves and revolves around the Sangha.

When used as a tool of discovery, Weber's concept of charisma points not only to qualities of an individual person, but also to properties inherent in the traditional order (1947:364). These interlinked concepts which operate through the Sangha in this Buddhist community are (1) personal contact charisma of a high individual quality, (2) charisma of office (Amtascharisma), and (3) a form of lineage-charisma (Gentilcharisma). These different dimensions of charisma do not conflict, but interact and at times merge. The strength of the leadership role of the Sangha lies in the fusion of these different facets of charisma operating in the one community.

Although difficult to analyse sociologically, charisma "can be identified by the social effects it produces" (Leger, 1982:45). Similarly, Wallis (1982b:38)
characterises charisma in terms of "social relationships" that are "situationally generated". The community has evolved because the time and place, that is, the 1980's and Australia, provided the conditions ripe for the emergence of charisma. In Western Australia migrants and refugees (Thais, Burmese, Sri Lankan, Kampuchean and many other Asian Buddhist individuals and families) and 'newcomers' to Buddhism (Westerners) come together to support a Sangha composed of Westerners. The sole reason for the Asian and Western lay Buddhists' interaction lies in their common interest and joint efforts in support of the Sangha. The former are responding to a tradition where the charisma is already generated through the 'routinisation' of a charisma of office, and the latter are responding to the charisma of new ideas, and see the Sangha as a prophetic element in society.

Common to both Asian and Western lay Buddhists is their orientation to the Sangha overall. Both speak of the legitimacy of the message, the traditional sources and the present qualities of the monks who both exemplify the message and deliver it. The traditional Buddhists stress past culture, comfort and continuation of tradition. These facets of charisma were present from the day the Sangha entered the community in 1982. The intensity of the perceived charisma has persisted right up to the present moment and continues to work because both parties, Sangha and lay, benefit. A traditional reciprocal relationship between ordained and non-ordained occurs. However the form of social exchange is wide and generalised not mutually exclusive. Reciprocity is a key factor in the social cohesiveness of the community (see Chapter 3).
1.2.1 Charisma – personal
The Buddhist community relies on the leadership of two senior teaching monks, both of whom have a special personal relationship to the community. The senior monk, the Abbot, in particular has a personal appeal for the majority of lay Buddhists. For the ‘newcomers’ to Buddhism, the Westerners, a perception of personal 'charisma' is also present because the Western Sangha are seen as bearers of a 'new order'. In the leadership provided by the Abbot, it is difficult to separate the 'man' as a person from what he projects, that is, the order of the Sangha and its teaching.

As leader of the ordained and the lay community the Abbot exhibits both a charisma of leadership through (i) his personal qualities, (ii) an exemplary ascetic monastic lifestyle, and (iii) the Dhamma (Buddhist teaching) which he provides.

(i) Personal leadership qualities
Personal integrity and high moral values, a formal education, a wealth of experience as a monk, knowledge of the Buddhist teaching, effective teaching methods, quiet self-confidence, equanimity, persistence, and a concern for and encouragement of others, are all good leadership qualities projected by the Abbot. Throughout the period of this research lay Buddhists commented regularly on the Abbot's 'tremendous energy' and 'self-reliance'. This reinforces the impression of good leadership. His personal style is characterised by optimism, directness and integrity. His ordained status contributes to the appearance of a control of 'inner-self' which is linked to effective leadership control. The paradox that exists in the Buddhist forest monastery tradition is that the less the 'ego' is seen to be operating in the teacher, the more apparent is his charisma (see Chapter 1.3.3). This is counter to the projection of expressiveness associated with the definition of charisma in other contexts. It is almost charisma by default.
(iii) Exemplary ascetic monastic lifestyle
There is a series of 'checks and balances' that grounds the personal charisma of the Abbot in the organisational processes of the Sangha. The charisma is tempered by the context of communal living with its rules and regulations. Personal charisma is also enhanced being situated in such a context. The discipline exercised in a community of ordained Buddhists contributes to an image of respectability in the leader. Thus the forest monastery tradition and its authenticity are the key factors in sustaining the charisma of the leadership. No controversy surrounds the man or the order (see Chapter 7). Throughout the thesis I will indicate how specific visual signs (dress, hair shaved, deportment, etc.) as well as the separation of monk and lay people (no touching, withdrawal to the monastery and celibacy) contribute to charisma.

(iii) The Dhamma (Buddhist teaching)
Further charisma is derived from the salvation message delivered. It is the Dhamma (teaching of the Buddha) and meditation training techniques offered by the Sangha that attract many 'newcomer' Westerners to Buddhism. These 'newcomers' speak of signs, proofs and the relevance of the message and its delivery, and credit the leadership with special qualities. This supports the view that charisma exists only in so far as it is recognised by others (Wallis, 1982b:26) and that a charismatic 'breakthrough' represents "the sudden eruption into history of quite new forces, often linked to quite new ideas" (Berger & Luckmann 1966:49).

Parsons (1947:65) commenting on Weber's theory of institution building, says that "the authority of the leader does not express the 'will' of his followers, but rather their duty or obligation". This is illustrated in the reciprocal relationship between the Sangha and lay community (see Chapter 3, 4 and 5). Most 'newcomer' Westerners begin this response to the 'prestige' of the Sangha in the setting of the teacher/pupil relationship
(see Chapter 5). The wit, intellect and personal appeal of the Sangha, particularly the Abbot, attract followers. There is a personal affection for and identification with his goals and followers like to be in his presence. The message (Buddhist Dhamma) taught is only valuable if exemplified in its messengers (the Sangha). The persistent ascetic lifestyle validates the message.

1.2.2 Charisma – office
The precariousness of charisma and the need for its constant reinforcement and protection is noted by Weber (1947:360) and others, for example Wallis (1982a:5). Because personal charisma of the leadership in the community under discussion is important to the continuity of the community, the question often arises: what would happen if and when the leadership changed? When charisma emerges, and is recognised, it must also be maintained.

If the theory of 'routinisation' of charisma into order is applied, the community should sustain itself on the strength of the social structure that evolves. The organisation of the Sangha itself maintains sufficient charisma for continuity of a community. In this study, personal charisma is seen as an integral part of a historical process of routinisation and maintenance and not necessarily distinct from that process. Because a latent potential for reinterpretation of personal charisma presents itself from time to time, charisma is inherent in the authority and order of the Sangha. In Western Australia, inheritance of an already established traditional order ensures this continual 'routinisation' process, for example by facilitating an adequate number of successors through ordination and a transference of authority through ceremonies and rites. Legitimacy is claimed by the Sangha and accepted by the lay community which maintains the authority of the order.
Ishii (1986:78) comments that personal charisma of Thai monks, though manifesting from time to time over the years, is an unreliable support for the ongoing development of Buddhism. He sees "the characteristic qualities of the Sangha itself, which derive from the legitimacy of the Sangha's succession from the Buddha, and are sustained by the correct observance of the precepts by its members" as the key to its prosperity. The acquisition of a kind of "ex-officio charisma" derives from proper ordination and a moral life. Tambiah (1984:330) similarly writes of two kinds of charisma, one volatile and the other institutionalised. These two dimensions are not necessarily separate and are continually manifested in the Western Australian community under discussion (see Chapters 4 and 7).

In the Western Australian community collective charisma operates through the exemplary ascetic lifestyle of the monks and their pursuit of purity. In Buddhism purity is not a state but a never-ending quest. All those who enter the monastic community to pursue this quest offer total personal commitment; therefore purity is defined here as strict adherence to the Vinaya (rules and regulations for the ordained). Their pursuit of this purity is not an end in itself but it results in power to the one who pursues it. The closer and more authentic the practice, the more perceived purity, the more legitimacy, the more charisma, and the more followers. The Western Sangha's adoption of the forest monastery interpretation of the Vinaya and strict adherence to it has attracted numerous lay followers. In North East Thailand this charisma is seen in Buddhist 'saints' who have acquired a charisma through a personal quest based on renunciation by virtue of their detachment and discriminating wisdom on the one hand, and universal compassion on the other. In Western Australia, the lay community see the Western Sangha as a compassionate 'mission' to a new society emanating from this Thai forest monastery source. At one and the same time members of the Sangha strive for their own personal liberation...
and yet are responsible for disseminating the teaching to others. The ability of an individual to balance this dual quest and pass the knowledge on to others confers a specific form to the charisma operating in the community.

1.2.3 Charisma – lineage
Although lineage charisma is usually defined as an emphasis on blood-ties, the charisma defined here is also one that is transferred through a historic line from leader to follower, or more specifically from teacher to pupil, who may then inherit the ability to manifest a similar charisma. The leadership of the Western Sangha derives its authority and legitimacy not only from the Sangha's succession to the Buddha, but more recently and more specifically from the long line of North East Buddhist 'saints' and teachers who personally tutored and guided them. These continuing direct links legitimate the Western Sangha (see Chapter 2.1.1). Rather than charisma dispersing on the death of these North East forest monastery Thai monks, my research suggests that the continuation of this lineage by Western Buddhist monks, and their movement back into Western culture, carry sufficient elements of the initial lineage–charisma to the new setting. The Western Sangha members are not necessarily 'saints', but some legitimacy and authority are passed on to them as pupils and followers of their Thai teachers. There is a transference of charisma, however small, through teacher–pupil succession. It is the key to knowledge of understanding acquired to operate one's own self-mastery. In this case the knowledge has been transferred and inherited from the Thai teacher Ajahn Chah in particular.

Some leaders have the ability to empower others and enable their development as opposed to taking control of their pupils. In the forest monastery lineage this empowering process is evident. It is based on an
ability to nurture self-esteem in others, to encourage each individual to see his or her own capacity to act. It is a process of tapping into the aspirations of others for the momentum to develop their own strengths and possible leadership qualities, and their own specific human potential. There is an 'awakening' of the same capacity for charisma in the pupil by the teacher.

In Western Australia, in the community under discussion, this process of an 'awakening' may also be initiated at the level of individual lay people, as the same process is repeated from Western teacher to new pupil through meditation and Buddhist teaching which leads the way to self-mastery (see Chapter 5). It consists of a strengthening within each individual of the same personal qualities operating at the centre of the community.

It is important to note here that the view of charisma outlined above contradicts Weber (1947:359) whose definition of charisma indicates that the exceptional power or qualities of the charismatic leader are "not accessible to the ordinary persons". Buddhist teaching however proposes that these qualities are inherent in anyone and available to all. If charisma exists only in the process of origination, in this community it can be seen continually manifesting itself anew at different levels in many individuals. Rather than dispersing and diluting the charisma into the community, this enhances the legitimacy of the source of the charisma, the Sangha.

1.2.4 Problems of Charisma
Similar acknowledgment of the followers' potential for self-generating spiritual growth exists in the literature in new religious movements in Western society (Stone, 1982:157; Ellwood, 1987:22; Robbins, 1988:118). The proliferation of new religious movements, which mostly came into
prominence since World War II, resulted in an increase of interest in religious studies. Although Buddhism is considered a traditional world religion in the East, it is sometimes judged in the framework of a 'new religious movement' in the West because it meets most of the criteria given. For example, Barker (1989:145) states that these religions "offer a religious or philosophical world view or they claim to provide the means by which some higher goal such as transcendent knowledge, spiritual enlightenment, self-realisation or 'true' development may be obtained".

The charismatic quality of some leaders in new religious movements in the West, however, can become a destructive force where overt pressure is applied to followers to join the group, continue the membership, contribute never-ending financial support and 'surrender' as a person to the movement. An example of the most destructive power of a charismatic leader in a new religious movement is probably the well known and very publicised Jonestown suicide pact (Johnson 1979:315).

The criticism of destructive charisma operating in new religious movements includes different Buddhist communities. For example, Jacobs (1989:27) questions the leadership of a Buddhist group in the U.S.A. and quotes an example of the disenchantment of a disciple who finally left the movement because the "more she studied and meditated, the more she found that all of her thoughts and feelings were somehow tied to the guru".

My thesis gives an account of a charisma operating in the monastic leadership that provides a direct challenge to this criticism directed at Buddhism as a new religious movement in the West. The Western Australian Theravada Buddhist community and its leadership described in this thesis are grounded in the traditionally structured monastic framework, its rules and regulations (the Vinaya). Throughout the thesis I maintain that for lay followers there is no guru to be followed blindly,
power is considered to reside within the self; there is no extortion of money, although the charisma of the monks ensures support; no social interpretation of the teaching, the teaching stands alone; no control over a follower's social life, individual control is self-generated; that is, there is no inconsistency between the action of the leader and the doctrine, hence there is trust in the leader.

Adhering to Vinaya precludes a destructive form of charisma arising in the leadership (see Appendix I for information on the Vinaya). The premise throughout this thesis is that the traditionally structured monastic leadership bound by adherence to Vinaya cannot go astray as easily as non-ordained Buddhist leadership. There are guidelines to maintain its integrity. The four most important offences for an ordained monk to commit are (1) incelibacy, (2) theft, (3) murder and (4) falsely claiming spiritual superiority. This latter offence specifically relates to the quality of charisma observed throughout the thesis but not claimed by the leader, in that a monk who talks about personal spiritual attainment or boasts of "superhuman faculties" is expelled from the monastic community according to Vinaya discipline (Prebish, 1975:53). The Vinaya, laid down, changed and modified by the Buddha is not an absolute truth, but it is needed for the orderly and smooth life of a social organisation and the lay community respond to the example set. Early records show prosperous Buddhist communities were linked to those who were practising and developing the Vinaya (Prebish:1975:28) while other communities dispersed.

Rahula (1978:65) states that the roots of Buddhism will only go deep in England where a Sangha is formally established. Sri Lankan born Nalpola Rahula was the first Buddhist monk to hold a professional chair in the Western world. He advocates that the Vinaya must adapt to the West and suggests, for example, that members of the Theravada Buddhist Sangha established in England should be able to wear shoes, instead of the leather
sandals stipulated by the Vinaya. He argues that "changes and modifications should be made to suit social and economic conditions in the West, and this is quite in keeping with the tradition of Buddhist history". (p.65)

This highlights the paradox in the development of this ordained Theravada Buddhist monastic community in Western Australia. The rules and regulations of the Vinaya which provide the social cohesion necessary for an ordained community, also include non-essential laws. For example, the robe worn by a monk is clothing stipulated by the Buddha centuries ago. A local newspaper began an article on the Abbot and the monastery in Western Australia with the following critical first sentence, "Hey, what's a nice Italian boy like you doing wandering around in the bush in a yellow dress?" (Sunday Times: May 1989).

There are many other rules that could be considered non-essential, for example, "should any bhikkhu have a needle-case made of bone or ivory or horn, it entails expiation with breaking up" (Nanamoli, 1969:116). And yet the Vinaya is also the major basis for monasticism, because the rules remove the responsibility of family and possessions and provide the rules for checking body and speech actions which are said to aid an individual in achieving Enlightenment. The Vinaya literally means "that by which One is led out" (Khantipalo 1979:34): led out of suffering, by "purifying exterior actions so that the interior ones, the workings of the mind, can be purified".

Hence the question arises as to whether monasticism is relevant to present day conditions or is it a medieval social structure, and an Asian one at that? There are ordained Buddhists in the West who wear the robe and yet do not keep strict Vinaya. However in Western Australia the forest monastery tradition endeavours to maintain as strict as possible an interpretation of the Vinaya as it becomes established in the West. These
rules, essential or non-essential, relevant or irrelevant, provide the training for the mind. Thus the argument made by the Sangha in Western Australia is that modifications should not be made to the Vinaya on the basis of social and economic conditions in the West because other laws pertaining to the psychological and spiritual basis of the monastic community could also be changed, resulting in a diminished vitality of monastic practice.

The practice of Vinaya adds to the charismatic quality projected by the order. Lay Buddhists in Western Australia expect the Sangha to maintain Vinaya and in so doing transmit Dhamma. There is very little in the literature about the future prospects of Theravada Buddhism in the West without the leadership and experience of an ordained Sangha as its focus. Some insight is available from books and articles from those Western Buddhists who were, or still are, members of the Sangha; for example Batchelor (1982), Kapleau (1980), Kornfield (1977, 1988), and Khantipalo (1979) and yet to date there is only a token debate on the issue of ordained versus non-ordained leadership in Theravada Buddhism in Western society (see Batchelor, 1982:27). Both ordained and lay Buddhists endeavour to uphold the major precepts of the religion (see Appendix II), however lay Buddhists practice without ordination and the adoption of Vinaya. See Chapter 8 for further discussion on ordained/non-ordained leadership.

The leadership charisma inherent in the monastic leadership in Western Australia should continue into the future as a central feature of this community because the lay community identifies with and respects the achievements to which they themselves also aspire. The Sangha's knowledge and efforts to transcend "this-worldly concerns" are characteristic of the quality of charisma that "is imputed to persons, actions, roles, institutions, symbols, and material objects because of their presumed connection with 'ultimate', 'fundamental', 'ritual', order-
determining powers" according to Shils (1965:386). More importantly, charisma should continue to act as a force for as long as the Sangha maintains its doctrinal stance on 'purity'. The manifest purity of the leadership serves as a focus for charisma and is continuously being evaluated by fellow monks and the lay community, locally, nationally and internationally.

1.3 Overview
Section One (Chapter 1 and 2) briefly overviews Buddhism as a world religion, clarifies the choice made by the community in Western Australia and introduces the participants, both ordained Sangha and lay community, their respective roles and the setting in which they operate.

Section Two (Chapter 3, 4 and 5) outlines the interaction that occurs between the Sangha and the lay community. The reciprocity that occurs with ritual offerings, ceremonies and a teaching/meditation programme is recorded. The concept of charisma is applied as a rationale for the social structure that evolves. The Asian and Western Buddhists build their own relationship with the Sangha which locks the diverse groups into a single community.

Section Three illustrates the dynamics that arise as the Western Sangha and this diverse lay community interact. There is evidence of conflicts and tension as the community evolves in its new environment in Western society, yet simultaneous integrating forces occur. Social interchange, communication, sharing and connected growth result in a dynamic living organism. Despite tremendous diversity the social effects of charisma of the leadership holds the community together. The dynamics within the community are reflected in the wider relationship of the Buddhist community and the society as a whole.
1.4 Continuity

Buddhism in Western culture reflects the many forms of tradition already established in Asian countries. Chinese Buddhists initially were "confused by multifarious forms of Buddhism" introduced from India and Central Asia (I-Ching, 1986:xx). Westerners are also sometimes confused by the number of choices of Buddhist practice available. A more culturally embedded practice of Buddhism in the West is found where immigrants and refugees transfer their traditional practice to a new environment. The linguistic and cultural barriers of this type of practice hinder access by Westerners. The decline of Buddhism may occur after one or two generations if it is not radically changed to adapt to the West. Most Buddhist groups favoured by Westerners are centred around teachers, many from the Zen Buddhist tradition. To cope with life's stresses, individuals commonly pluck what they need from the psychological/philosophical components of Buddhist teaching. They learn to meditate as an aid to peaceful existence, but in the main do not seek the social inter-relatedness of Buddhist practice that revolves around a Sangha (Jacobson: 1966:39). They reach for the Buddhist doctrine whilst leaving the deeper social meaning of the teaching behind.

The Buddhist community under discussion is different again, because a Sangha-led community results in a traditional reciprocal relationship between ordained and non-ordained, a relationship which operates through the medium of the language and culture of the local society.

1.4.1 Western Australia

Perth is a geographically isolated city in the State of Western Australia, with approximately a million and a half inhabitants of whom 0.5 per cent are Buddhists. They form the largest single non-Christian group in Western Australia and most live in the corridor north of Perth (Figure 1) (Hugo, 1986:340). The nine Buddhist groups in Perth together represent a
FIGURE I.

PERTH STATISTICAL DIVISION SLAs*: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION, BUDDHIST, 1986

(* Statistical Local Area)

good example of the various ways Buddhism presents itself in the West and highlight the uniqueness of the community being discussed (see Table I).

There are two groups of 'traditional' Buddhists; the Vietnamese Buddhist Society and the Congregation of Vietnamese Buddhists in Western Australia. Both of these function linguistically and culturally as ethnic Vietnamese communities. The latter group is a Sangha based community that has two monks and two nuns. The former group maintains a lay community leadership. A power struggle between the original lay community and the invited Sangha created a formal split in the Vietnamese community. However, on many occasions many Vietnamese attend functions at both communities on the same weekend. For example, in May 1988 many attended both the laying of a foundation stone at a new Buddhist centre at a northern suburb (Vietnamese Buddhist Society) and the opening of a new Centre at North Perth (Congregation of Vietnamese Buddhists of W.A.) held on the previous day.

The Burmese Buddhist Foundation, another traditional group, has small membership and limited resources. Many of its members also belong to the Buddhist Society of Western Australia. However, it periodically invites Burmese monks or nuns to visit, as a small group in the Foundation expresses an aim to establish 'Burmese Buddhism'. Mullins (1988:217) notes that the need for traditional Buddhism dies "without significant replenishment by new immigrants". It appears therefore that the survival and strength of these groups may depend on the future pattern of immigration from traditional Buddhists countries.

Five other groups, though of traditional origin, consist of mainly Western members (Zen Group, Tibetan Buddhist Society, Origins Centre, and two Vipassana meditation groups). These communities invite monks, nuns and/or other prominent lay teachers to visit.
### TABLE I

BUDDHIST GROUPS IN PERTH METROPOLITAN AREA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF SOCIETY</th>
<th>YEAR COMMENCED</th>
<th>NO. OF ADHERENTS</th>
<th>TRADITIONAL BUDHISTS</th>
<th>'NEWCOMER' WESTERNERS</th>
<th>RESIDENT SANGHA</th>
<th>VISITING SANGHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ORIGINS CENTRE Subiaco + South West Retreat</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Lay teacher</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ZEN (via Japan and Hawaii)</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Lay teacher</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. TIBETAN BUDDHIST SOCIETY Tibet</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Lay teacher</td>
<td>Sometimes Resident Sangha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. VIPASSANA FOUNDATION Burma</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Lay teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. INTERNATIONAL MEDITATION CENTRE Mahogany Creek Burma</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Lay teachers</td>
<td>Visiting Sangha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## BUDDHIST GROUPS IN PERTH METROPOLITAN AREA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF SOCIETY</th>
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<th>'NEWCOMER WESTERNERS</th>
<th>RESIDENT SANGHA</th>
<th>VISITING SANGHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. CONGREGATION OF VIETNAMESE BUDDHISTS IN W.A. (Marangaroo) (Vietnam)</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 monks</td>
<td>2 nuns</td>
<td>Other Sangha Visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. VIETNAMESE BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION (Vietnam)</td>
<td>1983/4</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Lay teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. BURMESE BUDDHIST SOCIETY (members also belong to Society below)</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sangha visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. BUDDHIST SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA (Thai)</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>2000+</td>
<td>600+</td>
<td>6 monks</td>
<td>1 nun</td>
<td>Sangha visits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N.B. Some Westerners meditate at more than one Centre
Three categories of Buddhist teaching are present in the Perth area.

(1) Buddhist teaching and practice led by traditional Sangha. Both the resident Sangha in the Vietnamese community and the visiting Sangha in the Tibetan community teach in a cultural and language setting that creates a barrier for Westerners even when there is a translator (as, for example, in the Tibetan Sangha).

(2) A category of Buddhist teaching in the English language that has been transformed into a more Western cultural mode. This occurs at the Zen Centre (Japanese Buddhism via Hawaii and North America) and the Origins Centre (Tibetan Buddhism via North America). The two Vipassana groups maintain a Western lay teacher approach, though they often invite visiting English-speaking monks/nuns from Burma.

(3) A third category now exists with the established teaching Sangha supported formally by the Buddhist Society and informally by many lay Buddhists. Westerners who trained as monks in a traditional Buddhist country remain in the order of the Sangha to practice and teach Dhamma on their return to the West. This, the largest Buddhist community in Western Australia, is the focus of this thesis. It is a multicultural community drawn from many traditional Buddhist groups and is centred around the Thai-trained Western Sangha.

The lay community's ability to come together to support Western Sangha contradicts Croucher (1988:123) who, when discussing the trials and tribulations of Buddhists working together in Australia, implies that the 12,000 or so Anglo-Australian Buddhists are still pitted against the 70,000 ethnic Buddhists. Croucher comments on the factionalism in Buddhist
circles in his commentary on Buddhist history in Australia. But the establishment of a Western Sangha in Australia is an historical watershed. Migrants and refugees (Thais, Burmese, Sri Lankan, Kampuchean and many other Asian Buddhists individuals and families) and 'newcomers' to Buddhism (Westerners) come together to support a Sangha composed of Western monks.

The formal support structure, the Buddhist Society of Western Australia, was formed in 1978 by Western and Asian people interested in furthering the development of Buddhism. Monks were invited from a well known forest monastery tradition in North East Thailand where Westerners interested in Buddhism have trained for many years.

One of the main aims and objectives of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia was to establish and maintain, for propagation of the teaching of the Buddha:

(a) a permanent Buddhist centre or centres in the Perth metropolitan area and in such other places as the Society may determine; and

(b) a forest monastery or forest monasteries in the tradition of the Vinaya- (the code of discipline of Buddhist Monks and Nuns) . . .
(Constitution:Section iii).

A brief introduction to the tradition in which the monks trained and the pool of resources upon which Western Australia derived its Sangha leadership is necessary. The roots, continuing support and validation for the Sangha in Western Australia are in Thai Buddhism. The heritage of centuries of Theravada Buddhist communities in Thailand underlies the establishment of the community in Western Australia.
1.4.2 Theravada Buddhism

A schism occurred early in the history of Buddhism ostensibly on account of differences on points of monastic discipline, but probably on more fundamental doctrinal grounds. The Mahayana school (the 'Great' vehicle) spread to China, Japan and Korea. Theravada or teaching of the Elders is the dominant sect that continued from the 'lesser' vehicle (Hinayana) school. By this time the Hinayana tradition had moved from India and established itself in Sri Lanka and from there moved into South East Asia.

The different schools of Buddhism have identical aims, namely the exercise of tolerance and warm compassion towards all living beings and achievement of intuitive wisdom leading to Enlightenment. Training the mind, knowing the mind and 'freeing' the mind are supported by self-discipline. Both accept the idea of repeated rebirth until Enlightenment; however, here the two schools diverge doctrinally. According to Theravada teachings, a highly evolved human being in this life or after just a few more lives, becomes an Arahant (saint) and thereafter enters Nirvana, when the ego-based hindrances are finally negated. Mahayana Buddhists, on the other hand, refrain voluntarily from entering Nirvana and aim to remain in the universe helping others attain this goal.

Theravada Buddhism in South East Asia is a way of life which involves the individual, the family, the village, city and nation. An on-going debate in the anthropological literature centres on the diversity of practice within Theravada Buddhism. However, it is not the cultural differences in Buddhist practice between countries in South East Asia that is of major interest, rather researchers concentrate on the diversity of practice within a single tradition. The overall spectrum of Buddhist practice ranges from an exoteric form (more devotional, with a merit-making emphasis aiming for a better rebirth) to a more esoteric form (including meditation and ultimately aiming at salvation).
These different levels of practice in Theravada Buddhism overlap (see: Terwiel, 1975; Swearer, 1981; Tambiah, 1970, 1984 for Thailand; Southwold, 1982, 1983; Kapferer, 1983; Gombrich, 1971, 1988 for Sri Lanka; Nash, 1973; Spiro, 1971 for Burma). In effect, one view states that one's life is basically within one's own control and one has the power within oneself to follow a wholesome lifestyle and achieve Nirvana, and freedom from desire in this lifetime; the other view relies heavily on trying to control outside forces considered responsible for life's problems. Some scholars view the two extremes of this spectrum as indicating a fundamental dichotomy in Buddhist practice. There is a gap between the ideology and practice as evidenced in the 'Little' tradition (see 1.4.2b). Others see the wide diversity in practice and the many variants as equally the 'real' Buddhism. For example, Tambiah (1984:367) criticises this distinction. My synthesis, which attempts to clarify some of the pertinent factors in the full spectrum of Theravada Buddhist practice, is summarised in Table II.

In Thailand, the town and country, 'Great' and 'Little' traditions, and forest monastery traditions represent variations in the spectrum of practice, but no complete distinction or separation of traditions occurs (Placzek, 1981:165).

1.4.2a 'Great' Tradition
Pristine Theravada Buddhism proposes a specific teaching, Buddhist Dhamma as outlined in the Buddhist Canon (the Tripitaka). The path of morality and meditation indicated then leads to wisdom. The insight of wisdom is understood to completely release the follower from the painful cycle of birth, old age, ill-health and death and all the lesser sufferings which occur in daily life (Kornfield, 1977:137). This is the so-called 'Great' tradition of Theravada Buddhism. It is a metaphysical doctrine, based on
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'Great Tradition'</th>
<th>'Little Tradition'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'True' Buddhism</td>
<td>'folk', 'popular', village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Normative' or 'Nirbannic'</td>
<td>'non-normative' or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pure, pristine Buddhist philosophy</td>
<td>'kammatic'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compartmentalised Buddhism</td>
<td>'crises' religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>co-existence of animism, Hinduism and Buddhism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>syncrétic Buddhism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small percent of population (and monks)</td>
<td>greater majority of population (and monks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educated, elite</td>
<td>uneducated poor people with pressures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mainly city and larger towns</td>
<td>rural, mostly village communities (plus the new poor in cities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual, metaphysical abstract, intangible involves long-term view i.e. overall attitude to life span contemplative meditation</td>
<td>more social-oriented collective, tangible ritual short term - usually a 'stop gap' measure involves five senses and action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>power - within oneself</td>
<td>power - emphasis on outside forces, supernatural, myths, magic, symbolism or loss of power (kwan leaves the body) protection - tattoos, amulets, shrines, etc. placation - ghosts, spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsible for one's own actions (cause-effect principle)</td>
<td>responsibility and help from mediums, monks, exorcists, ex-monks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the abstract and intangible and requires self-discipline, such that only a minority of the population (preeminantly the Sangha) undertake this way of life.

1.4.2b 'Little' Tradition
The majority of Buddhists follow the tradition which is often termed 'folk', 'popular' or 'little' tradition. Fused with animism and Hinduism, it is a more socially oriented and collective form of practice worked out in ritual through external actions. It does not entail the long-term attitude that 'protection' is based on living an exemplary life, but focuses on the ability to adopt protective measures and placate outside forces. Most villagers fear the world around them. They understand misfortune and disease as allied to supernatural and malevolent forces. The worship of Nats in Burma (Nash, 1973), the demon exorcism in Sri Lanka (Kapferer, 1983), and the use of amulets, tattoos, spirit houses, shrines and the spirit cults in Thailand (Tambiah, 1970) are all examples of this 'folk' tradition. Some Buddhists, though often expressing a non-belief in all these protective and placating measures, do continue to participate in all or many of these rituals. This attitude represents in fact, a 'double insurance policy'. The new poor and powerless villagers who flock to the large city in South East Asia, for example Bangkok, rely even more heavily on these measures, as many of the political, social and economic forces of life are beyond the control or comprehension of the individual (Mulder 1979:160). Therefore it is not only in rural Buddhism that magical or folk elements are adopted. City Buddhists may also aim to alleviate suffering by taking a lottery ticket or gambling.
1.4.2c 'Forest' Tradition

In Theravada Buddhism there is a long tradition of great masters or teachers and forest monasteries in South East Asia. These monasteries provide a quiet retreat with minimal distraction, where the Sangha learns to live in harmony with the environment, developing an ability to 'still' the mind. Forest monks were, and some still are, 'wandering' monks, that is monks who travel through the forest, sometimes for a period of weeks (tudong monks).

The forest monastic tradition existed in the time of the Buddha and spread to Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand and Laos. During the last one hundred years there has been a "rediscovery, revival and reform" of this form of Buddhist practice (Carrithers, 1983:4, Placzek, 1981:171). There is very little written about the forest monastery tradition. However, Bucknell and Stuart-Fox (1983:17) assert that "alongside the two well-recognised streams in Buddhism, the philosophical-monastic and the popular, a third esoteric-meditative stream should also be given proper scholarly recognition and attention". Taylor (1985:4) also adds the forest setting as a 'third locale', when discussing village/rural and urban Buddhism.

The forest monastery is usually situated about an hour's walk from a village and/or around 10-15 kilometres from the road. It is supported by the local Buddhist community and also others beyond the immediate location. Some monks in the forest monastery will tolerate villagers practising more of a 'folk' Buddhism, while others will not. However, the ascetic practices of these monks ensure their support by nearby communities. In Thailand, social and financial support also comes from the educated elite living in larger towns, particularly Bangkok, and from members of the Royal Family. The merit-making interdependence through the lay offering support for the Sangha in return for Dhamma teaching and
ceremony, is practised between ordained and laity, but there is less interaction than in a town monastery.

In Thailand, the forest monastery tradition and the monks involved, belong to, yet do not conform to practices of the orthodox Thai monastic tradition. The Thai Sangha reform of 1902 eliminated formal recognition of the forest monastery tradition which emphasises the importance of meditation in Buddhist practice. Yet possibly less than ten percent of monks meditate (Kornfeld, 1977:6) and of the thousands of monasteries in Thailand, only a few are concerned with meditation. The importance of meditation for the Buddhist laity also has been on the increase since the 1950s, adding further support for forest monasteries (Gard, 1971:3).

Some of the most revered forest monks are part of the continuing tradition of masters who "have been acclaimed as saints (arahants)" and who are "credited with extraordinary wisdom, love and charismatic powers" (Tambiah, 1984:3). Most Westerners who go to Thailand with serious intent to ordain, begin at Wat Bovoranives in Bangkok, a meditation centre with living quarters for foreigners. However, most spend a further period of time in a forest monastery. They participate in an ascetic, meditative existence with minimal interaction with the laity. The forest monasteries are also less elaborate than the traditional monasteries in the villages or the cities. During the twentieth century the focal point for the forest monastic tradition is North East Thailand where a lineage of teaching forest monks has evolved.

Ajahn Chah and Ajahn Maha Boowa, two forest monks with a large following in recent times, spent a period of training with Ajahn Mun, an earlier teacher in this tradition. In fact, Placzek (1981:175) goes so far as to state that the forest monastery tradition in Thailand is only one lineage
tradition, that of Ajahn Mun. (See Nyanasampanno, 1982, for biography of Ajahn Mun).

Ajahn Chah has trained many Western monks (Tambiah, 1984:136) and there are more than 40 branch monasteries and many of his disciples in Thailand and in the West (Placzek, 1981:176). Two monks were invited to Western Australia from this tradition (Chapter 2.5 details the emergence of a Western Sangha).

The nature of the 'export' Buddhism in Western Australia is the pristine form of forest monastery practice. It meets the criteria defining a forest monastery (Placzek 1981:156) with meditation, strict discipline and certain austerities as its base and practice rather than study as a major principle. I discuss in Chapter 5 how it is this philosophical or psychological approach that interests its Western followers. Furthermore, throughout the thesis I suggest that this form of Buddhism is attractive because it steers a middle way between the different Asian Buddhist practices and shows less preference for the cultural or national practices of any one country.

In Western Australia, as in South East Asia, individuals choose the elements of practice they need. The diversity of lay practice is not a negative force in the community, in fact quite the reverse. The dynamic interplay of diverse practices creates a unique and positive force (see Chapters 6 and 7).

1.4.3 Sangha

The role of the Sangha as the front line of Buddhism as it enters other cultures is documented historically (Lamotte, 1988). The Sangha are the initial leaders and managers that assist Buddhist communities in the early stages of development. (For Sri Lanka, see Dutt, 1962 and Gunawardana, 1979); and in China see Chen, 1964 and 1973; and Wright, 1959). The

The separation of the ordained and lay communities is the basis upon which Theravada Buddhist communities evolve. The term 'Sangha' literally means an assembly or a community. 'Savaka-Sangha' or 'Ariya-Sangha' refers to the body of men and women who are considered to be at high stages of development on their spiritual path (though not necessarily ordained). 'Bhikkhu-Sangha' refers to the body of ordained males, and 'Bhikkhuni-Sangha' to ordained females. The Sangha is responsible for leading others towards a path resulting in a more spiritually aware and civilised world community (Phra Rajavaramuni, 1987b:35). It is possible, however, for members of the afore-mentioned non-ordained Sangha to be present in the local community before the presence of the more conventional Bhikkhu-Sangha is established. Alternatively, both may co-exist at the same time. On this understanding, this type of lay Sangha may exist in Australia either now and/or before ordained Sangha arrived (see Chapter 8.1.2). Whether communities today are as spiritually aware, or close to a high spiritual development, as they were in the time of Buddha living on earth is debatable however. In this thesis, the Sangha refers to the Bhikkhu-Sangha, or ordained Sangha.

In Thailand in the nineteenth century the Sangha divided into two different sects, the Dhammayut and the Mahanikaya. The latter is by far the larger of the two sects, whilst the former was in the nature of a reform movement. Entry into the Sangha today continues to provide conditions where individuals can pursue their own spiritual path. This path is pursued, not as a form of anti-social withdrawal, but to transcend rather than abandon secular society. The monastic leadership is rooted in 'this world' however.
Monasticism is not "an end in itself" but a "means to an end, namely Enlightenment" (Collins, 1988:114). Overall, the monastic order is more strongly structured with regard to its social position in and interaction with society than is the case with Christian monasticism (Silber, 1985:268).

In Thailand the Sangha is the biggest national institution (Mulder, 1979:131) and wields an influence in public and political affairs. The top official of the Thai Sangha is the Supreme Patriarch. Thai males may ordain as monks any time after the age of twenty and approximately ninety percent of all Buddhist men over fifty years of age have been monks for some period of their lives (p.132). Ordination is an act of self-dedication to an ascetic way of life and does not confer sacred powers. However, the pursuit of 'purity' does imply degrees of power based on the level achieved. Thai society considers young men who have not entered the order to be immature.

The monks and novices aspire to live by a set of 227 rules (the Vinaya) which are voluntarily observed as a mode of self-training and which may be voluntarily relinquished when a monk reverts to the state of a layman. The entrance of the Sangha into Western culture necessitates a closer look at the Vinaya as it accommodates to Western society (see Chapter 7). Only males can join the Sangha. Women become nuns but cannot obtain full ordination as the female lineage of ordained women was interrupted many centuries ago (see Chapter 7.3).

1.4.4 Sangha–laity Interdependence
The cornerstone of any Theravada Buddhist community is the interdependence of the ordained men and women and the laity. The lay people depend on the Sangha and the Sangha depends on the lay people, as individual and collective, material and spiritual needs are met in a
mutually acceptable relationship. The complexity of this Sangha–lay relationship reflects opposite but complementary facets, of Theravada Buddhism: namely (a) the pursuit of mystical goals – yet a daily practice in the 'here and now' working out of the philosophy; and (b) individual spiritual goals along with attention to social cohesion within the community. The attainment of a spiritual enlightenment, Nirvana (freedom from desire), is theoretically the end goal for all Buddhists and it is considered more within one's grasp if one ordains. Each person is responsible for the consequences of his or her own thoughts and deeds and his or her spiritual status is determined by the amount of merit or demerit accumulated in both former lives and the present one, which then places them on a continuum according to their proximity to Nirvana.

Therefore, the creation of opportunities for both the Sangha and the layperson to gain merit is vitally important. By the provision of material support the laity frees the Sangha from the necessity to work to supply daily needs. They can thus pursue their spiritual goal (Nirvana) with a total commitment of body, feeling and mind. Less involvement in a sensory world enables monks or nuns to perfect their moral being, and also allows spare time for preaching the Dhamma. This primary focus on spiritual advancement entails a life without money or material possession, chastity and a devotion to study and/or meditation. Hence the ordained person's karma is enhanced by the little or no demerit accumulated from an austere lifestyle, and added by the merit gained from spiritual status and the time and effort spent in furthering this aim, as well as from one's role as custodian of religious rites and a promoter of peoples' well-being and happiness. Most lay Buddhists therefore endeavour to ordain for some period in their lives.

It is the lay community's duty to provide food, medicine, clothes and lodging for the Sangha (Lester, 1973:61). Not only is daily food given to individual
members of the Sangha, but money, material goods, time and labour are contributed towards building and maintaining the community or village monastery. In this way, the lay person accrues merit. The monastery is the focal point of the community, not only in a physical sense, but socially as well, by virtue of its role as a centre for merit-making (Bunnag, 1973:136; Lester, 1973:133). The monastery complex which is a necessary functional group of buildings that house the Sangha and provide a meeting place for the community rituals, also performs other diverse functions. It is the hub of the village or centre of a small suburban community.

The individual's spiritual objective of accumulating merit requires social contact between individuals and groups. Therefore, a give-and-take relationship, felt to be shared by ordained and non-ordained, has developed over time. The accumulation of merit is considered not only as a private quest, but also as a public action (Tambiah, 1970:140). The relationship between monks and laity is of a reciprocal nature. Reciprocity, the social exchange of goods or services based on equivalent returns other than money, is practised because both parties have definite expectations of the relationship.

Theravada Buddhism recognises that an individual has both material and spiritual needs. The two separate ways 'the way of the ordained' and 'the way of the world' are ever present and well defined, yet there is flexibility for an individual to change from one role to the other. It is the co-existence of the two worlds of ordained and non-ordained, that enables both material and spiritual human need to be met, as one system complements the other. Thus the question "is the Sangha really necessary in a Theravada Buddhist community?" does not arise.

Conze (1951:212) concludes his book on Buddhism: Its Essence and Development, with the following statement: "it remains to be seen when
and where Europeans garbed in the saffron robe will make their first appearance". Since Conze's comments nearly thirty years ago, monks and nuns have begun to reside in the West, particularly over the last decade. The present monastic community and its Buddhist supporters in Western Australia are now well established. The presence of a traditional Theravada Buddhist monastic order in Western Australia has resulted in the presence of a large support community which I now discuss.
CHAPTER TWO
THE COMMUNITY

A traditional interdependent relationship between an ordained and lay community is the basis of a large, fast growing Theravada Buddhist community in Western Australia. In both the Sangha and lay communities there are unique factors that create an exceptionally diverse community.

2.1 Sangha
A ceremony ordaining the first Australian-born Theravada Buddhist monk on Australian soil was held in the forest monastery at Serpentine on March 23rd, 1987. This was the culmination of six years of development of the monastery and the Sangha in Western Australia. There is no further need for Australians to travel to South East Asia to experience a community of Buddhists and visit a monastery or be ordained into the Sangha. This opportunity now exists in Western Australia.

Historically, Westerners who were interested in Buddhist teaching pursued their interest through philosophical groups and the books that followed early translations of Pali texts by Buddhist scholars. The availability of these books, articles and translated texts played an important role in the establishment of Buddhism as a religion in the West (Conze, 1951; Humphreys, 1960; Oliver, 1979). However, the only way for a Westerner to develop any serious interest in Buddhist teachings and practice was to be ordained. The Westerner had to travel and reside in a country where Buddhist monastic communities existed. This meant that Western Buddhists had a wide range of teachers and traditions from which to choose.

Khantipalo (1979:171) suggests this experience in a traditional Buddhist country is still an important reason for Westerners to be ordained and
practice in the East even though they now have an alternative in the West. Monastic life in a traditional Buddhist country called for persistence, endurance and tenacity to conquer the language, health and food problems, sift cultural Buddhism from original Buddhist teachings, etc. It often proved too hard a road and many disrobed. Some Western monks I met in Thailand told me they believe this is still the best route for anyone interested in Buddhist practice. In short, good practice can be enhanced by one's handling of difficulties encountered in foreign settings.

The forest monastery tradition in North East Thailand is one of the major training grounds for Western monks. However most Westerners who were ordained as monks in Thailand became laymen on returning to the West. The absence of a support community is one of the major reasons for disrobing. Wearing the robe indicates practising the Vinaya so a monk cannot cook or feed himself, handle money or support himself. (There are approximately 20 ex-monks of the Theravada tradition living in Australia).

2.1.1 Western Sangha

The establishment of a Western Theravada Buddhist Sangha is the direct result of the life and teaching of Venerable Phra Bodhinyanathera, more commonly known as Ajahn Chah, a meditation master in North East Thailand. This monk is now in his seventies, seriously ill and is renowned as a wise and extraordinary Dhamma teacher. He has no formal education beyond the fourth-grade. Ordained at twenty he spent many years in the style of an ascetic monk, sleeping under the trees in the forest. He spent some time with a meditation master and after many years of travel and practice, settled in a forest area in North East Thailand. He remained in the more predominant Mahanikaya sect rather than the reformist Dhammayut, the sect of his teacher (Ajahn Mun). In the monastery he maintained a regime where discipline is extremely strict.
In the late 1970s representatives of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia travelled to North East Thailand to request Ajahn Chah's support in establishing the Sangha in Western Australia. Ajahn Chah chose two senior Western-born monks who arrived in Perth in 1982. These monks were two of the many Westerners who had studied meditation and Buddhist practice with Ajahn Chah and had helped establish the International Forest Monastery (Wat Pah Nanachat) in North East Thailand. The most senior Western monk (Ajahn Sumedho), established four monasteries in the United Kingdom with a community of approximately seventy monks and nuns. There is another branch monastery in New Zealand, another in Switzerland, and a movement for the continuation of this tradition in the U.S.A. (see Table III).

The ordained members of this forest monastery tradition work together to support the growth of this movement in the West. There is communication, mutual support and personal interaction. A 'Forest Sangha Newsletter', published in England, distributes news within the Sangha. A joint anthology, "Seeing the Way" of the teachings of twenty of the English-speaking disciples of Ajahn Chah, was published in 1989.

Travel also plays an important role in communication. The forest monk, who spent days walking from one forest monastery to another, now uses an international jet. Senior monks and nuns spend time residing in and/or visiting the different branches in the West and the original monastic centre in Thailand.

Tambiah (1984:137) points to the missionary nature of the tradition and Ajahn Chah's "institution building". Repeated requests for teaching monks result in monastic Buddhism's continued expansion. In Western Australia, as in England or elsewhere, the Sangha members were invited to come here. After they arrived the support resulted in a monastery being
### TABLE III

**LINEAGE OF FOREST MONASTERY SANGHA INTO WESTERN SOCIETIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Monks/Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Thailand (Ubon)</td>
<td>Wat Pah Nanachat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(International Forest Monastery)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Ajahn Sumedho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Ajahn Jagaro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Ajahn Viradhammo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Ajahn Tiradhammo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above are places where monks and, in some cases nuns, live and practise according to the style established by Venerable Ajahn Chah at Wat Nong Pah Pong, Thailand.
established. The Sangha and monastery in Western Australia are part of a larger movement of Western-born monks returning to their own society to teach and help establish Buddhist practice. The geographical expansion of this particular lineage of the forest monastery tradition stems from the teacher–pupil relationship. A 'branch wat' is usually led by an Abbot who patterns his own methods and life upon those of his teacher (Placzek, 1981:175).

The teaching in the Buddhist community in Western Australia does not rely on scriptures, nor on scripture commentaries. The method of teaching the Buddhist path is based on the direct transfer of knowledge. It passes from one who has 'mastered' meditation and Buddhist practice to the lay person. The teacher encourages his students likewise to pass on the teaching and thereby pursue a practice which will enable them to attain their own Enlightenment. For the two monks who teach in Western Australia an initial contact with a Buddhist master, Ajahn Chah, evolved into a binding relationship between master and pupil. By means of this bond Buddhism is observed in an existential way, in a person in whom the philosophy is alive. Both of these monks speak of the 'charisma' of this master. It is this teacher–pupil succession that is the essential link in the continuation of the forest monastery tradition (Placzek, 1981:174).

Often in Buddhist practice the less 'ego' a teacher projects the more popular he becomes. This is particularly so in the forest monastery tradition. The Western monks often speak of an encounter with this teacher, who by his example of self-discipline and self-purification, illustrates concretely the Buddhist path. It is this relationship, as well as the Dhamma taught, that encourages a large following. Charisma emerges as a binding force (see Chapter 5).
Both the senior teaching monks in Western Australia follow the path of Ajahn Chah. Their teaching is similar in style: simple and direct communicating compassion and humour. As a result, in Western Australia a relationship between teaching monks and lay followers, similar to that the monks have experienced with Ajahn Chah, is evolving. Its essence is personal guidance in a personal quest.

2.1.2 Role
In Western Australia, as in Thailand, the monk's role is primarily to practise the Teaching of the Buddha so as to realise the Truth. The provision of a monastery at Serpentine creates a physical setting where individuals can concentrate on this personal goal. The monks and a nun set an example of virtue and high moral standards, educate others by teaching and lead the community in religious activities (see Chapter 3 and 4). Hence both a forest monastery at a more secluded place, and a town centre, where the lay community can more conveniently interact, have been established. A creative tension exists between the two settings (see Chapter 7).

2.1.3 Needs
Food, clothes, shelter and medicine are the major requirements of those who ordain. Traditionally, personal requisites are an outer double thick 'cloak', upper robes, an under robe, a girdle to hold up the under robe, a bowl to collect food, a needle and thread to repair robes, a razor, and a water-strainer to exclude small creatures from his drinking water so that they are not harmed. In Thailand I have seen far more than this in use in monasteries. For example, pens, clocks, torches, typewriters, television sets, transistors radios, sunglasses, etc. are common personal possessions. Practice in a forest monastery tradition results in a return to the strict
PLATE 1. Bodhinyana Monastery, Serpentine, Western Australia. Members of the Sangha leaving the ubosot.
PLATE 2. Bia sema stone – Ubosot, Bodhinyana Monastery

PLATE 3. Inside the Ubosot, Bodhinyana Monastery
PLATE 4. Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre, Nollamara, Perth

Vinaya (rules and regulations for the ordained) a simple lifestyle and a few personal things. In Western Australia monastic practice adheres to this forest tradition.

It is a complex exercise to establish a Sangha community in the West. The Sangha is not allowed to possess means of independent support. Its formal support structure is the Buddhist Society of Western Australia. The purchase and establishment of the properties, land and buildings to house the Sangha and create a centre for Buddhist teaching, is the result of tremendous support from both local and overseas Buddhists.

The Buddhist Society of Western Australia has acquired two properties, one at Serpentine, approximately 70 kilometres from Perth and the other in the metropolitan area.

The Bodhinyana (Enlightened wisdom) Forest Monastery situated at Serpentine, is about one hour's drive from Perth. This property, acquired in December, 1983, consists of ninety-seven acres of attractive hill country (see Appendix III). Over the last six years many kutis (huts), an ubosot with the required bia sema for ordination ceremonies, and other support buildings were constructed (see Plates 1, 2 and 3).

A small residential suburban house in North Perth functioned as both a Vihara (meeting house) and the Buddhist Society office from 1979 until 1987. Both the Sangha and lay communities increased considerably in numbers during this period and larger premises were sought. The Anglican Church in Nollamara, a suburb north of Perth, sold a large church hall and adjacent residential home next door to the Buddhist Society. It was renamed the Dhammaloka (The Light of Truth) Centre and opened by the Governor of the State of Western Australia on November 14th 1987 (the year 2530 in Buddhist era) (see Plates 4 and 5). This Centre now provides
the venue for many different Buddhist activities (e.g. different rooms in the house function as the Society's office, monks' residence, library, office for the dissemination of social service information and assistance). Two adjacent houses have since been bought to enable expansion.

The two properties complement each other as they represent the way in which the needs of the ordained and the lay people respectively are met. Two spheres of operation provide: (a) a simple, tranquil atmosphere where ordained Buddhists can live together as a community and as individuals develop their own spiritual path and practice, and (b) a community centre where the Sangha can teach and lay people congregate. The manner in which these two centres operate together illustrates the duality of the aims and objectives of the Buddhist community.

2.1.4 Members
The Sangha who reside or have resided at the monastery are listed in Table IV. The two senior Western monks were responsible for the development of the monastery and training of those new to Buddhism. Two Thai monks who resided here for a two-year period (1986 and 1987) returned to Thailand, and other Western monks stayed for short and long periods before moving to other monasteries or disrobing.

The Sangha is a hierarchical body, where seniority is established by the number of years (or 'rains retreats') spent in monasteries. Those in the Western Australian Sangha are discussed in order of seniority.

Ajahn Jagaro is the Abbot of the Monastery (See Plate 6). He was born in Italy, raised in Australia as a Catholic and became a research chemist before travelling in Asia during his early twenties. When in Thailand, he studied Buddhism and spent ten years training with Ajahn Chah. Since 1982 he has been largely responsible for the development of the Buddhist
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SANGHA MEMBERS</th>
<th>COUNTRY OF BIRTH</th>
<th>MEMBER OF PERTH BUDDHIST COMMUNITY</th>
<th>YEAR OF ORDINATION - PERTH</th>
<th>RESIDENT AS AT JANUARY 1991</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJAHN JAGARO (ABBOT)</td>
<td>(b. Italy)</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>1982 -</td>
<td>RESIDENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEN PURISO</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td></td>
<td>1982-83</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEN BRAHAVAMSO</td>
<td>England</td>
<td></td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>RESIDENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEN PANNAVARO</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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PLATE 7. Venerable Brahmavamso.
monastic community. His personality, leadership qualities and entrepreneurial skills result in a personal following. Ajahn Jagaro is well known, popular and in demand as a teacher in Thailand. Requests for talks, television appearances and special invitations are numerous. Two examples illustrate his continued attraction to Thai Buddhists. In 1987 he was invited to speak on Buddhism at a celebration held by the World Fellowship of Buddhists to commemorate the King of Thailand's 60th Birthday, and in 1989 he was the first non-Thai acknowledged for public service to Thailand for Dhamma teaching by being presented with a special award of the Silver Conch Shell. He is the spokesman for Buddhism in the State of Western Australia. He attends ecumenical functions and is quoted and written about in numerous newspaper and journal articles and on radio and television.

Venerable Brahmavamso shares the responsibility of the community and takes a leading role when the Abbot is absent (see Plate 7). He was born in England in 1951, is a Science graduate of Cambridge University and was ordained in Thailand in 1974. He also trained with Ajahn Chah in Thailand for eight years. These two monks are responsible for the training of the newly ordained monks, nuns and novices.

Venerable Ariyasilo, also born in England, was the first young man to ordain at the Serpentine monastery in January, 1986. He received the Pali name, meaning 'One of noble conduct or virtue' when he undertook the training precepts of a samanera or novice monk in November, 1985. In late 1990 he moved to the forest monastery in Wellington, New Zealand.

Venerable Visarado, the first Australian-born monk to ordain on Australian soil, was born in Western Australia. He lived at Mundijong, a farming area very close to the Serpentine Monastery. After graduating in Science from the University of Western Australia, he entered the monastery
in 1985 and took full robes in January, 1987. His parents and sisters are supportive of his choice to become a monk. In fact his father, a farmer and lay Buddhist, helped in the initial stages of the monastery's development with tractors, graders and manpower. The family were present at the ordination (see Plate 8 and 9). The monk's father video taped the proceedings and his mother presented him with the customary requisites (robes, bowl, etc.). In 1989 he moved to Thailand and still resides there.

Venerable Abhinyano, a monk who ordained in April, 1988 does not have the same family support or acceptance for his chosen way of life. His mother finds it difficult to understand how her son, of Italian descent with a Catholic childhood in Melbourne, could adopt Buddhism and become a Buddhist monk. His sister travelled to Perth to be present at the ceremony when he entered the monastery as a samanera in March, 1987, and again when he took full robes in April, 1988. Though not understanding Buddhism, she supported her brother by her presence and her ten-day stay at the monastery prior to his ordination. She explained that though "not proud of him", she respected his decision. Their relationship was close because as an older brother he had supported her over many years.

Venerable Sudhammo was born in England and migrated to Australia. He left his comfortable home, good friends, and a long-term steady relationship to enter the monastery. His female companion of many years attended the ordination ceremony in April 1989.

Venerable Narado, a Thai migrant to Australia, received the necessary permission from his wife to ordain as a novice. Another novice (Venerable Jayanto) came to Australia some years ago from Spain. He has now disrobed. Lyn, a young English visitor to Australia, entered the monastery as the first novice nun. She ended a long-term relationship with her male companion when she chose a commitment to her own Buddhist practice. As

Sister Rocana, she spoke to me of her decision to develop her own practice. When she was a lay person, "lack of time and money" prevented complete commitment to Buddhist practice. The monastery provided the time, the environment and the teaching for her to develop her spiritual path. From November 1989 she continued her practice as an ordained nun in the monastery in England, then disrobed in 1990. Monks from the forest monastery community in England come to Western Australian to join the resident Sangha. These monks stay the official two year period of time allowed by the Australian government for non-resident religious personnel. Venerable Nyanadassi arrived in July 1988 and returned in October 1990. Venerable Sumangalo arrived in July 1989, Venerable Preecha from Thailand in 1990 and Ajahn Nimmalo in 1991.

Others from the lay community, usually lay Buddhists considering ordination themselves, reside at the monastery to provide support for the ordained Sangha. This period of commitment is a time of 'natural selection' allowing at least a year before a more formal commitment.

2.2 Lay Community
The lay community consists of four different but inter-relating groups, of lay Buddhists:

1. groups of traditional practising Buddhists from South Asia and South East Asia, namely Thailand, Sri Lanka, Burma, Kampuchea and Laos ('born' Buddhists and their children);
2. individual Buddhists from other Asian areas;
3. many Westerners, and
4. overseas Thai Buddhists.
2.2.1 Thai
There are approximately eight hundred Thais living in Western Australia and the majority of them are Buddhists. Most of them are women married to Australian men. Some have been in Australia for ten to twenty years; others are more recent arrivals.

Many of the Thais belong to the Thai–Australia Association, a secular body which serves to continue the remembrance of traditional Thai national events as well as link the peoples of both countries. Some members of this association are also supporters of the Buddhist community, but this is not necessarily so. Generally speaking, their Thai identity is linked more to the Thai–Australian Association, than to the Buddhist community.

The promotion of Western Australian education to overseas markets results in an increasing number of Thai students entering educational institutions for short- and long-term study. At the present time there are over one hundred Thai students in Western Australia, the majority of whom belong to the Thai Students' Association, another body with similar goals and aims to the Association mentioned above. The students are temporary residents with interests different from those of the local Thai residents.

There are status differences that divide the various members of the Thai community. An individual's background, position and social status in Thailand continue to play a part in his/her position in the new environment of Western Australia. That is to say, just because they are all members of the Thai community does not mean that they have a lot in common. For example, the education, family background, social status, interests and lifestyle of a woman who worked as a bar girl in Bangkok before marrying and coming to live in Australia, can differ greatly from those of the post-graduate students at a local University. Rivalry and dissension exist between different factions formed upon status differences.
The degree of interest and support of the Sangha and monastery differ among members of the Thai community. Many were devout and committed Buddhists in Thailand and welcome the opportunity to continue their practice. Others display little interest in supporting the Buddhist community and concentrate on merging into the secular Australian society as the Buddhist community in Western Australia is too pristine a form.

Many of the Australian men who marry Thai women do not understand the principle of merit-making and the traditional food offering to monks. The willingness of Thai wives to spend time, money and energy in preparing food for monks, whether daily, weekly or occasionally, is misunderstood by many an Australian husband who sees a monk's need as competing with his own. Therefore, opposition is often expressed to continuing this traditional practice of supporting the monks. Some Thai women did not describe their religion as 'Buddhist' in the 1986 census, preferring to adopt the religion of their husbands.

Students, with limited time and money available, express the view that their current studies are of utmost importance and there are opportunities back in Thailand to enter into a fuller commitment to their own Buddhist practice later in life. Those who do participate offer full support to the Sangha and the community.

2.2.2 Sri Lankan
Members of this community are families resident in Western Australia who migrated some years ago. Many are Western educated and some are of European descent. They are mostly upper-middle-class, professional men and women, many of whom became leaders as they became integrated into Australian society. Fifty or more families form the major core of the Buddhist Sri Lankan community in Perth. The majority, over 1,000, are
Christian. There is an ethnic association, W.A. Sri Lanka (Ceylon) Association, with a much larger and wider membership to which many of Sri Lankan Buddhists also belong.

Some of the Buddhist Sri Lankan families were part of the original membership of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia when the decision to invite monks to Perth was taken.

2.2.3 Burmese

There is a small Buddhist group of about a hundred in Western Australia that came from Burma. Most Burmese who migrated to Australis were Christian (Over 3,000 Catholic and 1,000 Protestant Burmese). English education, language skills and work prospects were enhanced by attending Christian missionary schools in colonial Burma. However, some of the Burmese returned to Buddhist practice after their arrival in Australia. Christian and Buddhist Burmese worked together and organised a peaceful demonstration in Perth city to show their support for people in Burma during a recent political crisis.

The Burmese have a separate Buddhist Foundation and invite their own monks to visit. They also support the resident Western-born Buddhist Sangha and the monastery as the practice is strict and the monks' teaching is popular. The Vipassana meditation tradition that originated in Burma is also represented in Western Australia by an established centre in the hills nearby at Mahogany Creek. No resident Sangha is present, and, as it is dominated by Westerners who single out meditation as the major dimension of Buddhist practice, Burmese cultural religious activities are disallowed. Hence, many Burmese Buddhists continue to support the resident Sangha of the Buddhist community under discussion.
2.2.4 Laos
The Laotian ethnic group is not large. A few families living in Western Australia belong to the Buddhist community. Some Thais who come from North East Thailand, speak Lao, the local language of this area.

2.2.5 Kampuchean
The largest traditional group of Buddhists in the lay community are the Kampuchean refugees. Most of these families are struggling to become integrated into Australian society. The majority are poor, come from rural areas and have a lower social status than the other South East Asians in the Buddhist community. Few of the thousand or so Kampucheans speak English and entry into the workforce is difficult. They live mainly in welfare housing areas east of Perth city.

At their request, the Buddhist Society provides some religious instruction for their children in a local school. Refugee families are sponsored to Western Australia by the Buddhist Society. Their needs are further provided for by a Buddhist welfare group. This kind of welfare function is becoming one of the major factors of interaction within the lay Buddhist community. The Sangha also hopes to cater more to their specific needs and has invited a Kampuchean monk to join the monastery. Migration figures show a continued flow of Kampucheans into Western Australia.

2.2.6 Other Asian
Buddhists from many other Asian areas are part of the community. Men and women from Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Hong Kong, China, Japan, Korea and Nepal attend on occasions. Some are migrants, some resident students, some are 'born' Buddhists, some Mahayana Buddhists and a few are 'converts'. For example, one Indonesian spoke of
the 'necessity' to adopt a religion in his home country. Without a religion one could be thought to be a communist.

The majority of this group are Western educated and in Western Australia are most likely to join the 'meditators' in the community.

2.2.7 Westerners
Most of the Westerners are Australian born; other Westerners are migrants from Europe or North America. There is no dominant age, sex or social class in this group of Westerners and their different reasons for this interest in Buddhism reflects this diversity. The majority of them interact with the Sangha as individuals, rather than as families. This is directly related to their interest in Buddhist ideology as it applies to the individual. It is not surprising therefore that their entry into the Buddhist community in Western Australia usually takes the form of their attendance at Introduction to Buddhist Meditation courses presented by the Abbot. The majority of Westerners, when asked, considered they were following or were interested in Buddhist principles before they read or heard about Buddhism as a religion. Not all of the Westerners who begin meditation instruction and Dhamma teaching continue to attend. Within the group of Westerners, there is a 'floating population' - when some move on, others come in to take their place. Other Westerners embrace both practice and ritual and form a 'core' group in the lay community (see Chapter 6).

2.2.8 Overseas Thai
Great support flows from Thai Buddhists to the Sangha and the monastery in Western Australia. Organised group visits keep the links active. Nearly one thousand Thais have visited in the past four years. The majority are 'meditators' and professional middle-class Thai supporters of respected monks. Some individuals return for personal and professional visits.
These links are financially beneficial. Over half of the money contributed to the monastery has come from overseas Thais. Because of the substantial support and their interaction with the local community, this group is considered part of the overall Buddhist community. The interesting economic and social links between the visitors and the local community and the political significance of these links are discussed in Chapter 6.

2.2.9 Diversity
Most of the individuals and families of the traditional groups came from South East Asian Buddhist communities in their country of origin. This, in itself, results in many common beliefs and practices, yet at the same time there are many differences. Because of their home background and heritage each of these Asian communities has to accommodate a different practice to their own cultural tradition and their needs and expectations vary. Individual Westerners and visiting Thais add to the complexity of the community (see Chapter 6). The tremendous diversity and complex dynamics within the lay community cannot be underestimated. The combination of 'born' Buddhists, 'newcomers' to Buddhism and the links with overseas Thai results in a unique lay community. As well as factors that are common to the different groups there are also divisive forces. Nevertheless, this wide spectrum of lay practitioners remains a coherent community mainly by virtue of their common interaction with the Sangha.

2.3 Community Structure
The Buddhist Society of Western Australia is the formal structure operating for the development of the Sangha and lay community.

Rules forbid members of the Sangha handling money or owning property, so the business and legal matters of the community are managed by this formal support group.
There are about 600 members of the Society in 1991. The fees are $30 for a single membership, $40 for a family membership and non-waged are asked to pay $20. There is a difference between Ordinary membership (100) and Associate membership (500): the smaller group of ordinary members is restricted to those who consider themselves to be fully 'Buddhist' (a Buddhist being defined as one who adheres to the five precepts and adopts the three refuges, see Appendix II). Westerners tend to join formally as they would any other society, whereas up to 2000 Asian adherents do not see the need formally to join something to which they consider they automatically belong. To them it is a practising ordained:non-ordained Buddhist community. However, membership fees are only a small proportion of the monies received by the Society in any one year. In 1987, they accounted for less than $10,000, while general donations and fund raising contributed over $100,000.

The Buddhist Society of Western Australia operates four accounts:

1. **General Account**: Members subscriptions and donations are deposited in this account which is used to meet 'running costs' (newsletter, electricity, telephone, etc.)

2. **Perth Meditation Building Account**: Used to meet monthly mortgage repayments and maintenance expenses of the Town Centre. Donations are tax deductible.

3. **Forest Monastery Building Fund**: Used solely for building and maintenance expense at Serpentine Forest Monastery. Donations to this account are also tax deductible.

4. **Monastery Expense Account**
The net property assets (forest monastery and city centre) amount to well over one million dollars (twenty million baht in Thai currency). (Audited Annual Report: Buddhist Society of Western Australia, December 1989).

Over the last five years an increase in the value of these assets has occurred through capital appreciation and inflation. However, from my sighting annual reports of the Society and consultations with the Treasurer, I estimated that seventy per cent of the net original value of the assets was donated by overseas Thai Buddhists (see Chapter 6.4). Some send donations by mail, others bring money to donate when they visit. Finance for one kuti (hut) was donated by the Thai Embassy in Canberra.

Local donations are directed towards the Town Centre account where a shortfall sometimes exists. The sale of a vegetarian cookbook, Buddhist logo T-shirts, Yoga and Tai Chi classes increase funds. Westerners desiring more comfort, sometimes purchase special wooden stools or cushions on which to meditate. Most money raised by this type of fund-raising effort goes to the Buddhist community. Many of the community as well as visitors attend the regular ethnic lunches and dinner evenings which raise approximately $400 an event. The annual International Food Festival has raised some thousands of dollars.

Buddhism has legal status as a religion in Australia and therefore the Society has no difficulty in obtaining all the benefits, exemptions and courtesies, financial or otherwise, accorded to other established religions.

Commonwealth Government grants pertaining to assistance to ethnic communities are requested and obtained. A grant to train social work volunteers to attend to the needs of the refugee Kampucheans resulted in the growth of a voluntary group of workers within the lay community.
2.4 Summary
Individuals and groups in the diverse lay community have worked together to support the Sangha. This effort is one of the major integrating factors within the lay community. Once established, however, the interaction and the relationship that evolves between the Sangha and lay community offers further opportunity for the diverse factions of the lay community to relate where they otherwise might not. However, before proceeding to an examination of interaction among the different elements of the lay community (in Chapter 6) I will describe the interaction that occurs with the Sangha.
SECTION II

THE INTERACTION

Three areas of interaction between the Sangha and lay community illustrate the binding nature of the relationship. The opportunity for interaction occurs with the provision of dana by the lay community (Chapter 3), ceremonies (Chapter 4) and the meditation instruction and teaching programme (Chapter 5). The different needs of the wide spectrum of practice in the lay Buddhist community are met in different aspects of ritual.

The interaction is a response to the world in both silence and action. I hope to show that the external expression, that is, the ritual of the interaction, reinforces the bond of the various segments of the community to the Sangha thus bringing them together, restoring a fragmentary and diverse laity into a more cohesive unit. As interaction takes place in an external form and visible format it creates an internalised sense of togetherness under the symbolic 'umbrella' of the Sangha.

Different leadership qualities of charisma operate in the different modes of interaction between the Sangha and several lay communities.
CHAPTER THREE
DANA: LAY SUPPORT

Offering food to the Sangha in the Theravada Buddhist community is commonly called 'dana'. The literal meaning of this term is 'charity' or 'giving' and the word inherently implies generosity. Lay people offer food, clothing, medicine, shelter and financial support to the Sangha. The Sangha in return gives counselling and teaching to lay people. This reciprocal relationship has been sustained since the beginning of the Sangha at the time of the Buddha and is continued in the Western Australian community.

Mauss (1954) suggests that in the offering and receiving of "the gift" from one group to another, an exchange of values occurs. He also refers to the Hindu idea of gift-giving, namely, danadharma, from the Mahabharata. "Food given away means that food will return to the donor in this world; it also means food for him in the other world and in his series of reincarnations. Water, wells and springs given away are insurance against thirst; the clothes, the sunshades, the gold, the sandals for protection against the burning earth, return to you in this life and in the other." (Mauss, 1954:55). Tambiah (1968:117) points out that these texts to which Mauss refers, post-date Buddhism. However, he further states that the cultural context is relevant when referring to the transactions between monks and laity. Tambiah (1968:119) does not see gift-giving as manipulative, but rather states that the "the Buddhism idiom of selfless giving of gifts, control of passion through asceticism and renunciation of world interests is an idealisation and extension of and a contrast to the social norm of reciprocity."

What is interesting in the Western Australia community and the reciprocal relationship between the Sangha and its lay followers, is that reciprocation
is not necessarily directly between specific groups or individuals (see Chapter 3.4). That social solidarity derives from generalised social exchange rather than a restricted exchange process concurs with Ekeh (1974:215) and Greenburg (1980:18).

Because the role of food in the ritual binding of the Sangha and lay community is so central, I will commence the discussion on interaction by focussing on the donation of food. Food in addition to providing for the needs of monastics also creates the opportunity for this diverse lay community to share in ritual and by so doing relate to each other. As the relationship between the Sangha and lay community is strengthened, so is the interaction within the lay community. Male and female, traditional Buddhists and 'newcomer' Westerners participate at different levels and in varying degrees in offering dana. The support is constant from those who offer it because of their respect for the Sangha.

3.1 Sangha
The Sangha must eat to live. The most important daily interaction between the Sangha and lay community is through this provision of food (dana). In Western Australia the Sangha does not grow food nor does it prepare it. The food offering is personalised as each individual participates in the ritual. The personalisation of the task, and the possibility for daily participation intensify the Sangha-lay relationship. I have asked many lay Buddhists in Thailand how they decide which monks to feed and why they offer food. Almost every response given refers to the quality of the monk: "he is good", "practices correctly" or is a "special teacher." Similarly, when in England in February 1989, I spoke to Sri Lankan, Thai and Burmese Buddhists. They supported their "own" monks in the West because of the national affiliation although these monks did not always keep strict Vinaya and lapsed some of the rules, for example, the handling of money. But they
stressed that the reasons for their continued support for Western monks occurred because of the discipline of the forest monastery tradition and the special quality of practice. It is the prestige that results from a monk(s) with a special quality or 'charisma', that ensures continued ritual offering. Reciprocity ensues and this provides a vehicle for understanding how a leader's role is legitimised according to Hollander (1980:109).

In Western Australia, lay supporters also speak of the quality of monastic practice and reward this 'charisma' with dana.

The presence of a Sangha is conducive to good merit making. In South East Asia food is placed directly in the monk's bowl on his early morning round (pindabat) by lay Buddhists. A monk does not ask for food nor does he thank the donor for it, since it is he who gives merit to the donor by accepting the food. On returning to the monastery the food is pooled and redistributed. In Western Australia, as in the forest monastery tradition elsewhere, only one meal a day before noon is eaten. A less strict Buddhist sect would allow two meals before midday.

When residing at the town centre, monks have gone on morning rounds of about half a mile to 'show the flag.' However, on most days food is prepared in different suburban homes by lay people and brought to the centre. As would be expected, it is the traditional Buddhists from Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka and Kampuchea who most frequently provide dana.

There are many occasions when offerings are made to make merit. Days celebrating birthdays, weddings and anniversaries are considered auspicious days to offer food. This tradition continues in Western Australia. Other occasions that have been noted are anniversaries of a death in the family, or on one occasion a family offering food after their young son had a lucky escape that week in a motorbike accident.
Most of the Sangha reside more or less continually at the Bodhinyana monastery. The same traditional Buddhists who offer dana at the town centre drive to the monastery, some on a regular basis and others only on special occasions. A large basket placed in a conspicuous place in the town centre is marked for "contributions to the monastery" and non-perishable goods are donated to continually replenish its pantry. The diet of the Sangha is restricted to whatever can be cooked from what has been donated. This calls for great ingenuity by the anagarikas (novices) or nuns who prepare food at the monastery when no lay people are expected to arrive (about four or five days a week). One novice confessed that at the beginning of monastic life periods of good meditation time were spent deciding what to cook with what was available.

Care has to be taken to adhere to the rules of preparation of food and, as in Thailand, the skin of the fruit is split before offering to the Sangha to theoretically allow the seed to be freed and regenerate. Seeds are considered 'new life' and have to be treated as such. On one occasion I heard natural food exponents (Westerners) and traditional lay Buddhist women debating the ethics of offering a dish based on seeds and nuts (another seed). Advice was given by the ethnic women to 'newcomer' Buddhists offering health foods and it was proposed that the women themselves "would accept the negative merit in order to have a healthy Sangha."

The Sangha, on their part, reflect on food as one of the four requisites (together with robes, lodging and medicine) with which they are provided in the following Pali chant (translated):

Wisely reflecting, I use almsfood:
Not for fun, not for pleasure, not for fattening, not for beautification;
Only for maintenance and nourishment of this body, for keeping it healthy, for helping with the Holy Life;
Thinking thus: "I will allay hunger without overeating, So that I may continue to live blamelessly and at ease".

For the Sangha, the times when they eat are not periods for communication, frivolity or a time to let the mind wander. In fact, thirty of the two-hundred-and-twenty-seven rules for monks (the Vinaya) that the Sangha has to continually consider, apply to food. It is the strict adherence to the Vinaya and the exemplary practice that results in the prestige and respect for the Sangha community and ensures its support.

Food is also a method of control. If there is need to discipline a member of the Sangha or expel a lay person residing in the monastery, food is not offered. The person would have to move back into the lay community to survive. However, the need for this has not occurred in the community under discussion. In fact, quite the contrary, the generosity of food and money occurs because the Sangha follows strict practice.

From the first day that the two monks arrived in Western Australia, they have been fed by the local Buddhist community except for one occasion in the early days, 1984, when I arrived at the town centre to find a very hungry monk. Due to an oversight food had not been offered for two days. However, when ceremonies are held at the monastery, there is an over-abundance of food, again mostly prepared by traditional Buddhists. In fact, an embarrassing situation occurs with food overflowing on to the ground out of monks' bowls. On these occasions extra provisions are left at the monastery. These offerings include tinned food, large sacks of rice and personal requisites like toothpaste, toilet paper, tissues, etc. The pantry at the monastery is always well stocked and the donations of Christmas cake and Easter eggs according to the Christian calendar of the local culture makes for an interesting cross-cultural occasion.
Surplus food and goods at the monastery are redistributed to those in need. On more than one occasion I helped others to deliver assistance from the monastery stores to newly arrived Kampuchean refugees, a women's refuge and needy families. This is an example of further sharing through the central focal point of the community, the Sangha.

3.2 Lay community.
Not only is giving and receiving food a ritual that solidifies a life-long relationship between the members of the Sangha and lay community, but it is one of the major uniting factors in the Buddhist community as a whole.

The Buddha identified ten ways of making merit. One of the list is charity or generosity, particularly the provision of food for a Sangha. A guide to the value of the merit is expressed in the terms that "the feeding of a hundred laymen is equivalent to the feeding of one novice; the feeding of one hundred novices is equivalent to the feeding of one monk" (Spiro, 1971:109). At the town centre three or four individuals and/or families would present food on most weekends. This number can increase to fifty or more if a special family occasion arises. After the Sangha has received food, the lay people, Thais, Burmese or whoever are present, share the remainder of the food. This is eaten in another room to where the monks are eating, with the dishes of food on a cloth in the middle of the floor. The lay community sits around the food on the floor eating and talking. In fact, as in Thailand, on all occasions in this community the Sangha and most lay people eat when seated on the floor or at ground level. A roster system established to ensure the Sangha was fed when at the town centre became unnecessary. Information about their needs is passed by one lay member to another by telephone.
At large ceremonial occasions, both at the monastery and at the town centre, the offering of food is a joint ritual action linking the diverse lay community. On festive occasions more than four-hundred lay Buddhists can be present at the one time. When food is given, something from every person offering food has to be taken by a monk or nun and placed in the bowl, so that each person giving can receive merit. This ritual takes a long time when there are large gatherings of lay people involving hundreds of plates or bowls of food. The Sangha sits in a line in seniority from right to left, according to the number of years (i.e. rains retreats) spent in the Sangha. The food bowls are then passed down the line. Sometimes, weather and space permitting, lay people form a long line and the Sangha walks past accepting food; again the most senior monk leads the procession and accepts food first (see Plate 10).

After the Sangha is fed, most of those present eat together in ethnic, family or friend groups from food that is pooled and displayed on long trestles at the back or outside the hall. Few Westerners are present at these ceremonies. However, those who are, share food with the rest of the community. This sharing of food signifies compatibility and acceptance between the different members of the lay community (see Plate 11). Food is a basis for interaction (van Esterik, 1986:197) and eating together can be seen as a visible, tangible interaction. For lay Buddhists, it is not what you eat, but who you eat with, that is important.

The significance of food in establishing a reciprocal relationship is evidenced when overseas lay Buddhists come to visit. When the first large group arrived from Thailand in 1987, customs officials had a busy time confiscating prohibited foodstuffs. Many individuals of the large group (over a hundred people) brought in ingredients for food offerings to the Sangha. On their first morning in Australia offering food was the most important item on the itinerary and they went directly to the town centre:

PLATE 11. Lay community sharing food.
linking not only the Sangha and lay Buddhists over thousands of miles but the two communities. A welcoming dinner from the local lay Buddhists added to the interaction. In October 1988, the overseas Thai visitors' evening meals, provided by Burmese, Vietnamese and Kampuchean communities extended the provision of food to the level of an important social occasion (see Chapter 6). The organising of food provisions for the visitors is high on the priority list in arrangements – food being so important in the success of the visit.

Food has a further integrating function among the lay community when it operates as a fund-raising activity. Monthly dinners and an Annual Food Festival not only raise financial support, but provide an opportunity for social interaction within the lay community. Furthermore, it is a public relations exercise vis-a-vis the wider community. Although each individual ethnic group provides food for different occasions (monthly dinners), there are other joint efforts and opportunities for sharing (recipes, the cooking load, etc.)

Food is a symbol of ethnic identity. However, an overlap is occurring. As the migrant and refugee families become more 'Australian', changes are beginning to appear in their food offerings and fast food (Kentucky Fried chicken) has already appeared at the monastery. A reverse situation also occurs and some Western Buddhists prefer to offer rice and noodle dishes. The diversity of lay people offering food to monks ensures a varied meal for monks. Combinations of rice and noodles spiced with chillies and cream cake and lamingtons can be placed in one bowl. This is visual, edible evidence of the diversity of the lay Buddhist community.

Westerners, adopting Buddhism, usually try to apply the principle of ahimsa (not killing any living thing). The Western Sangha expresses a preference for vegetarian food and at the Serpentine monastery only
vegetarian food is prepared. However, South East Asian Buddhists are not necessarily vegetarian. This can vary according to cultural and individual preferences. The Sangha in Western Australia partakes of the fish, chicken and meat dishes when offered, as they are obliged to accept all food. Traditionally, they are allowed to eat meat when others have provided it and if it has been killed for general eating, that is, not especially for them. Most Westerners who offer food have adopted (or are adopting) vegetarian eating habits themselves and mainly offer this type of food.

3.3 Gender
In the monastic community all those who are not fully ordained help prepare food. But the Sangha is predominantly male (only one nun) and this creates tension in the Sangha–lay relationship. The generous giving of food to the monks by the women in the community contrasts with the monks rejection of such sensuous pleasures as eating. They are required to eat everything offered, showing no preference and some monks have been known to mix all the food in the bowl into a nondescript blend so as to ensure no desire or sensual pleasures arise from eating. Women in the local Buddhist community know, however, of the likes and dislikes of resident monks, for example, who does or does not eat food containing chocolate. Women cannot be alone with a monk, nor can they give anything directly into a monk's hand, so any offering is placed on a cloth in front of the monk, or sometimes food is placed directly into the monk's bowl.

The women with a traditional Buddhist background prepare most of the meals. They have spent their earlier years in a Buddhist country, and lived in homes where traditionally grandmothers, mothers and daughters prepared food for monks every morning. Women preparing food together also share in the merit accumulated. On days when monks are at the town centre (particularly Saturday or Sunday mornings) it is these women who
provide dana. Exceptions to this interaction are the Westerners who are on the Buddhist Society committee and older members of the community who are more aware than other Western members that the Sangha has to be fed. Some Westerners are in the community for a long time before they realise that someone has to offer food.

3.4 'Born' Buddhists: 'newcomer' Westerners

It is the traditional Buddhists in the main who feed the Sangha, who in turn provide the 'food for thought' (Buddhist teaching and meditation techniques) to Westerners (See Chapter 5). There has been very little direct teaching to Westerners at meditation or at 'Introduction to Buddhism' sessions about the relevance of providing dana for the Sangha or merit-making. Presumably, pointing out their reliance on daily food giving is not an acceptable topic for a teaching monk to choose. Furthermore, as one Western informant said "we Westerners take a 'back seat', because it is important for traditional Buddhists to offer food to the monks." This Westerner and others did not see the need to make merit by offering food because "there is enough food and few monks."

As already stated, Westerners are slow to adopt this traditional merit-making act and are more interested in interacting with the Sangha in other ways. Many reinforce their commitment to the organisational structure not only by responding to the needs of the Sangha with offerings of time, money and personal skills, but by responding to the needs of the community as a whole, for example, their work with Kampuchean refugees. Their reciprocation is not necessarily directly rewarding the Sangha who give the teaching, but through other avenues in the community (see Chapter 5).
3.5 Summary
Food is divisible and thus can be shared, both between the Sangha and the lay community. This helps to create solidarity. By its initial decision to create a Buddhist community that invites and supports a resident Sangha, a relationship has been established that creates a life-long two-way obligation. Once established, any break in its continuity creates de-merit. This symbiotic relationship further enables diverse lay Buddhists groups to interact. Food then integrates rather than creates division.

The prestige of the Western Sangha is related to the recognition of charisma in its members and the order itself. This will be explored further in Chapter 4 and 5. That it has already been tested and found worthy of respect has resulted in generous, consistent support. Through transactions of food and other gifts Buddhist followers reinforce the leadership role of the Sangha.
The presence of a Sangha within the community and the ceremonies that ensue are the major continuation of tradition. The origins of these traditional rituals are centuries old, many dating back to the Buddha himself. The Sangha survives as a social movement from that era. Its survival defied the pessimistic model of disintegration of charisma and it continues to persist as an institution. The Sangha has survived, not only the process of succession to leadership by incorporating and reinterpreting personal charisma, but also through a ritual and organisational structure which flourishes at the same time. This is evidenced in Western Australia.

In the Western Australian community, daily, weekly and seasonal ceremonies provide an opportunity for the ongoing routinisation of charisma through rituals and merit-making activities. Ceremony links the local community to the religion's origins. Buddhist holy days are set by the quarters of the moon. As in Thailand, these are occasions when many lay people interact with the Sangha by attending ceremonies and offering dana. A few lay Buddhists undertake to keep stricter precepts.

Larger ceremonies on these holy days are the 'linchpin' that create an opportunity for the diverse Buddhist practices to come together. Ceremonies create an opportunity not only for lay Buddhists in Western Australia to interact with each other, but for wider community links to develop. Overseas Thai supporters and their pilgrimage visits for the Kathin and Pha Ba ceremonies provide links of tradition and ties with the Western Australian Buddhist community.

Further discussion of the dynamics and outcomes of these interactions within the lay community is provided in Chapter 6. Comments on the
ordination ceremonies which are attended by some lay community members are included in a discussion of the Sangha in Chapter 7.

In Buddhist ceremonies in the Western Australian community, three different types of relationship between the Sangha and the lay people occur, namely (1) individually based interaction with the Sangha, (2) interaction of large groups of traditional Buddhists with the Sangha, and (3) interaction of the community as a whole with the Sangha.

4.1 Individual ceremonies
Many lay Buddhists carry out personal and private devotions (pujas) in their own home. But the Sangha's presence is important for traditional Buddhists for individual personal ceremonies, for example weddings and funerals, opening a new business or moving into a new home. Members of the Sangha perform the ritual blessing with the appropriate Pali chanting and Dhamma talk. Chanting for critically ill lay members, before death and on specific days after death also occurs. Some 'newcomer' Western Buddhists request similar assistance. In November 1988 I attended a wedding service which provides an illustration of the Abbot's role in individual interaction.

S...... a New Zealander married P......a Thai at the town centre (Dhammalokka). The fifty or so friends of the bride and groom attending included both Thai and 'Western'. Prior to a civil celebrant performing the legal marriage act the five precepts were chanted. Following further special blessings chanted by the monks, a short Dhamma talk was given to the married couple on the impermanence of emotions and feelings and the need to build 'respect' for each other. The traditional pouring of water over the married couple's joined hands was performed, complete with the use of a large shell to hold the water. Some Thai students present offered comments on how and why this ceremony is performed. Westerners poured large quantities of water in contrast to the smaller and symbolic gesture given by the Thais. The bride and groom and the guests presented food to the monks. Guests ate together informally at the back of the hall. Blessing for the marriage of the bride and groom had wider relevance: all present shared in the blessings and merit derived from the Sangha's presence, the offering to them and the reciprocal blessings.
This wedding is one illustration of interaction with the Sangha, a ceremony for individuals including wider involvement of others.

4.2 Traditional ceremonies
Celebrations are held that do not have relevance for all Buddhists. These are specific traditional events pertaining to one national group who attend in large numbers. Other Buddhists are welcome but not many attend. For example, the Sri Lankans hold an annual gathering at the town centre to celebrate the coming of Buddhist teachings to their country over 2,000 years ago (Poson Day). The Kampucheans come together on a specially chosen day to remember their ancestors (bangsakou). The Burmese hold a similar, but separate, ceremony. The Sangha is invited, dana presented, blessings shared and special chanting for the specific event occurs.

4.3 Annual ceremonies
There are Buddhist holy days when many members of the different community groups come together to interact with the Sangha and in so doing interact with each other. Thais, Burmese, Kampucheans, Sri Lankans, other Asians and Westerners mingle together at these 'core' Buddhist celebrations. These are common traditional celebration occasions throughout South East Asia (Vesakha in May; Beginning of 'rains' in June–July; End of 'Rains'/Kathin in October–November).

In Western Australia the beginning of 'rains' and end of 'rains' (celebrated as Kathin in 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991) are the two most important days for lay people at the monastery each year. During these celebrations lay Buddhists re-affirm their relationship with the Sangha and their own practice. Some integration also occurs between the different tenets of lay practice and practitioners.
4.3.1 At the monastery
A period of Buddhist 'lent', called Phansa or sometimes just known as 'rains', is a period when monks traditionally withdraw to home monasteries for the rainy season (approximately three months). The beginning of the Rains Retreat in late June or early July in South East Asia is the onset of the hot and wet monsoon season. In Western Australia it is the beginning of the cold and wet winter season (see Plate 12). A day is chosen, usually a Sunday near the first day of the waning moon in July, to begin Phansa. During this retreat, members of the Sangha concentrate on their own practice. In Western Australia, the busy activity of building and maintaining the monastery facilities is postponed until the end of the 'rains'.

The most important ceremony of the year to support the Buddhist monastic tradition is the Kathin ceremony held after the 'rains'.

4.3.1a The Kathin ceremony
This ceremony dates back to the time of the Buddha when it was customary for mendicant monks to wander alone across the countryside. As the order of monks following the Buddha's teaching grew in number, factors such as climatic conditions and the importance of not disturbing rice cultivation during the wet rainy season, resulted in settlements with land, monasteries and kutis (huts) being developed. The conduct and rules of etiquette consisting of an informal code of ethics was delivered to the Buddha's followers as different situations surrounding monastic requirements arose.

A monk is allowed to have three robes (four layers of cloth) – a single under-garment, a single waist cloth and an upper garment, usually made of double cloth. Devout Buddhists gain merit by offering gifts of cloth for new robes. At Kathin the robe cloth must be offered and received, and one robe cut, sewn, dyed and finished for use and presented to one of the
PLATE 12. Offerings to the Sangha at the beginning of a rains retreat at Bodhinyana Monastery.

Sangha on that day. Other robes from cloth can be made on other days throughout the year. The design of the robe is also stipulated. Lay people choose the day for a Kathin ceremony in consultation with the Sangha. It must be held between the full moon of October and the full moon of November following the end of 'rains'. In tropical conditions robes needed to be replaced annually. Then, supplied with new robes after the 'rains retreat', the monks can leave monasteries and travel again.

In Thailand, lay people move across the countryside, particularly from the city of Bangkok towards the borders and outlying regions of the country, to offer Kathin. This is considered an important function in legitimising the national, social and economic territory as it links communities that are spatially separated. The Kathin ceremony in Western Australia creates a bridge between 'old' and 'new' Buddhist communities. These social and economic links have political significance (see Chapter 6.4).

Kathin celebrated in November, 1987 and October 1988, 1989 and 1990 in the Western Australian Buddhist community, not only brought together local Buddhists of diverse traditional practice and Westerners new to Buddhism, but also linked overseas Thai Buddhists directly into the local community (see Plate 13). In 1987 the Thai pilgrims brought this kathin cloth from Thailand. I witnessed this ceremony as it occurred at the Serpentine monastery in 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 and noted the growth, strength and syncretic direction of the community. Because less than five monks resided in the monastery during the retreat period in 1984, 1985 and 1986, it is called an end of 'rains' ceremony.

In November, 1987 the Buddhist community celebrated the first Kathin ceremony in Western Australia at the Bodhinyana monastery, Serpentine. It was held in the new, somewhat bare ubosot (ordination hall) which was in the final stages of completion. Many of the traditional Buddhists,
particularly the women, wore traditional costumes from their country of origin: bright, colourful hand-woven cloths, some with silk and gold thread used for full-length dresses. Even if they don't travel overseas themselves, many of the women have relatives or friends in their home country who supply them with this kind of material. Hence, in 1987, this ceremony was a colourful occasion. Indeed a video or still photographs of the people on this day might suggest a celebration anywhere in South East Asia. A few of the women from the traditional Buddhist countries were in all-white clothes to signify that special precepts were being kept on that particular day. Adopting the precepts of the day's only meal before midday, no false speech, no alcohol or sex, portray this lay person as following a life-style similar to the Sangha, even if only for one day. Many of the men, women and children from South East Asia wore amulets of metal or terracotta and stamped with a tiny Buddha figure or a famous monk's image. They consider that such amulets provide protection and attracts good fortune. The few Westerners who were present were the most casually dressed, often in jeans, t-shirts and the like, as if they were going on a picnic.¹

The formal ceremony, due to commence at 10.00am, actually started nearly half an hour late. As one Western observer commented, "things operate mainly by 'Thai time' around here." In Thai Buddhism it is known that events flow, from one to another, in a flexible rhythmic manner, rather than adhering to a rigid format. The only pressing element in the time structure was that, according to their rules, the Sangha had to eat before midday.²

¹ See Chapter 6 for different attitudes amongst segments of the Buddhist community.

² The concept of time is one area where Western and Asian cultural conditioning differs and the above comment about 'Thai time' is often heard when plans for events are discussed.
The Sangha sat at the top end of the hall in a hierarchical order, according to seniority. When any Buddhist enters the hall where a Buddha image or member of the Sangha is present, respects are immediately paid. On leaving the hall, these respects are repeated. Those present as a group open the procedures by paying respects in a collective manner.

Respect and homage to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha is a simple ceremony but a core ritual in Theravada Buddhism. When performed by a Westerner it indicates that Buddhism is being adopted. Refuge in the teacher (Buddha), the teaching (Dhamma) and those who have been taught and are teaching (the Sangha) is taken by chanting in Pali, with the hands in an 'angeli' position (that is palms and fingers held together in a 'prayerful' position:

- Buddham saranam gacchami (I go for refuge to the Buddha)
- Dhammam saranam gacchami (I go for refuge to the Dhamma)
- Sangham saranam gacchami (I go for refuge to the Sangha)

This is known as the Triple Gem or the Threefold Refuge which guides a Buddhist on the path to peace and happiness. At the conclusion of each homage, the floor in front of one is touched by the forehead and hands. This Pali formula of Refuge is reputedly the same as it was in the Buddha's time. Following this personal undertaking a leader in the lay community, a respected Thai elder, asks the Sangha to chant the Five Precepts.

The Five Precepts serve as behaviour guidelines in living a moral life. There is no prayer in Buddhist practice, but a layman repeats or chants the Five Precepts on a Holy Day such as Kathin. In essence, he or she chants "I undertake the rule of training to abstain from (1) harming or destroying living beings, (2) taking what is not given, (3) unlawful sexual relations, (4) false speech (including lies and idle gossip) and (5) from intoxicants causing carelessness."
Three additional precepts are added for those who elect to take them. They are: "I undertake the precept to refrain (6) from eating at wrong times, i.e. after noon, (7) from dancing, singing, music, going to shows, wearing garlands and beautifying oneself with perfumes and cosmetics, (8) from lying on a high or luxurious sleeping-place, i.e. indulging in too much sleep." These additional three precepts are undertaken by some lay people who endeavour to follow them just for the twenty-four-hour period of the holy day. They are taken very seriously.

All the chanting is in Pali and is led by the monks. Pali is the spoken language of the ancient Buddhist texts and used as a liturgical language by all South East Asian Buddhists. In this way it is something that can be performed together by Buddhists from different backgrounds and is thus a common denominator for them. In the Western Australian Buddhist community the use of Pali for chanting illustrates the ongoing accommodation and transformation of tradition. When the different South East Asians chant Pali, it is familiar to all of them and it produces a blend of rhythms and accents. For the Westerners it is a new experience and a more 'sing-song' approach occurs (a leftover from their Christian hymn singing past). The continued use of Pali, instead of the introduction of the English language, does, however, slow down any 'Westernisation' process.

Not all the lay people who visit the monastery for the performance participate in the Pali chanting. (The hall used for the ceremony in 1984, 1985 and 1986 was too small for the large crowd.) Some of the women continue to prepare the food for presentation in the kitchen adjoining the hall. This time is used to socialise and catch up on family news and other general matters. Some men sat outside, likewise exchanging ethnic, 

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3 The morning after the ceremony it was disquieting for me to find a visiting lay Buddhist on the floor next to the most comfortable bed in my house. My offer of the bed had been to no avail!
business or general information. Many of the Australian men married to Thai wives know each other well and sat together. The men looked after the younger children. Mounds of yellow sand and blue metal used in the building of the monastery provided play materials and unintentionally brought to mind the 'wan chai' in Thailand, when people bring sand into temples and make symbolic mounds to resemble chedis! The older teenagers wandered off into the monastery grounds, where a creek, dam, granite boulders and trees provide an ideal setting to sit and talk.

The precepts were followed by a short Dhamma talk. As usual, the talk by the Abbot centred on harmony, accord, integration and the conciliatory nature of Buddhism. It was presented in English and a shorter, abbreviated version repeated in Thai language. Children moved in and out of the building, a baby was being fed on the bottle, and another was crying.

The presentation of dana began at around 11 o'clock. Fine weather allowed for the easiest and quickest method of presenting dana. That is, the Sangha walked on an alms round along the long line of lay people who stood ready to offer their contribution. Members of the lay community then ate. Those who knew each other ate together, often in ethnic groups, others moved around. Shortly after midday the presentation of the Kathin cloth, presents and financial donations followed (see Plate 14). Because of the unsafe conditions surrounding the incomplete new sala building, the traditional three-times circumambulation of the building and Buddha image by the people did not take place on this occasion. However, this dedication ritual complete with drums and dancing, occurred at all other ceremonies at the monastery. People gathered inside the sala with the Sangha. Not only Kathin cloth was presented, but money and a wide selection of other necessary items e.g. tinned food (milk, fruit, milo, tea) sacks of rice (up to 100 kg), eggs, etc. Toiletries such as toothpaste, soap and toilet paper were also presented. All the presents are delightfully wrapped, more often than
PLATE 14. Offering of the Kathin cloth
November 1989.

PLATE 15. Cutting the Kathin cloth in preparation for sewing into a robe.
not in saffron or orange coloured cellophane paper. Though the supply of food and other items for the monastery occurs all year round, this is the one single occasion when all Buddhists should participate – even if it is their only appearance at the monastery for the year. Money collected on the day is also donated to the monastery. A large collection bowl passed around among those present who gave cash and cheques. At other occasions a money tree, the symbolic bodhi tree with branches holding the fluttering money (dollar notes), was used. Flowers, incense and candles are also brought and left at the monastery.

This ceremony was organised so the cloth could be presented by the whole community. The Abbot spoke of the ceremony being not for "one person or one group, but for everyone." The offering of the cloth was made in four languages, English, Pali, Khymer and Thai, by chosen members of the community. The Sangha chose a 'fitting' monk (one who needs it the most) to receive the cloth and after expressed agreement two of the monks departed with a sample of what was offered and begun to cut and sew the robe. The Abbot explained to those present that the making of the robe should be a united effort with all monks contributing. When speaking during the Kathin ceremony the Abbot concentrated on the symbolic nature of the ceremony. The cloth, the money and the material goods were a "great moral support for the Sangha", reaffirming that it is a "right path striving for that which is worthy." "Giving each other (Sangha and lay) support" was seen as "spiritual bonding."

During the meditation, scheduled for two o'clock and attended by only a few meditators (mainly Western and overseas Thais), the sewing machine in a small room at the back of the sala could be heard as the monks sewed the robe (see Plate 15). Some notable but permissible short-cuts to the procedure were made to allow the robe to be completed in one day. The cloth was already dyed the right colour. The robe that was sewn, the under
garment, is the smallest needed and the measurements of the chosen monk, from the navel to half-way down the calf on the leg, were known beforehand. The robe must contain at least five segments or panels and a border. The traditional small pieces of rectangular cloth (said to be shaped like rice fields) were cut and sewed. In the Buddha's time the original piece of cloth and rags were stretched on a wooden frame (in Pali, literally a 'kathin').

In the evening, the completed robe was presented to the monk chosen to receive it. Large bolts of material are usually donated and during the course of a year monks are encouraged to make their own robes. The forest monastery tradition uses a darker orange-brown coloured material, whereas the establishment Sangha in Thailand use a brighter saffron-yellow. Over the past few years, box-loads of donated 'yellow' robes which are not required in Western Australia, have been re-distributed to monasteries in poor areas in Thailand.

By mid-afternoon most lay people had packed up and left. The overseas Thai moved on for a barbecue evening at a picturesque nearby tourist spot.

4.3.1b Kathin summary
For centuries the monk's saffron robe has been a symbol of the order and discipline of the Sangha. The primary aim of this commemoration is to give, and be seen to give, support for the Sangha and monastery, not just to present robes. Ninety-five percent of those present are 'born' or traditional Buddhists. Most of them see this ceremony in terms of making merit. The acquisition of merit is linked to practical objectives, to establish a 'home' for the Sangha and establish Buddhism in Western Australia.

During 1987, 1988 and 1989, the first three Kathin ceremonies, the dominant traditional group present were Kampucheans, with the visiting overseas
Thai contingent being the second largest group. Few Westerners attend this or similar ceremonies at the monastery (usually only five percent of the lay community present are Westerners). Some Westerners are meditators new to Buddhism and are in a sense 'sightseers.' It is their first visit to the monastery and their first experience of a traditional Buddhist ceremony. Most Westerners who attend on a regular basis are committee members of the Buddhist Society, or Australian men married to Asian women. In the week before the 1988 Kathin ceremony, the Abbot gave an afternoon seminar on the meaning of the ceremony. It was attended by about forty Westerners. Some of the Westerners present at the seminar attended the ceremony.

Kathin is also a day when Buddhists invite visitors for a day's outing. I encountered tourists from Europe, Asia and North America visiting with Buddhist friends. The importance of this day to lay Buddhists can be gauged from the efforts taken by some of them to attend. For example, Thai Buddhists from Geraldton travelled five hundred kilometres in three cars to attend this ceremony. The interaction between people on the day was intermittent because of the large crowd. Though most of the food is pooled on large trestle tables outside the hall, most Buddhists ate in groups with their own friends. A few Westerners joined these groups, others ate together.

Traditionally in Thailand, Kathin results in linking communities that are spatially separated. In Western Australia, cooperation between the different groups brings together local Buddhists from different suburbs and areas in Western Australia, Westerners new to Buddhism, and also overseas Buddhists.

This most important annual event, involving both Sangha and lay people, is seen as an opportunity to join "in a harmonious expression of support"
The unifying effect of ritual and mutual support for the Sangha is further expressed in the Newsletter as a "fitting example of the universality of the Dhamma and the unifying power of goodness." An analysis of the commitment, support, influence and interaction of lay Buddhists in Thailand and the Western Australia community is to be found in Chapter 6.

A third traditional ceremony, Pha Ba (offering support of money and goods to the Sangha and the monastery) occurs intermittently at any time in the year outside of this 'rains' period. Other large groups of overseas Thais travel to Western Australia to offer support in this manner (see Chapter 6.4).

4.3.2 Vesakha Day
Buddhists all over the world celebrate the full moon day of the sixth lunar month as Vesakha, an important event as it commemorates the Birth, Enlightenment and Parinibbana (final passing away) of the Buddha. The observance of Vesakha Day reminds the community of the Buddha, his life, his personal qualities and abilities, and of his personal charisma that led to the beginnings of a religious movement. It is also an important day in the Western Australian Buddhist community and as such is the continuation of a long tradition.

The following programme reproduced from the Newsletter gives some indication how the ritual of the day creates an opportunity for Sangha and lay communities to interact and communicate.
Vesakha Day - 1988

9.00 am Gathering at Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre

9.30 am Group chanting including taking the 3 Refuges and the 5 Buddhist Precepts. Auspicious chanting by the Bhikkhus. A short Dhamma talk on the importance of Vesakha Day.

10.30am Offering of food to the Bhikkhus. The lay people will then share a meal.

Afternoon Films/videos/talk on Buddhism and social gathering.

7.00 pm Meeting at Dhammaloka for the evening's celebrations.

Taking the 3 Refuges and the 5 Buddhist Precepts. Chanting the Recollection of the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha. A Dhamma talk by Ven. Ajahn Jagaro, followed by circumambulation of the shrine.

Attendance on this day and the resulting atmosphere differs a little from the ceremonies at the monastery, because it takes place in a town setting. A more sombre and formal mood occurs. From 1984 to 1987 the original small house (Vihara) in North Perth had insufficient space for the increasing numbers in the lay community. A larger venue was hired. The new town centre (Dhammaloka) was used in 1988, 1989 and 1990. A brief account of the participants and format of the day will highlight further integration occurring as a result of ceremony.

About five hundred members attended from the beginning of the day and many took the eight precepts. A more representative distribution of traditional Buddhists were present. More Westerners attended than in previous years and also joined in the ritual. A few Westerners went home by mid-morning, missed the lunch, the noise and confusion, and came back at night. This occasion is one opportunity for Westerners to learn, participate in and 'adopt' Buddhism, as opposed to just being meditators. In the confined space of the hall, the different traditional Buddhists groups mingled together more than at ceremonies at the monastery although some spilled out of the hall on to the grass outside.
The Dhamma talk given reminded those listening that human nature, its frailties and problems were 'common' to all. The need for personal transformation was stressed and the harmony and accord that will result was highlighted. The afternoon programme provided for periods of meditation, including a walking meditation around the park opposite the hall. The evening's circumambulation of the shrine was equally attended by the different groups, including many Westerners. The Sangha led the procession of lay Buddhists, who proceeded three times around the shrine, each person holding an individual offering of a flower, incense and lighted candle. The Sri Lankans added their own special contribution with some songs before the conclusion of the evening.

4.3.3 Limits to Ceremony
In the Western Australian community, ceremonies for the individual or group are what is allowed and performed by the master Ajahn Chah in Thailand. There is no ceremony for 'luck' to assist individual lay members. For example, there are no sai sem ceremonies, where 'white cord' is used to enhance protection for individuals or buildings, nor are amulets 'blessed' or distributed. I have not seen gold leaf applied to Buddha images and ritual is devoid of many of the folk elements of South East Asian Buddhism. Many lay Buddhists spoke to me of their respect for the Sangha because of the use of only 'basic' Buddhist ritual. Within the spectrum of what is acceptable, I have witnessed variations according to need. For example, one young Thai woman with an alcohol problem was brought to the Abbot by her Australian husband. The Abbot gave her a small Buddha with the remark that the image was only to serve as a 'reminder' of the teaching and that she needed to rely on inner strength to resist alcohol. At a group level,
'lustral' water is used occasionally. Monks participate in a Songkran festival (Thai) or Chaul Chnam Thmey (Kampuchea) when a ritual bathing of a small Buddha image and some water tossing occurs. Though not Buddhist in origin, these rituals are an opportunity for the Sangha to teach Dhamma.

Another ceremony I attended which is thought by some Buddhists to be on the fringe of ascetic practice, was the receiving of dana and offering of blessings to commemorate the opening of a new business. A devout local Thai Buddhist who imports and sells Thai goods requested this ceremony. However, the ceremony was simple with the emphasis on the people involved and not the new shop premises. What ritual there is in the Western Australian community is simple and basic and is an extension of the practice of the forest monastery tradition of North East Thailand and Ajahn Chah, in particular.

4.4 Summary
The united efforts of lay Buddhists from all sectors of the community support the Sangha. When ceremony and ritual occur not only do ordained and lay communities interact. The different traditional groups of Buddhists and the many individuals do not always practise in unison, but there are many occasions when they do communicate. These occasions create an opportunity for those lay Buddhists present to share outwardly and inwardly in the interaction. Ceremonies create an opportunity for a learning process for those 'newcomers' to Buddhism who do join in the rites and ceremonies.

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4 Lustral water is made during chanting when candle grease from a lighted candle is dropped into a bowl of water containing flower petals.

6 This contrasted greatly with the opening of a large department store complex I attended in Thailand in 1983. The white sai sem cord enwrapped the buildings and the many monks were provided with ritual fans specially embroidered with the name of the store.
Vesakha and Kathin are ceremonies that contribute to solidarity in the present. Their link to the past, their regularity and uniformity of observance across different nations and over many centuries, link the Western Australian community and its Sangha leadership directly into an unbroken tradition of discipline and order. The Sangha maintains its leadership role through its 'official' capacity in the community that gathers around them. The organisational structure that results is a good example of the 'order' of charisma at work. The robe is symbolic of the routinisation processes that occurred in the past and still occur today.
CHAPTER FIVE

TEACHING/MEDITATION

The Dhamma teaching and meditation instruction create another ongoing avenue of ritual interaction between the Sangha and lay community. The teaching relationship between monks and laity not only results in further bonding of the two communities, but also aids the process of integrating the diverse lay community.

Meditation instruction and Dhamma teaching are inextricably linked. In addition, the teaching given to the community points to the oneness of an individual (mind and body) and the interrelatedness and interconnectedness of an individual, society and all existence.

The acceptability and growing interest in the teaching programme coincides with broad trends in Western society. The community's acceptance of the teaching's relevance, and the charisma, popularity, status and ability of the teaching monks are indices of a felt need in the wider society.

5.1 Trends in the West
Two issues relevant to the entry of Buddhism into Western Australia will be briefly discussed, namely (a) the urban setting into which the teaching is entering, and (b) the attraction of meditation for Westerners. Neither are new phenomena.

5.1.1 Urban Buddhism
Buddhism is entering an urban environment as it enters the West. Gombrich (1988:23) states that not only did Buddhism begin as an urban religion, but further rapid urbanisation and an exploding population changed the "religion beyond recognition" in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the
Buddhist revival in the ideological framework of colonial society coincided with a fundamentalist concern to "sweep away the impurities of ideas and practices which were understood to have crept into Buddhism." The Buddhist community in Western Australia is based on the austere forest monastery tradition but the lay people here accept the 'fundamental' approach taken by the leadership. As Gombrich (1988:23) states: "when Buddhism settles into a new social and cultural environment, a redefinition of what it is to be Buddhist occurs". The balanced tension between an urban setting for Buddhist teaching and the necessary forest monastery seclusion, to retain the impetus, is discussed in Chapter 7.4. There is a need for personal time and a suitable setting to pursue wisdom and liberation, and a separate time and place to teach others. In the West the majority of followers of Buddhism live in cities or in an urban setting. Buddhist ideology is popular in England (Oliver, 1979, Humphreys, 1968; Snelling, 1987), continental Europe (Beckford and Levasseur, 1986; Gibson and Tutle, 1988, Kantowsky, 1988) and the U.S.A. (Fields, 1986; Morreale, 1988). Urban Buddhist movements in Thailand also grew in influence on the nation during recent decades (Jackson, 1989:7). In Australia it is no different. Australia is an urban society and Buddhism is growing in popularity (Gillman, 1988; Humphrey and Ward, 1988 and Croucher, 1988). Some Buddhist groups link an urban teaching venue with a more aesthetic rural locale for retreats some distance away. However, if it is not possible to control the aesthetic aspects of the external environment, an alternative is to cultivate the experience of tranquillity within oneself. Hence, the growing interest in meditation.

5.1.2 Meditation
The practice of meditation is not new. It has been practised in many cultures and forms the basis of many religions. Paradoxically there is a dearth of meditation practice in both the Sangha and lay Theravada
Buddhist communities in South East Asia (Spiro, 1971; Nash, 1973; Southwold, 1983; Tambiah, 1984). However there has been a recent renewal of interest in and revival of meditation practice in some communities and on the part of some individuals (Van Esterik, 1977; O'Connor, 1978; Carrithers, 1983). Also, the interest of Westerners in meditation and its adoption is on the increase (Needlemann, 1970, 1978; Coleman, 1971, Fromm, et.al. 1974; Cox, 1977, Ornstein, 1982, Ellwood, 1987, Claxton, 1986, West, 1986, Gussner, 1988). It is part of the "turning East" (Cox, 1977) and an interest in other religions which has been observed widely.

Many Westerners I interviewed in the Buddhist community were disen­chanted with Christianity, their previous religion, even though it did offer a form of meditation practice. The common theme I heard was "Buddhist ideas expressed their thinking." This view concurs with authors who maintain that Buddhism is in accord with Western philosophy (Jacobson, 1966); Western psychology (Fromm et.al, 1974; Goleman, 1978, Ornstein, 1982; Claxton, 1986; Manne–Lewis, 1986; Smart, 1987; Bastow, 1988) and modern scientific thinking (Zukav, 1984; Capra, 1975). Westerners also stated that Buddhist ideology harmonised with their thinking on current world issues (holistic lifestyle and ecology, social justice and peace issues) (see Chakravarti, 1986; Sivraksa, 1988, Jackson, 1988; Bobilin, 1988).

Buddhism is a world religion but as one of the Eastern religions it is often considered to have a status of a 'cult' in Western society according to Needleman (1970); Richardson (1983); Stark and Bainbridge (1985); Beckford (1986); Robbins (1988) and Ellwood (1987). A common theme in the literature on the many 'new' religious movements in the West states that they are inspired by Asian religions and share a "focus on therapeutic transformation of the self" (Johnson, 1981:51). According to Wilson (1982:20), they offer a more proximate salvation, have accessible techniques
to achieve this, offer spiritual mobility, are readily available and relate to ordinary people. Meditation and Eastern religious teachings offer a "system for understanding and promoting deep personal change" (Claxton, 1986:9). It is such a transformation that is sought by the 'newcomer' Westerners.

5.2 Programme Overview
Buddhist philosophy and meditation techniques are closely linked and cannot be practised separately (Nyananponika, 1962; Kornfield, 1977; Chah, 1985; West, 1986; Bucknell, 1986; Buddhadasa, 1987). Dhamma is sometimes labelled as incomprehensible, or too refined a teaching. However, there are many levels of teaching, depending on the intellectual and spiritual capacity of the individual. In Western Australia there are Dhamma talks specifically for the Sangha community which focus on their needs. Such talks differ in style and intensity to talks offered to the lay community. The teaching monks also use their understanding of the different lay audiences and alter the delivery style according to which segment of the overall community they are addressing. The monks have changed the style of their teaching and have adjusted to the needs of a more Western audience since their arrival in Western Australia.

In Theravada Buddhism no direct proselytising can take place, that is, there must be a ready audience who have at least implicitly requested guidance from the Sangha. On request the Buddha-Dhamma for lay people is presented in four different types of situations:

Firstly, in the wider community in Western Australia there is a continual demand for Buddhist teaching. Visits to schools, tertiary institutions, churches, prisons and special-interest community groups take place regularly. Radio talks and television appearances also occur.
Secondly, Dhamma talks are presented at most opportunities and follow a request for a monk to teach, for example, at gatherings where people meet at individual or communal events where monks are present, e.g. a wedding, funeral or Buddhist holy days. There are Pali chants and a special format to ask for Dhamma.

Thirdly, a weekly programme of Dhamma meditation instruction has occurred since 1982 in the town centre. In 1983 around twenty-five to thirty meditators used to meet on a Friday evening in North Perth. By 1989, this number increased to over one hundred to one hundred and fifty meditators and by 1991 there were over three hundred meditators. Since 1986, an extra programme has been held in a local meeting hall in a southern suburb some 20 kilometres from the main town centre. Another fifty to seventy meditators attend the teaching programme at this venue each week. The programme is discussed below in Section 5.4.

Finally, meditation retreats, at weekends and also for longer ten-day periods, are also available throughout the year for those who are regular and serious meditators. Because of the strained resources of time and energy of teaching monks, these retreats are not offered often enough to meet the demand. Hence some meditators also join the Zen and Vipassana retreats offered by other Buddhist associations.

There is an interest and enthusiasm from the wider Western Australian community for Buddhist teaching and meditation instruction. The saying "when the pupil is ready, the Master appears" is relevant to describe what is happening. The interest of the general public coincides with a general rediscovery of the processes involved in the direction and development of the determinant power within the self. This trend will be briefly outlined before a more detailed description of the meditation/teaching programme of the community is discussed.
5.3 Teaching Sangha

For the Westerners in the Buddhist community, books, study and intellectual debate are now a secondary tool to understanding Buddhism. The Buddhist monks who teach both by example and through orally delivered discourses are now the primary source of information and inspiration.

The two teaching monks who were born in the West learnt Thai language and Buddhist practice during their training years in the Sangha in Thailand. They have imparted this knowledge in English to Western society on their return. They offer the security of a traditional world religion and further status for the religion for some followers as the trained teaching Sangha is Western-born. Their strict ascetic practice also lends authority to the teaching.

The original teachings were simple and direct, but they have acquired numerous embellishments, commentaries and appear in a variety of translations. The Buddhist Scriptures of the Theravada School, known as the Pali Canon, were handed down for five centuries by an oral tradition and committed to writing in 20BC by monks in Sri Lanka. They comprise 46 volumes and consist of three basic divisions called the Tipitika or the three Baskets; Vinaya Pitaka which contain the rules for monks; Suttanta Pitaka, which contains dialogues, sayings and sermons and Jataka Tales (stories of previous lives of the Buddha), and the Abhidhamma Pitaka, which are books of psychological and religious-philosophical analysis. The different schools in Buddhism rely on this teaching to varying degrees ranging from only a nodding familiarity to intense textual study.

The teaching in the Buddhist community in Western Australia does not rely on these scriptures nor on books of commentary. Forest monks base their method of teaching the Buddhist path on the direct transfer of knowledge.
It is said to pass from one who is a practising meditator seeking Enlightenment to the lay person. The teacher-pupil succession has already been discussed (see Chapter 1).

Because Dhamma is transmitted from person to person, rather than derived from textual study, the pursuit of intellectual Buddhism can sometimes be a stumbling block to understanding or any personal realisation. In the teaching in the Western Australian Buddhist community there is very little discussion of Buddhist doctrine, or indeed intellectual debate at all. The focus is on Dhamma (teachings of the Buddha) (see Plate 16 and 17).

The direct relationship between the Sangha and a lay person, encourages the development a personal following for individual monks. In the Buddhist community under discussion both teaching monks have their 'followers.' Lay Buddhists' comments include "there's just something about him.... (monk)", or "the first time I heard him it was like being drawn to a magnet." The monk's ability to translate Buddhist concepts, and the "quality" of his Dhamma teaching and its personal relevance, are also mentioned.

This type of teaching implies a certain personal charisma present in the monk. A drunk who stumbled into one evening programme, and staggered out again some fifteen minutes later, summed it up as "Gees, he sucks them in... he sucks them in...!" Interestingly he returned over subsequent weeks in a more sober state, another illustration that the aura and discipline surrounding the teaching, and the teaching itself, attract, even though an individual questions the response to charisma that is operating.

For the first five years after entering a monastery, a monk is still an 'apprentice.' This is a period of learning, intended to develop individual practice, before teaching can be undertaken. Even then, teaching is not

PLATE 17. Lay followers listening to the teaching.
obligatory and some monks prefer not to teach. The two monks, who teach in both English and Thai, spent many years 'apprenticed' to Ajahn Chah in North East Thailand. According to the monks, the teaching method is basically a continuation of this master's teaching. Ajahn Chah's published Dhamma talks, translated into English, substantiate this comment as the content and style appear similar to that I experienced in the Western Australian community (Chah, 1980,1985). The key role language plays in the introduction of Buddhist teaching in the West is important.

5.3.1 As Translators
The importance of the presence of English-speaking Western monks who act as translators of Buddhist concepts cannot be underestimated. That the teaching should be in the vernacular has been also stressed throughout the history of Buddhism (Lamotte, 1958). Second and third generation Buddhists in the West have great problems relating to Japanese Buddhist monks (Mullins, 1988:223). Vietnamese young people born in Australia have similar problems in relating to Vietnamese speaking monks.

The introduction and use of Pali terms in the Western Australian community is considered by certain laity as a worthwhile supplement to the understanding of Buddhism (pers.comm.). For example, in most instances one Pali word cannot be given a simple English explanation. The word Dhamma can have one or all of some fourteen different meanings, e.g. Truth, teaching, doctrine, righteousness, piety, morality, justice, natural law, all conditioned and unconditioned things and states. Rahula (1978:88) notes that "a learned Buddhist nurtured and disciplined in his own culture" is aware intuitively of the different meanings of the word Dhamma in different contexts. This can also be extended to most of the Pali language used in Buddhism. Usually Dukkha is translated as 'suffering', yet further
explanatory words are often used, e.g. unsatisfactoriness, restlessness, disease, etc. to indicate a more exact translation.

Chanting to pay homage to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha at the end of the evening also occurs in Pali. In Thailand, in recent years, a move to chant in Thai has not been popular. When in Sydney and Canberra, I encountered English translations for chanting, but there was difficulty with the rhythm and rhyme. For Westerners the meaning of the chant is clearer if English is used. However, some new Western members expressed the view that the continued use of an archaic language, Pali, in the community, creates an atmosphere of mystery and ritual. This adds to charisma and to the credibility of the monks' teaching role.

Monks teach with humour and wit and in consistent, clear and simple language. All Dhamma talks are in English except at predominantly Thai occasions when Thai language is used. Thai language is completely entwined with Buddhist teaching and in the Western Australian community Thai friends justify the continued use of Thai between the teaching monks and Australian Thai people when discussing Dhamma and personal practice even though both parties speak good English. They claim that there are no comparable words in the English language "that have the same meaning." However, the language and concepts are so familiar for 'born' Buddhists that a monk's teaching may lack penetration for those who are only listening politely.

The use of English is, however, a common denominator for the diverse lay community. English is the language used for the weekly meditation/teaching programme. This necessitates delving deeper into the English words, sometimes labouring the point in order to clarify a meaning. Visiting teaching monks from South East Asia who need a translator or
whose English language level is not of a high standard, are not popular among the predominantly Western lay community at evening programmes.

5.3.2 As 'selectors'
The monks also 'sift' or select Buddhist doctrine and ideas in deciding what and what not to teach. Buddhist talks do not include reference to cosmology, astrology or Jataka tales (previous lives of the Buddha), myths, or legends. The teachers comment that all this type of analysis is irrelevant. Views on reincarnation or recollection of former existences are similarly not delved into. Nor are other religions critically attacked and comments only emerge when an inquirer asks questions of a comparative religious nature. Nor do talks contain political, economic or social statements. The only focus is how to change the conditioned 'self'.

The teaching implies that the individual is able to determine his or her own salvation and it relates to the goal of achieving 'wholeness'. Personal transformation should result in new attitudes and the possibility of a better society. Confrontation with others in the world is not seen as skilful action, nor as necessary for social transformation. That is, no approach to social action is sought or taught. (Many Westerners are already involved in social action - see Chapter 7.) So worldly concerns with consumerism, materialism, environment, peace, and such like, do not enter the Dhamma talks. But the teaching does illustrate how the principle of cause and effect relates not only to one's actions and relationships with others, but the environment in general. In this way, lay people are directed to be non-attached. Metta (loving kindness) is taught to be important, therefore 'non-attachment' is not intended to mean indifference or not caring at all, but rather objectivity.
Dhamma talks at ceremonies, where the diverse lay community congregate, emphasise core Buddhist teaching of harmony, accord and conciliation and many a time terms like 'International family' or 'one big family' are used. The monks teach that the past and the future are irrelevant and the present moment is the important opportunity for practice and, for that matter, Enlightenment. The Buddhist path to the achievement of its goals is the cultivation of morality (sila), concentration (samadhi) and wisdom (panna).

Morality is given to mean living a 'skilful' life in a wider context than sexual morality. Words like 'sin' and 'guilt' do not enter the teaching. For example, when one inquirer asked what Buddhism says about homosexuality, the reply was not yes, or no, or in any other way judgemental. The explanation given is that "It is considered unskilful action, if what one does hurts oneself and/or hurts others." What matters is the central issue of suffering, understanding its causes and its removal.

At times the concepts are hard to grasp, but the choice of words and style of delivery makes for easy listening. The teaching is presented in a direct manner rather than in speculative terms, and the emphasis is on practical applications rather than abstract theorising. Analogies used once or twice during a talk assist comprehension. One example intended to illustrate 'illusion' and the need to break through to insight, is the analogy of fish who spend life completely surrounded by water. Being surrounded by water is not the complete reality of the world as understood by humans which points to the possibility of other dimensions of reality maybe as yet not experienced. Similarly, to explain the need for form or ritual in Buddhism, the simile of a banana, of which the skin is the form enclosing the fruit, presents the teaching sheathed in a protective ritual just as the skin of the banana preserve the quality of the fruit. Or the same topic can
be illustrated by the well-known analogy where the form or practice of Buddhism are only the 'raft to cross the river', the aid to 'Enlightenment.'

5.4 Transmission of knowledge

Because it is the special weekly programme of meditation/teaching that introduces 'newcomers' to Buddhism as a religion, this topic will be discussed in more detail. It is the teaching itself that continually reminds lay Buddhists of the need for harmony within the self, within the Buddhist community and the wider society. A brief description of the monk–lay interaction that occurs on a Friday evening illustrates the setting for the transfer of knowledge to enable others to attain self-mastery.

Meditators are led as a group sitting together by one of the two senior monks.

On Friday evening after seven o'clock most of those who arrive sit in silence, beginning personal meditation. The majority pay homage to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha before adopting a meditation posture. The majority sit on the carpeted floor in a cross-legged position, a few on meditation stools, some on cushions; others bring their own personal, and often well-worn, meditation cushion. Some chairs placed at the rear of the hall are also used. A conducive setting is created as the lights are dimmed and candles lit on either side of the golden-coloured brass Buddha image, which glows in the soft light. Concentration on the breath is the method used to practise mindfulness and enhance tranquillity. The Abbot begins to speak at 7.30pm and leads those present into a more formal meditation sitting. His voice is soft, slow yet deliberate, as he guides meditators to "imagine themselves on the top of a mountain surrounded by cloud and all alone." The voice is not hypnotic, but there is a quality of tone and concentration that provides a link with the meditator's individual mind. Correct posture is sought, a straight spine, eyelids half closed, etc. For the first few minutes guidance follows on how to concentrate on the breath passing in and out of the nostrils. Counting breaths, from one to ten, as the meditator exhales and inhales is undertaken slowly. The teacher reminds meditators to concentrate on the breath, and not on the thoughts coming and going. Those present are instructed to let go of thoughts to do with the past and the future. This is repeated a few times until the breathing itself is not the meditational objective, rather it is the "mindfulness" of breathing that becomes the technique.

Concentration and awareness are heightened if meditation is undertaken correctly. Drowsiness or sleep are incorrect results.

The meditation session lasts thirty minutes. Over that period of time, as the mind wanders, once or twice the individual is encouraged by the teacher to begin again on the mindfulness exercise. The meditator is
encouraged to be patient and gentle, rather than forcing the mind and creating tension. A few minutes before the period finishes, the teacher suggests bringing attention back to the body, the posture and the sensations being felt. A small brass gong is struck to end the meditation session.

No meditators leave during this changeover period from sitting meditation to Dhamma talk. The monk talks for approximately one hour and then answers any questions. The evening usually concludes between nine and nine-thirty. Homage to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha concludes the evening. (This is often the first introduction of Westerners to Buddhist ritual.)

Over a period of time an atmosphere develops that attracts lay Buddhists to return again and again.

Needleman (1970:13) sees the central thrust of Eastern religion as being toward the "transformation of desire, not satisfaction of desire. At its purest, it is a radical and constant movement inward, into the self." The thrust of the teaching in the Buddhist community is, however, always linked back to the interrelatedness and interconnectedness of everyone and everything and in fact the Dhamma/meditation teaching programme itself is one example of this.

5.4.1 Links: Dhamma—meditation

Westerners identify meditation as their initial interest in Buddhism. However, as the programme to teach meditation techniques is linked to Buddhist teaching, the Westerners are automatically present at an overview of the religion.

Meditation and Dhamma talks go hand in hand. That is, the community's programme reflects the Buddha's teaching, that meditation is one part of an eight-fold path, called the Middle Way, to be studied and put into practice. It involves the individual in adopting Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. The latter two, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration, pertain most to the practice of meditation. Meditation is,
therefore, not a specific activity separate from Buddhist practice, just a normal part of it.

Thus in Buddhism, meditation, in practical terms, is taught as only part of 'the way' or one component in the daily round. It is mental training that cannot and should not be divorced from moral practice and restraint of thought, feeling and action. After understanding the nature of the mind and to that extent gaining control of the mind, the meditator can use it to develop wisdom. It is a system or technique and a training directed to peace and harmony within the individual by means of Concentration (Samatha) which provides the tranquillity which then allows one to see the Truth directly and for oneself (Vipassana). Buddhist teaching sees these two aspects of tranquillity and insight as being linked. Traditionally, morality, concentration and then wisdom are the sequential path to follow. Although Enlightenment is less likely to be achieved by a lay person, this path is available to lay people as well. Some Buddhist practitioners (and scholars of Buddhism) debate the difference in practice between Samatha and Vipassana and the preferability of one or the other, and whether it is essential to do Samatha before Vipassana. Ajahn Chah, the teacher to whom the monks in Perth are successors (1982:120) says: "Simply do the practice and you'll see for yourself."

5.4.2 Links: Mind–Body
On the face of it Buddhist meditation techniques vary greatly. According to Theravada Buddhist tradition, the Buddha is supposed to have taught over forty different methods. A lengthy general discussion on Buddhist meditation will not be entered into in this thesis. However, some reference to the specific meditation practice that is taught in the Perth community is necessary in order to further specify more fully the aim of personal transformation by means of the union of mind and body.
Buddhist monks teach that the human condition is the same for all people. Ajahn Chah, the master and source of the teaching in this Buddhist community, was asked the question, "Are the minds of Asians and Westerners different?" He answered:

"Basically there is no difference. Outer customs and language may appear different, but the human mind has natural characteristics that are the same for all people. Greed and hatred are the same in an Eastern mind or a Western mind. Suffering and the cessation of suffering are the same for all people." (Kornfield, 1977:37)

The monks teach that one of the most difficult things in the world is to control one's mind and suggest the need to be free from mental illness is harder to achieve than freedom from physical illness. Meditation is taught as a way to understand the mind, by observing thoughts as they come and go. The thoughts, memories and impulses that arise in the mind are separate to the still mind. They are impermanent. If the mind has not ceased wandering it becomes entangled in all feelings and thoughts. A calm, peaceful mind develops by the practice of meditation. When this tranquillity is achieved insight into the nature of the mind can be gained. As Ajahn Chah, the source of the community's teaching, has said "The knowledge that the mind is the mind, the object is the object, is the root from which Buddhism has been able to grow. It is the heart of Buddhism" (1958:8).

The result, a 'trained' mind, can observe and examine the mind in action. The type of meditation taught is called anapanasati which means 'mindfulness with in-breaths and out-breaths.' In a publication written as a manual for serious beginners, this technique is described as follows:
"The breath is vital, natural, soothing, revealing. It is our constant companion. Wherever we go, at all times, the breath sustains life and provides the opportunity for spiritual development" (Buddhadasa Bhikkhu :1988:v)

Formal sitting meditation develops awareness and the further application of mindfulness to daily life is achieved. For example, walking meditation is an exercise not for the body but for the mind where again the aim is to train the attention on sensation of the feet touching the ground. Individual formal meditation of fifteen, twenty minutes or longer, is suggested once or twice daily, but a mindful approach to all action is also promoted as most relevant. That is, when cleaning the teeth, washing dishes or driving a car, one should cultivate mindfulness and direct awareness of one's actions.

Although Enlightenment is the goal, blissful jhanic states are not discussed and expectations of them are not encouraged. In fact, the monks teach that aiming for, or 'clinging to', blissful experiences or altered states of consciousness is an unworthy goal. This is a further dimension of the Dhamma, the teaching that points to the unsatisfactoriness of grasping or clinging to any concepts, including a concept of Enlightenment. Even strict practice or a clinging to hours of sitting in meditation is seen as unnecessary. Trying too hard, without wisdom, results in unnecessary suffering. Being patient, kind to oneself, and having no expectations or an achievement-oriented approach to meditation, is seen as correct practice. Through such practice it is taught, one eventually comes to understand the 'self' as an illusion.

5.4.3 Links: Individual-Society
The monks consider invalid the criticism that meditation separates oneself from others in society. Being 'selfish' (finding time to meditate) to be
'selfless' (attaining a state of non-self) is understood as ultimately benefiting others in society. Meditation in the Buddhist community is taught as an aid to understanding the non-self, wherein the body is experienced as a universe itself. This cooperation of mind and body, the inner and outer worlds, assists in the development of insight into their essential oneness. There is no renunciation of one for the sake of the other. Indeed, attainment of Enlightenment (Nirvana) results in the end of all 'separateness.' Though it is experienced by an individual, meditation results in an experience of union within the self. This frees an individual from all conditions connected with the sense of a personal ego. It is the personal ego that dictates one's relationship to others. When the ego is removed, the interrelatedness of everything in existence is then understood. In this way, it is argued that Nirvana or Enlightenment is social, rather than individual. Thus the wisdom attained is not an omniscience, but rather insight into the true nature of mankind.

In the Buddhist community, meditators are asked to forego the intellect, to seek the discipline of quietness and to practice mindfulness in daily living, and to try, try and try again. It is an experiment that anyone can attempt, and a truth that the individual can test and confirm or disprove for him or herself. As the practice is within the control of the individual (not the monks or any outside force), many endeavour to follow the teaching. Its popularity may be due to it being seen as one means of regaining autonomy in a life where the individual appears to be dictated to by others.

There is a constant reminder that listening and talking about 'Buddhism' are not the same as putting it into practice. Ajahn Sumedho, who leads the forestry monastery tradition in England, summarised this when asked about the necessity of spending years studying the Dhamma, he said: "I would not do it..... To me it is like reading cookbooks without preparing any meals" (1983:29).
Though meditation is a personal experience, a trustworthy and experienced 'spiritual friend' or teacher for ongoing advice, is recommended. The monks fulfil this role for some meditators. I did not observe any swapping of meditative experiences to any large extent, but I am told this does take place. However, meditators did comment on the experience of meditating together and that they sensed a feeling of 'communion.' The idea that meditation is a social phenomenon as well as an individual one, is examined in a Zen setting by Preston (1988:146). There is a sharing of a meaning system that emphasises direct, intense, personal experience. A transpersonal or transcultural model of social action and reality-construction results.

However, the wider social implications are realised at a deeper level of experience than the more physical coming together of a community, that is in the experience of the individual and his or her progress towards the goal of Enlightenment. The Sangha's role is to 'awaken' this ability within Buddhist followers.

5.4.4 Results
The charisma and teaching ability of the senior monks result in a continually growing lay community attending the teaching programme offered at the Buddhist community. Many Westerners hear about the meditation teaching programme from friends or in the workplace, that is, by word of mouth. Others attend special 'Introduction to Buddhist meditation' courses, usually presented twice a year, or more general talks on Buddhism. These courses are advertised in newspapers and close to a hundred people attend. Some who attend these introduction sessions continue their interest and attend the weekly programme. At all times the community maintains the traditional Buddhist concept that it is unethical
to charge for Dhamma and meditation instruction. Donations can be made, but are not solicited.

Ninety-five percent of those who attend the weekly programme of Buddhist teaching are Westerners. The monks offer new concepts, and both they, and the teaching and the delivery style, attract followers. The Asians who do attend are the educated elite from many different Asian countries, not only South East Asia. Individual Western-educated Buddhists from Malaysia, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Singapore also attend. The offerings and support of monks and the monastery described in Chapter III return substantially to the 'newcomer' Westerners. What transfers from the monk to the follower is the knowledge how to transform the self. This occurs more than any of concept of mystical powers of monks associated with the Buddha and the sacred texts. Traditional Buddhists come from a context where Buddhist teachings have been incorporated in the culture over many generations and where an individual absorbs the culturally embedded teaching from very early years. Traditional Buddhists know its essence and understand its principles, even though they might not appear to put it into practice. As 'born' Buddhists they comment that the opportunity to adopt a more serious practice is always available. Most of those questioned, however, consider this is not necessary. Many Westerners, on the other hand, are trying a new approach to life by adopting an old established religious practice. Though Buddhist, it is not foreign in concept to a path of personal development or self realisation already embarked upon by many Westerners (see Chapter 7).

The Dhamma, or Buddhist teaching, is also distributed through the medium of tapes and books in English and Thai languages. The library contains approximately five hundred small cassette tapes of Dhamma talks in English, recorded each week at the town centre. Requests for tapes in English not only come from within the State, but throughout Australia,
North America and the United Kingdom. There are also over three hundred tapes in Thai. The Thai community in the North West of Western Australia sometimes requests those in Thai, as do the overseas Thai Buddhists.

A library of nearly a thousand books on Buddhist philosophy, ethics and practice, is also widely used. All schools of Buddhism are represented. About one quarter of the books, including a copy of the Tipitaka, are in Thai language. The Buddhist tradition of distributing free books on Dhamma continues in Western Australia. At present most of these free publications are the result of donations by benefactors in Thailand who make merit by publishing and printing small booklets. This is often donated in memory of a recently deceased family member. This tradition also continues in Western Australia and many books have now been published. A Newsletter, published four times a year, links those in the lay community and provides information and abridged Dhamma talks. The printed word again focuses on unity in diversity with phrases like "we are part of the whole of existence" (Newsletter, October 1988). Some articles and quotes are selected from other Buddhist traditions and teachers.

In Western Australia, some special Buddhist talks are given a title because Westerners like to know what is on the programme. Talks entitled "Self Understanding and Inner Peace" or "Accepting Life and Accepting Death" are subjects considered part of Dhamma or Buddhist teaching that is given without the need for a title in South East Asia. Special talks are also given to aid the Westerners acquire new attitudes and behaviour. For example, talks on Buddhist etiquette or ceremonies are given with titles like "How can I say and express that I am a Buddhist" and instruction includes the correct posture and procedure for Buddhist ritual. These 'workshops' are only held occasionally and in response to requests from Westerners.
5.5 Summary

Dhamma talks and meditation practice reinforce the relationship between Sangha and lay community. They represent a continuation of the teacher–pupil relationship perpetuated over the centuries by Buddhist teachers. They offer personal guidance for a personal quest. The teacher enables the pupil to 'awaken' a similar inner source of strength, namely the individual counterpart to the charisma perceived in the personal example of the teacher. The Dhamma is the source of the charisma. Meditation aids in the elimination of 'self', which paradoxically enhances this charisma. At this point, where the teacher and the teaching are operative together, it is difficult to distinguish or separate the personal charisma operating in the teacher and the internalised teaching (the Dhamma). They are manifested as one and the same entity.

The focus is on the individual as the sole instrument of his/her salvation, whether the member is of the Sangha or lay community. The relevance of this teaching results in a nucleus of meditators and Dhamma listeners that attend a regular programme. Many followers who were initially curious and attracted to the teaching monks become devoted and reverent. Some lay community members ordain into the Sangha where a continuation and intensification of the same meditation/teaching programme occurs. The full teacher–pupil relationship then develops on a more personal basis resulting in a more visible personal transformation. Other lay people often choose a practice that mirrors this monastic life without actually becoming ordained (see Chapter 8).

The Dhamma taught by the monks, not only stresses harmony within the self and the Buddhist community, but also harmony within the wider society and the natural environment. The linking of internal personal peace to external social peace is commented on in an analysis of the dynamics of the lay community in Chapter 6. Equanimity is the key word
in the teaching programme and it is a focus for the community. The teaching aims to pre-empt conflict and tensions that arise in the community. These wider interactive dynamics are discussed in the following section.
SECTION III

THE DYNAMICS

It is charisma in the form of personal leadership, and the charisma of the order of the Sangha itself, that sustains the Sangha-lay community relationship. This principle established in the previous chapters underlines the Sangha-lay interaction that occurs. The charisma is of such magnitude that it draws a diverse lay community together and overrides any major conflicts that arise. The Abbot, as leader of the Sangha, acts as administrator and politician and manages the interaction among lay supporters and the different spectrums of Buddhist practice within the one community.

The tensions that arise between individuals and between traditional Buddhist groups are discussed in Chapter 6. There is relatively low intensity of any one conflict because of the plurality of fronts created by the large number of different groups in one community. There is no real incompatibility of aims or goals as the support of the Sangha is paramount. The dynamics of interaction within the Sangha itself are also kept minimal because of the pattern of leadership and inherited authority. This is discussed in Chapter 7.
CHAPTER SIX
DYNAMICS WITHIN THE LAY COMMUNITY

The dynamics of interaction in the Buddhist community are complex. The composition of the lay community - its many different ethnic groups, overseas Buddhists and Westerners - was outlined in Chapter 2. An analysis of the manner in which these groups interact illustrates the tensions that can arise, mirroring many of the tensions that exist in Buddhism itself. The turbulence arising from the interaction of diverse traditions results in a hybrid Buddhist practice. Despite the tensions, support for the Sangha acts as a common focus for the diverse Buddhist practices to intersect.

Because of the wide spectrum of practice, the various constituent individuals and groups of people often operate as separate entities. Although at times they operate independently, the several sectors of the community are interrelated and interconnected as they support and interact with the Sangha.

6.1 'Born' Buddhists
Thais, Sri Lankans, Burmese, Kampucheans and other traditional Buddhists negotiate an informal, but close relationship with the Western monks. As noted earlier, members of the traditional Buddhist groups do not necessarily belong to the Buddhist Society of Western Australia, the formal association which supports the Sangha. The Society is not the forum for interaction that it could be, even though most ethnic groups are represented except the Kampucheans, who only participate informally.

For each individual, family or traditional Buddhist group, the interaction is channelled directly through the Abbot of the monastic community or his
representative. Most lay members have no idea of the overall structure and composition of the wider community. Neither does the committee of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia. It is the Sangha which has its finger on the pulse of what is happening for as the only Theravada Buddhist monks in Western Australia, they cater for a 'captive' but willing audience.

6.1.1 Integrating Factors
Common to all the traditional Buddhists in this community is their merit-making activity and their support of the Sangha and the monastery. They attend festival occasions and Buddhist ceremonies as families, where the emphasis is on food and fellowship. Thus the fund raising, working bees, food, ceremonies and ritual function act as an integrating force. Buddhist holy days are also seen to be occasions when Buddhists come together. Indeed many of the 'traditional' Buddhists only attend on these occasions.

There are broad similar ties in background that are shared by those 'born' in a Buddhist country. For example, Pali language is universal among traditional Buddhists and its use in ritual provides a common denominator. These men and women are seen to 'live' Buddhism. Even their physical characteristics - a smiling face, calm, slow moving, graceful body movements, tolerant speech and a quiet manner - illustrate an 'internalised' Buddhist practice. Many of the men were monks at some time in their past before coming to Western Australia and so they understand the role of the Sangha. The women continue to practise their traditional role of support.

Traditionally, Buddhism is a cradle-to-the-grave experience. For example one evening in a private home of Thai friends I heard a traditional nursery
rhyme being sung to a three-year old. The mother explained to me that the words in this nursery rhyme contained Buddhist teaching. The influence the teaching has on individual lives, personalities and behavioural traits cannot be underestimated. Moreover, what began in the country of origin, is carried through into life in Australia. Most traditional Buddhists relate to the Sangha when crises or celebrations occur, e.g. funerals, weddings, anniversaries or a new home. Many, but not all, families maintain a Buddhist altar in the home.

Buddhists from different countries encounter similar problems in their new environment while seeking to live, work and settle in Australia. Most of them continue their religion in an 'alien' environment. An additional problem is that, in Western Australia, traditional Buddhists encounter a pristine form of Buddhism of the forest monastery tradition. On more than one occasion a traditional Buddhist spoke to me about the possibility of "their own monks" coming to Western Australia to perform additional rites and ceremonies that are missing. In the Western Australian forest monastery community, the emphasis is on a formal long-term preparation for ordination and a serious commitment to monasticism, probably for life. The shorter time period, usually the three-month 'rains' period, that most young male Buddhists of South East Asia spend in the Sangha, is one of the most important factors in the continuation of Buddhism as a cultural phenomenon in their own countries. So far, this opportunity is missing in the Theravada practice in Western Australia, there being no opportunity for young men to ordain for short periods of time in this community.

Another common problem is that many of their children show little interest in the Buddhist community or in the traditional Buddhism practised by their parents. This is particularly so among those who have been in Western Australia for the longest period of time. Some teenagers, born in Australia of Sri Lankan and Thai families, were only present at ceremonies
because their parents insisted on their attendance. One first-year University student said that the ceremony encroached on "good study time." This student may well approach Buddhism through books, meditation or just philosophical interest - a more typical Western approach - or not at all. He differed from older, traditional Buddhists who spoke of "being born a Buddhist" or "belonging to" a Buddhist community.

Young Asian men and women living in Australia need to devote time to develop language, study and work skills in order to succeed in a new culture. Australian society applies additional pressure on them to fit into a society that pays little time and attention to religion. Their traditional Buddhism is now set in a Western framework. There are no Buddhist holidays, no time off work to enter the Sangha or monastic retreats, and it is necessary to travel quite some distance to offer dana to monks, traditionally a daily interaction.

Some members of the committee and many of the traditional Buddhists they represent, have been in Western Australia for periods ranging up to twenty years and more. Some accommodation and adjustment has already occurred in the practice of these 'born' Buddhists. Many drift away from their traditional Buddhism. Many traditional Buddhists still financially support relatives in their home countries. Because family responsibility is important in these cultures, the Thais and Sri Lankans make many visits to their home country. The Kampucheans and Burmese however have found it difficult to fulfil this responsibility because of current political situations in their countries. Most traditional Buddhists are still linked in some way to their original home and traditional religious practice.
6.1.2 Divisive Factors
In Western Australia little talk can be detected of old distrusts that could spill over from the Buddhists of South East Asia homelands. For centuries, Burmese, Thais and Kampucheans vied for territory and in their respective countries old-folk tales blend with modern stories telling of national rivalry. (Any Westerner living in these countries is well aware of these attitudes).

The differences between the traditional Buddhist groups sometimes outweigh the common factors of religious affiliation. Although they have a common Buddhist background, their language, history, national culture and politics, do create a different conditioning. Many Thais, Burmese and Sri Lankans have easier access into Australian society than the Kampucheans. Many of the Burmese and Sri Lankan Buddhists were Western-educated and some have Anglo-Saxon parentage which gives them an advantage. Also the majority of Thais are women married to Australian men. However, refugee Kampucheans, the largest group of traditional Buddhists, are the most recent arrivals and their previous background and refugee status result in greater difficulties in entering their newly-adopted society. They focus more on the Buddhist community and actively encourage their children to do so because they still see Buddhism at the centre of their ethnicity. The traumas and insecurity experienced by the Kampuchean refugees may be one reason for their generosity and practice of large scale merit making. Buddhist ideology that hopes for a better life in this one or the next, may be translated in practical terms. One young Kampuchean, I interviewed after he had offered food to the Sangha, described his action as "a hope for a better life in Australia."

Many lay Buddhists belonging to the other national groups may not have met or spoken to each other even though they are in the same community. Key people negotiate the relationship of their particular group directly with
the Sangha and organise different specific Buddhist celebrations for different national groups (see Chapter 3). Furthermore, national celebrations which are separate, secular activities, are often more popular than Buddhist functions. For example, the Thai community holds functions for annual events celebrated in Thailand (Loy Kathrong, Sonkran and the King's Birthday celebration). These are nights of dancing, drinking and good fun. On more than one occasion such secular functions have clashed with a religious function.

Outwardly there are few signs of tension between the different factions. However, tension does exist. Despite its 'pristine' practice, the Sangha in Western Australia, is inextricably linked to the Thai Sangha and there is overwhelming outside support from Thailand. This leaves the Burmese, Sri Lankan, Kampucheans and others to negotiate its 'Thai-ness'. At times this same factor, for example the ability of the teaching monks to speak Thai, creates the necessary link for the community to function. However, on the other hand, the Thais do not consider the practice of the Sangha as true Thai Buddhist practice: not only is it devoid of much of the Thai cultural components, but the monks are Western.

Tensions manifest on occasions when individual feelings are hurt or ethnic pride dented. One evening the Burmese altar decorations, which were in keeping with their tradition and offered as a gift to the Sangha, were removed and put out to the back of the Vihara. The quality of the decorative gifts was poor according to one non-Burmese informant. Another person suggested that as the overseas Thais were due the next day, confusion could arise if they arrived to see a Burmese-style altar decoration.

There are many examples of both similarities and differences between traditional Buddhists. However, traditional Buddhists are not greatly
increasing in number or in overall influence in the Buddhist community. Additions to the Buddhist community from the refugee programme and a slightly increased migration rate from South East Asia, are offset by the move for many traditional Buddhists and their children to become 'Australian'. Those who do continue their support of the community follow traditional patterns of devotional and cultural components of Buddhist practice: others move into the wider Australian society and out of the Buddhist community.

A few individuals from the traditional Buddhist groups have joined the many Westerners who participate in the Sangha-led Dhamma/meditation programme. They are mostly professional Asian men and women. Some meditators from Burma, Malaysia and Singapore whom I spoke to had had a Christian education in their country of origin but returned to Buddhist practice in Australia. Two Burmese meditators interviewed illustrate this latter group. Both were educated in a Christian school in Burma, married practising Roman Catholic women and are bringing up their children in this tradition. After settling in Western Australia, however, the men returned to the Buddhist community and now attend meditation evenings and retreats. Sometimes they also attend Vipassana retreats led by Burmese teachers visiting the Meditation centre at Mahogany Creek in Western Australia.

Three short biographical accounts may serve to depict the variety of 'born' Buddhists and their diverse Buddhist practise in the community.

A migrant Burmese family settled into Australia fifteen years ago. The parents and two children in their twenties participate regularly in community activities. A Buddhist altar, with more than one Buddha image, fresh flowers, incense and candles are present in the lounge area of the home. The father has a well paid technical position, maintains long hair worn in a topknot, continues individual daily meditation and attends most holy day Buddhist celebrations. The mother follows the traditional women's role and is a constant provider of food for monks and bulk food for shared meals or fund-raising dinners. The daughter uses her office skills after work for the Buddhist community and the son is finishing a
University course. Both the mother and daughter, at the Abbot's invitation, joined the Buddhist Society's committee. Their role in the Buddhist community links the committee directly to their ethnic community and those Burmese on the fringe of the community.

A Kampuchean family of six (parents and three school-age children) live in government housing and on welfare. They have done so since their arrival in Western Australia four years ago. The husband has limited English language ability, the wife none. One child is severely handicapped (no limbs) and needs special attention. They do not meditate but attend as a family on Buddhist celebration days.

Mrs ..... a Thai woman married to an Australian, has lived in Western Australia for fifteen years. She supports the Thai secular community through her work with the Thai Association, ethnic radio broadcasts, links to the Thai student group and work as a Justice of the Peace and translation service. As her time and energy are equally committed to the Buddhist community, she is a key link between the Thai secular and religious communities. Mrs..... personally supports the monks by providing food about two or three times a week which entails a journey to the monastery in the forest. She also practises as a meditator. Her husband is also involved directly in the community's activities as well as being supportive of her role.

The multicultural nature of the community with its different languages and traditions indicates different needs and expectations. Not all of these can be met. The advantage to Westerners of having teachers from their own culture who understand their needs and expectations can also be seen as a disadvantage for those of the 'born' Buddhist groups.

Moreover, the increasingly large numbers of Westerners joining the community are beginning to make their presence felt.

6.2 Westerners

In Western Australia, Westerners choose whichever 'flavour' of Buddhism suits them best. Those Westerners who choose the Theravada Buddhist community do so because of their preference for the Dhamma teaching and meditation guidance given by the Sangha. Even then, Westerners relate in different ways with varying intensity to the Buddhist community. Hence there are divisions among Westerners who come to the community despite the obvious common factors.
Westerners fall into different categories or groups according to how they relate to the Sangha. While Westerners come together when meditating and listening to Dhamma talks given by the Sangha, there is little opportunity for interaction. Some stay longer and communicate over tea and coffee. Others leave immediately. Retreats, where silence is part of the practice, do not provide an opportunity for any depth of friendship to occur. It is more a 'union of silence' after many meditating hours together. Some of the older members of the community know each other and friendships have developed over time. However, one of the founding members, returning after some months absence, reported that she "only knew two or three faces in the hundred or so present." Among the Westerners, who interact significantly with each other there is a core group who call themselves "Buddhist."

6.2.1 Integrating Factors
The teaching ability and personal charisma of the monks are the key factors in the continuing attendance of 'newcomers' (as discussed in Chapter 5). A respect for the Sangha, interest in the meditation, finding the teaching relevant and "making the most of the opportunity" are reasons Westerners give for joining this particular Buddhist community.

Most Westerners, questioned about their interest in Buddhism, spoke of being on an "individual spiritual path" for a long period before the Sangha arrived in Western Australia. In fact, many proclaimed they were "Buddhist but didn't know it." One individual explained his personal attraction to Buddhism was as follows: "I found my own understanding and worked out the principles of life". According to another: "my ideas fit with the teaching". A third person had this to say: "well.....it's innate, isn't it?.....knowing you're part of everything." In some cases, this 'finding' Buddhism had already occurred through reading books. Again, the most
common remark was around the theme "it was like seeing in print something you already knew."

Many meditators identified 'Buddhism' as a philosophy which promotes principles they had already reached or discovered in their own search for meaning. One of these was a middle-aged, educated Aboriginal woman. "Buddhist ideas are very similar to what I think as an Aboriginal", she said. "We have lived in this country for centuries with a simple non-materialistic way of life and our elders practised a form of meditation". Her comments centred on the similarities between the two ideologies.

For many, this personal attraction to Buddhist teaching coincides with an ideological link to current world issues. A key word in Buddhist teaching is nonviolence (ahimsa). The connection between internal personal peace and external peace issues has already been identified and discussed (see Chapter 5).

Therefore, it is not surprising that many of the Westerners adopting Buddhism are also involved in groups pursuing such causes and interests, as 'peace', 'conservation', animal liberation, yoga, and Tai Chi. Many belong to organisations like Amnesty International, Theosophical Society, Community Aid Abroad, and the Samaritans. However, their participation in these social action groups was on an individual basis and did not stem from their membership of the Buddhist community. Most of these Westerners had common lifestyle attitudes. The equation of success with material wealth was under question and most saw themselves as pursuing a 'holistic' view of life.

Many Westerners spoke of their spirituality as being a reaction to the monopoly they see technology and science having over development in the contemporary world. Some said they were looking for a personal
philosophy and commitment. Some said that they sought "a peaceful mind", or "a positive way to cope"; another said "I'm ready to try something new." A number of these Westerners attracted to Buddhism spoke of previous out-of-body experiences and altered states of consciousness. Some spoke of having had experiences where there is no 'self', no space or time dimension. A few accounts of near-death experiences through serious illness, surgery and brain damage were also recorded.

Many of the Westerners also attend other Buddhist centres, an ashram, or other meditation teachers, while some continue their Christian interests. For example, two young males belong to the Quaker community as well as the Buddhist community. Another young woman attends Christian retreats as well as many of the Buddhist retreats.

6.2.2 Divisive factors
In spite of their common attitudes, a great sociological diversity exists among the Westerners who come into contact with the Buddhist community. There is no dominant age group, sex, or social stratum. Male occupations varied from local dog catcher to a medical doctor. Members attend more as individuals than as family groups. In fact, there is a large proportion of single, divorced or separated Westerners among the community. With those who are married, problems may arise when one partner moves into the Buddhist community and the other does not. This occurs, particularly when a member takes on extra Committee work or a leadership role. Western children are noticeably missing from the community.

Westerners do not come to Buddhism with one mind or one kind of socio-cultural conditioning. Their family, educational and general social background in most instances include a Christian upbringing. There are
members of the lay community from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds, so denomination seems to have no bearing on their interest in Buddhism. There are also some who speak of little or no background in religion at all. A number spoke of their disenchantment with 'the Church.' As some explained it, the essence of Christianity and its simple teaching became fused with the growth of the institutional church, its involvement in the development of western civilisation, its proliferation of western art, architecture, and music, and its advancement of the Protestant work ethic. Within the Church itself, ceremonies and ritual trappings had became important. Many Westerners turned elsewhere as the task became harder for them to find the core of an essential Christian message among these trappings. Buddhism was a foreign religion and an outside culture, but many Westerners who joined the community found the teachings and meditation techniques personally important.

The involvement of the increasing number of Westerners who come to the community occurs at four different levels:

1. those who leave after a brief encounter;
2. those who stay for a longer period but only seek the philosophical/psychological component through Dhamma and meditation techniques;
3. those who endeavour to put meditation and Dhamma into daily practice, but disregard any rites and ceremonies;
4. those who endeavour to put meditation and Dhamma into practice and join in the rites and ceremonies.

At present the majority of Westerners in contact with the Buddhist community are in the first category. If all those who made an initial
contact joined the community or attended regularly, the meditation hall
would be overflowing. Approximately 250-300 Westerners a year are
introduced to the community through the special introduction courses or
normal weekly meditation evening programme but only a minority
continue. Many of those who do continue are the "seekers" who like to
discuss Buddhism in terms of philosophical and psychological theories.
Some Westerners call these "the academics", as they are in continual debate
with the teaching Sangha. They seek answers to personal questions, for
example, reincarnation, Enlightenment and individual karma.

Of those who continue to interact with the Buddhist community, many
move into the third category; that is they try to apply Buddhist practice
and meditation in their daily life to the point where thoughts, actions,
livelihood and lifestyle reflect the teaching.

More Westerners are now moving into the fourth category. It is hard to
discern the motivation behind the adoption of rites and rituals of Buddhist
practice. The monks teach most of the appropriate ritual behaviour and
encourage its adoption. Those Westerners who found that the cultural
trappings of the church were a hindrance to Christian practice appear
unlikely to adopt other forms of ritual as they embrace another religion.
On the other hand, if a religion is foreign, introduced from an outside
culture, then individuals may feel they can peel off the cultural trappings to
expose an inner core of universal meaning. Some Westerners I spoke to did
not see Buddhist ritual as 'trappings', but rather as peripheral to practice.
They adopted the Sangha's promotion of ritual and its relevance to
Buddhist practice. For example, 'bowing' to Buddha images and monks is
justified as fostering humility within the individual.
At all times the teaching emphasises that the 'form' of religion must be transcended. Thus, after this realisation of Truth it is not important what form an individual uses if it helps to maintain good practice.

Many Westerners adopt Theravada Buddhist meditation rather than participate in a more Western meditation setting, such as transcendental meditation or Christian meditation. Some Westerners mistakenly consider long meditation periods as evidence of good Buddhist practice, whereas the teaching stresses moderation and the importance of not clinging to any blissful mind states. One Westerner coined the term 'floaties' when speaking of a small minority of meditators who appear to indulge in heavy meditation regardless of their surroundings.

Some Westerners are attracted to Buddhism as a foreign religion. It is easy to identify these lay people as their preference for Asian food, clothes, art, artefacts, and area of travel, is very noticeable. One example which may illustrate this point involved a wedding of two Westerners held one Saturday morning. The Sangha blessed the couple. The bride was dressed in a sari-style wedding dress, flowers in her hair and bare feet. The groom was also barefoot, in white, wearing a long Indian-style shirt over his trousers. The couple were not regular members, but when questioned declared their Hindu-Buddhist way of life and preference for the presence of the Sangha to celebrate their marriage. In the Buddhist community, even in its pristine form of practice, there are orange-robed, shaven-headed monks, incense, candles, images and chanting. Mystery, magic and an almost 'romantic' ethos occurs, lending a distinct atmosphere of devotion to the proceedings.

The adoption of ritual by some Westerners creates one opportunity for the overall community - 'born' Buddhists and 'newcomers' - to interact. Through the performance of an external ritual, a communion of action and
mental focus also occurs. Initially, the adoption by Westerners of patterns of behaviour of traditional Buddhists occurs during meditation evenings by the ritual of paying homage to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and the introduction to Pali chanting. The principle of merit-making, giving financial support and offering dana (food), and attending ceremonies on Buddhist holy days follows. An increasing number of Westerners attend ceremonial days. Some women wore ritual white at the Vesakha Day celebrations in May 1988 in response to a suggestion from the Sangha. During the evening, equal numbers of 'newcomers' and 'traditionalists' circumambulated the shrine with candles, incense and flowers. This trend of Westerners to participate in more traditional Buddhist activities points to increased opportunity for interaction.

Because some Westerners in the community did not continue their interest I only saw them once or twice. Many in this group expressed the view that the Buddhist community adopts too many of the "cultural trappings" and superstructure of the religion from the Theravada Buddhist countries. These men and women remain on the fringes of the community or move out altogether. Some attend a few times, then decide not to form any permanent link with either the lay or Sangha community. They argue that the Dhamma can exist in Western culture without a Sangha and traditional devotional and cultural Buddhism.

Though only a few Westerners participate in daily food offerings to the Sangha, a considerable amount of time and energy is directed by Westerners towards the support of the Sangha and the community. As 'time' is a valuable asset, different levels of involvement are undertaken in the community by most Westerners. Committee, library and organisational assistance are also considered valuable 'dana'. Some Westerners summed it up in the phrase "doing it our way."
The several modes and intensities of involvement by Westerners are exemplified by the following brief biographical notes:

L.... is in her late forties, a founding member of the Buddhist community and practising meditator for over fifteen years. She was a member of the small group that travelled to North East Thailand to make the request for Western monks to come to Western Australia. She lives on her own, meditates more than once a day, and attends many retreats each year, both in Western Australia and in other States. She works part of her week for the Sangha and the community. She says that occasional attendance at church and Christian retreats complements rather than contradicts her Buddhist practice. L.... is one of the Westerners who had a near-death experience during a serious toxemia illness. Reticent about her meditative states she is a respected and devout member of the community and many seek her advice. She involves herself in all aspects of the community's programme, dana ceremonies, meditation and ritual. She lives simply, with few personal possessions and her own room has a Buddha image and many Buddhist books.

C.... is a retired male who enjoys an Australian way of life, particularly the beach, surfing, etc. He lives alone in a small house he purchased in the same street as the town centre. He has been actively involved in the community for five years, attends most activities, meditates and adopts the ritual.

D.... is a middle-aged divorced male. Previously known in the suburbs as an alcoholic, prone to violence, he has moved in and out of the community over five years. He states he is a "changed man", and now considers himself individually self-sufficient.

R.... and S ....... are a middle-aged married couple. R.... was born in England and had read books on Buddhism for many years before migrating to Western Australia. He became a practising Buddhist after listening to the Sangha's teaching. His wife initially attended to "see what he was up to", but also joined the community. Both are regular attenders and R..... has been a committee member for some years.

R. ... and B..., another married couple, are fully involved, cook for retreats, carry out handiwork and gardening at the town centre and perform other behind-the-scene chores. They are not only supporters of this community, but support other Buddhist teachers from other practices.

6.3 'Born' Buddhists and Westerners
Westerners and 'born' Buddhists from Asian countries are at different ends of the spectrum of Buddhist practice. They have different needs and
expectations. They may even attend the Buddhist community and interact with the Sangha at different times and different venues.

Westerners are initially concerned with their own personal needs. Their motivation is their own spiritual path. They see the Sangha as an avenue to reach their own goal and participate mainly as attentive listeners. At the very least, they hope to learn a practical path for easing personal life problems. At the most their goal is to achieve Enlightenment in this lifetime. A direct spiritual experience is sought or at least an understanding of the ways and means to achieve this. The majority attend meditation and Dhamma talks only and do not attend the ceremonies and other occasions when inter-mingling of the different groups occurs.

The traditionalists on the other hand are active supporters of the Sangha. To accrue merit is seen by most as a sufficient aim for this life. Only a small overlap between the two groups occurs.

6.3.1 Integrating Factors
An opportunity exists for some individuals in the two groups to merge into a small common 'core' component within the Buddhist community. Most interaction within the lay community occurs at the interface with the Sangha at fund-raising functions and on Buddhist holy days. Other developments are emerging wherein the lay community members can interact at times without the presence of the Sangha.

A 'common core' group has emerged. Over time those Westerners who are devout followers and members of the 'core' component of the community present changes in behaviour. External appearance becomes similar to the 'born' Buddhists, for example, conservative dress is adopted, speech is interspersed with Buddhist language terms, there are visible changes in deportment and a more outwardly devotional Buddhist practice is exhibited.
Therefore I was not surprised the first time I saw Westerners greet each other with a typical Thai 'wei' (hands together in a prayer position). A small pendant in the form of a dhammacakkra wheel made by a former committee member of the Society is worn by some Western Buddhists. It is considered decorative value only by those wearing it, rather than offering protection and good luck as in the case of amulets worn by traditional Buddhists. In September 1990 I attended a party for twenty or more Western Buddhists who were friends. No alcohol was consumed and only vegetarian dishes were offered. These Buddhists and other 'newcomer' Westerners join with meditating traditional Buddhists, to form a 'core' group of practising Buddhists in the community.

Attitudinal changes also reflect further involvement. Many Westerners have moved away from initial individual self-interest needs to those of the community. One nucleus of concerned Westerners works to sponsor Kampuchean refugees through the auspices of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia. When called upon, further practical support for this work is forthcoming from the wider Buddhist community. In addition, a decision to train volunteers for social work responsibility within the Buddhist community has resulted in the formation of a welfare group which offers a more positive opportunity for individuals within the different groups in the community to interact. It also provides a link into the wider society because many who completed the training at the Buddhist Centre are Christian as well as Buddhist. They came from such diverse cultures as Thai, Burmese, Singhalese, Kampuchean, Filipino, Italian, German and Australian (Newsletter, October 1988). This training is financed by the Government and on this occasion was shared with the welfare centre of the Catholic Church. English language classes also provide an opportunity to interact and a home tutor scheme links Western English speaking Buddhists directly to newly arrived refugee and migrant families. Support
for Kampuchean monks in refugee camp situations in South East Asia offers another involvement opportunity.

6.3.2 Divisive factors
At times there are competing needs. The co-existence of two different spheres of practice within one Buddhist community was highlighted at one weekend in 1987, when five of the monks led traditional Buddhists (approximately 300) celebrating the New Year Songkran festival in the city, while at the same time fifty Westerners, mostly newcomers to the community, spent the weekend in the hills at a Buddhist meditation workshop led by the senior monk. This type of 'split' in duties for the Sangha often occurs. This, and many other similar instances, highlight the Sangha's different roles in the community and how they are stretched to fulfil all the needs of the community. On one busy weekend in 1988 five differently focussed activities for the Sangha and the various lay segments occurred without many of the individuals in each group interacting with each other. Indeed, as a researcher, on busy weekends I found it difficult to decide which activity to attend and record and sometimes had to rely on the accounts of informants.

There are other occasions when a conflict of practice creates competing demands for space and facilities. For example, one Friday evening when the teaching monk led over a hundred meditators, mostly Westerners, in a crowded room in the town centre's main building (the Vihara), which houses the central Buddhist image, a Sri Lankan family with a new-born baby came straight from a maternity hospital to the centre. They wanted to place flower offerings at the altar of the Buddha image and present the five-day old baby for blessings from the Sangha. This would have disturbed the silence and concentration of the meditators. A second monk was found in the accommodation next door. The new parents placed the
baby at the monk's feet and offered flowers to a smaller image in the room that houses the library. It was not quite what they wanted to do, but they compromised.

Ethnocentric views expressed by the different groups about one another highlight the contrast between 'born' Buddhists and 'converts' to Buddhism. At times these views indicate genuine respect. When I asked traditional Buddhists what they thought about Westerners adopting Buddhism, most replied they were pleased and proud and thought it a natural phenomenon. However, other instances illustrated misunderstandings. Comments from some Asians about the meditating Westerners included: "they are a bit too keen", "very holy aren't they", "they are trying too hard", "why do they only do meditation" and even "they think they are better Buddhists than us."

Westerners on the other hand, talked of the traditional Buddhists and how they "fuss around the monks too much", "go overboard with the bowing and scraping bit", "are often in fancy dress" and they "drink, smoke and don't speak English anyway." The ceremonial days at the monastery are judged as "too much confusion" and "like a circus." Many Westerners I spoke to placed all traditional Buddhists in the same category. In fact, many could not discern the differences between people from different Asian countries.

As 'newcomers' to Buddhism, Westerners are often criticised by traditional Buddhists as "trying too hard." Westerners adopt the more fundamentalist form of Buddhist practice offered by the forest monastery tradition when they join this community. Many are vegetarian and teetotallers; on occasions an ethnocentric view or attitude of superiority surfaces. When a group of colleagues from Japan, academics in Buddhist studies and practising Buddhists themselves, visited the community, they returned hospitality at a Japanese restaurant. The austere approach of local Western Buddhist committee members puzzled the Japanese. In fact, an
embarrassing situation developed. The visitors ordered large quantities of beer, saki and non-vegetarian dishes. The Westerners ignored the alcohol and the meat dishes. Similar disbelief arose when a visiting Thai scholar, the champion of Buddhist practice and a simple lifestyle, ordered and drank Western Australian wine before departing at the airport. The Western Buddhists accompanying him drank soft drink. It is incomprehensible to some Westerners that all the profits from a large beer producing company in Thailand finances the most popular videos on Buddhist monks and their teaching.

One meditator expressed disappointment that traditional Buddhists and the Sangha members ate meat. She stated that the principles and the practice were in conflict. Another Westerner excitedly discussed the Buddhist principle of non-violence (not killing any living thing), with a Thai who had been a soldier on the border near Kampuchea. She did not understand how he could be prepared to kill the enemy "for King, the Buddha and a safer Thailand." The trinity of nation, King and religion, were inseparable for him and this attitude proved incomprehensible for the 'pacifist' Westerner. Another young, serious lay Western Buddhist on his return from Thailand, expressed his disbelief at one of his experiences: a young woman visiting a monastery had propositioned him "in front of the Buddha image."

Many of the traditional Buddhist groups 'live it up' at ethnic functions. These celebrations relate more to their own national activities than to the Buddhist community as such. The form of Buddhist practice taught and practised is pristine; that is devoid of any 'folk' or 'national' elements. However, this austere practice is respected as exemplary by many traditional Buddhists who comment that they prefer a Sangha to adopt this 'pure' practice without adopting it themselves. I overheard the compliment "you're a real Buddhist" made to a Westerner the day following a Thai function. The Westerner's ability to be a serious Buddhist by day and an
'eat, drink and be merry good-time Buddhist' at night was considered the right balance. Traditional Buddhists state that many Westerners try to live "too like the monks."

Cross-cultural contrasts are also visible. There is little interaction between the different groups and, more often than not, Westerners learn Buddhist ritual and behavioural expectations direct from the Sangha and its teaching. The question of how a lay person should interact with a monk confronts Westerners continually. Cultural and traditional habits take time to acquire and many Westerners, though not wanting to be rude and abrupt, are often insensitive to others. Although there are no hard and fast rules in the community, there are guidelines that help Westerners blend in with the traditional standards of etiquette common in South East Asian countries. On occasions, Westerners exhibit behaviour that is interpreted as disrespectful by those Asian members present. Many examples were noted. For instance, Westerners sit or lie with extended legs and feet pointing directly at the monk or Buddha image. One Thai lady expressed horror at seeing a Westerner with a Buddha amulet on a bracelet. This was hanging by the side of her thigh. For Thai Buddhists a Buddha image or holy ornament must be placed high on the body or not worn at all. Some Westerners use Buddha images as elements of decor in the home not knowing this is disrespectful if the image is not placed in a high enough position.

Conservative dress, speech and body language are considered important. The Abbot himself expressed his embarrassment at the lack of propriety in dress and behaviour of Westerners. The Abbot met an important Thai monk accompanied by a male committee member attired in shorts, T-shirt and leather sandals. Neat, clean and cool attire for a heat-wave summer day in Australia, but definitely showing a lack of respect for a Thai monk. In Thailand, shorts are only worn by the young, not mature adults. In the
eyes and understanding of traditional Buddhists, similar thoughtless dress and behaviour on the part of a lay person place a monk in a situation which may cause gossip. For example, a traditional Buddhist spoke of her dismay when she saw a monk in a potentially compromising setting. She stated, "they (the monk and the woman), looked like lovers, walking and talking". When I asked why she thought this, she criticised the woman's dress and excited chatter. It was a hot day, the Western woman wore a strapless sun dress and talked vivaciously to the monk. This is not correct behaviour for a Buddhist, the first woman said, even though the content of the conversation may have been centred on Buddhism. Traditional Buddhists do not consider the cultural blunders by 'newcomers' as intentional transgressions. Toleration is the order of the day. As one Thai put it...."they (the 'newcomers') are like my babies....I will help them grow...."

Cultural differences between Western and Asian members can arise in both personal and group interaction in the community. Committee meetings provide a forum for these differences to occur. From time to time a contrast surfaces between the Westerners' open and forthright manner of speaking and expressions of a point of view and the two typical Thai characteristics of interaction: krengjai and non-confrontation. Krengjai is diffidence, deference and consideration merged with respect. This results in a reticence to push one's own feelings or opinions. Krengjai, together with the Thai avoidance of open social confrontation, can be wrongly interpreted by Westerners as a lack of interest in the topic or decision to be made. Westerners, on the other hand, continue with their frank and critical commentary of whatever is under discussion. On many occasions I observed the contrast between the restlessness of Westerners and the calm restraint of traditional Buddhists.

Friendships, which cut across cultural boundaries, do occur within the community. One case involves the marriage of a young Thai man and a
young New Zealand woman who first met outside of Buddhist circles but who are now a practising Buddhist family in the community. The wife speaks Thai and her interest in Buddhism arose after a year's schooling in Thailand. As a married couple they interact with the Sangha as do other traditional Buddhists. For example, the Sangha was asked for and gave an appropriate name to their first born child. In a similar case a young Kampucheian girl married into a local Chinese family. Although the Sangha attended and blessed the marriage this couple did not meet in the Buddhist community either.

A few male Westerners whom I met at the community's monthly fund-raising dinners were openly looking for Asian female company. One divorced man said he was an avid reader on Eastern religions. He expressed the view that he was seeking a second marriage and preferred an Asian wife. He told me that this choice would ensure his role as head of the household while his wife must take the traditional feminine role. He did not want the 'feminist' Western women.

6.3.3 Summary
There is richness in the diversity of this community and no real need for homogeneity. It is neither a dry, intellectual group of Westerners concerned only with the mind, nor a colourful scene of traditional devotees moved principally by emotion. Rather it is a living community with a variety of participants and a small 'core' of practising Buddhists. At times, the diversity of the cultures and the different ends of the religious spectrum merge. It is the Sangha that is at the interface of the Asian as well as Western cultures and provides the main rationale for integration.
6.4 Overseas Thai Buddhists

Another dimension of lay activity further compounds the dynamics of interaction within the community. This is the social and economic support from overseas Thai Buddhists. In order to make merit Thai Buddhists have supported monks and monasteries for many years. Travel is an added bonus to this merit-making act. Many miles are covered by car, bus, train and plane, as devout Buddhists travel across territory, consolidating the Thai nation in inner and remote areas as a social, economic and political unit by their support of 'chosen' monks and monasteries (Tambiah, 1984).

Over the past few decades it has become increasingly popular to support meditation monks in North East Thailand (Gard, 1971:3). This trend extends to the support of the disciples of these well-known teachers, in particular the Western monks who move back into the Western society. The charisma of an ordained community practising an austere meditation tradition is a definite 'pull' or attraction for Thai lay Buddhists.

The Thais who visit Western Australia are lay Buddhists who follow and support particular monks they respect. About one hundred monks in the Thai Sangha are considered 'special' and in this category. They attract a large following. Respect is earned by a monk's quality of teaching and the exemplary life he leads. The Abbot in Western Australia is one of these respected monks.

Another traditional facet of this type of support is the collective nature of organised merit-making action, for example merit-making must be seen to be done. In Western Australia, the established Theravada Buddhist community has become a popular venue for this merit-making act. The ritual links Thailand into the West. Thai pilgrims go to Western Australia not because it is a sacred place, but because there are sacred people.
6.4.1 Integrating Factors
Ritual interaction with the Sangha, at Kathin and Pha Ba ceremonies, provides the opportunity for the visiting lay Buddhists to relate simultaneously to the local lay community as well as the Sangha (see Table V). This results in economic and social ties between not only the Sangha and the overseas Buddhists, but also between the two lay groups, Thai and West Australian.

In October, 1986 a small group of eighteen Thais and four monks visited the Buddhist community in Perth. Two monks and some lay Buddhists came from Ubon Ratchathani and the other two monks and lay people from Nong Khai. More recent larger groups have come mainly from Bangkok with only a small proportion of the group from country areas. These larger groups are led by a small nucleus of Buddhists who work for Esso Standard Thailand Limited. (Only 6 of the 120 visitors were employees of this company in 1987, and 3 of the 140 in April 1988). Other companies and firms also have Buddhist groups to which some of their staff members belong. When a visit to a monastery is proposed, news spreads quickly among the workers in these companies and other like-minded supporters of meditation monks and monasteries. There is a nucleus of serious meditators among the travellers and others who are not so serious. Families join in the fun and fellowship as the large group travels to pay respect to overseas monks and monasteries.

Of the thousand or more Thai pilgrim-tourists who have so far visited the Western Australian Buddhist community, over seventy-five percent are women and a few are married couples. Some are related to each other and/or are work friends of pilgrims. Many continue to keep company within their own family or friends throughout the visit, as many members of the larger group have never met each other before. The pilgrims are mostly middle-class professional Thai people, medical doctors, University teachers


TABLE V

Visitors from Thailand in Special Group Tours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 1986</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>'End of Rains'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1987</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>First Kathin Ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1988</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>Pha Ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1988</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>Second Kathin Ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1989</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Pha Ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1990</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>Third Kathin Ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1990</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Pha Ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1990</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Fourth Kathin Ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1991</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>Pha Ba</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note  
(1) Additional visitors arrive separately  
(2) The group number is limited according to the availability of seats on airlines. For example in October 1989 only 93 of over 200 applicants were able to obtain a booking.
and administrators, bank personnel and private business people. Most speak some English. Some of the Thais in more recent groups were related to, or knew, friends who travelled on previous visits. Two of the women travelling spoke about their 'freedom' to travel. Both had married children, and husbands who had ordained to spend the latter years of their life as monks. One young business woman travelled with her parents. She spoke of her mother's unwillingness to undertake any overseas travel until this more acceptable religious merit-making journey was proposed. The majority were fifty years or older and some members, unable to endure the rigours of daily events, rested on some days. One seventy-three year old woman collapsed and died of heart failure on the morning she was due to return to Thailand. These pilgrimage tours spent about one week in Western Australia.

The Abbot stressed the religious nature of the group while teaching in their presence. Though pilgrims were from many different backgrounds in Thailand, they were united in being Buddhists. That pilgrimage operates as a 'leveller' between different classes is testified to in the literature (Turner, 1978; Jha, 1985). One of the reasons for the continued pilgrimage visits is the leadership of one lay man in Thailand, a brief description of whom is as follows:

The key organiser, Somchai, has been President of the Buddhist group of his company (Esso) for ten years. He is a middle-aged family man who lives on the outskirts of Bangkok. A hard working man of modest means, he devotes his time and energy to further Buddhism. He is a devout person and one room of his simple and small Thai-style home is set aside as a meditation room. It has pictures of famous monks on the walls, a shrine, and special relics of Enlightened monks. He also leads lay Buddhists up-country to North East Thailand on merit-making journeys. Somchai aims to retire within the next year or so to further his personal Buddhist practice and increase his time available for intensive meditation.
It is possible to identify three sets of integrative factors among the overseas Thai Buddhists. The first are economic. Support from individuals and groups of overseas Thai people is largely responsible for the development of the Buddhist community in Western Australia. From 1982 to 1990 between half to two-thirds of the financial assistance came from Thai people (see Chapter 2). The Buddha images, monastery bells and monks' requisites, are also donated from Thailand. The pilgrimage tour centres around acts of generosity. The major reason for pilgrims coming to Western Australia is to support the Sangha and monastery. In 1987, the first Kathin group donated over one million baht (more than A$60,000), an average of $500 per person. Each gift was more than the average cost of the expenses per person for the trip. Cheap accommodation, transport and meals were organised, as the express purpose of the trip was to donate money. The average wage in Thailand, even for a professional person is not high. For example, one of the visitors, a headmaster of a school, earned just under A$400 per month. The average donation per person was higher than this.

Some of the committee members of the local Buddhist community expressed embarrassment at receiving money from people who are considered less well off and therefore question the continuation of this practice. However, donors feel that the presence of the Western Sangha and monastery creates a field of merit which cannot be discouraged or discontinued as it is simply the furtherance of tradition. When interviewing traditional Buddhists in the community I collected many stories of support for Buddhism in the West. One member recalled that even though his family in Sri Lanka was very poor, his mother found money to send to the London Buddhist monastery fund.

There are social and cultural, as well as religious reasons for the pilgrimage. Pilgrims mentioned that the lower cost and convenience of a group tour, together with easier visa procurement were factors conducive to
their travel. Some of the visitors gathered information on education, explored business interests and expressed a keenness to see Australian tourist attractions (koalas, kangaroos, beaches). One pensioner from Bangkok told of her exploratory travels to Melbourne and Sydney on similar pilgrimage excursions.

The Thais come bearing gifts as well as money. The cloth for making monks' robes needs to come from Thailand. Monks' bowls, carry bags, altar decorations, gold and silver flowers in glass boxes were also donated to the temple. The leader of the pilgrims gave a small wooden model of a chedi (cetiya: containers for relics) approximately six inches high, holding grains of minute crystal said to be bones of a Buddhist saint, to a few members of the Buddhist community. As a recipient of one of these, I was told that if meditation was practised properly and devoutly, these crystal grains would multiply. A photo of the energy surrounding similar relics of an Enlightened monk was also provided. Some pilgrims also gave amulets of the Buddha, of famous monks and of the King of Thailand to local Buddhists. The Abbot at the monastery at Serpentine has many similar donated relics. Though the majority of gifts donated were of a 'sacred' nature, individuals also exchanged gifts of a more secular nature such as Thai silk purses, scarves and photo frames. The pilgrims returned with excess baggage, consisting mainly of commodities difficult to procure in Thailand. Thus the programme for groups visiting Perth is a mixture of pilgrimage and tourism. Both the tourist industry and the Buddhist community benefit.

The second set of integrating factors is social. In Thailand, when Pha Ba or Kathin ceremonies are held, a reciprocal relationship develops between the village or community that is the host and the supporters who visit. Villagers open their homes and temporary buildings are constructed in temple grounds in which to feed and house the visitors. Most of the Thai
visitors to Western Australia came and went in the very brief period of less than one week. There were not many opportunities for interaction, unless formally organised.

The size of the first group, (eighteen Thais), enabled the Buddhist community to offer individual hospitality in their homes, provide transport and personal sight-seeing tours. Since then it has become increasingly difficult to 'personalise' the tour. The fourth group, in October, 1988, was successfully coordinated by a local Thai committee member. Links in the community were forged between the different traditional Buddhist groups in the local community and the visitors. Eating together created the opportunity for interaction, for example, at dinners provided by the Buddhist Society, the Burmese and Kampucheans Buddhist groups. The Kampucheans cooked dinner and hosted one evening. The spokesman for the Kampucheans told the visitors about their gratitude for the time spent in the refugee camps provided by "the King and the people of Thailand" before their arrival in Australia.

Some members of the visiting groups returned to Western Australia for personal and professional reasons. For example, a Professor from Chulalongkorn University returned for a subsidised two-week professional visit resulting in closer links between a tertiary educational institution in Thailand and one in Western Australia with exchanges of teaching personnel being negotiated.

A book commemorating the Bangkok-Perth First Kathin (1987) was published for distribution. This is a public testimony in Thai illustrating the links between the Thai people and the Western Australian Buddhist community. Its publication in Thailand points to the importance of the relationship.
The economic and social links forged by pilgrimage are not without political significance. There are no direct political connections or affiliations to Thai political groups evident in the Western Australia Buddhist community. Rather, it is the particular form and format of Buddhist practice and doctrine that appeals to, and is acknowledged by, Thai people. A return to the spirit of the original teachings, a 'back to basic' Buddhism is the common denominator for people of different cultures East or West.

The Thai visitors see a different Buddhist community in action in the West which is nevertheless an acceptable model of Buddhist practice in a new social and political setting. The community sits in a Western democracy where religion and state are separate. The teaching is demythologised and demystified. It is a simple meditation-centre practice and the doctrine of salvation (Nirvana) is taught as being available for lay people as well as the ordained, for women as well as men. The teaching promotes individual freedom of the mind as lay meditators are encouraged to seek 'liberation', a process of 'inner' or mind control.

Commenting on the dual character of urban Thai Buddhism ('reformist' and 'establishment') Jackson (1989:10) suggests that lay Buddhists are "only able to express their aspirations and interests through the medium of the unofficial structure of Buddhism by sponsoring monks or movements whose teachings lend support to their own social and political aspirations." The pilgrims are from the group of 'core' meditators: meditators who are a new 'political' breed within Thailand, according to Tambiah (1984:167). Their travel to and support of a centre of Buddhism in the West is connected with the form of practice and Western Sangha. In Western Australia, the 'back to basic', pure, pristine Buddhism centred on meditation practice, links up directly with the resurgence of this type of practice in Thailand. Jackson (1989:39) describes the supporters of 'reformist' Buddhism in Thailand as
being of the "economically powerful middle class" a description which fits the pilgrims who visit the Western Australia community.

When the merit-making visits to Western Australia are organised, pilgrims sometimes travel with a respected member of the Thai Sangha. The monks accompanying the pilgrim-tourists are well-known and respected 'key' monks in Thailand. Respected elderly monks are given the title Luang Phau meaning 'respected father'. For example, Luang Phau Rian, a monk from the north of Thailand, accompanied the group in October, 1987. This monk stays at the King's residence when in Bangkok and his connection to royalty together with his well-known respected Buddhist practice, creates legitimation in the eyes of the Thai people.

The pilgrimage ritual creates an important link into the West for Thailand. A 'dialogue' is entered into between Buddhists in Thailand and Buddhists in Western Australia. At the centre of the 'dialogue' between 'old' and 'new' Buddhist communities is the monastery and the emergence of a Western Sangha. As noted earlier, Katz (1978:34) hypothesis states "that Buddhism could not take a firm footing in the West unless a true dialogue is entered upon." He also suggests (1978:36) that "one-way missionary activity might serve to introduce Dhamma (Buddhist teaching), but only true dialogical meeting can establish it." In Western Australia a dialogical process has been pursued through return visits. In 1990 a return visit from a lay Western Australian Buddhist contingent to Thailand consolidated the relationship between the two centres of Buddhist activity. The Sangha's role in the 'dialogue' is similarly reciprocal. Members of the Sangha in the West draw on the support of its original source: the forest monastery tradition of North East Thailand and other 'reformist' monks (see Chapter 7).
The Western Australian community is not only a visible affirmation of Thai Buddhism, but it may be linked to the future of Buddhism in Thailand as the support extended to the Western Australian Buddhist community adds weight to the movement for reform in Thai Buddhism at a time when the nation is emerging as an economic and social force in the international arena.

6.4.2 Divisive Factors
Physical distance alone creates difficulty in the continuing relationship of overseas Buddhists with a local lay community. Furthermore, national and cultural differences are present within an already complex lay community. The visits of large groups of Thai pilgrims further emphasises the community's Thai heritage. If the ordained and lay community desire to develop a 'Western' Buddhism, the link with Thailand may need continual monitoring. The overseas Thai Buddhists relate directly to the monks and the monastery and their support bypasses most of the local lay community.

It is the Sangha, and its monastic setting, that provides the rationale for this continuing and developing relationship between the lay Buddhists of Thailand and the Western Australian community. Without the attraction of a Sangha such interaction would be negligible or non-existent.

6.5 Conclusion
The dynamics of interaction within the diverse lay community are exceedingly complex. No major conflict resulting from different cultural backgrounds and different Buddhist ideologies has occurred to date. Members of the lay community only conform as much as is needed and the tensions that continue create change rather than division. Any conflict is channelled along controllable lines through members of the Sangha who are the upholders, teachers and proponents of harmony, accord and conciliation
around which the lay community revolves. Westerners are meeting migrants, refugees and pilgrims on their own religious ground. Buddhism identifies values for the traditional followers in a new society, reinforces ethnicity, but at the same times cuts across this ethnicity because it introduces others into the community.

Opportunities are also presented for individuals and groups in the community to interact and a learning process occurs across the lines of cultural difference. Tolerance is practised and a loose integration occurs despite these differences. This process of coming together reaffirms the capacity of Buddhism to encompass many forms of practice within one community; a community that is not practising in unison but is united by a common Sangha. Buddhism began in one culture but it has since embraced many. It is this ability to become integrated into different contexts that points to its universality. The varied forms of charisma that link the Sangha to different factions in the community through interaction, as outlined in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, are maintained despite the diversity.
CHAPTER SEVEN
DYNAMICS WITHIN THE SANGHA

The Sangha in Western Australia represents the continuation of tradition. The monastic order routinised the original charisma (of the Buddha) and established legitimacy and authority for the religion at its inception by ordination procedures and the adoption of the Vinaya. This process of routinisation continues in Western society by adherence to ritual procedures and observance of rules for monastic life. Recognition is also paid to the charismatic quality of the individual, in particular the Abbot, by followers within the Sangha and the lay communities. Legitimacy of the position acquired through lineage (teacher–pupil succession) is also acknowledged.

Members of the Sangha, like the Buddha, are pioneers of the way to attain a measure of self-mastery. They do not act as priests or intermediaries between this world and any spiritual realm. Although they constitute a holy community, they are also prone to worldly interpersonal problems and when tensions and conflict arise within the monastic body, they have to resolve them just as they would within the lay community. As Buddhist practitioners they should exemplify the Buddhist teaching on compromise in conflict and finding a peaceful solution to problems.

Within the monastic setting in Western Australia, there are visible strains. On the one hand it is necessary to create a monastic setting to lessen distractions and enhance non-attachment. Yet, at the same time it is necessary to build a close-knit fraternity among the members of the Sangha, be open to the continual interaction within the lay community and initiate and maintain a working relationship with the wider society in Western Australia. In addition, overseas links must be maintained,
particularly with Thailand. A closer look at the dynamics within the Sangha will serve to illustrate the kinds of tensions that arise.

7.1 Leadership
Tambiah (1984:145) comments that Thai forest monasteries "revolve around a single personage – the Acharn (Ajahn) – who is the radial meeting point of multiple dyadic and personalistic teacher-disciple and saintly monk-lay donor relations." Although conditions are not exactly the same as in Thailand, there is no doubt that in Western Australia, Sangha and lay communities do revolve around the Abbot, Ajahn Jagaro. Lay Buddhists often comment on his entrepreneurial ability, strong leadership capabilities and personal determination.

The Abbot is seen to be the leader and he exercises his right of overall responsibility. The Sangha in Western Australia is a predominantly male hierarchical body. As such, the monastery operates within a traditional framework. However, in the interests of harmony within the monastic community, problems are discussed and consensual solutions are sought. The two senior monks, the Abbot, Ajahn Jagaro and the senior monk Ajahn Brahmvamso share the leadership role particularly when one or the other is absent overseas for a period of some months. Though they possess different personality and human relationship skills, members of the community believe that these differences complement, rather than detract from, their joint leadership and teaching roles. They are responsible for guiding both newly ordained monks and the lay community.

7.2 Thai : Western
In Ubon Rathatani in North East Thailand, a few kilometres from the monastery of their teacher Ajahn Chah (Wat Ba Pong), foreign (non-Thai) monks established a separate monastery (Wat Bananachat). Western
monks I interviewed said that North East Thai villagers are as supportive of foreign monks as they are of Thai monks. Or even more so, if the practice is exemplary. In Western Australia, the Western monks linked to the original Thai community, are members of an ordained body whose unbroken succession makes it one of the oldest institutions in the world. It offers a continuity which ensures strength, security and depth. However, this very continuity presents two problems for the emerging Western Sangha. First, the inevitable cultural trappings of its long, evolutionary journey in South Asia and South East Asia can represent a major limitation in its adaptation to Australia. Second, its continuing validation by, support from and links with the Thai Sangha can delay the formulation of its local Western identity.

The bond with the Thai Sangha presents a dilemma. The Abbot of the Western Australian monastery is well known and respected in Thailand and this relationship is expected to continue (see Chapter 2). This bond results in continued financial and spiritual support from Thai people. Moreover, many monks ordained in the West continue their training in Thai monasteries, sometimes for many years. For example, the first Australian-born monk to ordain (Venerable Visardo) is at present practicing in Thailand and it is not known if and when he will return to the local Sangha. This 'dialogue' also continues between the Western Sangha and the Thai Sangha with reciprocal visits and recognition, not only by the Sangha, but also by the King and the people of Thailand. If the Western Sangha is a direct implant of the Thai tradition, the question arises as to how a 'Western' Sangha will evolve its own practice?

1 A similar position of respect and support is given to the Abbot, Ajahn Sumedho, at the Amaravati monastery in England.
Two Thai monks, one a relative of Ajahn Chah, spent a period of two years in the Sangha community in Western Australia. Complete integration with the developing Western Sangha did not occur. The limited English of the Thai monks caused communication problems and they were reluctant to accept non-Thai Buddhist practice. The timing of their two-year presence in the monastery and the extent of their participation were, however, influential on the developing Western Sangha. Their practice was a constant reminder of tradition. When I questioned Western monks at the Serpentine monastery, they said that because of the presence of these Thai monks more effort was made to keep to strict Vinaya when at times it might have been easier to adopt a new mode of practice. The Thai monks developed a special relationship with the Thai community in Western Australia. In a two-week extended tour to the North West of the State, they were enthusiastically received by Thai immigrants. When asked about the future of a Sangha in the West, they expressed confidence in its future, but added the rider "it cannot be the same as in Thailand." When I was in England in January 1989 I recorded similar comments that members of the Thai Sangha do not stay for extended periods with the Western Sangha when tradition is perceived as being less Thai. A Thai temple in the urban setting of south London caters for most of the visiting Thai Sangha.

A special visa for religious purposes allows overseas monks to stay in Australia for a two-year period. At present, members of the Sangha are 'Western' and it is not as ethnically diverse as the lay community. When a Thai migrant moved from Melbourne to Western Australia to join the Sangha in 1989, it seemed to point to future changes in the Sangha's composition. However, he returned to Thailand "out of concern for his mother who was not reconciled to his decision to be ordained in Australia" (Newsletter, Buddhist Society of Western Australia, June, 1990). In 1984 attempts were initiated to bring a Kampuchean monk to assist the
Kampuchean community and, after a protracted search, one such monk is due to arrive in 1991 from a camp on the Thai border. Difficulties may arise if the future Kampuchean monk's practice is not sufficiently compatible with the forest monastery tradition.

7.2.1 Ordination
The ordination of new members into the order of the Sangha is a ritual dating back to the beginning of the religion when it was instituted by its founder, the Buddha. Over the past five years, a number of young people have taken ordination precepts. Four men to the full ordination of monkhood, two others are samaneras (novices), one male as a novice and a young English woman as a nun.

If the ordination procedure is taken as an example, some directional change may occur. For the first four ordinations in the Western Australia Sangha community the Upajjhaya (one who is able to conduct the ordination) was a leading Thai monk (Venerable Pannananda). Hence these newly ordained monks were linked to the Thai Sangha. However, in the ordination of March 1989, the Abbot in England (Ajahn Sumedho), who visits Western Australia regularly, officiated and thereby technically ordained new members in Western Australia into the English Sangha Trust. The two senior monks and two English monks who arrived more recently, spent considerable periods of time at the forest monastery communities in England. These developments strengthen a more Western direction for the Sangha's development. However, in Western Australia the Western members of the Sangha are still linked to Thai legitimacy and perceptions and appear likely to be so for many years to come.

2 The Kampuchean Sangha was decimated during the violent conflict over the past two decades.
7.2.2 Continuity
There is an unbroken flow of Buddhist religious practice and teaching of a forest monastery tradition from North East Thailand into Western Australia. For example, the principles of training are as taught by Ajahn Chah who, as Tambiah (1984:154) says, is "held up as an exemplary forest-monk and meditation teacher who did not engage in the low art of saiyasat ('magic')." The Vinaya is strictly adhered to and recited in Pali. There is formal meditation for approximately eight hours a day and an all night session once a week during rains retreat. Awareness meditation in all respects is the goal. As with their lay Western counterparts, the newly ordained members of the Sangha internalised Western culture before adopting a monastic religious practice from another culture and now have to undergo a training which is a process of internalising Buddhist practice so that thought, speech and actions are 'mindful.'

Other aspects of traditional training continue. One of the most challenging research tasks I encountered during the time I spent in the Buddhist community was in 1988, when with seven of the monks, the nun and four lay people, I witnessed a two-hour autopsy of a body at the State mortuary. Members of the Sangha view the autopsy as one way to gain insight into the transience of human life by understanding death and decay. Such meditation on parts of the body, its ageing process and disintegration is practised to cultivate understanding of impermanence (anicca). In Thailand some monasteries have a crematorium in the monastery grounds, some display plaques where ashes of bodies are held or others display bones, or decaying bodies of monks in glass cases. The monastery in Western Australia houses some ashes of deceased members of the local community, but these are not displayed.

One interesting area of continuity now surfacing is the category of 'special stories' surrounding monks and monasteries. Although any out–of–the
ordinary feats of monks are supposed to be down-played according to Buddhist teaching, in Thailand stories of supernatural occurrences, concerning meditating monks and their surroundings, abound. This includes stories about Ajahn Chah. In Western Australia I heard similar verbal anecdotes. For example, as early as 1986 one Thai at the monastery told me of an experience she had while meditating. According to her she saw "Ajahn Chah in North East Thailand being taken to hospital" and "followers sadly walking behind." Her vision occurred simultaneously with the events in Thailand. Despite the fact that there is no 'old' monk in the Western Australian community, reports of sightings were forthcoming. For example, one Westerner who frequently visits Karnet Prison next to the monastery, spoke of her first introduction to the community when driving past and seeing "an old monk pointing his finger into the monastery" saying "come on in." A similar sighting of an "old monk with a walking stick" inside the monastery "leading" the alms round for food was reported to me by one Buddhist. These three reports are by people who, when questioned, said they linked Ajahn Chah who is still in Thailand to what they experienced.

Some of the traditional Buddhists point to similar stories in the Australian monastic situation. One example occurred at the ordination of Venerable Visardo (the first Australian-born monk ordained in Western Australia). A giant rainbow that appeared directly behind him during the ritual procedures was considered auspicious and led to speculation about his 'special' qualities. Before he left for Thailand, whispers among some Thai people grew to include that he was .."Well, ....almost Enlightened." All of the stories contribute to the charismatic qualities attached to the Sangha.
7.2.3 Change
The depth of tradition in the forest monastery Buddhist practice, however, cannot be experienced by the newly-ordained monks and nuns in the West. Though much of the tradition continues, both the example set and teaching given, are in a different language and cultural setting. The new members of the Western Sangha do not speak Thai, though there is an interest by two of them to learn the language. Nor are they surrounded by scholars of Pali, large numbers of venerated Thai teaching monks, or a large, established practising monastic community, as in Thailand. Thus monks in a western setting practise a way of life that is in marked contrast to the outside environment.

In Western Australia there are no teenage temple boys who live and work in a monastic situation, as in Thailand. The Thai tradition, which ordains young men into the Sangha for short periods of time, is not continued in the Western Australian Theravada community. Although the Abbot considered ordaining young lay Buddhists into the samanera (novice) status over a few weeks in the summer vacation period, it has not eventuated.

In Western Australia the live-in support for the monastic community must come from the general lay community. Many young men and women, retirees and lay Buddhists from the Eastern States have spent weeks or months living at the monastery. In recent times in England, the large numbers of people ordaining as monks and nuns diminished the pool of the devout lay practitioners and the resources they provided, creating an organisational problem. This has not occurred in Western Australia where there is sufficient lay support for a smaller monastic order.

One Australian monk, who also trained in Thailand, left some months after joining the Western Australian monastic community. He found it difficult
to settle and decided to return to Thailand. Similarly three Western monks interviewed in Thailand preferred to practise in a Buddhist country and had no intention of returning to the West. This movement of monks to other monastic communities where they feel better suited to the conditions and the community, also occurs within Thailand.

Vinaya modifications in Sangha practice illustrates a Buddhism that has undergone transformation. For example, in the Japanese Zen tradition, priests marry. However, in Western Australia the strict adherence to Vinaya practice in the forest monastery tradition appears to preclude any such local modification. Though aided by additional orange woollen head gear, and jumpers and socks in the winter, the Sangha stands by the Vinaya rule with the stipulated sandals and robes, sleeping on the floor and not handling money. Natural medicine is encouraged when possible and in general simplicity of lifestyle is the key note.

The new monks, novices and samaneras live in the comfortable environment of their own language, country and climate, secure in the knowledge that there is a reliable support community. Their links with their own society are sufficiently attenuated so as to create less attachment and responsibility outside the monastic setting. For example, they are not required to vote in Federal or State elections. Yet the advantages of the welfare state can be resorted to, for example, they are registered for the benefits of Medicare, should it be needed.

7.2.4 Wider links
The forest monastery provides the Sangha with a venue to play 'host' to Sangha visitors from both Theravada Buddhism and other traditions who come to Western Australia or are travelling through to other States. Monks from the eastern States of Australia, the U.S.A., Sri Lanka, Burma, Europe,
New Zealand and many other countries, as well as Buddhist scholars from Japan, make short or longterm visits. Sangha visitors are predominantly from Thailand. However when the visitor is not of the same strict tradition problems can arise. For example, one overseas Sangha visitor issued individual horoscopes upon request and also handled money, practices which are not acceptable to this forest monastery ordained community. Members of resident Sangha tried to distance themselves from this visitor: a difficult thing to do as permission was given for him to stay in the monastic community.

7.2.5 Social Action
In Thailand, there are often debates as to whether the members of the Sangha should be initiators of or involved in social development programmes or social justice and peace movements. Some monks and monasteries do play a role in promoting health, new agricultural programmes, etc. For example, one monk runs a rehabilitation programme for drug addicts. These monks are known specifically as 'development' monks. Other monks take an active role in local politics. But the critics point to the dangers of involvement in the lay world. Where there is less demarcation between the two worlds, monastic and lay, more problems are likely to arise. For instance the Governor of Bangkok was severely criticised for his use of monks to assist in the preparations for his political campaign in the Thai elections. The most radical of Thai monks, Venerable Buddadassa, renowned for his controversial views which advocate a social-action role for Buddhists (Jackson, 1987), is also often visited by members of the Western Sangha when in Thailand.

In Western Australia, low-key socially-engaged Buddhism does occur in the community. The monks teach meditation and Buddhist ideology to prisoners, lay individuals are involved in wider community social-action
groups and a social welfare programme operates within the community itself.

In England, some Sangha members and their leader Ajahn Sumedho showed quite vigorous signs of 'Buddhism in action' by joining others in a peace march across the country. However, they were reprimanded by the conservative Buddhist Society in England for doing so. In Western Australia, two monks for the Sangha did engage in peaceful action during a recent political crisis in Burma by joining in meditation with Burmese protesters and sympathisers in the central area in Perth city. Points for and against their action were debated by lay Buddhists, particularly by members of the Burmese community. One outspoken Burmese man commented that the presence of monks in this demonstration made a political statement and he did not agree with their action.

There are differences between the Abbot in Western Australia, previously an Australian Catholic research chemist of Italian birth, and the Abbot in England who was an ex-US Navy man. Even though both communities are in the West and have a similar history emanating from the same teacher, Ajahn Chah, no complete uniformity of practice occurs because of the different background and personal approach of these two leaders. In Western Australia, the focus of the Sangha community is a continuation of the forest monastery tradition with emphasis on teaching and the individual contemplative needs of lay people. It is rather the members of the lay community who are interested and involved in current world issues not the Sangha.

7.3 Gender
Gender equality is an issue that brings another source of tension to the Sangha. The implant of a Thai-trained Sangha in Western Australia
highlights the gap between Buddhist ideology and practice inherited by the local community. Women are currently requesting that their Buddhist practice needs be met in a monastic setting.

However, women are unable to ordain into full membership of the Sangha, as the lineage of bhikkhunis (ordained women) ceased somewhere during Buddhism's long journey from India through South East Asia before it reached Thailand. Nevertheless a bhikkhuni status is sustained in the Mahayana tradition. Kabilsingh (1986:144) states that the concept of the bhikkhuni is remote and foreign to ordinary Thai perception. The fact is there are no Thai bhikkhunis within the Theravada tradition although there is a Mahayana-ordained Thai female Buddhist teacher. In Thailand, many Buddhist lay women are motivated to support the religious institution where religious ideals are practised while they go on about the business of living in the wider community and a few become lay teachers with their own following.

Western women expressed their personal view that they wanted to join the local community, not to adopt an Asian ideology, but to achieve personal spiritual liberation. Yet in the Buddhist community they are subjected to the same stereotypes and practical restrictions in relation to reproductive responsibilities and their role in society and in the home, as they encounter in other religions and in the wider society generally. They are restricted in attaining full ordination and must meet the behavioural standards set out in the Vinaya for monks and lay women. Not many Western women accept the female stereotyped roles dictated by Western society, let alone those of a South East Asian religious tradition.

According to scripture, at the time of the Buddha, it was acknowledged that women were equally capable of achieving Enlightenment. However, it took a rigorous lobby to persuade the Buddha to allow women to ordain in a
Sangha. Extra rules and regulations (311 for women as against 227 for male) were introduced to maintain male dominance in the community (Leslie, 1983:95). The social reality in India at the time was difficult to transcend. For example, one belief states that it took many lifetimes before a woman could be reborn as a man, become a monk and achieve Enlightenment!

This contrasts with the egalitarian ideology taught at that time (Barnes, 1987:105) as well as in the present day. The teaching contains no 'sexist' language and the aim of Enlightenment is to transcend gender. It is a state of perception into Reality beyond the concepts of male or female.

A full discussion on the position of women in Theravada Buddhism cannot be explored in this thesis. However, in Western Australia the lack of opportunity to fully enter the Sangha as a bhikkhuni needs to be examined. What do women, who are serious about Buddhist practice, do in the Western Australian community? The kind of choices made by women are examined below.

7.3.1 Devout lay women
It is well documented that although women are traditionally the major devotees and merit-makers in Buddhist countries they nevertheless have no access to the most valued religious roles in Theravada Buddhism (Cook, 1981; Kabilsingh, 1986; Van Esterik, 1986; Barnes, 1987). The Western Australian community would not exist without the support given by the lay women in the community whose role extends well beyond that of 'feeding monks.' The number of committee positions, including President, that have been successfully filled by women in the formal Buddhist Society illustrate their leadership qualities in the lay community.
When I asked women about their role in the community, many stated that they sincerely believed that being a woman was a good opportunity for lay practice. They saw the bearing and raising of children as a possible vehicle for the development of insight and wisdom (non-attachment and non-self). Most of these women disregard the myth that to be a woman implied being caught up in the world through suffering, death and rebirth. In fact, women's involvement in daily life is seen as providing opportunities for transcendence. One outspoken woman also pointed out that if sensuality, desire and attachment to women had the potential to corrupt males, that the reverse could also be true.

Some women in the community who had greater economic and social freedom chose a different lay path. For example, those women I spoke to in the community, who had grown-up children or no children at all, considered that they had an opportunity for more leisure time to develop Buddhist practice. They were happy in creating individual 'inner space' within a lay context. One high profile lay woman in the community says that she chose divorce because it offered "room for more practice", as her husband was not interested in the Buddhist community.

One female past-President of the Buddhist Society is in an intensive Zen retreat practice overseas in Hawaii where she reports that a less sexist approach for women prevails. Zen or Vipassana communities in Western Australia, in other states or overseas, are popular with women as are retreats offered by visiting Buddhists nuns.

7.3.2 Monastic options.
In Western Australia one eighty-year-old Thai woman lives as a nun but remains with her supportive family. This continues the Thai tradition of Maechiis (nuns) who wear white and usually live in a monastic setting.
These devout women are not considered bhikkhunis, fully ordained and equal to the monks (bhikkhus).

One young English woman, who took precepts in Western Australian in March 1987, finished her required two years as a novice before further ordination. She chose to ordain fully in England where teaching nuns are part of the established Buddhist community. This monastic community of men and women was established some five years previous to the community in Western Australia. Ordained nuns wear the brown forestry tradition robe, like the monks, but are still considered 'nuns', not bhikkhunis (equal to the bhikkhu). In 1991 the woman disrobed and returned to Western Australia as a lay person.

Teaching nuns from England were requested to found a women's order in Western Australia to work alongside the monks, but so far this has not come to fruition. Even in England they are still under control of the male Sangha. A request to go on 'tudong' (walking alms round over a few days) was met by a strong reprimand from the Abbot. It was considered as inappropriate in England in the twentieth century, as it was in the time of the Buddha, for a group of nuns to go out alone walking across the countryside!

A separate monastic tradition for women in the Theravada sect is one avenue open to establish equality. Separate monastic orders do exist but are not legitimate, according to the regulations set out at the time of the Buddha. For example, regulations specify that nuns may not spend a rainy season in a place where no monks are resident, and that a nun must receive the teachings in the presence of monks. A Buddhist nun who came to Western Australia after training in another Australian State, resided in the local Sangha community for some months. Her decision to leave was based on her desire to teach. Because she had not fulfilled the required five
years training, as required by the forest monastery practice, this was not acceptable. Observing Buddhist precepts for nuns outside of monastic surroundings, she is now teaching short courses on Buddhism throughout Australia.

7.3.3 Wider links
The Western Australian Buddhist community is visited by many women who live in Buddhist religious communities overseas. One example is that of a Theravada Buddhist nun, Sister Ayya Khema, who has visited and taught in Western Australia. She was born in Germany and ordained later in life, 1979, in Sri Lanka, where she founded an Island monastery for nuns. She was instrumental in helping found the Theravada Buddhist monastery, Wat Buddha Dhamma, in Sydney, Australia, and is a well-known female leader in Buddhism who is popular with both traditional and Western Buddhists.

Other female visitors include a Western Australian nun who trained and lives in a Korean monastic community and a Victorian nun who trained in Nepal. During the time I spent with these women, they both spoke of the need for the development of an Australian women's Buddhist movement. There are other women I met, both in Australia and overseas, who said they would return to Australia if better conditions for monastic practice were available.

7.3.4 Future prospects.
In May, 1988 a full ordination of a samaneri into the Theravada monastic tradition took place in Los Angeles, California. To ordain a bhikkhuni, the presence of a minimum of five existing bhikkhunis is required. In this instance, Mahayana bhikkhunis fulfilled the requirement (WFB report, April–June, 1988). Theravada Buddhist experts may, or may not, accept this
ordination of a bhikkhuni as valid. It is possible that an increase in status of a body of ordained women in the Western Buddhist communities may assist a change in attitude among the Sangha in South East Asia towards the introduction of full ordination procedures for women.

Khantipalo (1979:153), a Western monk and scholar, argues against pushing for equal ordination for women in that any advantage it creates, is offset by the possible schism among members of the Sangha. A schism in the religious hierarchy is a far more serious and unforgivable action, according to the Vinaya. Khantipalo also reasons that it is better for women to keep the eight or ten precepts as a nun than to try and live up to the rules of 311 precepts for full Bhikkhuni status. Furthermore, it would need the majority approval of the senior monks in Theravada countries to re-introduce correct lineage ordination for women – a difficult thing to accomplish.

The majority of traditional Buddhist women I spoke to in the Western Australian community did not enter into any debate or controversy over the rights of women in the Sangha community. A few women (mostly Westerners) expressed a view that it is necessary to re-create a Bhikkhuni Sangha, for reasons of equity and authority. But others disagreed and queried whether this is the best choice. They argued that asceticism and non-attachment, maybe even Enlightenment, can be achieved without a monastic life.

If full ordination is only available to males, maybe the issue for Buddhism as it enters Western society is not one of gender but the structural division of Buddhism itself into ordained and non-ordained categories (see Chapter 8).
7.3.5 Male–Female tension
When I asked a leading Thai Buddhist monk and scholar what he thought about women's equality, the reply was "Equality should not be the end in itself." Any conflict, battle, assertion of rights or clash of the sexes was interpreted as unnecessary and efforts to change women's status should depend on education and negotiation. Furthermore, if Enlightenment is the main goal, time and energy are unnecessarily diverted from the goal if the aspirant is involved in trying to achieve bhikkhuni status in an ordained community.

Possible sexual distraction is the basis for separation of monks and nuns in monasticism. In fact, when women were admitted into the Sangha, the Buddha is supposed to have prophesied the disappearance of the true Dhamma in five hundred years! (Leslie, 1983:94). Traditional Buddhists gave helpful hints to a young Western woman in the Sangha community, when she took vows as a novice. Some small points of tradition that caused her consternation were interesting. For example she was told that tradition precludes Thai nuns from wearing brassieres, but she argued that, because of her heavy build she would be less sexually provocative around the monks and the monastery if she continued to wear this undergarment. She did not conform to tradition.

In Western Australia, some of these problems are limited by separation of the living quarters of male and female within monastery grounds. Kutis (huts) provided for women are on one side of a small creek and kutis for men on the other. When they do interact, the monastic rules preclude a monk and a woman (including a nun) from being alone together or touching each other. Thus, a cloth must be used by a monk when he receives food from lay women in order to avoid possible personal hand contact. The preferred behaviour between monks, nuns and lay people is set out in a leaflet published by the community. Suggestive speech, physical contact
with lustful intent and any kind of erotic behaviour is forbidden. According to the abbot the high standard of behaviour sought is "to prevent scandalous gossip or misunderstanding occurring."

Some critics in the community argue that women achieve the status they deserve. Celibate monks are of romantic interest to some 'fringe' lay women and I have overheard more than one comment to this effect. For example, one lady, after some weeks listening to the meditation teaching monk, expressed the view that it was "a waste of a good man" and another thought he was "a hunk" and "spunky." In fact, one woman's attentions towards a certain monk were a problem for an extended period of time. The Abbot in England wrote on this subject and stated that "women are often in love with teachers and figures of authority" (Sumedho: 1983:27).

The peaceful, understanding nature of the monks appears to draw women to them. This image, together with the monk's striving for perfection elicits an idealistic rather than romantic response. Listening to women in the community comparing the average Australian male with the exemplary monks, provided an interesting insight. 'Born' Buddhists, and those members of longer standing, display learned behaviour that is more acceptable in a 'proper' monk–lay personal relationship.

A short history of the two lay Buddhists who entered the monastery further outlines the male–female sexual tension. In these cases celibacy has been chosen to further an individual spiritual path.

B.....and his girlfriend T....lived together for many years in England and in Australia. The relationship was long and happy. Both attended the Buddhist meditation and teaching sessions. In the early months of 1986, B..... decided to further his spiritual path by living at the monastery as a lay person. His girlfriend decided to end the relationship. "There was no point in him thinking he could come back, if he didn't like it at the monastery. It is better for him to make a complete new start if he leaves the Sangha." She decided her decisions would assist his practice. They saw each other occasionally at the town centre if he accompanied the Sangha from the monastery, or at ceremonies at the monastery on the Buddhist holy days celebrations. T... offered presents including personal things she knew he liked. She wore a bare shouldered sundress, a possible
statement of non-compliance to the conservative dress requested by the monks. She stood at the back of the 'church-like' sala looking on at the proceedings while the half-hour ceremony took place. It may well have been their wedding, but it was without her participation.

On a television news coverage interview B..... expressed the view that to "give up material things was not a problem, the returns far outweigh what one has given up". After the event, T.....commented that he "had a lack of respect for what he was renouncing."

Today, B..... is still in the monastery. T..... is going out with other male companions and hoping to find another "meaningful relationship."

A similar relationship provides another illustration.

Both S........ and E......... came from England, visiting Thai monasteries on the way out through Asia. They had lived together for some years. In this instance, it was the woman who decided to enter the monastic order. S.... was also present at her ordination but moved interstate to complete a University course. E..... disrobed after 3 years.

Celibacy is encouraged by many religions and is mandatory for monastic life in most, including Theravada Buddhism. Celibacy is widely considered as helpful for a path of personal liberation. The members of the Sangha chose their own spiritual training as more important than continuing in the lay community life and in a sexual relationship with another person. Attachment to someone is understood as being in the same category as attachment to things and should be transcended. In both cases the Sangha discourages a close friendship continuing unnecessarily after ordination.

For lay people sex is not considered 'taboo' as such, but is seen as intrusive if one's goal is a spiritual one.³ Though this experience is not seen as an alternative to worldly and shared experience with a another person, in some instances it is the preferred choice.

The future members of the Sangha come from the lay community and some will return to it. This is seen as natural given the dualist view of Sangha

³ A different stance is taken by Tantric Buddhism where sexual union may assist the spiritual path. There may be some truth in the suggestion that blissful meditative 'jhanic' states produce physiological changes in the body that induce 'orgasmic' experiences.
and laity as the co-existence of two units belonging to one spectrum of practice. Two Australian monks who spent some time in the Western Australian monastery after training in Thailand later disrobed but did not abandon Buddhism. One of these young men eased the transition into secular society by living on a family farming property for some time. When I visited him in 1987, I had difficulty recognising him. A full head of hair and beard created a new image. Yet qualities of inner peace and tranquillity, visibly present when he was known as a monk, were still evident. Some scholars consider that when Enlightenment and inner peace are achieved, return to the lay life is more relevant than remaining in the ordained Sangha community (see Chapter 8). The manner in which the time and energy of the monks in the Western Australian community is divided between the forest and the town centre is another illustration of the dynamic relationship between the ordained and lay communities. Though they do not represent completely separate domains, the two properties do symbolise a distinction that occurs within Buddhist practice.

7.4 Forest : Town
Physically, the monastic community is housed in the forest, but the monks who live there are required to interact with the lay community. Hence the need for both a forest monastery and town centre. The priority for the Sangha is the pursuit of their individual spiritual path. The need to physically create their own monastic setting has taken time and energy and many hours of labour as well as the financial support of lay people. At the same time a growing lay community makes ever-increasing demands. This creates a unique type of monastic practice. The balance attained between the developing monastery and town centre is best illustrated by describing how the monks live and move between the two centres: they are active-duty monks in suburbia as well as meditative and forest monks.
The monastery is primarily the Sangha's domain, although large numbers of the lay community go to the monastery for ceremonies on special occasions. As described previously, the open days for the monastery, at the beginning and end of the rains retreat, and at the annual Kampuchean ceremony for remembering ancestors, provoke a mass invasion of lay people. Ordination ceremonies of monks, novices and nuns are not so well attended, although between fifty and one hundred lay people witness the event. Individuals and families also visit the monastery to make merit. The scenic setting and the hour's drive from the capital city still make it a drawcard for Buddhists and visitors alike. When it was still in the process of being built, a tourist bus drove through the monastery and its passengers asked a lay Buddhist living there, when they would be open for "afternoon teas".

The monastery is maintained as a conducive environment for meditation. Lay people who live by monastic rules reside for short periods. Larger lay group retreats are held elsewhere than in the monastery in order to preserve the tranquil conditions. The principle of non-violence is stringently kept and the monastery exists as a typical monastic haven for animal life. Kangaroos can be hand fed and troublesome mice or snakes are moved further down the road. 4

The teaching monks also reside at the town centre for part of the week for this is an easier venue for lay Buddhists to visit. Whereas the monks' monastery abode provides a quiet retreat the town is where the hub of the community meets. Thus the teaching role means that the monk moves from a small like-minded group to a larger, more variegated community. The mental shift from one environment to the other requires astuteness and adaptability. Members of the Sangha are more accomplished at

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4 In Thailand numerous dogs and cats overrun some monasteries.
negotiating this transition than lay meditators on long retreats who find it
takes time to re-enter normal social interaction. They find crowds and
noise difficult to tolerate. The community's demands are insatiable. The
phone rings continually both at the town centre and at the monastery.
There is consistent pressure for interaction.

Buddhist scholarship or studies are not present in Western Australia
despite a plea by some of the more academic lay Buddhists for a formal
study centre. One of the senior monks is, however, undertaking an
interpretative study on the Vinaya.

A balance between individual meditation and practice and teaching
responsibilities is maintained. The spatial separation that is created for
those in the Sangha is supplemented by time-out periods. For example,
the three month 'rains retreat' for 1989 and 1990 was strictly adhered to by
the Sangha with lay Buddhists fulfilling the teaching role for some weeks.
In earlier years the teaching monks continued to travel to the town centre
for teaching commitments. Support received during the 1989 and 1990
strict 'rains retreat' was overwhelming. As the Sangha retreated to the
monastery the people made an extra effort to visit with food and supplies.
The restriction of access may actually serve to cultivate elements of
charisma.

7.5 Summary
Tensions within the Sangha can be positive and creative. A balance is
maintained between what seem separate and polarised entities: town and
country, male and female, Thai and Western. In Buddhism generally, the
balance of physical and mental, or body and mind, is seen in terms of a
whole, not as a relationship between independent entities. That continual
solitude is not necessary for one's training is evident in the layout of the
monastery grounds. The private, individual kutis are very separate. But the body of the Sangha comes together in the communal hall or Sala and for meals and ritual in the morning and evening.

The complementary practice that exists between the monastery and town centres (ordained and lay focus respectively) illustrates that in this Buddhist community one supports the other. This is analogous to the relationship between the Thai Sangha and its counterpart, the Western Sangha. There is interdependence and interrelatedness which mirrors a similar duality in the male and female relationship and ever-present tensions in each individual between 'self' and needs of others. One without the other seems to divide the 'wholeness' of existence. Buddhist practice then is oriented to finding the balance between any opposing forces that are in play.
CHAPTER EIGHT
UNITY AND DIVERSITY

An overview of this composite Buddhist community further illustrates the dynamic relationship between the two major divisions, Sangha and lay, in terms of both formal and informal 'tensions' between the two. Similar tensions and a similar dynamic occur between the Buddhist community in Western Australia and Thailand, the major source of this form of Buddhism.

8.1 Sangha: Lay
The interdependent relationship established between the Sangha and lay community is fully discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. The dana, ceremonies and teaching interaction highlight the breadth of the relationship and the bond created. Though there are tremendous differences and divergent practices within the lay community, individuals and groups directly negotiate a relationship with the Sangha and thereby establish a bond amongst themselves. There is evidence that these bonds are growing in strength, such that, at times, the Buddhist community potentially operates as a whole entity.

8.1.1 Formal relationship
Historically, the community began as a lay-oriented Buddhist group. After ten years the community made the decision to invite ordained monks from Thailand to form the nucleus of a local Sangha (see Chapter 2). Since the arrival of the Sangha in 1982, members of the lay community often comment that "The Sangha IS the Buddhist Society". Initially the Sangha established its leadership role because of the traditional authority of the monastic order and also by virtue of its austere practice. The Sangha made
moves to further 'routinise' its leadership role in 1988 by changing the constitution.

The formal lay community structure – the incorporated Buddhist Society of Western Australia – is of necessity the financial, business and legal support arm of the Sangha. An ongoing creative tension exists between the Sangha and the lay community which is delineated by the formal distance and yet close cohesion between the two structures.

The Sangha is a hierarchical body whose structure and daily routine are bound by specific rules – the Vinaya – since the time of the Buddha. On issues within the monastery, a consensus decision by the members of the Sangha often occurs, although younger members usually defer to the opinion of senior monks and the final responsibility lies with the Abbot. The lay community is not consulted on Sangha matters unless a consultation is requested by the Sangha. The lay society – the Buddhist Society of Western Australia – operates on democratic principles and committees form and re-form continually. There is some overlap within the informal lay community, which numbers between two and three thousand members, and the members of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia which has approximately one hundred ordinary members and five hundred associate members. The overseas Thai community, which gives substantial financial support, and the local Kampuchean community, the largest traditional Buddhist group, are not represented in the formally constituted society. In the unlikely event of the Sangha and the Society not agreeing on major issues and in effect parting company, it would appear that the Sangha has sufficient informal support to enable it to survive with this as an alternative support base.¹

¹ Most Thai monasteries operate on an informal relationship with the local laity.
The 'charisma' operating in the community following the early 'honeymoon' stage of the relationship between Sangha and lay community started to be 'routinised' in November 1988. Changes to the constitution of the Society were considered and adopted. In effect, this 'wrote' the Sangha into the constitution and gave it representation on the committee of the Buddhist Society. Thus the two communities, Sangha and lay, were bound even more closely together and an informal working relationship changed into a more formal alliance. The constitution did not reflect the way the community had been working over the seven years since the arrival of the Sangha so the changes adopted were intended to allay any fear or insecurity of either party (Sangha or lay). The changes however, brought into the open many of the challenges facing a Sangha-led Buddhist community in the West.

Some of the complexities of the relationship illustrate the difficulties that arise. For example, according to local State law, the Society owns and is responsible for the assets, but in Buddhist terms the Sangha has the 'deed of trust.' Individuals and groups largely direct financial donations to the Sangha and the monastery, not the Buddhist Society. The Vinaya states that the Sangha is responsible for implementation of these contributions and it remains the original donor's money until it is used according to the donor's instructions. Although the Vinaya precludes an individual owning money and property, the communal Sangha property, specifically land, buildings, building materials and tools, are administered by the monks in the monastic community. Before the above mentioned constitutional changes, the Sangha had no representation in the formal decision-making process to the extent that the Society could theoretically decide to sell the monastery, disband the community and redistribute assets without consulting the Sangha.
Some traditional Buddhists challenged this entry of the Sangha into more worldly affairs of the community. According to one man, the principle was not correct and was only workable while the "high regard, esteem and popularity" of the Sangha continued. "What if....many years down the track......the Sangha was not as principled as now", asked one Sri Lankan lay member. The Sangha won the day however. Despite some controversy, respect for and loyalty to the current Abbot, as well as his reminder of the principle of tolerance, were the factors that swayed the voting of lay Buddhists at the meeting.

Representation of the Sangha in the Buddhist Association affects decisions made by some lay members. On more than one occasion, an idea voted on by the Committee lapsed because the Sangha considered it inappropriate. One Committee member told of instances where after "hours of debating an idea and its adoption" nothing eventuated. Though monks are acknowledged as the 'professionals' in Buddhist practice, in worldly matters their expertise is not always so highly regarded. Though no resolution of the Committee is effective unless it is agreed to by the representative of the Sangha, any difference arising and not agreed to by a majority of the Committee can be resolved by calling a Special General Meeting. Future cooperation depends on the character and personality of individuals in both parties and their willingness to negotiate. Issues that require both consideration of the Sangha's point of view and that of the lay community continue to arise, highlighting the need for ongoing consultation and occasionally a reassessment of the formal relationship.

8.1.2 Lay Sangha: Ordained Sangha
The distinction between ordained and non-ordained members of the community occurs at formal and informal levels. Lay members who listen to the Buddhist teachings do not necessarily become 'Buddhist', or aim to be
ordained. Individuals and groups practise in whatever manner and at whatever level they choose. Some form the core of the society, others are on the 'fringe.' A small number of lay people 'live' Buddhism in a devout, meditative manner with a simple daily lifestyle, where precepts are kept, sometimes even in celibacy. Such an individual Buddhist practice mirrors monastic life whilst remaining in a lay setting. Thus there is an adherence to Dhamma, but not to Vinaya. When a lay Buddhist projects a noticeable degree of 'charisma' an overlap occurs between ordained and non-ordained and thus the leadership of the Sangha is implicitly challenged. This adds to pressure on the monastic community to maintain a strict ascetic practice. Some long-term practising lay members may even develop an individual Buddhist practice that is more austere than that of newly-ordained Sangha members.

This clouding or overlapping of the dividing line between ordained Sangha and lay people can be further illustrated. A few members in the lay community who spoke to me, believed that once an individual path is developed in a monastic situation, understanding reached and awareness attained, a return to lay life is acceptable. A short return to the monastery or yearly intensive retreats to re-establish the initial attainment of mindfulness, morality and wisdom. Acceptance of the idea of movement into and out of a monastic environment points to an overlap between Sangha and lay communities. Though formally they are separate entities, there is a 'grey', informal area. A more flexible movement between ordained and non-ordained communities occurs in South East Asia, but the forest monastery tradition and its Western counterpart place emphasis on a more serious life-time commitment. The initial development and separateness of the ordained Sangha at the time of the Buddha were discussed in Chapter 1.3.4. The Dhamma teaching points to the elimination of the need for form and ritual, yet reinforces the maintenance
of it with an established monastic tradition. Problems in validating an ordained leadership for Buddhism in the West highlights this paradox. As one Theravadin Buddhist scholar writes "without a concrete organisation like the Bhikkhu-Sangha as the tool, the task of establishing and maintaining the lay Sangha of disciples would be so very difficult, if not an impossibility" (Rajavaramuni, 1987b:36). The Vinaya lays down the dynamics between the sacred and the secular world and this pattern is reinforced by the laity.

There is no community of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order in Western Australia whose centres are founded on a concept of less cultural Buddhism. Popular in England since 1967, such communities claim they create a 'lay' Sangha, stay in single-sex groups or communities and often form workers' co-operatives. Founded by a former English Theravada Buddhist monk, the members enter the order by a 'form' of ordination into a lay Sangha. They do not wear the robe or live according to Vinaya, hence claim to be a more acceptable form of Western Buddhism and criticise the motives of Westerners who are prepared to adopt the external manners and habits of an alien culture (Kennedy, 1983:26). When I visited a few of these communities in England in 1989 and spoke to some of the members, I found that there was a wide variation in Buddhist practice that relied on personal commitment and interpretation, rather than on rules and regulations of a monastic community. Although there are now many centres of this order throughout the world, the original founder's charisma and ensuing authority and legitimacy are diminished without the control of correct procedures, rules and regulations.

In Western Australia I have met individual members of different overseas Buddhist Sanghas who came to inquire about the possibility of enlisting lay support to start a new Buddhist community. Their outward appearance and clothing often suggested an ordained status, but they were mostly
individual entrepreneurs without the backing of an established Sangha order from their home country and no local community eventuated.

8.2 Wider Buddhist community
Some Westerners try out the different styles of Buddhist teaching and meditation techniques at the various schools of Buddhism represented in Western Australia. The texts and commentaries of most of the Buddhist schools are translated into English and they provide another avenue for Westerners to learn, and to opt for one school or the other. Westerners often attend more than one community for meditation and Dhamma talks.

A wider, general Buddhist community exists across the different schools, wherein people know each other personally. Similarly, the leaders, Abbots and/or monks of the different sects relate ecumenically by invitation to and attendance at special festival days, opening ceremonies, Dhamma talks and in order to greet visiting dignitaries (see Chapter 7). The Vietnamese Buddhist vegetarian restaurant in Perth is a popular venue for lay Buddhists. A farewell dinner for the past-President of the Theravada Buddhist community was held in 1989 at this restaurant. Her move to the Diamond Sangha (Zen) centre in Hawaii for further study prompted a gift of a meditation necklace by the Vietnamese novice monk who works in the kitchen – one illustration of the common focus of three schools of Buddhism in Western Australia.

The co-existence and co-operation of like-minded people from several Buddhist communities operating within a wider non-Buddhist society occurs. Wisdom is not claimed as the possession of any one tradition and any Buddhist vehicle is seen as worthy. Nevertheless, the Western Sangha Buddhist teaching provided by the monks of the Serpentine monastery is sought out by the many lay Buddhists in Western Australia; not only
Theravada Buddhists. When I asked Westerners from other Buddhist groups why they attended the community their comments pointed to the special quality of personal contact charisma of the Abbot and the Sangha.

8.3 Buddhism: Wider Society
The Abbot of the Serpentine monastery is the representative and spokesman for Buddhism in Western Australia. That he is an English speaking Western monk and a 'professional' of long standing, creates the status necessary for this position. The Sangha maintains good public relations with the wider community through its teaching commitments in the wider society (already discussed), with Government education authorities on religious education, and the broad ecumenical movement in general.

Buddhism is a traditional world religion and as such has status and recognition in the West. This contrasts with the frequent non-acceptance of some other new religious movements. In general, the Buddhist community is not seen as a threat to local Western Australians, nor does it seek power through politics, property or other means. The Dhamma is free of charge.

The favourable image of Buddhism contrasts with the fear and hostility generated locally by media criticism of the 'Orange People' in recent years (Van Leen, 1983). Before the charismatic leadership of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh of the 'Orange People' foundered in the United States of America (Palmer, 1988: 119), the sect had already spread to Western Australia. Requests for large personal donations, bankrupted one local business man and contributed to the breaking up of families.

The Buddhist community is widely accepted with no evidence of antagonism from local Western Australian society, either towards the monks or towards
lay followers. Some Anglicans were not happy about the conversion of a local church to a Buddhist temple, but the sale went through and the previous Anglican minister attended the Buddhist dedication ceremony. The Governor of Western Australia opened the town centre in November, 1987, confirming the high standing of the Buddhist community.

One lay Buddhist said that the monastic community and the well-established monastery at Serpentine "make a positive statement for Buddhism and a good entry into the West." Others criticise the large sums of money spent on landscaping, stone-masonry and carpets, as signs of incongruous plushness in a community that teaches simplicity in all things.2

Set in a secular society, that is nominally Christian, Buddhism has some of the same problems as any other minority religion - such as the fact that holy days are not holi-days. The Buddhist calendar revolves around the phases of the moon and the nearest weekend is therefore usually chosen for special events.3 All events are said to occur in the Buddhist Era: 1990AD being 2533BE (Buddhist Era). More every day problems also must be addressed, for example, since the Sangha do not handle money there is a need to have private transport and drivers for their busy schedule.

Buddhism has always taken on local colour from the cultures and religions predating its arrival in a country. There is a two-way influence that operates over a long period of time. The Sangha's nine year period in Western Australia is too short a time span to comment on the long term impact the Buddhist community might have on the surrounding

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2 In Thailand, generous financial support flows to ascetic monks and monasteries, because of their simplicity and non-attachment to worldly effects. This overwhelming support, however, can change the atmosphere of simplicity in the monastery.

3 Interestingly, ordination ceremonies were twice held on Good Friday.
environment. However, two general observations about the wider community can be made about Buddhist teaching on the one hand and about Buddhist practice on the other.

Teaching and practice are two different facets of the religion. The Dhamma is studied by philosophers and psychologists. It is considered to be universal and not to belong to any one religion. In short, Dhamma is not Buddhism, and Buddhism is not Dhamma. The 'newcomer' Westerner is taught not to study Buddhism, but to study the self by applying the teaching. Nevertheless, to obtain the teaching the 'newcomer' Westerner enters a relationship with the Sangha and a practice that entails ritual and form, that is Buddhist 'religion'.

My major concern in this thesis has not been to debate the overlap of Christian and Buddhist ideology. Nevertheless, from personal observation of Christian religious books, broadcasts, talks, programmes, speakers, lecturers and church ministers over the same period as this study on the Buddhist community, I have noted, on more than one occasion, words and concepts that appeared to be very similar. Other Westerners in the Buddhist community comment on changes in the direction of Christianity: for example, doctrinal changes of emphasis regarding man's position in the world, the current issues of ecology and the ecumenical movement. Over the past decade in Christianity, this change of emphasis and a return to the more mystical heritage and an upsurge in interest in meditation has occurred (Fox, 1983). However, there is just as wide a spectrum of practices in Christianity as there is in Buddhism. The 'folk' tradition in Buddhism and the fundamental 'born again' groups of Christianity are at only one end of their respective religious spectrums. In Western Australia, there are many Buddhists and Christians who share a similar ideology in their understanding of their own existence and relationship to society and the world. Sometimes this overlap occurs across different religions more often
than it does within the total spectrum of beliefs within the one religion. Some Christians and Buddhists formally and informally meet at world-wide religious conferences and inter-faith dialogues, as well as at the local state level in Western Australia.

Both the Buddhist Sangha and the lay community interact with people of other religions. A Jesuit Priest, who is also a Zen meditation exponent, has taught at the Buddhist community. When visiting country areas the Sangha often stayed with Catholic priests. As already stated in Chapter 6, lay Western Buddhists do not entirely dismiss their own Christian religious tradition.

The Western Australian Buddhist community's attraction to Westerners, suggests traits similar to 'new religious movements' because of its emphasis on inward liberation, negative attitudes towards consumerism, materialism and worldly pursuits, holistic conceptions of self, and a non-dualistic ontology. However, other characteristics of 'new religious movements' are missing. One of the criticisms of these new movements is the social apathy and passivity among the members and an 'obsessive self-fixation' (Robbins, 1988:41). In contrast to this, there are a large number of individuals in the Buddhist community who are involved in socially engaged activity (see Chapter 6.2.1). It is linked to new social movements such as the environmental movement and peace activism which, together with the growth of 'new religious movements', help erode the boundaries between private and public domains. In the West, this forum results in interaction between people of different religious practices.

8.5 Western Australia: Thailand
The Buddhist community in Western Australia is linked to the resurgence of Buddhism in Thailand. However, the forest monastery tradition in
Thailand is only one of the movements for reform. It has not received as much attention as some other recent moves for revival (for example, DhammaGhai, Santi Asoke and Suan Moke – Jackson, 1988, 1989; Taylor, 1990). As well as having links to the original teacher in North East Thailand, the Western forest monastery monks are linked to the latter movement led by the Abbot of Suan Moke, Ajahn Buddhadasa. He remains in the traditional Sangha at the same time as promulgating a new Buddhist ontology. His interpretation lessens the distinction between private and public domains of Buddhist doctrine, between monk and lay people and advocates a socially-engaged Buddhism. This proposes a politically, economically and socially committed Buddhism that could turn its back on the modernist and materialistic Western model of development for Thailand (Sivaraksa, 1988). Western monks visit this monastery (Suan Moke) and its literature is distributed in the Buddhist community in Western Australia.

The Buddhist practice that is 'new' to the West and 'renewed' in Thailand is linked. The growth of Buddhism in Western Australia has a feed–back effect in Thailand. As the fundamentalist form of Buddhism gains momentum in the West, this re–affirms the Thais own view of their religion and practice at home. Katz (1978:40) writes about an effect that can occur when a 'purer' Buddhism, devoid of extraneous cultural practices, rekindles a similar form of basic practice in the country of origin. This interacts with other contemporary factors, for example, the scientific rationalism of

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4 DhammaGhai (Thai: thammakaay) – A popular fast growing Buddhist movement with strict discipline and meditation. Appeals to middle class, builds on training an elite of University graduates.

Santi Asoke – controversial, political Sangha group led by a reformist Abbot (Phra Potirak) not considered authentic practice and defrocked and sentenced for non–conforming practice.

Suan Moke – monastery centre led by leading contemporary Buddhist thinker and Abbot (Phra Buddhadasa).

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Buddhism and Thailand's rapid adoption of modern industrial technology. Both the local Sangha and lay community are engaged in dialogue with Thailand (see Chapters 6 and 7) and such links that have been established are growing in strength.

8.5 Summary
The Sangha's presence ensures the interaction of many diverse segments in the Theravada Buddhist community in Western Australia. The emphasis in the community is on the teaching of the Buddha (the Dhamma), not on any specific cultural heritage. Though the existing cultural variations are of consequence, no fragmentation of sufficient magnitude to cause a split in the lay community has emerged. The image of Buddhism as a tree with many branches symbolising the different points in a spectrum of practice is a well-known illustration and fits the community well.

The Abbot has described the total community as "the most harmonious, largest Theravada Buddhist community in Australia". There is not always a consensus of opinion within the lay community, or even within the Sangha, or between the Sangha and laity, but the Sangha has thrown down the gauntlet, so to speak, by indicating that the challenge is to practise the Dhamma in a lived sense to achieve harmony and conciliation.

The Sangha provides the example of transcendence, symbolising the attainment of an existence 'beyond' form, yet paradoxically, it is the Sangha that represents Buddhism in a most visible form. The Sangha leadership is accepted by many in the wider Western Australian society in general. The form and format that necessitate the continuation of Buddhism as a religion are linked to its roots in, and the continuing dialogue with, Thailand. However, membership of the Sangha is not a necessary path to deliverance. It is the attainment of one's own Buddhahood (Nirvana) that is
the overriding value. Clinging to anything, tradition or innovation, religion or secular values, is seen as an impediment to the development of wisdom.
CHAPTER NINE
CONCLUSION

The Buddhist community described in this thesis functions because of the quality of 'charisma' inhering in the Sangha. Different facets of charisma - that is the personal charisma of the monks, a routinized charisma of the established order, together with charisma derived from the forest monastery lineage - operate at different times and often at one and the same time. In this community there appears to be no boundary between the sources of charisma, whereas Weber's (1947:328) concept of leadership distinguishes between the basis of influence of charisma which resides in the leader as a person and the social and organisational context within which the leader operates.

A Sangha of ordained Westerners has created, maintained and progressively enhanced its leadership role in the community. Its success is due to a combination of factors. The Sangha, has established a religious ideology and provides an example of the way to live. There is a clarity and a consistency between belief as an aspirant and action in the role model provided by the Sangha such that the belief system promoted is acceptable to its lay followers. This concurs with Weber's insistence that a personal gift of charisma is dependent on the ability of followers to recognise it as such (1947:359). Furthermore, the leadership has relevance to the thinking, activities and goals of the followers. This thesis lends support to the belief that the Dhamma (teaching) and the Sangha (the teachers) are mutually dependent and that there is a place for the leadership of a Sangha in Buddhism in the West.

Section I described the community, the development of the Western Sangha and its diverse multicultural following. The study then pursued the wider
topic of how charisma may arise from situationally-generated conditions of time, place and people.

In Section II the quality of charisma is shown to be responsible for the relationship that evolves between the Sangha and lay people through interaction at the individual or ethnic group level. As the relationship develops, this charisma maintains, legitimates, and reinforces the authority of the Sangha and its role. However, charisma is seen to be not only residing in the leadership, but the basis for authority derives from charisma that resides in the social structure of which both the leader and the follower are a part. There is a two way process between the leader and the follower, not just the ordained leadership upon the followers.

Chapter 3 illustrates how the prestige of the Sangha results in a reciprocal relationship between the ordained and non-ordained followers by virtue of visual, tangible support. The need to provide daily sustenance for the Sangha is in itself a routine action and food is an example of the reward for the charisma. It is a generalised reciprocal relationship that occurs. The Sangha transfers the teachings to all who ask for the teachings, not only those who offer support. Reciprocity in a wider context occurs across the spectrum of the community as members support each other, not only the Sangha.

Chapter 4 shows how ritual and ceremony is used to accentuate the legacy of adopted tradition and highlights the process of routinisation of charisma in the Buddhist community. Ceremonies that bind a Sangha and lay people also consolidate the level of charisma that may otherwise diminish over time. This bonding is highlighted in the annual ceremony of Kathin, where the robe symbolises the continuation of support for the needs of the Sangha in Western Australia.
Chapter 5 delineates the unbroken line of lineage-teaching resulting in inherited charisma. The entry into Western society of the teaching with a unique style and content and the promulgation of a 'new order' for society, suggest the charisma of a 'prophet' for 'newcomers' to Buddhism. The personal example of a special quality of lifestyle, speech and action on the part of the Sangha is not only visible for all to see but also can be emulated at a personal level by the lay community as they practise Buddhism. In this way some individual members link into inherited charisma by their new-found potential for personal transformation and spiritual transcendence. Many traditional lay people renew their interest in Buddhism because of this interpretation on the part of Western 'newcomers'. The Dhamma remains constant and is seen as Buddhism's most important legacy to the West.

The interaction depicted in Section II of the thesis represents a continuation of traditional Buddhism through the catalyst of a Sangha. The Sangha anchors Buddhism in the familiar cultural experiences of the lay people. It does not completely fit into the pattern of 'new religious communities' in Western society because of its long established, traditional and patterned order. At the same time, the Sangha are 'renewers' of religion as it is a 'fundamental' Buddhism that they espouse. A new way of knowing is taught, but it is grounded in the immemorial past. The Sangha also brings salvation, exemplary prophets and agents of change for the many 'newcomers', at a time of social upheaval in Western society with the adoption of new attitudes, values and lifestyles. The promise of a new transcendent order challenges the social order in which the community resides. The power of charisma can be revolutionary (Weber, 1947:361) as the authority lies outside the realm of everyday routine and the presiding order.
Section III outlined the organisational dynamics within the Sangha, within the lay community and in the interaction between the two. Tensions and conflicts are seen as normal and necessary to any organisation and in this community social non-conformity contributes to the maintenance of the group. Different facets of charisma operate to bind the diverse community into a special relationship with the Sangha. There is tension because of different cultural backgrounds and different ideological assumptions, but there is really no incompatibility of aims. At present the charismatic quality of the ordained leaders is of sufficient strength and quality to inhibit any schisms in the community. Indeed, the Sangha's apparent ability to prevent schism within an existence, that is perceived in terms of division and duality, is largely responsible for the creation of charisma and lends support to the possibilities of enlightenment and transcendence embodied in Buddhist teaching. There is evidence of further consolidation within the lay community with the emergence of interaction across different cultural elements. Because the reciprocal relationship that binds the Sangha and lay followers together is not mutually exclusive it aids social solidarity.

This community represents a meeting of East and West, of 'born' Buddhists and neophites, merged because of a system of shared meanings and values but, more importantly, because of the focal leadership of a Sangha. The different followers within a divergent lay community trust the Sangha leadership, espouse similar aims and goals, accept the leadership with few questions and have affection for and identify with its members. As both Sangha and lay communities achieve further self-development, it contributes to the overall impact of Buddhism in the West.

Historically, members of the Sangha are the 'professionals' in Buddhism. In Western Australia the perpetuation of the order of the Sangha is ensured with the ordination of new members and the transfer of special
qualities as suggested in Chapter 5. Members of the Sangha are in the process of transposing the centre of the religion to a new environment. They are also seen as 'Westerners,' whose language, societal knowledge, education and expertise assist in an understanding necessary for a religion like Buddhism to enter new ground. Throughout the thesis many different reasons for Westerners adopting Buddhism were offered, but the reason they joined this particular community was the attraction of the leadership. The Abbot contributes a personal stamp to a traditional religion and a personal following responds. The leadership role of the monks is accepted by those outside the immediate Buddhist community, that is, within the wider Buddhist community and society in general. This also reinforces the Sangha's status. The external forces of an alien culture and a new environment contribute to the consolidation of the religious community.

There is no doubt the leadership of non-ordained Buddhist teachers in Western society today is significant as it has been in the past. However, whether the members of this band of Dhamma teachers are casually dressed young men or women, or a well-dressed executive type leadership, similar problems can arise. Even if personal contact charisma is present in non-ordained, non-monastic leaders, any perpetuation of it, either as a personal quality of the individual or with regard to its maintenance within the teaching–pupil relationship, is subject to the human condition and its vagaries. What is often missing, are all the qualities, historical and contemporary that are represented by an ordained Sangha, that is the order, the lineage and the highest personal exemplary lifestyle possible. Loyalty to the leadership in this community is more than loyalty to an individual person.

Lay people have for centuries paid homage to a quality of charisma through their daily ritual with their declaration that they seek refuge in the Buddha (original charisma), the Dhamma (the source of charisma) and the Sangha
(those in society who are said to be the carriers of charisma). The quality of this charisma is crucially dependent on the ascetic commitment of the Sangha through its adoption of the rules and regulations (the Vinaya). Historically, this is the accepted guideline for gaining close proximity to the source of charisma (Dhamma) and it continues with an ordained community of monks who are Western. The stricter the Sangha practice, the more charisma and the less the likelihood of a schism within the lay community. Even if traditional Buddhist monks from South East Asia set up in the same city and attract their own lay following, support for this Western Sangha would still be forthcoming as long as they adhere to strict Vinaya.

However, the stricter the Vinaya practice, the less accommodation to Western society. The adoption of the yellow robe, and all it symbolises, is considered by some to be incongruous in a technological advanced Western society and as not portraying an authentic 'Western' Buddhism. This is the one major problem in the emergence of a Western Sangha. The inevitable cultural trappings of its long evolutionary journey in South East Asia produces a gap between original Buddhist ideology and today's world, for example, with regard to the issue of full ordination for women in Theravada Buddhist communities (in Chapter 7). For some Westerners, the attraction of charisma is enhanced by the cultural practices and social structures indicated in the Vinaya, while for others, it limits Buddhism's appeal. For the latter, the support of orange robed, shaven-headed monks, suggests that the community has not adapted to Australian conditions. Indeed, these critics see ordained leadership and associated ritual as unnecessary and even detrimental to the pursuit of their Buddhist path. What they fail to recognise is that this Buddhist group in Western Australia has flourished primarily through a charisma rooted in the Vinaya.
Yet flexibility, adaptability and creativity are also vital qualities needed for sustained leadership. If adaptation is too slow, Western Buddhism may remain a tropical plant in a hot-house, unlikely to grow freely in the natural soil of the land. As Rahula (1978:66) says: "If it is kept artificially as an exotic plant, it would be extremely regrettable." This is not likely to be the case in Western Australia, for, as I have shown, the Buddhist community cannot be characterised as dry, intellectual or static. Rather, it exhibits such a vitality that its penetration into our society and its eventual form and format may surprise us all.
APPENDIX I

THE VINAYA

The Buddhist Sangha is expected to prosper and not decline if the Vinaya is observed. "A decline in Vinaya observance is followed by or related to a decline in practice of Dhamma" and many examples could be brought forward to show this according to Khantipalo (1979:16).

The Buddha set down the rules and regulations for the Sangha during its formation as the need arose. It was flexible in the beginning and probably took its final root form by about 400 BC. (Prebish 1975:23)

The reciting of the Vinaya was ritualized and it is recited every fortnight when bhikkhus (monks) have a chance to confess infractions and then, purified, listen to the recitation (Khantipalo:1979:35).

A brief summary of the rules (Ishii, 1986:7) are as follows:

"The parajika

The four offences that are the most serious are

(1) sexual intercourse,
(2) theft
(3) deprivation of life (of a human), and
(4) false proclamation of superhuman faculties.

Violation of any one of these results in permanent expulsion from the Sangha.

The sanghadisesa are the following thirteen offenses which include masturbation, for which punishment is decided by a meeting of the Sangha.

The two aniyata rules cover cases in which the penalty is determined according to circumstances.
The thirty nissaggiya–pacittiya deal mainly with the possession of prohibited articles.

The ninety-two pacittiya deal with a wide range of offenses, including lying, drinking alcoholic beverages, destroying life, eating outside the proper time, going to see an army, and damaging plants.

The four patidensaniya rules cover the confession a monk should make when he finds he has eaten food he should not have accepted. These offenses, like the nissaggiya–pacittiya and the pacittiya, are minor transgressions expiable by confession to up to three other monks. In the case of the Thai Sangha, one monk suffices.

The seventy-five sekhiya are rules of conduct which carry no penalty for transgression but merely the direction: "this is a rule to be kept (sikkha karaniya). They deal principally with conduct among the laity, etiquette of eating, and deportment in teaching the doctrine.

Lastly, the seven adhikaranasamatha are rules for setting disputes which may arise within the Sangha, for example, by a majority decision."
In essence the principles are to shun evil, do good and purify the mind. The teaching guides one to aim for:

Morality, Meditation and Wisdom.

This wisdom is attained by understanding the Four Noble Truths;

1. In life there is suffering. The basic nature of all existence is that everything from a thought to an empire is impermanent, i.e. passes through the same cycle of birth, growth, decay and death. However, because of illusion, there is a continual experience of frustration, inner conflict and tension.

2. The cause of the suffering is craving or desire. It is the individual's habitual craving for pleasant experience and aversion or fear of the unpleasant which brings about a state of constant struggling, since in life one inevitably experiences both the pleasant and unpleasant.

3. The end of suffering is achieved by putting an end to this struggle.

4. The path of practice leading to the end of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path:

**Right Understanding:** this means that one begins to understand the above four truths and in particular the relationship between suffering and the cause.

**Right Thought:** to renounce sensual pleasures and be free from malice, ill-will and desire to inflict pain.
Right Speech: abstaining from very kind of wrong speech and adherence to truth.

Right Action: conduct that is peaceful, honourable, pure and benevolent.

Right Livelihood: abstention from wrong and harmful occupations and living only by right methods.

Right Effort: self-discipline, prevention of wrong thoughts and increasing and developing good states of mind.

Right Mindfulness: complete awareness of what one does, says, feels and thinks, allowing nothing to happen heedlessly or mechanically.

Right Concentration: this involves a systematic training of the mind so as to be able to focus and sustain the attention on the meditation object thus resulting in clarity and tranquillity.

In addition there are five fundamental virtues to work towards: generosity, loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity.

This path is then supposed to root out all attachments and greed and all hatred, malice and evil, all tensions and anxieties, all turbulent desire and passions that produce inner conflict, unhappiness and misery. This path, the Middle Way, leads to the realization of the Ultimate Truth of existence of attainment of Nirvana.
PRECEPTS

(Precepts 1 to 5 undertaken by most lay Buddhists; precepts 6-8 on holy days)

1. I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures.

2. I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given.

3. I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct.

4. I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech.

5. I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating liquors and drugs which lead to carelessness.

6. I undertake the precept to refrain from eating at wrong times, i.e. after noon.

7. I undertake to refrain from dancing, singing, music, going to shows, wearing garlands and beautifying oneself with perfumes and cosmetics.

8. I refrain from lying on a high or luxurious sleeping place, i.e. indulging in too much sleep.

(Rahula, 1959; Kornfield, 1977; Indasara, 1978)
APPENDIX III.

BODHINYANA MONASTERY - SERPENTINE

The monastery consists of functional buildings scattered among ninety seven acres of scenic forest property, with granite outcrops, a small dam and a running creek in the winter season. (see Plate 18).

Most of the design, foundation work and construction of the buildings has been carried out by the monks. Some assistance came from the lay community and contract labour.

Some of these major features are:

Bot (Ubosot) A brick and tile consecrated building for performing the most important and sacred ceremonies, e.g. ordination and large gatherings. It houses the most important Buddha image. A black-bronze Gandhara-style image seated on a wooden lotus flower altar, approx. three metres high and donated by Thai people.

Bai Sema Consecrated stone slabs placed upright and set into the brickwork at the four cardinal points of the Bot.

Bell tower Wood and tile open sala. The bell cast and donated from Thailand (see Plate 20).

Bodhi Tree (ficus religiosa) A tree growing from a cutting donated from the Sri Lanka Bodhi tree which in turn was grown from the original sacred tree the Buddha attained Enlightenment. (transl. Bodhi) (see Plate 19).
Dhammacakkra
Disc of wheel symbol on the outside of the Bot. Represents the Wheel of the Law which the Buddha set into motion when he preached his first sermon.

Kuti
Small huts or living quarters large enough for individual members of the Sangha. They vary from brick and tile to iron and wood constructions. (See Plate 21).

Facilities Hall
Large brick and tile hall containing the kitchen, food storage area and meeting area for the Sangha and small groups. A small altar with images from many Buddhist countries, including a Kuanyin (Mahayana tradition). Photos of Ajahn Chah. Australian architectural style with large overhanging verandahs and log posts (see Plate 22).

Dormitory
A brick and tile building with accommodation for twelve visitors (see Plate 23).

The buildings are simple, with no ornate architecture, no embellishments or gold leaf. There is no large chedi (stupa) housing sacred relics.

PLATE 20. The bell tower

PLATE 21. Larger kuti for the Abbot or visiting senior monks.
PLATE 22. Dining hall during construction.

PLATE 23. Dormitory for lay people and small dam.


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