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Patterns and determinants: The case of periodic offering of prepared meals to Buddhist temples

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Provision of prepared meals periodically to resident monks in temples by households of patron communities (known as *Salaka Dane* or *Peru Dane*) is a well established social institution among Buddhists. This study examines the nature and the determinants of the households' decision to participate in this practice to evaluate this institution within contemporary social and economic background.

Data were obtained from the database prepared for a contingent valuation study on enhancement of Yala National Park. Data for the original study were collected during the first quarter of 2009 using a drop-off and pick-up type questionnaire from households in ten administrative districts selected using stratified random sampling. Answers to the question on contribution of *dane*, details of the type of meals, frequency, and magnitude of offering explained by number of resident monks, and socio-economic characteristics for 531 households were available.

Sixty five percent of households indicated that they offered *dane* to a Buddhist temple in their village or elsewhere. About a half of households contributed to temples with less than four resident monks. The estimated binary logistic regression model indicate that households with their heads holding offices in community organizations, are environmentally conscious, have participated in pilgrimages, and with female members over 40 years, are likely to contribute to the tradition. Age, educational status of the household head or geographical location of the household do not affect significantly the decision. Households with reported annual incomes over 240,000 SLR are less likely to engage in the practice while residents of interior districts are more likely to involve when compared with coastal districts.

Although widely practiced currently, future of this practice will depend on the availability of labour for preparation. Commitment by communities may also lead to emergence of new practices that share diverse resources within the community to continue the practice.