

**THE ROLE OF KAMNANS IN THE ADMINISTRATION  
OF THE PROVINCE OF YALA**

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Yala is one of the four provinces in the extreme South where the majority of people are muslims. The people of these provinces are quite different from the people in other parts of the country. From time to time, there have been some disorders that the government has to deal with. It is a chief aim of the government to improve governmental administration and to develop these provinces economically and culturally. In order to accomplish these purposes, competent men are needed.

Kamnans (commune leaders) have an important role in provincial administration, especially at the commune (Tambol) and village (Mooban) levels. Kamnans are people's representatives and the closest administrative officials to the people. The Kamnan acts as a liaison between the government and the people in rural areas. His importance may be judged by the fact that 22,497,724 (88%) of the total population in 1960 resided in rural Thailand.

Because of the importance of Kamnan the writer decided to make a study of Kamnan duties and responsibilities, of the condition under which they operate and of Kamnan characteristics.

In order to make this study a thorough one, Kamnans in another province, Nakhon Phanom in the Northeast, were also selected for the comparative study. Apart from library research, the data for this study was collected in 1961 during conference sessions of Kamnans from the two provinces in Bangkok. The data was gathered by questionnaires, interviews, observation and field survey. The conclusions are as follows:

**Duty and responsibility**

The Kamnan, as an administrative official or head of the Tambol, has two functions. He is an official agent of the government in the commune, and a representative of the people. For all practical purpose, the Kamnan is in charge of law and order in his commune and of vital statistics within his jurisdiction. As an agent of the central government he is responsible for transmitting to the people the messages and demands of the government. He has to see to it that

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the villagers pay taxes; he organizes work parties for when public works in the commune are undertaken; and he serves as the people's representative and liaison official between the people and the government.

#### **Kamnan's Characteristics**

The largest group of Kamnan in Yala, about 30%, gave the reasons for accepting their position as a desire to help the country in its administration. The rest of them mentioned other factors, such as being persuaded to serve by government officials. A few Kamnans said they volunteered to serve.

About 80% of the Kamnans were between 40-60 years of age, about 10% were over 60. Their average age was 48. The average age at appointment was 39. About 25% were appointed when they were between 36 and 40 years of age, but 65% were appointed when they were between 31 and 45 years old. Excluding their experience as village headman, approximately 60% had been Kamnans, for 10 to 35 years. Three percent had from one to 10 years service. The average tenure of office as a Kamnan was 9 years. About 80% of the Kamnans were farmers and gardeners (rubber planter).

Apart from his nominal salary, 90% of Changwad Yala Kamnans earned from approximately 500 to 1,500 baht per month in cash, while about 63 percent of the Kamnans in Nakornpanom province earned less than 500 baht per month in cash. The difference may be at least partially attributable to the lower cost-of-living in Nakornpanom. Because the economy in rural areas is more a subsistence economy than a money economy, a Kamnan's cash income is not a good indicator of his financial status.

In Yala, as in the other 3 provinces in the extreme South where population is largely Muslim, there are two systems of education. One is Thai and the other is Islam (Por Noh). All 10 Buddhist Kamnans out of the total attended Thai schools, only 8 of these had 4 years of primary education or higher.

The education of 32 Thai-Islam Kamnans can be classified as follows: 13 of them had been in both Thai and Islam schools; 4 went to Thai schools only; 8 went to Islam schools only; and 7 attended neither.

Only two of the Islam Kamnans (6.2%) could speak, write and read Thai well; 12 (37.5%) could speak, write and read quite good; and the rest, 18 of them (56.2%) didn't under-

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stand Thai well enough to be of real use. Their ability in using the Malayan language is as follows: 4 of them (12.5%) could read and write very well; 9 (28.1%) could read and write well; 10 (31.2%) could barely read and write; and the remaining 9 (28.1%) could only speak Malayan.

A study of Kamnans' understanding of their own authority of Buddhist Kamnans in Changwad Yala revealed that 80% of them understood very well. On the other hand, only 2 out of 32 Islam Kamnans understood well. Nineteen (59.4%) understood moderately well and the rest, 11 men, understood a little. In contrast, 34 Kamnans (54.8%) in Nakornpanom understood moderately well.

At commune and village levels a Kamnan is the leader in several ways. He is the head of administrative officials of the commune, a religious leader, and more often than not a well-to-do man. He is thus regarded highly by his people. The Kamnan is both a formal and informal leader, but an Islam Kamnan is very much respected by Thai-Islam people in the South because he can be both an administrative official and a religion leader. Some Kamnans are heads of Islam religions order: such as Toh-Imam, Toh-Billa or Toh-Gortep. They are empowered to grant rewards or punishment to Islam people according to the Islam precepts which cover both spiritual and civil matters, such as laws governing family affairs and inheritance. Even if a Kamnan is only "Hayee" he will be respected. Besides he may be a relative of a Toh-Imam. The relations between a Kamnan and religion leaders affects a Kamnan in the South very much. A Buddhist Kamnan can not have such influence, as he is not formally sanctioned by the Buddhist scripture, though he usually plays some parts in village religious life.

Since Kamnans have an important role both in the administration of the Tambol and Mooban, and in daily lives of the villagers, they should be good and competent men. This study on Kamnans in Changwad Yala shows clearly the need for development in several areas, especially in modernizing the administration of Tambol and Mooban.

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