Changing roles and statuses of women in Thailand:

a documentary assessment

Bencha Yoddumnern-Attig
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Amara Soonthorndhada
Chanya Sethaput
Anthony Pramualratana

Institute for Population and Social Research
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On the auspicious occasion of H.M. Queen Sirikit's 60th Birthday anniversary, Mahidol University takes this opportunity to dedicate this book *Changing Roles and Statuses of Women in Thailand: A Documentary Assessment* to honour H.M. the Queen as the ideal role model for all Thai women. The purpose of this book is to disseminate information and, most of all, to express a heartfelt felicitation to our beloved Queen.

NITTAYA

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Preface

To commemorate H.M. Queen Sirikit's Sixtieth Birthday Anniversary, Mahidol University has undertaken several projects as a humble tribute to Her Majesty during this auspicious occasion. One such undertaking is furnished by the Institute for Population and Social Research of Mahidol University which has commissioned several experts of the Institute to write this important book entitled *Changing Roles and Statuses of Women in Thailand: A Documentary Assessment* for the purpose.

It has long been recognized that Her Majesty the Queen holds great concern for the welfare of the Thai people. Her Majesty's numerous charity activities are known throughout the world; in particular, those which aim at raising the status and quality of life for Thai women of all ages and all walks of life. Her Majesty's special endeavour is towards providing increased opportunities for women to improve their quality of life as well as that of their families in the face of rapid social and economic change in the Kingdom of Thailand. It has been customary for Her Majesty to spend several months in a year, every year, visiting people up-country and always trying to extricate people from poverty and ill-health. It can truly be said that Her Majesty's achievements in these development works are models of effective and sustainable development.

On behalf of Mahidol University, I wish to take this auspicious occasion to extend to Her Majesty our best wishes on Her Majesty's Sixtieth Birthday Anniversary. May Her Majesty enjoy all the happiness and prosperity as well as be with His Majesty the King the eternal rulers of the Kingdom of Thailand.

P. Charoenthaitawee

Prof. Dr. Pradit Charoenthaithawee
President
Mahidol University

Foreword

The "roles" women play in a society and the "status" they are accorded are important concepts in the study of family and development. However, few attempts have been made to systematically analyze the range of roles women must assume, the social and cultural contexts in which they are embedded, and women's reactions, or adaptations, towards them as development progresses rapidly and family and work conditions change.

Five professors from the Institute for Population and Social Research successfully take different perspectives in looking at the historical position of women in Thailand against the background of rapid social change. As an organizing framework, the investigators have chosen the seven major roles women play in Thai society, namely, parental, conjugal, domestic, community, occupational, kin and individual. The chapters discuss research findings that answer several questions about social change and its effects that cross-cut a number of roles and social contexts. These findings are basic to the understanding of the situation of Thai women, and are of current interest to many researchers and policy makers. I am sure this book will finally give a broader understanding of the dynamics and processes of change and how Thai women are reacting to them.

To honour Her Majesty the Queen's 60th Birthday, this book pays tribute to Her Majesty's significant contributions to the development of women in Thailand.

Aphichat Chamratrithirong
Institute for Population
and Social Research

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express our sincere appreciation to the International Labor Office, Geneva, for offering us an opportunity to explore the existing knowledge on changing roles and statuses of Thai women. The authors gratefully acknowledge I.L.O. financial support. Dr. Christine Oppong from the Employment and Development Department, in particular, deserves our sincere gratitude for her valuable comments, suggestions, references, and patience during the research and write-up period. Our deep appreciation is also extended to IPSR's Director, Dr. Aphichat Chamratrithirong, for his valuable consultation throughout the project. Ms. Aurapan Hanchangsith and her team also deserve a special note of recognition for their excellent assistance in administering the project and organizing this book's publication.

Special thanks go to the people whose names appear in our reference list, for without their knowledge and contributions, this exploration into the *Changing roles and statuses of women in Thailand: A synthesis and analysis for integrated development* would have not been possible.

Finally, we would like to express our sincerest gratitude to Mr. George A. Attig for his valuable contribution to this book's fourth chapter, in addition to his insights and suggestions as well as his editorial and technical assistance in preparing this document from cover to cover.

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Kerry Richter
Amara Soonthorndhada
Chanya Sethaput
Anthony Pramualratana

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Framing a Study of Thai Women's Changing Roles and Statuses

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Country Setting and Study Rationale

The Kingdom of Thailand, with an area of 198,456 square miles, is located in central Southeast Asia and is bordered by Laos and Cambodia on the east and northeast, Burma on the west and northwest and Malaysia on the south. Thailand currently has one of the fastest growing economies in the world and is expected to gain the status of NIC (newly-industrialized country) in the next five to ten years. Although nearly two-thirds of the labor force still work in agriculture, the industrial, construction and service sectors have greatly expanded in recent years. Tourism, foreign investment and exports of manufactured goods have contributed to the internationalization of the Thai economy.

These rapid economic changes have transformed Thai society in the past two decades. Women in present day Thailand face an entirely different set of decisions regarding work, fertility, residence and lifestyle than their mothers did. Factors influencing these changes include:

* *low fertility*: Thailand's total fertility rate (TFR) has dropped to near replacement level in a generation; the TFR dropped from 6.3 in 1965 to 2.4 in 1989, and the contraceptive prevalence rate is currently over 70% (Knodel, Chamratrithirong and Debavalya 1987; Contraceptive Use Prevalence Survey 1987; National Statistical Office 1965, 1989).

* *delayed marriage*: Though rural women continue to marry earlier than urban women, average age at marriage has increased for both in

recent years. The singulate mean age of marriage was 21.4 for rural women and 24.7 for urban women in 1970; by 1980 this figure had risen to 22.0 and 25.5 respectively (Limanonda 1991).

* *high levels of migration from rural areas*: Bangkok's population has increased from about 3 million in 1971 to about 8 million in 1985. Migration is concentrated in the young adult age groups and over 60% of the 1980-85 migration stream were women (United Nations 1987; National Statistical Office 1985).

* *increased employment for women, especially in the modern sector*: labor force participation for women aged 20-49 in Bangkok increased from 58% in 1972 to 67% in 1987. For the country as a whole, employment in agriculture dropped from 70% of employed women in 1972 to 58% in 1987 (National Statistical Office 1972, 1987).

In examining how rapid demographic changes and industrialization may affect the roles and statuses of women, two prominent views appear. The first advocates that there tends to be a negative relationship between a nation's industrialization process, including socioeconomic development and modernization, and the economic, social and psychological development of women. This is largely due to the limited ability of women to control economic power and thus their relative inequality vis-á-vis men (Boserup 1970; Blumberg 1976; Saffioti 1978). Hence women's status in society is assumed to be low. Alternatively, Wolf (1988), for example, portrays a more ambiguous relationship between modernization/industrialization and women's social position. She suggests that from her Javanese information, industrialization may even enhance the status of female workers. Unfortunately however, these and other studies often utilize single variables (e.g., kinship, social equality, education, employment and salary scales) to measure or locate the position of women in society without realizing that social transformation rests upon changes or lack of changes in a range of several women's roles. Moreover, favorable conditions for women in one role domain may be coterminous with unfavorable conditions in another (cf. Oppong and Abu 1985).

In looking at Thailand, the picture is also extremely cloudy due mainly to two factors. First, a major frustration commonly faced by any person interested in the issues of women and development in Thailand is the lack of reliable and relevant information for policy formulation and serious discussion on the issues. In particular, existing research data are scattered and not disseminated effectively (Prasith-rathsint and Piampiti 1982).

Second, contradictions exist in the literature over the actual position of women in Thai society. On one level, Thai women are viewed as having relatively favorable status and a high degree of autonomy. Compared with women in many parts of the development world, Thai women rank relatively well in several important respects affecting female status. For example, literacy among Thai women currently in the reproductive ages is close to universal and labor force participation rates are high. Relations between husband and wife are also relatively egalitarian. Families in rural areas are traditionally organized around female members, where even though authority rests with the senior male, it is usually passed through the female line. Further, there is not a strong gender preference for sons, and women have a high degree of autonomy regarding reproductive behavior decisions. Dyson and Moore (1983) characterize societies with a high degree of female autonomy as possessing freedom of movement and association for adolescent and adult females; post-marital residence patterns that permit continued social contact between the bride and her natal kin; the ability of females to inherit and dispose of property; and some independent control in choice of marriage partners. Thailand clearly passes this test. In general, Thai women act more independently in many spheres than women in most other Third World societies (Knodel, Chamratrithirong and Debavalya 1987).

Despite these characteristics, measurements using single variables (health, marriage and children, education, employment, social equality) show that the status of Thai women is poor (cf. Population Crisis Committee 1988). Even in the same reports, the status of Thai women is differentially assessed as being either poor or high within the same variable. For example, women are "high" status in terms of labor force participation, but "low" status in terms of wages (Prasith-rathsint and Piampiti 1982). And lastly, no clear distinction is made concerning women's roles and statuses in the past as compared to the present, at micro- versus macro-levels, and among women in rural areas versus urban areas. These are crucial considerations since Thailand's national development picture reveals rapid industrialization and urbanization in the midst of a largely agrarian population characterized by declining fertility. Thus these issues, amongst others, clearly indicate that the simplistic concept of women's status is inappropriate in assessing the changing roles of women in the social transformation process. Rather, a much more valuable picture should encompass role adaption and its determinants.

Conceptual Framework

Hence as a starting point, we have followed the "Seven Roles and Statuses of Women" framework developed by Oppong and Abu (1985) to examine Thai women's roles within Thailand's national context (as opposed to international comparisons). This framework provides a mode of measurement for role-related phenomena and aids in describing and understanding systems of roles and how they are interlinked, overlapping, in harmony and conflict, at the societal and individual levels.

As its name implies, this framework is based on role theory which holds that the typical occupant of a given social position in a given context is expected to behave in a certain manner. In other words, by virtue of social, cultural and personal expectations, a particular role designates a particular behavior pattern a woman should hold as she occupies a particular structural position within that society and its subsystems (e.g., families, communities, work places). Role theory thus centers on interpersonal behavior; in short, the ways and reasons underlying a woman's relationship to persons who hold special positions within each of her role arena (such as her child, husband, employer). For women, role theory gives researchers a set of concepts (e.g., roles, role behavior, role ambiguity, role strain, role conflict), a means of classification (the 'seven roles' framework) and a mechanism for relating and analyzing items of behavioral and attitudinal data which links each individual woman with her social and cultural system.

According to Oppong and Abu, a women's seven major roles are: *parental* (mother), *occupational* (worker), *conjugal* (spouse), *domestic* (housewife), *kin* (kinswomen), *community* (citizen) and *individual* (a self-actualizing person). Each of these roles contain many activities, purposes and degrees of control, and each represents a particular set of social relationships (or social networks) a woman has with people who are within the range of her role.

For instance, a woman's parental role centers on the activities of bearing, providing care and socializing her children. To do these activities effectively, she requires resources (time, money, material goods) and a knowledge store house about contraception, nutrition and health, hygiene, child development, and so on. Her degree of control (power) in making key decisions about each of these activities depends upon her relationship with, and the influence of, her husband and other 'significant others' which can range from her kin group members to local teachers and health workers.

As a result, this role and its inherent social relations overlap with her conjugal, kin group and community roles. Moreover, her ability to fulfill these roles to satisfy herself and others will also have an impact on her significant others' expectations about her ability to care for her children. In other words, if she cannot fulfill kinship obligations, members of a woman's kin group may question her ability to care for her children. They may therefore play a greater role in providing advice and assistance within the woman's parental role, at least in terms of child care practices.

The challenge facing each woman is to: (1) identify and make as her priority one or a set of these roles in which she puts in extra time, energy and/or money in order to give her greater role satisfaction; (2) reduce the strain caused by not being able to fulfill the obligations associated with a role according to her own or others' expectations; and (3) minimize the clashing of roles, which can cause problems in terms of time and/or money and have adverse effects upon social relationships. Perhaps the most evident example of this is today's 'working woman' who must balance and derive as much satisfaction as possible from her roles of mother, wife and breadwinner. In the process, she must try and avoid potential conflicts (such as between mother and breadwinner in terms of her child care responsibilities), while at the same time emotionally dealing with her inability to fulfill her obligations to kin group or community.

The seven roles framework was developed by Oppong and Abu (1985) as a means to collect and analyze cross-cultural data relevant to test hypotheses and develop theoretical models regarding the changing status and roles of women. The framework encompasses behavioral and attitudinal aspects of seven major roles played by women in their respective societies, and incorporates dimensions that help to document power relations, tensions, strain, conflict and ultimately change. Implicit in this framework is that roles are not isolated phenomenon, but are associated meaningfully with the social contexts and situations in which they are embedded. Social transformation arises when change, or lack of change, occurs in a range of several roles over time. As such, any serious consideration of women's social position needs to take into account the array of roles women may play in social life.

Our purpose is to synthesize, succinctly and objectively, the available literature on Thai women within the seven roles framework, as well as to present clarification of issues regarding Thai women's status that may have been misinterpreted in the past. Our intent is to provide information and insights, not to spark controversy or to take sides over such a volatile issue. This publication should be useful for those who are interested in international women's issues, as it provides a general overview of

women's changing roles under rapid socioeconomic development in the Thai context.

Sources of Data

Since a major part of our goal is to synthesize existing knowledge of Thai women and the effect of the modernization process on their various roles and statuses, we present findings from many research studies. These include both small-scale surveys, ethnographies and qualitative analysis on specialized topics and national-level quantitative analysis of more general issues. We also have included theoretical overviews of the topic that have been attempted by others in the past. The statistics presented come both from these specialized studies and from government sources, and we have attempted to obtain the most up-to-date and accurate figures possible.

Organization of the Book

The first three chapters give general background on the situation of Thai women, past and present. To begin, Bencha Yoddumnern-Attig gives an overview of the traditional Thai family system, with special attention to differential roles for males and females in terms of residence patterns, decision-making and familial roles (Chapter 2). In Chapter 3, she describes how the conjugal and parental roles are difficult to disentangle in Thai society, and outlines the expectations and recent adaptations that women face in combining these roles. We then present a life history of a rural Northern Thai woman to give a dynamic view of women's roles and statuses and how they are affected by rapid socioeconomic change, on the one hand, and family demands, on the other (Chapter 4; George A. Attig and Bencha Yoddumnern-Attig).

Thereafter our attention turns to examining the various roles of women throughout their life cycle. Anthony Pramualratana examines support to the old in a rural village and describes how both the 'adult child' and parental roles have been transformed, particularly for women (Chapter 5). Amara Soonthorndhada examines another age group that is particularly affected by the modernization process, that of adolescents (Chapter 6). She then presents findings on how Thai women are balancing their domestic obligations in light of traditional role expectations in Chapter 7, and evaluates individual role behavior for Thai women past and present in

Chapter 8. She also describes women's longstanding active role in community development at the local level and discusses possible barriers to women's political role in Thailand (Chapter 9). In Chapter 10, Chanya Sethaput and Bencha Yoddumnern-Attig describe the implications for continuing shifts in occupational roles.

The final two chapters integrate the findings in the context of how traditional expectations have shifted for modern Thai women. Chanya Sethaput presents a chronology of government planning for integrating women into the development process as well as suggestions for the future in the context of what we have found (Chapter 11). And finally in Chapter 12, Kerry Richter synthesizes the sources of role strain, deprivation and conflict for women that appear as emerging issues for Thai society.

2

Thai Family Structure and Organization: Changing Roles and Duties in Historical Perspective

Bencha Yoddumnern-Attig

Man is padi.

Woman is rice.

- Traditional Thai Proverb

Introduction

Most prior studies on Thai women note that the latter have long enjoyed a status equal to that of their husbands. Monogamy is the rule, and the sphere of action for both sexes consists of complimentary roles within the family and society. The Thai proverb above is the most revealing summary of Thai attitudes toward male and female roles (Anuman Rajadhon 1954).

But while women have possessed a high status in the social and economic spheres, a discrepancy exists with regard to religion and politics. For the former, Theravada Buddhism prescribes that women are ritually inferior to men (for instance, only men can attain Nirvana) (Keyes 1984; Michaelson 1971). This is reflected especially in beliefs regarding the relative purity and impurity of the sexes, in addition to the religious order itself and its differential treatment of monks as opposed to nuns. On the political front, it remains a controversial issue that males predominate in the Thai government, although this situation is now gradually changing as more women are becoming actively involved in politics. Nonetheless however, their political activities rest on many social issues which are

extensions of their traditional family roles, including social welfare (e.g., child care, care for the elderly), education, and health.

Any study of the roles and status of Thai women thus requires an initial exploration into the Thai social and family structure. It is within this context that the roles and statuses of members are embedded as depicted by the organization of social and familial relations. It is also from this root that many explanations for women's changing roles and statuses over time can be elucidated.

This chapter presents an overview of Thai social and family structure and the differential influence female and male roles have played in Thai society over time. The discussion centers first on the major scholarly interpretations of Thai social structure. For the most part, these have sought to label the Thai social system based on the degree of closeness and flexibility in interpersonal relations. This is followed by a historical look at three key features of the Thai family structure, with special reference to the roles of individual family members. Special attention is given to how these roles are enlarging, for both women and men, in response to Thailand's dramatic socio-economic, reproductive, and environmental changes over the last two decades.

Thai Social Structure

The nature of Thai social structure has been a controversial issue for over four decades. During this time, two major interpretations have been hotly debated, namely, whether or not Thai social structure can be characterized as "loose" or "tight" as per social relations and the obligations which they engender.

A Loosely Structured Social System

The first interpretation, advanced by Embree (1950), characterized Thai society as a "loosely structured social system" since it represented a "culture in which considerable variation of individual behavior is sanctioned" (p. 182) when compared with the more "rigid" Japanese society. In support of his loosely structured paradigm, Embree noted that the Thai family was tied loosely together because family members lacked a strong sense of duty and obligation in family relations. In cases where duties and obligations were evident within the Thai family, although

minimally, Embree noted that their transmission was a female responsibility. "It is the mother who transmits these teachings to their children, not the father. She transmits them as sage advice rather than as mandatory obligations" (1950:183).

Embree's depiction of Thailand as a loosely structured social system quickly gained in popularity and influence to such an extent that anthropologists working in Thailand became curiously reluctant to investigate further, or even try to explain, Thai social structure in any other way. Embree's theory implied that the attempt would be fruitless (Potter 1977:4). Although Embree's theory predominated Thai studies for some time, other scholars began to find discrepancies in his analysis and new interpretations were soon forthcoming.

A Rigidly Organized Society

The second interpretation opposes Embree's theory and claims that the Thai social system is not loosely structured, but rigidly organized. Moerman (1966), who studied Thai society's structural aspects, found a large number of informal structural principles. He argued that social behavior is directed by numerous alternative principles, and an individual is expected to choose the one alternative which best advances the interests of his family. Special consideration is paid towards those alternatives which are economically-based. In examining and trying to explain the loosely structured paradigm as it related to his research village, Moerman gradually became less convinced of the value of this paradigm in depicting Thai society. In his view (1966:167), "Individual variation, although characteristic, seems to be less striking than it is in some societies which are rarely called 'loosely structured'."

Soon, Thai scholars also began to doubt the validity of Embree's paradigm. Punyodyana (1969) attempted to demonstrate and clarify the existence of social institutions and their "workings" which underlie the structure as well as the process of Thai society. His attempt began by analyzing the relationships and interactions between peasants and bureaucrats. He soon discovered that the relationships between these two parties were not loosely organized, but in fact were formed by numerous structural principles, social roles and rules, as well as sumptuary laws which made the Thai social system tightly integrated. Many of these prescribed specific actions which a lower status person must abide by in dealing with a high ranking individual. Consequently, "tight" relationships

characterized interactions between clearly distinct hierarchical positions, while those which did not have this status element yielded more "loose" behaviors (Calavan 1974).

In family relations, Jack Potter (1976) and Sulamith Potter (1977) also noted that relationships were tightly organized. In demonstrating that his research village was well-organized and contained highly structured groups, Jack Potter listed what he called the "eleven structural elements" which seemed to generate rural Thai communities. These elements included: the extended stem family and compound; the bilateral kindred; neighbors and neighborhoods; cooperative labor exchange groups; class and status divisions; the junior-senior (hierarchical) relationship; the entourage; political factions; the "natural" village community; the government's administrative apparatus; and the temple. For Jack Potter, all of these elements -- working singularly and together -- led to intricately intertwined social relationships and, thus, a tightly organized social system.

Focusing solely on the family, Sulamith Potter (1977) used a dramaturgical approach to describe family life in Northern Thailand. In one extended family, she scrutinized the ways by which the social structure of family life affected the economic behavior of each individual member. She also suggested that the Northern Thai family structure was matrilineal and matrifocal. This female-centered system, as she labeled it, was a reflection of a delicate and complex order of roles, statuses and relationships. She concluded that for social relationships, especially, a family was ordered around four important principles: formal authority belonging to men rather than women, juniors deferring to seniors, seniors assuming responsibility for the welfare of juniors, and family relations being lineal.

An Adaptive Social System

Two major problems soon arose in trying to depict the Thai social system as either "loose" or "tight." The first related to exactly what is meant by either of these terms. In analyzing this situation cross-culturally, Cunningham (1969) provided ample evidence from insular and mainland Southeast Asia to point out that numerous problems exist in comparing and categorizing societies along these lines. Such problems originated in an inability to place societies in the region on a continuum of 'loose structure' largely because no agreement had been made about exactly what elements should be given weight in characterizing a society as loose or tight.

Further, variations along these lines also exist depending upon what level of the social system is being addressed.

The second, and more major, problem with the "loose" versus "tight" interpretations is that they are static. They do not consider an appropriate time depth and the power historical forces play in shaping individual, family and social behaviors to fit new environmental circumstances. In particular, this temporal dimension would allow for an examination of the effects of social change as it alters and modifies the Thai social system over time.

Lehman (1959, 1963, 1971) and Lowe's (1982) analyses, on the other hand, take into account the effects of changing historical, cultural, demographic and ecological conditions as they have impinged upon and molded the Thai social system over time. Both scholars agree that Southeast Asia, including Thailand, imported a political-cosmological system from the Indian subcontinent (which is male-oriented). Lowe (1982) goes on to state that low population density and high geographic mobility are two fundamental reasons for the apparent lack of permanent social obligations and relationships.

Lehman put forth that changing cultural and historical features have even affected the Thai cognitive structure. In essence, elaborate sumptuary codes existed in Southeast Asian principalities and that the languages of Burma, Thailand, and Java still minutely prescribe status relationships. Lehman argues that the Burmese and Thai know this fact, but they also realize that they do not know the rules, and this colors their relationships with their fellows. They know that such rules existed and they might be held accountable in unpredictable ways. Therefore, they have developed inherent mechanisms for avoiding the tension inherent in establishing social relationships which are either too tight or too loose (cited in Cunningham 1969).

Lehman and Lowe's schema are thus diachronic, stressing the adaptability of the Thai social structure and of the Thai, themselves. Following their diachronic approach, contemporary Thai social and family structure is the result of a blending of external contact, the force of major historical events (i.e., socio-economic and demographic changes), and their adaption and incorporation into a Thai ecological niche. An investigation into gender roles and statuses in Thailand, therefore, must be understood as a long process of adapting to historical forces as they affect the drama of family life.

Economic and Population Forces

Within the past two decades, Thailand's socio-economic growth has averaged a remarkable 7 to 8 percent per year in real terms, largely by putting scarce resources in areas of high growth potential, while also controlling its population growth rate. Though Thailand is still predominantly agricultural (over 80% of the population resides in rural areas), the latter's share in the national output has continually decreased, whilst the manufacturing and services sectors have increased. These significant structural and economic changes have led to a rise in urbanization and industrialization, large-scale changes in migration from rural to an urban pattern, increased landlessness especially in Northern and Northeastern Thailand, a rise in female labor force participation, improvement in educational levels among both sexes, and an expansion of infrastructural capabilities (Yoddumnern 1985; Yoddumnern-Attig 1990).

Accompanying these socio-economic changes, Thailand has also experienced a "reproductive revolution." Between 1969 and 1979, fertility declined by about 40 percent. Contraceptive prevalence among women of reproductive age increased from under 15 percent in 1969 to nearly 60 percent in 1981. The rate of population increase fell from 3.22 to 1.6 percent between 1960 and 1988. More crucially, only a generation ago married women averaged 6 to 7 live births, but by 1981 only one woman in ten wanted more than three children (Knodel et al. 1984; Yoddumnern-Attig and Podhisita 1989). Despite these advances, the Thai government still aims to reduce the national fertility rate to 1.3 percent through the use of even more finely improved family planning strategies.

Simultaneously, the nation's population has changed its structure as reflected in changing proportions of various strata, including the childrearing, working age, and elderly groups. Most notably, Thailand's population has rapidly "aged," and within the last 20 years the number of elderly people has almost doubled, and at a faster rate than for the entire population (Attig and Chanawongse 1990). But while a change in the dependency ratio is evident, this has been accompanied by only a small change in the sex ratio. For the elderly group, widowhood among rural women is rising because of a shorter male life expectancy (Sethaput 1989).

From these joint transitions, the nuclear unit of society -- the family -- must inevitably be affected either positively or negatively. Several studies have focused on health and development, the roles of women, value of children, and family structure changes as influenced by demographic and socio-economic conditions (cf. Auamkul and Amornvichet 1984; Chamratrithirong et al. 1988; Knodel et al. 1984; Rodmanee 1980;

Yoddumnern 1985; Yoddumnern-Attig 1990). This present discussion now looks at how these forces have changed rural Thai family structure.

Changing Aspects of Rural Thai Family Structure

How these forces have altered Thai family structure can be seen through four key areas which relate directly to the roles of individual Thai family members, namely, residence patterns, family authority and decision-making, familial roles, and inheritance patterns. Changes in these, moreover, correspond roughly to three time periods: traditional (pre-1913), transitional (1913-1945) and contemporary (1945 to the present). These are divisible based on changing fertility, mortality, health and economic conditions (Yoddumnern 1985).

Residence Patterns

Empirical evidence from several areas of Thailand indicate that a norm of uxorilocal and matrilocal residence has generally characterized Thai society from early times up until today (Kaufman 1960; Kingshill 1960; Mizuno 1968; Moerman 1966; Phillips 1966; Potter 1977; Yoddumnern 1985; Yoddumnern-Attig and Podhisita 1989). One important consequence of this residence pattern is the formation of a system of family development characterized by expansion, dispersion and replacement (Fortes 1962). This developmental cycle is an important feature of Thai family structure, and it is tied directly to individual and family decisions concerning fertility, migration, child spacing, and other demographic considerations (Foster 1978; Yoddumnern 1985). This cycle, itself, is also dynamic and has passed through three phases as affected by changing population and economic conditions.

In traditional times, married daughters and their husbands lived with the wife's parents until the married couple's own children were old enough to aid in the housework and farming activities. The married couple was then free to establish their own household on the family compound. Under these circumstances and if the parents had several daughters, several married couples would co-reside in the original house at the same time. Thus, the extended family was the basic subsistence unit. Married couples would also continue to work on the parental property even after they had

moved out of the original house and into separate households. Virilocal residence was also practiced but only if a couple had no daughters.

During transitional times, uxorilocal residence was still adhered to, but responsibility for caring for the wife's elderly parents fell on the youngest daughter and her husband. In short, after a couple married they moved into the wife's parents' house and assumed economic responsibility for the household and its members. This responsibility lasted only until their child was 6 or 7 years old. At this time, the couple moved out of the original house, was given rights to a portion of parental land, and established their own independent household, usually within the wife's parents' compound. This separation meant freedom from the economic responsibility of the original house. The couple worked on their own land and ate rice from their own granary rather than sharing rice with the wife's family.

Two forces played significant parts in altering the residential pattern from the traditional to the transitional period. First, a cash economy (rather than subsistence or barter systems) placed an increased burden on a newly married couple when they remained in the original house immediately after marriage. Since the couple assumed the economic burden of the wife's family, both individuals were required not only to provide labor for farming activities but also to secure an income to pay off any expenses requiring a cash settlement. This not only taxed their time and energies; it also affected their economic future. Any income earned by the couple went first for paying family expenses and only secondarily for their own personal use. As long as the couple remained in the wife's family's household, the fruits of their labor went to the wife's extended family rather than to the couple's future expenses of establishing their own household and providing for their own children.

Also during this time, mortality rates were declining and parental life expectancy increased due to new medical technologies and an expansion of governmental health responsibilities (Caldwell 1967; Das Gupta et al. 1965; Jacoby 1961; United Nations 1963; Yoddumnern 1985). Thus, parents had a greater chance to live longer and see the youngest daughter married. By that time, a woman's elder female siblings and their spouses had left the original house to establish their own households. Care for elderly parents, therefore, fell into the hands of the youngest daughter and her husband.

In the contemporary period, matrilocal and uxorilocal residence still predominate (Luther 1978; Mizuno 1968; Wijeyewardene 1970; Yoddumnern 1985). Also during this period, the stem family household appears. Fundamental to this system is that one and only one married child in each generation resides in the parental household; co-residence of

married children did not exist. The basic structural units of the contemporary Thai family pass through three stages in the developmental cycle: 1) when a young couple marries, they initially live with the wife's parents; 2) when one of the wife's younger sisters marries, the elder married sister and her family leave the original house and establish an independent household; and 3) this pattern continues until the youngest sister marries.

But these three stages represent the ideal situation. Foster (1976), who worked in Thailand's Central region, rightly suggests three areas of change in which current residence practices show deviations from the traditional, folk model. First, more sons are living with their parents due, in part, to a reduction in family size. Second, in terms of remaining with the parents, the progression from oldest daughter to youngest daughter has broken down. And last, in some cases, all children move away from their parents thus leaving the latter alone in their old age (though the children do provide economic assistance). Foster correctly claims that these changes are attributable to the process of modernization.

In particular, three major forces are responsible for motivating these residence pattern changes: increased landlessness (Jacoby 1961; Wijeyewardene 1970; Yoddumnern 1985), the desire for advanced education as well as increased need for labor in the manufacturing sector. All of these are now working to push children away from their natal villages. Men and women who have completed the compulsory primary level education are now migrating to urban centers at an ever-increasing rate in search of higher education or paying jobs (Chamratrithirong et al. 1991). Hence, several provinces, especially in Thailand's Northern and Northeastern regions, have reported an increase in the number of elderly living alone. Changes in childrearing patterns are also evident. Migrants who have children often leave them in the care of their grandparents. In many rural communities, the major population groups consist of elderly people with preschool and/or school aged children. These people live on a portion of their land's produce and periodic remittances from their children (Svetsreni et al. 1979; Yoddumnern 1985; Yoddumnern-Attig 1990).

Family Authority and Decision-Making

No matter what time period is involved, numerous scholars have noted that familial authority in Thai society is usually passed from father-in-law to son-in-law. Thus, a system of affinal authority exists (Davis 1973;

Potter 1976; Potter 1977; Turton 1972; Wijeyewardene 1970; Yoddumnern 1985) except in cases of virilocal residence. Overall, the father possesses the major decision-making power within the family, and his decisions are final. A son-in-law, after replacing the son in his wife's family, slowly worked his way up to the position of head of the household. To begin, he assumed the economic burden of his wife's family and paid respect to his parents-in-law. His service to his wife's family, at this stage, included a form of bride service (Anuman Rajadhon 1954). In addition, he exchanged his labor for rights to use a portion of his parents-in-law's land (via his wife) in the future (Mizuno 1968). After the death of his wife's parents, the son-in-law assumed the role of head of the household.

This does not mean, however, that women have lower status and a subordinate position to men within the Thai household. In practice, what has existed in Thai society (and has only recently been changing) is a bi-dimensional decision-making system. While the household head may be a man, his decisions are mainly concerned with extra-household matters (economics, politics). Important household decisions rest firmly in the hands of the female household head(s), usually a wife and her mother. Further, a man must also pay respect to his wife's mother at all times. If she is a widow, moreover, she is still considered the *de jure* head of the household. Oftentimes, she still owns the land or other valuable family resources, and thus her opinions and desires are respected by all household members, no matter what gender or age.

This separation of the political male domain and the household female domain is well-documented in the anthropological literature (cf. Delaney 1977; Potter 1977; Yoddumnern 1985), but it is rarely mentioned in discussions of Thai women's status. Part of the reason for this may be the misguided hierarchical perception that the household level is subordinate to community and higher levels. In fact however, the household level is extremely important in terms of production, reproduction and socialization; without these, the higher levels would collapse.

What this authority system, its decisions and activities establishes is not a superior-subordinate hierarchical arrangement, but a family organization based on complimentary roles and responsibilities. Status derives from one's ability to fulfill these roles to his/her, the family's and community's satisfaction. This type of arrangement of very characteristic of Thai households where men are the main economic providers who must leave the house during the day for work.

At the present time, and in more urban areas, this division of male and female spheres is becoming skewed, due also to advanced education and/or

the increasing numbers of women entering the labor force and political arena. In short, women are enlarging their roles into the politico-economic dimensions of income generation and social advocacy, while men are assisting more with such household duties as child care and education, food preparation, and general upkeep. This is especially the case when both a husband and wife are wage earners who must leave the house on a daily basis, and they are unable to afford outside assistance. Rather than complimentary roles, wives and husbands are thus assuming roles based on ***mutual cooperation and support*** characterized by the joining sharing of family and economic responsibilities.

Familial Roles

The basic structural units of Thai society are extended and nuclear families. The former unit is usually comprised, in total or in part, of maternal grandparents, parents, married daughters, unmarried daughters and/or unmarried sons. Such households have been common in rural areas especially. Nuclear households (containing no more than two generations) can be found in rural and, most notably, urban areas. Following are the major roles and duties associated with key family members and how they have changed over time.

Maternal Grandparents

The elderly in Thai society are highly respected; in families and communities, they have always had the highest status. Earlier in their lives, they obtained the means by which their children, grandchildren and, possibly, subsequent generations could acquire food, shelter, land and other resources. Grandparents thus represent the familial base, particularly in extended families.

At this later life stage, they are key nodes in the village social network system, which is usually based on family and kinship relations, and thus they are efficient in activating community social resources for community development works. They are also relatively free from intensive participation in major economic activities, although they are still very active in many health care areas such as child care, nutrition (food item gathering, meal preparation, child feeding) and environmental sanitation (Attig and Chanawongse 1990, 1991; Yoddumnern-Attig et al. 1992).

Further, they contribute to the socialization of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, especially in instilling with them traditional norms, attitudes and values.

Parents and the Value of Children

According to the Thai point of view, the mother was likened to the entrance or gate leading to the house compound (Vootikarn 1983). As noted above, the father was the household authority figure and was responsible for the welfare of its members. All decisions regarding activities associated with extra-household matters (i.e., the "external, political domain") were subject to his decisions and authority. The mother, on the other hand, was responsible for the house and compound. This area represented the domestic domain and her authority, roles and duties centered on this realm (Delaney 1977).

In the traditional and transitional periods, a married couple's major responsibilities were three-fold, namely, to: 1) provide for and raise their children to adulthood, 2) accumulate property/wealth for child inheritance; and 3) encourage daughters to marry in order to insure parental old age security and continuation of the family line. Cumulatively speaking therefore, parental roles and responsibilities were closely tied to the value of children in Thai society. Much of the literature on the value of children focuses on economic benefits and costs. Nag et al. (1978:23), for instance, point out that children were (and are) economically valuable to their parents as a source of labor and as a means of old age security. They further indicate that since children are valuable to parents, the reproductive strategy of parents in peasant societies may be characterized by having as many children as possible, but with an ideal interval between births.

Relevant Thai literature also confirms Nag et al.'s postulation. Thai parents see their offspring as the basis for a dependency reversal later in life (Arnold et al. 1975; Buripakdi 1977; Phillips 1966; Piker 1975; Yoddumnern 1985). In short, through the children parents will have someone to care for them in their old age and to make merit for them when they die (Phillips 1966). During old age, these parents spend increasing amounts of time merit making and observing religious precepts to better enhance their rebirth prospects. The children, on the other hand, assume more of a responsibility for the family economy (Attig 1985; Piker 1975).

The Value of Children study in Thailand indicated that the expectations for economic assistance from children were shown to be highest in rural respondents. This pattern also reflected a reliance on these children for old

age support. More than eighty percent of urban, lower class and rural respondents expected to rely on their children when they become old (Arnold et al. 1975).

In contemporary times, parental roles and duties as well as the value of children have altered primarily in response to the increased importance of education. Under rapid socio-economic change, parents anticipate more of an immediate problem in raising and educating their children than in the past. As one Northern Thai informant stated (Yoddumnern 1985:228), *In the past, the parents' prime responsibility and concern was to feed their children. Today, the parents' prime responsibility and concern is to educate their children.* Under such circumstances, children are now seen as consumers of parental time and energy rather than valuable contributors to the household as in the past (cf. Muecke 1976). Parents, though, still value children in the long-run and view education as one main long-term investment which helps assure that a child can obtain stable employment for the benefit of children and parents. Daughters, especially, are emphasized for parental assistance and old age security, while sons are important in continuing the family line via the surname (Arnold et al. 1975; Buripakdi 1977; Yoddumnern 1985).

Roles of Children

A son's role changes according to his life course position. In traditional times, an unmarried son provided his natal family with labor and a secure economic base. After marriage though, he moved out of his natal home into that of his wife's parents' household. His labor, therefore, transferred to his wife's parents, leaving his own parents in the care of a sister and her husband. While his labor was lost to his natal family, the son also provided a means of forming an alliance between his natal family and his wife's family. This alliance often proved valuable in times of need (Yoddumnern 1985).

A daughter was expected to bring in a husband to help care for and support her parents and younger siblings. Specific duties included working on the wife's parents' land, producing or gathering foods from different areas, and providing assistance when family members fell ill. In return, the couple was given the right to use a piece of land belonging to the wife's parents on which to raise their own families. Further, since at least one daughter would remain with her parents, she also served as a source of old age security (Podhisita 1984; Rabibhadana 1984; Yoddumnern 1985).

Siblings, and most notably sisters, were expected to help each other whenever a need arose; child care being a prime example of such a responsibility. Often older siblings cared for younger ones through baby sitting, feeding, providing clothes, and emotional support. This responsibility became more significant when both parents died. At this point, the eldest sibling, usually a married daughter, assumed the parental role and care for any younger siblings as if they were her own children (Yoddumnern 1981, 1985).

The relationship between brothers and sisters is not as strong as between sisters. Once a brother married and moved out, he could not render any significant assistance to his siblings and their families. His major responsibility was toward his wife and her family.

In contemporary times, the roles of children have changed in a number of ways. The first change pertains to parental care strategies. In traditional times, children provided parents with both short- and long-term assistance. Presently, the degree of support largely depends upon the child's and her/his parents' educational aspirations. For children pursuing a higher education, parents are willing to forfeit immediate assistance in favor of long-term parental support/old age security. Among children who have received a primary level of education, they can more quickly help their parents as sources of family labor or money (if they migrate out of the village for work). It is not unusual to find parents who actually encourage their children to move to urban areas to earn money and send it back to their family.

Further, the rise in virilocal residence, and also the number of women seeking higher education, has meant that sons are taking more active care of their parents, rather than leaving this responsibility to sisters. In many cases, moreover, married couples provide assistance not only to the wife's parents but also those of the husband. This is especially the case when either elderly couple does not have an alternative source of old age security.

Lastly, the high value of education also adds to the roles and duties of siblings. At present, an older sibling is obligated to economically support a younger sibling who is seeking an advanced education, particularly if this sibling is the youngest child. This obligation often affects the life course decisions of older siblings such as career and residential choices as well as the desire to marry. In addition, it also influences the first child's birth and the interval between successive pregnancies (Yoddumnern 1985).

Inheritance

In traditional and transitional times, the inheritance of land and associated properties was bilateral in nature (de Young 1955; Hanks and Hanks 1963; Kaufman 1960; Kingshill 1960; Phillips 1966; Yoddumnern 1985). Upon the death of both parents, each child inherited an equal portion of land. Brothers, though, relinquished their rights to their parents' land since these men would have access to property through their wives. How property was divided was (and is) oftentimes specified in the father's will, for it is he who controls property division. However, this is the ideal situation and assumes that both parents die at the same time. A major exception to this rule is closely related to the residence pattern and is clearly outlined in an example from Northern Thailand.

In this region, property inheritance covers two broad categories: divisible and indivisible. If the property is divisible, such as land, the division will occur in two stages. First, after the death of one parent, usually the father, the land is divided equally between the children and the surviving spouse. When the latter dies, the spouse's land is transferred to the remaining child as compensation for remaining at home and caring for the elderly parents. However, if the property is indivisible, such as a house and its belongings, the remaining child will also inherit this property.

For the contemporary period, the pattern governing property transmission is still bilateral. Parental land and original house will be transferred to the child who shows the most interest and dedication to farming. In conjunction, an increase in the number of sons inheriting their parents' original house is evident, especially since men no longer relinquish their rights to parental property in favor of their sisters. This change is also attributable to increased landlessness and advanced education. For the latter, a man often depends upon inheriting parental land, since his wife's parents may not own land themselves, or the amount of land available is not large enough to sustain a family. Land, therefore, is highly sought after by both sons and daughters, and its transmission via inheritance tends to be even more bilateral.

In terms of education, parents are more actively providing one or two children will be provided with an advanced education, which represents their inheritance in place of more tangible properties. For women especially, parents are encouraging daughters to obtain an advanced education for three reasons. First, the daughters can then obtain jobs which pay a regularly monthly salary, and this money can pay for family expenses requiring a cash settlement. Second, this salary (especially from

government/civil service positions) helps insure the parents of a stable economic environment during their old age. And lastly, in families where land is in short supply, a daughter's education represents her inheritance. She would have a secure financial future in a more secure occupation than agriculture.

In essence, the demand for education, reduced family size and decreased resource (i.e., land) availability has gradually affected property transmission by allowing men and women equal access to both land and/or education. Over time, men have lost autonomous control over education to women, while women have lost autonomous control over land to men. Consequently, both sexes are taking on roles which allow them to cope with Thailand's changing economic situation and its impact on families in a more dynamic way than in the past.

Summary

The nature of Thai social and family relations is still a debatable issue, but they are best viewed using a diachronic perspective. The historical changes in Thailand's social and family structure have stemmed from a multitude of sources. Most important are transformations in the nation's and its families' economic base, educational aspirations, and the introduction of family planning which facilitated a decline in fertility and family size. Such changes have also had an impact on the differential roles of men and women.

Presently, many traditional features of family organization are gradually fading away, including the division of family assets, provision of care and support for elderly parents, and etiquette (Shioda 1987). The core ideology guiding the family members' roles and duties as set forth in the past, however, remains relatively the same, since many are embodied in the Theravada Buddhist religion.

Nonetheless, the means by which these roles, duties and obligations are fulfilled have changed. In the traditional pattern, the domestic domain and its roles belonged to women, while the political domain belonged to men. The roles of men and women were thus complimentary with little, if any, cross-cutting or sharing of duties and responsibilities. Today however, and especially with women becoming an ever-increasing part of the national labor force, male and female familial roles are based on

mutual cooperation and support in cross-cutting and undertaking duties which, in the past, were sex-specific.

This pattern is the result of Thailand's newly emerging entrance into the industrialized world which stresses attaining individual and family independence through economic and educational means. Unlike other industrialized countries, though, Thailand has not yet experienced a "breakdown in the family" since the roles, duties and obligations which bind family members remain strong and, most importantly, flexible. It is this flexibility (neither too loose nor too tight) which best characterizes the Thai social and family system, for it explains how Thailand has reacted successfully to changing ecological and historical conditions.

3

Conjugal and Parental Roles: A Behavioral Look into the Past and Present

Bencha Yoddumnern-Attig

Introduction

While the roles of wife and mother are inseparable for Thai women, the parental role is perhaps the most dominant in Thai society. As Keyes (1984) has mentioned, anything that originates or gives life to others is qualified by the respected Thai term of *mae* or mother (e.g., *mae nam* means 'mother river'; *mae posop* refers to the god of rice). In traditional Thai society (pre-1914) when maternal and child mortality rates were high, mothers who could successfully give birth to and raise their children to adulthood were highly respected by all community members. Such women were considered natural community leaders who possessed special abilities and knowledge. Community members would consult such women on many different types of problems (Yoddumnern 1985).

A review of the Thai literature quickly reveals that little attention has been paid to the conjugal role, the major exceptions being works concerning governmental laws, religion, and classical novels. Most studies center around the family and how men and women manage their roles and duties in order to raise their children in a socio-religiously proper manner.

This chapter, therefore, investigates the role of women and men both in terms of the wife/mother and husband/father roles. It will center around such features as marriage, age at marriage, rite of passage, fertility behavior in Thai society (fertility level, birth control practices, abortion) and the roles and duties of women and men in the family.

Marriage in Thai Society

The conjugal role begins upon the marriage of a man and woman. The definition of 'marriage,' furthermore, varies from society to society. Generally, marriage is defined as a socially legitimate sexual union, begun with a public announcement and undertaken with some idea of permanence; it is assumed with a more or less explicit marriage contract which spells out reciprocal rights and obligations between spouses along with those between spouses and their future children (Stephen 1964).

In Thailand, the Theravada Buddhist religion includes no wedding ritual; those that are used are Brahmanical imports from the Indian subcontinent. Frequently, a couple will start living together after a bride price is paid (Kingshill 1960; Riley 1972). In certain areas, marriage simply means cohabitation which is symbolically marked by the rite of "tying the bride and groom's wrists with holy string." This rite thus signifies marriage, irrespective of any governmental definitions or regulations (Yoddumnern 1981, 1985). Only recently, and mainly in urban areas, is marriage perceived and signified as comprising a formal ceremony and registration at a government district office.

The Thai are generally monogamous. Although the exact extent of polygamy is not known for Thailand, it is generally agreed that it is quite low and limited largely to wealthier farmers and upper-class individuals (de Young 1955; Hanks and Hanks 1963; Phillips 1966; Riley 1972; Smith 1973). In recent times, polygamy has tended to take the form of concubinage. For men possessing several "wives," the first wife is recognized, governmentally and legally, as the one with whom the man is officially registered. Other "wives" are referred to as *mia noi* or minor wives, and they live in separate residences (Knodel and Prachuabmoh 1974). A young girl from a poor family may become a minor wife and be incorporated into, to a small extent, into a wealthier family in order to secure her future (Hanks and Hanks 1963). Muecke (1976), who studied reproductive success among the Northern Thai, found that within the urban population polygamy might be associated with both extremes of wealth -- the rich and the poor -- rather than just the rich as previously believed. The minor wife's role in the poor family would be to provide additional labor (production) and not necessarily children (reproduction).

Arranged marriages are not generally practiced among the Thai. Usually, young individuals choose their own prospective spouses and then seek parental approval. This ability to choose one's own spouse is considered by Thai women to be their right (Nantanee et al. 1977). The choice of a spouse is restricted to individuals outside the 'hearth' (kinship)

group. Intra-kin group marriage is not favored, and it is forbidden within the second cousin range (Piker 1975).

Age at Marriage

According to Thai law, the minimum age for marriage is 15 years for girls and 17 years for boys. In actual practice though, this age at marriage is higher for both sexes and, in the case of boys, is controlled by other social factors. In rural areas, for example, girls are considered marriageable at age 16, but according to demographic sources, nearly all females marry between the ages of 18 and 20 (Limanonda 1976); the reasons for which are not certain. For males, ideally marriage takes place after a period of monkhood which usually begins at age 20.

A review of prior studies notes that during the past few decades, the age at marriage in Thailand, especially in urban areas, has increased slightly. Chamratrithirong (1979) maintains that Thailand is in a process of "transition" in nuptial behavior; but Limanonda (1991) finds only a moderate increase in proportions of single and singulate mean age at marriage over a 40-year period. The average ages at marriage of men and women for the entire nation in the Survey of Population Change (1984)., were 24.5 and 22.4 years, respectively. A variation in age at marriage also occurs between rural and urban areas, with women marrying approximately 3.5 years earlier in rural areas than in urban settings according to the 1980 Census (Limanonda 1991).

Rite of Passage

The traditional simplicity of weddings reflects the attitude that a marriage is only a beginning, a possibility or likelihood, until or unless it produces a live child (Benedict 1952; de Young 1955; Hanks and Hanks 1963; Muecke 1976; Yoddumnern 1985). For a Thai woman, marriage is the major rite of passage which signifies a change in her social status from "maiden" to "wife." This status change, moreover, is more socially significant than that of a man's. For a village girl, entry into adolescence and adulthood is gradual and is characterized by less marked stages. The

marriage ritual, however, signifies not only the woman's change in status but also a change in her protector.

Traditionally, most women give birth soon after marriage, since the birth of the first child signifies a stable marriage and, in part, legitimates the union. It also indicates her full change in status and role to that of an adult. The Thai customarily believe that a girl's entry into adulthood is marked by the birth of her first child. Immediately after delivery, she undergoes the rigorous *yu fai* (lying by the fire) ritual which symbolically represents the state of maturation. Even where the *yu fai* custom has almost disappeared, the birth of the first child still marks the girl's real assumption of adult responsibilities. Often it is not until the first child is born that a young couple can establish their own independent households. Before this time, even a married girl is still a part of her family's household and is under the supervision of her mother. Even if a young couple does not leave the girl's parents' home after the first child's birth, the girl nevertheless now takes on the status of 'mother' and her role within the household changes accordingly (de Young 1955). At this time, she can own her own property, manage her own household, and is thought to be sufficiently competent to provide for her husband's wants. Instead of tending younger siblings, as she did in her role as older sister and childless wife, she now tends to her own child.

Fertility Behavior

According to Oppong and Abu (1985), at the societal level, fertility, contraceptive use, maternal mortality as well as abortion are important indicators of parental roles.

Fertility Level

Thailand's family planning program began in 1970. From then on, empirical evidence has noted a rapid decline in marital fertility with the family planning program playing an important role in facilitating the fertility decline (Knodel et al. 1987). The total fertility rate declined from 6.3 in 1960 to 2.4 in 1987 (Contraceptive Use Prevalence Survey 1987). As shown in Table 3.1, the total fertility rate of the entire country, and in the Northern region as well as, has attained the replacement level since the 1980s. In the Central region, including Bangkok, the fertility level is

below that of replacement. It is not surprising then that the total fertility rate of Thai women would begin to fall below the replacement level beginning from the late 1980s and continuing onwards.

Table 3.1 Total fertility rates in Thailand from 1960-1984

Population by Region	Total Fertility Rates		
	1960	1975	1984
Whole Kingdom	6.2	3.5	2.21
Northern	6.4	3.0	2.17
Northeastern	6.5	4.4	2.46
Central	6.1	3.2	1.88
Bangkok	n.a.	2.1	1.65
Southern	6.5	4.1	3.06

Source: Pardthaisong (1991).

Contraceptive Use

The wide availability and use of modern contraceptives is believed to be one of the major contributing factors to this rapid fertility decline (Knodel et al. 1984; Krannich and Krannich 1980; Pardthaisang 1991). Contraceptive prevalence among women of reproductive age increased from under 15 percent in 1969 to nearly 60 percent in 1981 (Knodel et al. 1984) and to 74 percent in 1987 (Leoprapai and Thongthai 1989).

As reported by Leoprapai and Thongthai (1989), in 1987 the most popular contraceptive method was female sterilization, followed by contraceptive pills and injectables. Furthermore, eight out of ten current users were using methods which had been popular among Thai women since the beginning of the National Family Planning Program.

According to Yoddumnern-Attig et al. (1991), however, the choice of contraceptives, their use, shift and discontinuation depend highly upon a woman's reproductive life span (i.e., pre-childbearing, childbearing and childrearing, and family size achievement stages) as well as child care

patterns. After childbirth and until the infant is fully weaned, contraceptive use patterns change. In particular, breast-feeding mothers do not utilize pills for fear that the breast milk will dry up or become contaminated. This belief stems from the folk concept of the relationships between blood and milk, in that anything consumed by the mother will mix with the blood in the mother's veins and be turned into milk for the baby (cf. Mougne 1978; Vong-ek 1990). As an alternative, they will resort to other types of methods.

Maternal Mortality

In the traditional period prior to 1914, Thai society was characterized by a high mortality rate. The death rate remained fairly constant at about 30 per thousand (Bourgeois-Pichat 1959:22-26), and the life expectancy was probably about 35 years (Bourgeois-Pichat 1959:27; Das Gupta et al. 1965:12). This was due to a low standard of sanitation and public health. The Thai people were always afflicted by diseases that were common all over Southeast Asia (e.g., malaria, cholera, typhus, plague, tuberculosis) in addition to the hazards of childbirth (Lowe 1982:4). Not until the late nineteenth century did new medical technology and an expansion of governmental responsibilities in the field of health combine to reduce the mortality rate (Caldwell 1967:39; Jacoby 1961).

Presently, morbidity rates due to pregnancy, childbirth and peuperium in Thailand have been as low as 3 per 1,000 live births and decreased to lower than 1 per 1,000 live births from the year 1980. Although the number of maternal deaths is believed to be an under-estimate -- either because of under-reporting or improper categorization -- the decreasing trend in this category as a cause of death is significant (Prasartkul et al. 1985).

Abortion

The current legal status of abortion in Thailand is somewhat uncertain. Today, abortion is legal if the pregnancy was the result of rape or an exploitative sexual relationship, or it is necessary to preserve the woman's health. The law also states that only a "medical practitioner" may perform an abortion. These clauses make the law concerning abortion appear more liberal than in other countries (Fawcett 1971).

Traditionally, abortion has been common in Thailand. With the exception of extended breast-feeding and a period of post-partum abstinence, abortion was the only traditional form of birth control. Two methods of traditional abortion exist. The first is the ingestion of large amounts of "hot" medicine. This method is also used to bring on menses which appear to be delayed, to aid in labor, and to clean out the body after childbirth (Riley and Sermsri 1974:13). The second method, resorted to when the first method fails, consists of the use of "chiropractic" massage to "press out" the fetus. These traditional methods are reportedly common, but the extent of their use has never been measured. They are, however, recognized to be painful and dangerous, and hence not taken lightly (Riley and Sermsri 1974:13).

To date, there has been very little research on abortion in Thailand. Cook and Leoprapai (1974) found that most data on abortion came from hospital studies only. Chaturachinda and Thamlikitkul (1974) found that about half of maternal mortality at one Bangkok Hospital were attributable to complications from attempted non-hospital abortions. Using hospital statistics on the number of cases of unsuccessful abortion admitted to the hospital in a one-year period (1972-1973), Cook and Leoprapai (1974) estimated that there were 28 illegal abortions annually per thousand women aged 15-45 years.

Regarding attitudes, the Thai people tend to have a more liberal perspective as per abortion. Over half of the general public approved of induced abortion when the pregnancy adversely affects a woman's economic activities (Ruayajin 1979).

Familial Roles and Duties of Women and Men

As Husband and Wife

Within the Thai family, authority relationships between spouses are important structural indicators. In large families, the husband tends to be the paramount authority figure; his decisions determine the family's actions. In populations where the family size is small (as in present day Thailand), the authority structure is altered. The father's influence is less pronounced and authority is shared between husband and wife.

The traditional picture of husband and wife's roles in Thai society follow the age-old view of husband's as "breadwinners" and wives as

"homemakers." Historically Thai women were confined to the house and were silent and passive partners of men. In the household, the man is responsible for dealing with outsiders, particular officials and upper class people. Frequently, a wife addresses her husband by the term *phii* or elder brother (Rabibhadana 1984). The relationship between husband and wife is therefore liked to that of a brother-sister and/or companion (Smakhan 1976).

The present situation surrounding rural women, however, has changed. Although a rural Thai woman is not the official household head, she plays an important role in household management, especially concerning economic matters. She often serves as the family's treasurer and financial manager, in addition to her principal roles of mother and wife.

Both men and women are expected to contribute to the household's productive activities. But while a dividing line exists between "women's work" and "men's work," this line has become increasingly flexible due to increased economic demands on the family. At the village level, women participate almost equally in all areas of production and services in the agricultural sector, such as padi farming, soybean and tobacco cultivation, and vegetable gardening. Adults, both male and female, spend about 75-85 percent of their time in joint agricultural activities (Xuto 1984).

Both sexes also undertake mutual decisions concerning marital/family problems, but the woman is the key decision-maker regarding such issues as family size, birth spacing and child care. Both sexes, though, mutually decide on matters pertaining to family social activities (e.g., attending village meetings, religious rites) as well as the education of their children (Xuto 1984).

Regarding family planning behaviors, both men and women consider this a woman's domain, and women feel more comfortable in discussing contraception with other women. Husbands and wives will discuss amongst each other about the number of children they would like to have, and whether they are going to use birth control methods. Contraceptive method decision-making, however, is the sole responsibility of the wife (Yoddumnern-Attig et al. 1991).

Contraceptive use usually begins after the birth of the first child. In urban areas especially (but not solely) though, contraceptive use immediately after marriage is increasing. In Northern Thailand, for example, several married women between the ages of 20 and 29 years reported that they took contraceptive pills right after marriage without telling their husbands, although the latter wanted children right away.

Following are several statements made by Northern and Northeastern Thai women which reflect their reasons.

I wasn't ready for children when I first got married. I had to make sure that our marriage would last for a long time.

I wanted to save money to build a house first.

My husband wondered why I was not pregnant, so I told him. He was furious because he wanted to have a baby. He told me to stop taking any pills.

I was careless. My husband saw me taking the birth control pills.

Such data suggests that men are rarely included in these discussions unless they are attempting to stop their wives from using any form of birth control. Most of the time, discussions about birth control are held between female friends and/or their sisters who have had prior experience with various methods. The specific reference group, however, varies from region to region. In the North and Northeastern regions, for example, effective and extended networks (i.e., friends, health workers) are the most influential sources of information, even greater than a woman's intimate network containing family and kin group members. In the South, information seeking behavior begins first with a woman's intimate network. These include her kin group members (i.e., mother, elder or younger sister, close female cousins) who have experience in using contraceptive methods (Yoddumnern-Attig et al. 1991).

As Mother and Father

As noted in chapter 2, a father controls key family decisions, most notably property division, for he is considered the household head (Benedict 1952; de Young 1955; Embree 1950). The family structure in this case is authoritarian in nature. This characteristic is still apparent in rural areas, whereas in urban Thai society the relations between husband and wife are more egalitarian. Their roles, duties and obligations to the family are shared equally (Suvannathat 1979).

In the traditional period, a married couple had three major responsibilities. First, they were to provide for and raise their children to adulthood. This included the accumulation of property and other forms of wealth for transmission to their children. Second, it was the parents' duty to encourage their daughters to marry, which gave them a means of social and economic security. Lastly, parents were responsible for ensuring that married daughters produced offspring to continue the family line. One means of securing this was to verbally give rights to a portion of land to their daughters only after they had produced children. This land included an area on which to build a house and also a rice field from which to derive subsistence. After their daughters and husbands had left the original house, parents still offered to help them in several ways, i.e., care during illness, child care. Parents, however, were not obligated to provide their married children with money, though they would do so in times of need.

In contemporary times, parental roles and duties have altered primarily in response to the increased importance of education. While in the past parents wanted their daughters (and sons) to marry as soon as possible, parents now want their children to obtain a secure, usually non-agriculturally based, job before marrying and having children. This secures the child's financial future independent of her/his parents' resources. Today, parents prefer to send their children to school with the hope that they will obtain a secure job. As a result, parents continue to intensely support their children for longer periods of time than in the past. Parents assume a child's educational expenses until the latter reaches age 12, and, in many cases, until the age of 19 for those children seeking advanced education. One main consequence of this situation is that children are less able to help with fieldwork and house chores since the majority of their time is spent in school and studying. Parents, however, view this as a necessity and a means of obtaining old age security, for children are obligated (socially and religiously) to assist their elderly parents later on in life.

Conclusion

In Thai society, mothers play the central role as bearers, nursers and socializers of their children, and women have a high degree of control over their own childbearing and rearing behaviors and decisions. Thailand's successful family planning program has given them knowledge and ever-increasing accessibility to efficient methods of contraception as well as the

means to insure successful deliveries. Contraceptive selection and use, though, is an autonomous decision, resting almost solely in their hands. They will seek advice from several sources ranging from family members, to friends, kin groups members, and local health workers, but the reference group consists almost entirely of other women; husbands have very little say over the type of contraceptive method used.

The timing of births, and most notably the first, is dependent on a number of factors, the most important of which are the husband and wife's economic situation as well as their compatibility. In this area especially, one of the positive signs which indicates to a woman that the couple is ready for children is the degree to which she and her husband are willing to share rights, duties and associated tasks. These include not only child care but also the sharing of domestic services, economic cooperation, material support and companionship. All of these represent for the woman critical resources upon which she must rely in caring and raising her child. If her relationship with her husband will provide these, she will then take it upon herself to stop using contraception. This will occur no matter whether the husband-wife relationship is egalitarian, or one based on more traditional perceptions of husband and wife roles. This is possible since in Thai society, either perception places the women in a high status position as the core or pillar of the family/household domain.

4

The Dyamic Interplay of Women's Roles Through the Life of a Northern Thai Woman

George A. Attig
Bencha Yoddumnern-Attig

Introduction

Thailand's entrance into the industrial world has brought with it two unsettling phenomena. On the one hand, mass productivity has raised the hopes that material want might at last be overcome. Yet, fears abound that many will continue to be alienated from the output of their labors. Simultaneously, increased longevity and reduced reproductivity have raised the hopes that everyone born human may enjoy the fullest quality of life possible. It also brings with it questions of employment, role changes, family stability and old age security.

In short, a new pattern of constraints and opportunities is shaping the lives and livelihoods of the Thai at each stage of their life courses. This situation calls for a clearer look at the biographical timelines of human maturation, particularly of women who embody the potential and actual ability to perpetuate humankind along both productive and reproductive lines. Each woman (or man for that matter) is the handiwork of many individuals over many years. Their growth, moreover, reflects not only the priorities of today, but the lessons of yesterday, and the human material of tomorrow.

The chapters preceding and following this one give the reader a profile of the roles and statuses of Thai women in a general sense. While many address the historical changes affecting these over time, exactly how a woman's roles come together, intertwine themselves, and become affected by extra-personal forces is not intimately addressed. To view this process

dynamically, and within the confines of this book, let us concentrate on the life history of one Thai woman as she and her family members work to shape and time her roles and life course decisions within the setting of a rural Northern Thai community.

Mrs. Dee

Camouflaged amongst the rolling hills, sparse forests and lush rice fields of Lampang province sits the village of Ban Dawn and its 115 households. While not distinctive in its present state, some forty-five years ago it was the cradle out of which one middle-aged women -- Mrs. Dee -- entered the world. The family into which Mrs. Dee was born was an extended one. Early on, Mrs. Dee's mother and grandmother taught her the skills she would need as a future wife and supervisor of the household's activities.

At the age of 28, Mrs. Dee married a man slightly younger than herself and also lived within the village but was a member of a different maternal kinship group. When asked why she got married, Mrs. Dee was quick to respond that, *I married my husband out of love.* But in cross-checking her age at marriage with her family's structure and organization at that time, it became evident that the timing of her marriage also corresponded to her need for someone to aid in running the household.

Most notably, Mrs. Dee's mother died when Mrs. Dee was 26 years old. Beginning a few months thereafter, Mrs. Dee's family changed radically due to several marriages. Mrs. Dee's father remarried and moved into his new wife's original house. Her younger sister had already married and moved into her husband's original house. Her husband's family had not been fortunate in that they only had one child -- a son. Hence, Mrs. Dee's younger sister was needed more in her husband's household than in her own. A year later, when Mrs. Dee was 27 years old, her younger brother married and moved to another village.

Rather quickly therefore, Mrs. Dee's co-residing family declined drastically. Only two persons remained in Mrs. Dee's original house, Mrs. Dee and her youngest sister who was 11 years old. This was thus the ideal time for Mrs. Dee to marry; she needed someone to help on her farm and to help in caring for her younger sister.

The Stages in Mrs. Dee's Life

To analyze Mrs. Dee's situation more thoroughly, let us now turn to an examination of her life course and the developmental cycle, structure and organization of her family as they impacted upon her decisions and interlocking roles. These stages, as well as the above information, will also bring together and illustrate much of information provided in other chapters of this book.

In *Stage 1*, Mrs. Dee's household consisted of the following individuals: her father, age 37; her mother, age 34; her sister, age 15; Mrs. Dee, age 13; a younger sister, age 12; and a younger brother, age 7. At this stage, Mrs. Dee had just completed the fourth grade. Her family consisted of four people who actively provided labor for farm and household work. These included her father and mother, her older sister and herself. Her two younger siblings, a sister and a brother, were still in school.

In *Stage 2*, Mrs. Dee's household contained her father, age 28; her mother, age 35; Mrs. Dee, age 14; her younger sister, age 13; and her younger brother, age 8. Mrs. Dee's older sister died when she was 16 years old, leaving the family with only five members. Thus, Mrs. Dee's position changed from being the second eldest child to the eldest surviving child. Mrs. Dee, her father and her mother actively worked in their rice fields while Mrs. Dee's younger sister helped with the housechores, i.e., preparing meals, cleaning the house, washing the dishes and laundry, and fetching water. Her younger brother, although still in school, tended the family's buffalo during his free time.

By *Stage 3*, Mrs. Dee's household included her father, age 40; her mother, age 37; Mrs. Dee, age 16; a younger sister, age 15; a younger brother, age 10; and an infant sister, age 1. The major life course events which occurred in this stage were Mrs. Dee's first menstrual period and the birth of a younger sister. Household and farm responsibilities remained the same as in Stage 2, but Mrs. Dee's younger sister cared for her newborn sibling whenever possible.

At *Stage 4*, Mrs. Dee's household consisted of the following individuals: her father, age 48; her mother, age 45; Mrs. Dee, age 24; her brother, age 18; and her younger sister, age 8. Mrs. Dee's younger sister, who was age 23 at this time, had already married a man from another village. She also had moved to his natal family's household since he was an only child. At this time, Mrs. Dee's younger brother was old enough to actively help on the farm. Further, her youngest sister began to provide household labor such as fetching water, cleaning the house and doing

dishes. This increased participation in family activities by these two siblings partially released Mrs. Dee's younger sister from family responsibilities. Therefore, she got married. Meanwhile, Mrs. Dee was a major contributor to the family's labor force; she assumed joint responsibility with her mother for preparing meals and doing laundry in addition to farm work.

By *Stage 5*, Mrs. Dee's household contained Mrs. Dee, age 26; her younger brother, age 20; and her younger sister, age 10. When Mrs. Dee was 26 years old, her mother died. Shortly thereafter, her father remarried and moved to his wife's natal household. Mrs. Dee thus took on a new, and unique, role of head of the household. She and her brother worked on their farm, while she and her younger sister took responsibility for the household chores.

At *Stage 6*, Mrs. Dee's household contained only herself at age 27 and her younger sister, age 11. Just prior to this stage, Mrs. Dee's younger brother (age 21) was married and he moved to his wife's original house. Mrs. Dee rented out her rice fields to a local farmer with whom she shared the produce. Since her younger sister was still in school, her father helped with her school expenses, but he did not contribute in any other way to the household, itself. His responsibilities were to his new wife and her family.

In *Stage 7*, Mrs. Dee's household had grown slightly, consisting of herself (age 28); her husband, age 26; and her younger sister, age 12. At age 28, Mrs. Dee was married, and her husband moved in to the original house to replace her father and brother. Mrs. Dee and her husband resumed farming while her sister, although still in school, aided with the housework.

By *Stage 8*, Mrs. Dee's household consisted of the following individuals: Mrs. Dee, age 31; her husband, age 29; her daughter, age 1; and her sister, age 15. When Mrs. Dee was 30 years old, she gave birth to a daughter. The timing of this birth coincided with completion of her sister's education. Also at this time, her younger sister had completed the sixth grade and no longer wanted to go on with her education. She wanted to learn how to sew in order to become a seamstress and move to Bangkok. After marriage, Mrs. Dee took "hot" medicine, prepared for her by her father, in order to forestall a pregnancy until after Mrs. Dee's sister finished school.

At *Stage 9*, Mrs. Dee's household became independent from her own natal family; it consisted of the following individuals: Mrs. Dee, age 34; her husband, age 32; and her daughter, age 3. Along economic and

obligational lines, Mrs. Dee and her husband were responsible only for themselves and their daughter. Mrs. Dee's younger sister had previously moved to Bangkok and no longer needed any support.

Currently, Mrs. Dee and her husband have only one child, their daughter. When they were first married, they desired to have two children, a boy and a girl. They were forced, however, to delay the birth of their first child in order to ensure the completion of Mrs. Dee's sister's education. Mrs. Dee, therefore, used "hot" medicine as a birth control method. Later and after the birth of their daughter, Mrs. Dee and her husband wanted another child so they did not use any form of birth control. However, Mrs. Dee no longer became pregnant.

Mrs. Dee's only daughter is now 24 years old and has finished vocational training school. She is living with her parents until she finds a job. Most likely, this job will be in a larger town and she will have to move there to live. Mrs. Dee would like very much for her daughter to stay with her and her husband or at least live nearby, but she realizes that it is almost impossible for her daughter to get a job in Ban Dawn or a nearby village. Her daughter might have remained at home if she could do farm work but she cannot. She was always in school and never learned how to farm. Further, it was also Mrs. Dee and her husband's desire to send their daughter to school so she could learn a more stable occupation than farming. They also knew at the time that this occupation could very well pull their daughter away from them. Therefore, a conflict existed between Mrs. Dee and her husband's desire to have their daughter remain at home with them and seeing their daughter get a secure job outside of the village. Although recognizing this conflict, Mrs. Dee and her husband placed a higher priority on their daughter's future through a secure job, and the income it would produce, than on their own future and old age security.

Mrs. Dee and her husband plan on adopting two strategies so as to have a secure financial future. First, Mrs. Dee's daughter will compensate for her absence in the original house by sending her parents a monthly stipend out of her own income. With this money, her parents will hire a worker to provide farm labor and buy any modern appliances such as an electric pump, a refrigerator or an electric fan that they feel are needed. Secondly, they will add to this income any wealth they will accumulate over time from the sale of farm produce (i.e., tobacco, groundnuts). This money will be used to buy other household items and as a security net in times of need.

With these two strategies, both economically based, Mrs. Dee and her husband are trying to be as self-sufficient as possible. Neither want to

depend on relatives for assistance. They do not want to ask a nephew or niece to live with them since they only have enough property to give to their daughter. If they ask someone to come and live with them, this property would have to be divided two ways. They would prefer to leave it all to their daughter.

Discussion

In itself, this case study illustrates several features of Thai social and family structure which affects a woman's seven major roles (Oppong and Abu 1985). To begin with, all of Mrs. Dee's life course decisions and the assumption of crucial roles were regulated by family needs and circumstances. Her family, which was comprised of several children, did not own very much land. Being the eldest daughter delayed her age at marriage since she was a major contributor to the household labor force. Her family would have suffered if she had married early and her husband wanted to move out of her parent's household.

Secondly, her marriage occurred at an optimal point in her life course, particularly as it was influenced by other family members. Mrs. Dee was married after the death of her mother and the movement out of the original house by her father and brother. At this point, Mrs. Dee was in need of a husband to carry on with the farm work and to aid in caring for her younger sister. Her prospective husband, on the other hand, would be assured of a house in which to live and land on which to farm.

Lastly, after her marriage, Mrs. Dee's responsibility to her younger sister delayed the timing of Mrs. Dee's first child. A traditional birth control method - "hot" medicine - succeeded in preventing an unwanted pregnancy. Only after her younger sister had completed her education did Mrs. Dee give birth to her first child.

Changes in the Northern Thai educational and occupational structures brought about this latter case concerning Mrs. Dee's responsibility for her sister's education. Mrs. Dee, her next youngest sister, and her brother were all educated through the fourth grade. They did not require further education since their main occupation was agriculture. For Mrs. Dee's youngest sister, and later Mrs. Dee's daughter, increased occupational opportunities particularly outside of Ban Dawn led to a desire for advanced education, at least beyond the fourth grade level.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, usually the youngest child of a family was the one most likely to continue their education. They were supported both financially and emotionally by their parents and also their older siblings who remained in or near the original house. Parents, alone, rarely could afford to send their youngest child for advanced education or vocational training.

In Mrs. Dee's case, prior to her father' departure, he divided up the family's property between Mrs. Dee and her next youngest sister who had already married and moved away. The latter person received one rai of land on which to grow beans and groundnuts, while Mrs. Dee received the house, the land on which it was built, and one rai of rice land. Mrs. Dee's youngest sister was not old enough at the time to inherit any property.

Mrs. Dee and her father realized that Mrs. Dee's one rai of land was not large enough to be adequately divided between Mrs. Dee and her youngest sister at a future point in time. Therefore, Mrs. Dee and her father agreed to provide this sister with an education instead of land. Both would give this sister a future occupation. Her father then paid for his youngest daughter's education while Mrs. Dee took care of her and fulfilled her everyday needs until her sister moved to Bangkok.

Conclusion

Each woman's growth is a biological event which can be described through trends and stages within that person. Yet growth as a human event is cultural as well as biological. It represents the mutual building of biographies, a collective molding and self-shaping of lives according to a heritage of cultural values. Each woman represents an *individual* -- a unique center of initiative and integrity -- as well as a *person* who is a moral actor in her community's dramas.

Like all human phenomena, growth is the child of circumstance, built by opportunity, retarded by constraints. Whether there are limits to personal growth remains unsolved, but the apex for most societies rests on a woman's reproductivity; their hope for the future. A woman's desire or ability to time her growth as well as reproductive activities is largely limited by three orders of constraints: the cultural, the individual and the social.

In an anthropological sense, *culture* can be thought of as a legacy of idioms and values which give each human life a point and a purpose. Early on, a woman is enculturated -- infused and informed about

acceptable timetables for growth and the roles and duties which they prescribe. She is given an inherent cultural listing of the accumulated knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of the group with which she is associated. High on this list are her roles, duties, and responsibilities as the maintainer of life. The timing with which she moves from one role to another is shaped, in part, by such culturally defined timetables.

But each woman has her own distinctive features, her mark of identity and individuality created by both nature and nurture. This represents her *character* and through it she interprets how she will become a certain person and the roles she will accept within the general guidelines set by her culture. Her desire to accept the roles of wife, mother, economic provider, and community member rests on her and her alone.

A woman, however, usually does not apply cultural codes to herself in isolation; other people must interpret them for her as well. Her character, growth and assumption of certain roles and statuses are molded by her family, community and larger society through a series of social relations, built up and extended over time. But more importantly, her reproductive potential becomes in part a property of others, particularly of those who are her *consociates*. Consociates are people she relates to across time and in some degree of intimacy (Plath 1980). They are family, friends, spouses, kinsmen and colleagues joined together in separate, often overlapping networks. Figuratively speaking, consociates represent a special jury which examine and confirm the course of a woman's being. More dramatically, they heavily influence her major life course roles and decisions, such as those related to marriage, production and reproduction, since such decisions have an impact not only on herself but her "significant others" and social milieu. Consociates thus represent a primary social resource concerning information and validation as well as restraint in imposing limits on personal actions.

As demonstrated by Mrs. Dee's life, culture, character and consociates -- as regulated by prevailing social, economic and political conditions -- are thus the threads making up the fabric of a woman's life. The process is long, and different patterns can be seen at different points in her life course. In particular, her maturation into a woman, a wife, a mother and a grandmother highlight points at which each thread stands out as affecting her decisions concerning the acquisition, intertwining and discarding of key roles and responsibilities, and thus the overall shape of her life.

5

The Impact of Societal Change and Role of the Old in A Rural Community in Thailand

Anthony Pramualratana

Introduction

Population ageing is a recent phenomenon which has begun to affect most Third World countries. In Thailand, at least, this means a rapidly ageing rural population which is less and less an integral part of the wider society, because of the impact of societal change on the existing support system. Support and assistance to the old by their adult children in the pre-World War Two era was inevitable given the rural conditions where wage work was non-existent, where unskilled and semi-skilled factory occupations were rare, where distant emigration to other rural frontiers was impossible and where educational opportunities for the young were unheard of. Support during these times was taken for granted, since the physical presence of children during the parents' old age was highly likely. There were no strict procedures for the care which children were to give their parents, apart from the stipulation that adult children should clean up the excrement of their parents when the parents became incontinent. Children were there in times of emergencies, illness and accidents, to do the heavy household work and farming chores and in some cases to cook the evening meal; but beyond this the actual quality of care given is sparsely documented.

With the expansion of various facets of societal change encroaching upon rural villages in the past three decades, a striking transformation can be seen in practically all Thai villages. Such transformations have affected the villagers' total life style: they include higher expenditures on agricultural production, monetization of the economy, extension of road

systems and canals, development of mass media such as radio and television, increases in educational opportunities, development of industries and the attraction which they provide in low but stable wages for the unskilled and semi-skilled villager. These societal changes obviously affect the adult age cohorts who have taken up factory jobs, furthered their education, migrated elsewhere, involved themselves in wage work rather than farming their own land and moved into town to acquire jobs in service or laboring industries. In the past children did not have to be forced to remain at home and care for their old parents and their social practices and teachings gave no preparation for the consequences which societal change brought, among them the absence of adult children from their parental home. It can be seen that uncertainties about the form of support might be expressed by old parents. Support in old age, a non-issue in the past, is clearly an important issue of relevance in the present and an issue of such recent effect that social structures in rural Thai communities have not yet been able to adequately deal with it. The effect of societal change and its consequences upon the cohort of adult children in their economically active years has a direct effect upon support systems available to the old in rural communities in Thailand.

Data for this paper was acquired from the author's Ph.D. dissertation entitled *Changing Support Systems of the Old in a Rural Community in Thailand*, conducted during the years 1987-88. Fieldwork consisted of gathering in-depth information through participant observation, in-depth discussions, and focus group discussions. Cross-sectional data also included a village population census, a focused survey, and various secondary data at the district, sub-district, village and health center level.

This paper discusses the ideal role of the old as seen by adult children through traditional practices. It centers especially on the gender differences between sons and daughters in support they provide to their old parents. The paper attempts to explain what accounts for these gender differences in support given to the old and how the old themselves deliberately or non-deliberately maintain this disadvantaged position. The paper concludes that participatory understanding is necessary in order to avoid incorrect or misdirected conclusions.

The Role of the Aged

When asked about what it meant to be old, simply being a grandparent was not a necessary criterion; consideration first had to be given to the

person's chronological age and health status. Respect for the old was discussed in relation to common ceremonial activities. It was unanimously agreed by the discussion group that they respect the old. Respect is also outwardly shown in mannerisms such as bowing down when walking past the old and not pointing one's feet towards them. Beyond this however, adult children found it difficult to describe behavior practices regarding respect given to the old by the community. The old were not necessarily seen as receptacles of wisdom and experience, nor were they noticeably in positions of authority and power within the community. Past and present differences in the role of the old in community decision-making were discussed but not found to be salient. A person can be seen as becoming a community leader through personal achievements and not necessarily through ascribed status such as age. The adult children had very strong feelings of respect towards the old but this was not related to any leadership roles such as community decision-making in temple, school, or road and dam construction, which have been in the process of societal change for many decades. Furthermore, farming processes have undergone a dramatic change which has made obsolete the previous knowledge and skills of the old. It is likely that strong community co-operation in the rural central plains region was never a vital necessity. Fertile land had always been abundant; its cultivation could be undertaken by a single household and communal assistance was needed only during the harvest. Under these conditions community leadership was not as fully realized and various potential roles for the old did not emerge.

Regarding parental repayment, Knodel et al. (1984:50-51) state that:

> *The expectation that children will provide comfort and support to their parents...and particularly once their parents are elderly...is shared by virtually all segments of Thai society... It is a tradition deeply rooted in the culture and firmly linked to the broader normative structure... The concept of parent repayment is probably viewed most accurately in Thailand as a process which traditionally begins from the time when children are old enough to do household chores and make useful contributions in terms of labor inputs to family economic activities... However, it is the later stage of the process, particularly when parents are no longer able to work or care for their own personal needs, that seems to epitomize it.*

What Knodel describes is an expression by the participants of an ideal-cultural value. Close inter-personal relationships are dependent on

bunkhun which means a practical and moral indebtedness and has a deep sense of obligation. A *bunkhun* relationship is one of mutual but unequal moral obligation. Thus one has *bunkhun* to one's mother for giving birth to one, for rearing and upbringing. A person may also have *bunkhun* to a friend or elder persons, related or unrelated, for acquiring a job or presiding over one's ordination. Mulder (1985) defines *bunkhun* as gratefulness and describes social relationships as hierarchically ordered and valued in terms of these *bunkhun* relationships. *Bunkhun*-inspired close personal relationships are the key to the stability of Thai social life, belonging to a national culture and applicable for all Thai regardless of social status or class position. Relationships are thus built up on personal motivations based on *bunkhun* and obligation, need for affiliation and security, and the more intense these motivations, the more stable and predictable the relationship will be.

Children should care for their parents in all ways possible. More active care in illness was also said to be given when parents became older and less able to help themselves. However, economic changes have prohibited the children from implementing these cultural values of care to the old. These economic conditions can also exert emotional strains upon adult children; they want to realize the value of *luktao doorae* (children caring) but are unable to because they are poor. Differences can also be seen between adult sons and daughters in the care and assistance which they give their old parents.

Gender Differences in Support to the Old

From in-depth discussions on active support daughters are seen as better than sons. Differences between daughters and sons, in the form of active support given, made quite clear the preference for daughters.

> *Daughters are better. The sons cannot cook and do things well. If we want to eat this and that... if we cannot wash our clothes, ... daughters are better. The sons, it would be difficult to find one that would wash and do things for us, usually [one] cannot find [a son] like that. Good sons are quite good, they can do it also but [it is] hard to find* (In-depth discussion).

Note here the emphasis on 'good' sons, implying that there are exceptions to the opinion that sons cannot properly care for their old

parents. These sons are known as 'good sons' and are likely to be the equal of daughters in their ability to care for old parents; they are further distinguished from regular sons who are characterized by their inability to provide proper care. It was acknowledged that the physical strength of sons was a benefit in the farming process; but in spite of this physical advantage daughters were still preferred.

> Participant 1: *Sons are better [strength], daughters are a little bit weaker...neatness [though] sons can't match daughters...sons have more strength to plough.*
>
> Participant 2: *Daughters can work more tidily than sons.*
>
> Participant 3: *Daughters are more diligent [in the farming process] than sons. Sons are only good in ploughing* (Focus group discussion).

In spite of preference for daughters it should be noted that the physical presence of sons 'being there' must provide some feeling of immediate active support in certain chores, assistance during emergencies or at least physical protection or sense of security from robbers and thieves. On this latter point it was necessary in the past to have many grown sons for a family's physical protection from gangs of thieves and robbers.

Mixed opinions were expressed concerning care given by daughters-in-law. Some daughters-in-law were seen as very helpful but examples were also given of those that were considered uncaring. Most conflict was seen to arise from relationships between mothers and their daughters-in-law. Interestingly, most focus group participants were rather reluctant to express their opinions concerning care given by daughters-in-law. Many reiterated that daughters were the best in providing care to the old. Some mentioned that second to daughters were spouses and then daughters-in-law with sons as the last resort.

The view by the old that daughters are better active supporters than sons raises questions concerning the higher rate of absence of daughters from the household. How can daughters be better supporters if their physical presence is not being felt? This seemingly conflicting circumstance can be explained by the definition of active support which emerged during the field study. Within the central region and specific to the field site a large proportion of farming households had to rent additional land on which to farm. The process of urbanization has resulted in land speculation and the subdivision of such lands into manufacturing

and industrial sites. As a result of this the 'release' of farmers from their land has been predominant during the past three decades. These changes were clearly evident in the perceptions of members of the community.

> *Yes, we had a little land, they [children] helped. And then when they grew up we thought that we had only a little land, it would not be enough for all to live on so it would be better to find other ways [of making a living]. If anyone has left over [money] from their jobs they would send it back, if not then it is okay, it goes on like this* (In-depth discussion).

Most jobs available to unskilled migrants within the study area favored daughters more than sons; jobs within textile industries, small manufacturing, as servants, hawkers, market sellers, in some cases even construction workers. This does not preclude adult children from acquiring other forms of rural jobs in other areas where agricultural land is more accessible, a practice which has been going on for more than a century (Sharp and Hanks 1978; Phillips 1965). As a result of this it may not be surprising that more sons than daughters are residing at home with their old parents.

It is quite common in the villagers' view that daughters still provide good active support, though in a different sense than in the past. Active support in this community context cannot be defined or indicated by the uninterrupted presence of a 'supporter'. Active support by an absent daughter can be seen more as support by continued monitoring or support when it is needed. Qualitative information collected does give the impression that daughters provide more material support than sons. During the 12 months of field study we observed on numerous occasions that absent daughters seem to visit their parents more frequently than absent sons. Many old people can be heard during casual conversation with their neighbors to say that their child has returned home and brought gifts and/or groceries. Daughters can be seen more frequently than sons to carry large bundles of gifts such as sweets for children, large bowls of fish paste, fish soy, and various household necessities. Our field stay allows us to say that we observed more visits by absent daughters than sons. This can be seen as a form of active as well as social support by daughters. In many instances we found that adult sons seem to provide more 'excuses' than do daughters for their inability to care for the old. Expressions of love defined as various forms of support and their inability to implement them are stated by some adult sons. These opinions are phrased in a context of self-pity. Daughters however are more likely to describe actual

support given, no matter how little, to their parents in spite of difficult economic conditions.

Gender Differences in Socialization

The worry and concern which some daughters show over the well-being of their parents may perhaps be explained by the differences in early socialization which they received. Differences in early socialization between sons and daughters are evident in most societies. In Thai society sons seem to be given more freedom than daughters from their early adolescent years. Rabibhadana (1984) states that the general pattern is that adolescent girls are given much more responsibility, while the boys are allowed much freedom and given few responsibilities. Young boys of the same age, he states, are always found in 'gangs', 'hanging around', or 'just talking'. During my field study one of the major reasons stated for daughters not being given more freedom in their adolescence is the fear by parents that their daughters will be enticed or forced into premarital sex. Even if premarital sex does not occur gossip in the community concerning the 'loose' behavior of the adolescent daughter will indirectly affect the parents' moral standing within the community. Parents are seen as the cause of their daughters' behavior because they allow them to 'run loose' and people say 'Whose daughter is that? They shouldn't let her run loose like that'. This fear or worry about premarital sex is made clear by the saying 'having a daughter is like having a toilet in front of one's house', implying that more negative than positive consequences are likely to come to the family. Some daughters themselves believe this value system to be legitimate thus maintaining its effectiveness. For sons the opposite form of socialization, freedom to *paiteaw* (roam), is evident. For young male adults, the freedom to socialize, to drink alcohol, to learn how to entertain and to show that one is a good *sapport* (sport) by spending money on friends is certainly something which I have observed, and often experienced. This kind of behavior is rarely criticized by the community. The son learns to initiate, develop and expand his circle of friends within the community, and later when an outside occupation is acquired beyond the community boundaries. The bonds of obligation initiated in the early adolescent years have expanded to include not only the family but also the circle of drinking and non-drinking mates possibly defined as one's obligatory friends.

It is thus to be expected that daughters provide better care when ill, are more reliable in times of need and are more socially supportive to their parents; this type of role is evidently an ascribed one. Daughters are expected to do this and are brought up in this way; to cook, clean, wash, socialize only on a limited basis and to be conscientious at school. Though these attributes are seen as good for boys as well they are not as strongly emphasized. Daughters are better supporters in all facets but only 'good sons' are like daughters; an achieved role rather than an ascribed one is given to sons. A 'good' son has to achieve this label whilst a daughter does not. In spite of their absence daughters may take it upon themselves to visit and check up on their parents; this process of monitoring does not necessarily need physical presence. When visits are not possible maintenance of indirect contact through letters or friends and relatives going to and from the community may be undertaken. In this form some daughters may not have visited their parents for months but are in contact, know of their parents' well-being and are informed by friends and relatives when immediate support is needed. Different forms of socialization received by male and female children also account for differences in emotional attitude which parents have towards their children. Concerning the emotional worth which a father shows towards his son, it was not uncommon for a parent to show dissatisfaction at the lack of emotional support which the son portrays in his actions. Because of differences in socialization which daughters receive it is likely that they will be more concerned than sons over the well-being of their old parents.

Attitudes of Non-Imposition

Emerging from discussions on the various forms of support given by children, and expected by parents, is the concept of *kraengjai*. The meaning of *kraengjai* concerns the feeling by parents that they do not want to impose upon their adult children's lives. This feeling of *kraengjai* has a direct effect on the acceptance and requests for support by the old to their children. When parents have desires or needs, this feeling of *kraengjai* detracts from their willingness to seek assistance from their children.

The unwillingness to impose is partly due to a feeling of acceptance by old parents that the first priority of support should be given to the grandchildren. Married couples with children are seen to have responsibilities and burdens of their own. Old parents realize these practical necessities which their adult children face.

They [married children] must take care of their children and wives. If they have something left, maybe money or things, they will give it to us (Focus group discussion).

[Old people] begin to ponder and worry more. I think of my children very often but do they think of their parents? I don't know. There is a lot of kraengjai on my part. The children want me to go and see the doctor, I feel kraengjai. They have jobs to go to, I don't want to bother their minds (In-depth discussion).

One prominent theme which runs throughout all discussions concerning familial support is that whatever support is received is determined by fate. One's good or bad karma predetermines one's future. Though karma originally derives from Buddhist teachings it is not necessary to be a religious person to believe in its effect. This does not directly relate to religion because the concept of karma, as it is practiced by many, is a world view on life. Karma is continually produced and reshaped throughout one's lifetime. Though it precedes and continues beyond a person's lifetime it is also felt that karma accumulated during life will show its effect when one gets older. Because of this belief the discussions on karma were quite relevant to the old and were unprompted in most instances.

To influence one's karma a person may indulge in the process of making merit. Making merit or *tambun* can be done by the formal processes of providing cash or services to the temple. What can be considered the non-formal processes of *tambun* or *tamtarn* can be defined as providing sympathy, pity and helping one's fellow man. These concepts are in many instances used in conjunction with one another. Thus I may say I am going to *tambuntamtarn*, though I am more specifically referring to making merit at the temple. Tamtarn may also be considered a less conscious form of making merit, providing help to a less fortunate person, giving a beggar some money, showing generosity. Together, *tambuntamtarn* provide for the accumulation of good merit throughout a person's life. This accumulation of merit is seen by the old as accounting for the support or lack of it given to the old by their children.

No, no matter how difficult it would be for me I just think it depends on my karma. If I have some bun (good merit) I will die without troubling the people around me (In-depth discussion).

Caring for the old is difficult for me to summarize. People's minds are not the same. Parents can rear their children but will the children care for the parents? It is not certain... Our parents took the trouble to rear us, no matter how difficult we must care for our parents. And now when old to have or not to have to eat depends on each individual (In-depth discussion).

Summary

There is a difference in the forms of familial support which children and grandchildren provide to the old. More adult sons were residing with their parents than adult daughters. They provide more active support than daughters, especially in ploughing rice fields. However, daughters, though acknowledged as absent in greater numbers, provide a different form of support described here as support by monitoring. Though lacking in continual active assistance daughters maintain contact with their parents and can be called upon to care for parents in times of illness. There was a general consensus, when discussed in both focus group and in-depth discussions, that in remittances, companionship and support when ill, daughters were better than sons. Such differences between daughters and sons in the giving of care are probably the result of early socialization. Daughters are taught to 'maintain a proper household' by learning early how to cook, clean and work on the farm. Sons on the other hand are given more freedom. They learn to socialize and expand their circle of obligatory friends resulting in observed behavior and responsibility quite different from those of daughters. Grandchildren who are left in the care of grandparents provide adequate active support and can be relied on to do most chores around the house and farm, but their youth and lack of maturity makes them dependent and puts an extra burden on the grandparent.

Old parents are aware of the strains which their adult children encounter in bringing up a family within the economic constraints of a contemporary monetized economy. Now more than ever their needs are filtered through the concept of *kraengjai*. With such societal conditions changing rapidly before their eyes old parents are less willing to show their financial and emotional needs to their children and seldom request any help. Where requests for assistance do occur they are met by adult children's perceptions of their own limitations in satisfying the requests and their subsequent offers of assistance. These offers are met with

fatalistic acceptance by the old parent. In most instances the parents' silence may cause adult children to overlook their needs. Because of the idea of *kraengjai* a situation of consensual neglect may also exist. Neighbors may help but usually only in times of emergencies. The daily maintenance and care will be lacking and further compounded by the attitude of *kraengjai* by the old people.

Old parents are caught up in the vast transformations of the agricultural process; the movements of their children away from home, the increasing amount of wage work availability. They are caught up in two worlds, the old relatively non-monetized economy and the rapidly changing new one. They may be seen as remnants of the past whilst their children are swept away in the process of societal change. When time allows, 'good' children withdraw from this monetized economy and return home occasionally, but only for a fleeting visit. The non-participatory interpretation of these long absences from home, small remittances and limited assistance would be neglect by adult children. Yet old parents do not say this is so for they realize the requirement for their children to participate in this change. Rather, it is the process of societal change itself which does not have a place for the old in this rural agricultural community.

6

Adolescent Role Behavior, Expectations and Adaptations: Past to Present

Amara Soonthorndhada

Introduction

Recently, adolescents have received increasing attention from the Thai government. According to the 1990 census, Thailand has an estimated total population of 54.5 million, with the majority of the population living in rural areas. The number of people aged under 15 is 27.9% of the total population and 20.6% of the population are aged 15-24 years. While the legal age of marriage in Thailand is 17 years for both male and female, only 19.3% of women and 6.6% of men aged 15-19 were married in 1984, and the singulate mean age of marriage was 22.4 and 24.5 respectively (Limanonda 1988; National Statistical Office 1990).

This chapter reviews the adolescent role from past to present and examines changes in adolescence due to the influence of modernization. The chapter is divided into three main parts. The first and the second parts will concentrate discussion on a macro-level view of trends in adolescents' education and economic contribution. Discussion of social change and social conduct among adolescents is found in the final part of the chapter.

Adolescence in the Past

Tracing back to the historical period of the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910) when the country was first opened to Westernization, written documents record evidence of a tremendous change in Thai traditions and lifestyles. Formal education was begun in Thailand in 1855 as a result of

the Bowring Treaty with Britain, although formal schooling was made available to the young elite class only. Boys had greater opportunity to be educated since education in those days was conducted in either the royal palace for the royal members or in the temples for ordinary people. Girls were not allowed to have such an outside world experience until 1901, when formal education was made available for girls.

In the past, girls were taught by their parents or relatives to be good girls and good housewives, while boys were socialized to be the head of household and the family breadwinner. Males had full rights and obligations to continue their name and to take care of parents and family members. This system meant that boys were socialized to be more powerful and dominant. Boys were also obligated to be ordained as a monk for at least a short period. This implied that they had passed through childhood to be adults and that their maturity was recognized. This is part of the Thai religious belief of making merit through the ordination of sons. In this way, sons would fulfill their social duty and would be mature enough to start family life (Podhisita 1991).

Adolescence in the Modern Thai World

During the last decade, Thai society has appeared to undergo an accelerating change in its social conduct, and young people are most vulnerable to the forces inducing change. Whatever the reasons for change among the youthful population, our attention here is directed to consequences of change including education, employment, and familial and social conduct.

Adolescents and Educational Status

As mentioned earlier, the Thai formal educational system was started in 1855, but not until 1901 was formal education made available to the middle class and to girls. The four-year compulsory education act was enacted in 1921 and extended to seven years in 1963. In 1978, compulsory education was shortened to six years. Statistics on literacy show gradually increasing rates from 1947 (53.7 percent) to 1985 (87.7). Regional distribution is shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Population aged 6 years and over by literacy, sex and region, 1980-1990

Year and Sex	Region				
	Kingdom	Central	North	Northeast	South
1980					
males	92.4	94.1	87.0	94.9	88.1
females	85.3	85.3	77.1	89.6	78.8
1990					
males	94.1	96.4	90.0	95.6	91.9
females	90.2	92.1	84.3	92.9	88.5

Source: National Statistical Office, Bangkok, 1980, 1990.

However, there is still an imbalance in educational opportunities between youth in rural and urban areas. Youth in rural areas leave school at an earlier age for many reasons. One of these is the plight of their family. Labor force statistics show that only 30% of children enroll in secondary education after they complete six years of compulsory education, usually at the age of 11 (Komin 1989). Only 10% of children from rural areas are enrolled in secondary school.

Adolescent's Economic Contributions and Their Consequences

Those who have to leave school at the age of 11 or 12 when their compulsory education is completed are automatically forced to join the labor force to help their parents to feed the family. Child laborers are cheap and easily available, but the economic contribution of Thai youth is limited by their choices of occupation. The national labor survey conducted in 1988 revealed that 9.9 million of Thai youth aged 11-24 are in the labor force while 6.2 million enjoy continued schooling. In 1987, it was found that children living in rural areas aged 11-14 years constitute a

major part of the total employed child labor force of approximately 1.5 million. Many are sent alone to cities to look for work (Komin 1989).

Table 6.2 reveals labor force participation rates for males and females aged 11-24 years living in municipal and non-municipal areas as well as the nation. Results indicate that slightly over 75 percent of persons falling within this age range are a part of the nation's labor force. Further, youth in non-municipal areas have a higher labor force participation rate than those in municipal areas. This is partly because in non-municipal agricultural areas, youth who are students are also able to help their families with farming and other economic activities. Data also indicate that for the youngest two age groups (11-13 and 14-19) in both municipal and non-municipal areas, females comprise the largest portion of the work force. This supports the claim that females enter the labor force earlier than males. The statistics presented here, however, should be interpreted with caution. They represent only those cases of reported child labor and may not reflect the total situation (especially in the case of rural to urban labor force migration of young children).

Table 6.2 Percent labor force participation of youth 11-24 years of of age by sex and area

Sex and Age Group	Kingdom	Non-Municipal Area	Municipal Area
Total	75.1	77.8	63.3
Males	79.8	81.8	70.8
11-14 years	24.5	28.0	5.5
15-19 years	69.5	76.2	34.3
20-24 years	90.7	93.8	76.3
Females	70.4	73.8	56.2
11-14 years	25.3	28.6	7.1
15-19 years	71.0	77.3	39.8
20-24 years	83.5	86.9	68.8

Source: National Statistical Office, Bangkok, 1988.

Joining the labor force at an early age and leaving school very young

Joining the labor force at an early age and leaving school very young places Thai youth at risk. Child abuse, exploitation and crimes of violence come to be associated with this age group. Komin (1989) pointed out that number of convicted prisoners in jail age under age 30 years accounted for 62.8% of the total number of convicted prisoners. The causes of crimes have to do with economic hardship, emotional and family problems (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3 Percentage of juveniles (under 18 years) arrested and detained by five most frequent crimes

Five most frequent crimes	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Total number	2329	2480	2194	2314	2108
Theft	41.5	35.1	39.4	44.9	48.1
Drugs	13.7	9.5	12.8	19.6	10.5
Criminal gangs/association	9.7	19.3	21.0	15.9	8.9
Bodily injuries	7.3	5.3	4.4	3.8	5.1
Snatching	3.6	3.6	4.4	3.7	4.8

Source: Komin 1989.

Familial and Social Conduct

The influence of modernization introduces new concepts and fosters increasing social interaction between males and females. Thai adolescents are changing to become more liberal and individualistic. Change in norms about sexuality may be due to a general loosening of family control over the behavior of young people. This change may be particularly pronounced when young people have social interaction in mixed sex company, which is happening in schools and work places.

Traditionally, premarital sexuality is not permissible in Thai society. Young girls are socialized to value virginity. Sexuality is supposed to be confined to marriage as young unmarried people are not encouraged to commit themselves to sexual affairs. Birth out of wedlock is considered taboo and it brings a great shame to parents and families if their daughters

become pregnant before getting married (Rabibhadana 1984, Yoddumnern 1981).

Adolescent sexuality, to some extent, is still a sensitive issue in Thai society (Chompoothaweep et al. 1988, Prasartkul et al. 1987, Yoddumnern 1981). There is a prevailing double standard for premarital sexual intercourse; a survey of students and teachers in Bangkok found that 39% of students and 62% of teachers reported premarital sexual intercourse as permissible for males (Chompoothaweep et al. 1988). However, permissiveness with affection for premarital sexual intercourse also had some approval. Prasartkul et al. (1987) observed that 40% of male students and 36% of female students agreed with premarital sex within an engaged relationship.

However, there is evidence of increasing adolescent sexual activity within the last decade in Thailand, at least in Bangkok; though data from two surveys show conflicting results. The National Survey (Muangman et al. 1982) found that only 13% of males and 1% of females aged 15-19 as having had premarital sexual intercourse, but Koetsawang (1987) found that the rate was 45% for males and 5% for females in the same age group.

Attitudes Toward Family Formation

In this section we consider three basic indicators of sexual attitudes and behaviors, namely age at first marriage, criteria for mate selection and lastly cohabitation. Due to limited data, we knew very little about adolescents who have left school. This acts as a constraint of attempts to assess adolescent's attitudes towards family formation, as findings tend to come from higher social strata.

As found in a nationwide survey, Thai adolescents preferred to marry at the age of 24.2 on average. This result is much higher than the national average age at first marriage which is 20.5 (Chayovan et al. 1988). Other small-scale surveys show different patterns in the ideal age at marriage. Chawalit (1987) approached both male and female vocational students in Bangkok and found that the ideal age at first marriage ranged from 25-26 years for males and 21-22 for females. These results were a bit lower compared to a study conducted in 1988 among high school students in Bangkok which showed that 27.3 years of age would be an appropriate age to get married for males and 23.4 for females.

A possible explanation of these findings is that high school students anticipate that their educational achievement will take a longer period of time to be fulfilled; they are likely to be continue to the university level while vocational students may expect to settle down shortly after completion of their study. However, this assumption is not drawn from empirical evidence. Further studies are needed to obtain a unified view of adolescent conduct with an emphasis on social change and sexual elements.

It is worth mentioning two more indicators, mate selection and cohabitation, to understand the current state of explanation about the interaction between social change and adolescent sexual conduct. Even though parental control is somewhat important in Thai society, Thai youth have found themselves more liberal and individualistic. An obvious change has been highlighted at least during the last decade. In support of this in their large scale study, Pitakthepsombati et al. (1989) pinpointed that approximately 82% of adolescents desire to choose their mates on their own. In contrast, a study conducted in 1977 by Chawalit showed a much lower proportion of 30% of male adolescents and 9% of female adolescents preferred to choose their mates on their own. However, this comparative finding has its own weakness in the sense that the 1977 study is within Bangkok while the 1989 large-scale study is a nationwide survey. Nevertheless, the differences shown here to some extent would reflect changes in attitudes towards family formation in Thai society.

Cohabitation seems not to be practiced widely among adolescents in Thai society (Chamratrithirong 1984; Limanonda 1979; Yoddumnern 1981). In support of this, social norms with regard to the marriage institution are such that cohabitation is not a suitable option for most adolescents. In Thai society, marriage is valued as a rite of passage to adulthood, privileges and social recognition (Chamratrithirong 1984; Cheung 1984; Rabibhadana 1984). Parents expect their daughters to perform this important life event which may be considered as a standard of good upbringing. Moreover, marriage brings economic benefits to the girl's family in the form of bride price (Chamratrithirong 1984; Limanonda 1979). For Thai adolescents, especially girls, age of marriage is clearly related to the age of completing education. For those who continue full-time university education they are still economically dependent. Consequently, cohabitation is not really socially acceptable and hard to undertake in Thai society.

Conclusion

A widespread debate attempts to link signs of cultural change and lifestyles encountered by adolescents. Nowadays, changes in economic and social structure from household consumption to mass production for export have tremendously influenced the patterns of life of people in our society.

Adolescents at present are struggling to survive, much more than their counterparts in the past. Modernization brings them both positive and negative opportunities. In a positive way adolescents may have opportunities for education or for a better standard of living compared to their parents. On the other hand, modernization creates a big gap between those who have these opportunities and those who do not. As we have mentioned 72% of the youthful population live in rural areas and 70% of those aged 15-19 are not currently attending school, since compulsory education is normally completed by the age of 12-13 years. The inflow of young laborers moving into big cities like Bangkok is large and is increasing. Youth are motivated by adventure and have a strong determination to improve their living standard. This often means seeking an opportunity in cities and leaving behind their hometowns where natural resources are scarcer day by day. The point to be made here is that not everyone becomes successful in the modern society where materialism is valued. Social pressures may demean the emotional and intellectual development of youth and this will lead to social problems.

We are not calling for any unachievable action to remedy this situation, but at least something should be done to work towards social reconstruction. It is apparent that the Sixth National Development Plan for Children and Youths integrates many long-term development plans, including physical and mental health, nutrition, intellectual skills, employment potential, social, cultural and moral aspects and finally politics and local administration. The Thai government has made an effort to improve the population quality of life, especially for children and youth and it is evident that living standards have improved. However, more efforts for adolescent progress and development are recommended in three key areas.

First, special attention should be given to equal opportunity in education. Vocational training or an expansion of a formal education should be most appropriate to help delay child labor at an early age.

Second, equal opportunity in employment should be reexamined. Equal wages between the sexes and appropriate job descriptions should be strongly promoted.

And lastly, equal opportunity in social progress should be promoted in terms of social and cultural orientation. Youth should be given a chance to develop their emotional and intellectual capability, social commitments and moral development. This will help maintain society and place less value on materialism.

7

Domestic Role Behavior, Expectations and Adaptations: Past to Present

Amara Soonthorndhada

The Domestic Life Cycle

This chapter focuses on the domestic role, presenting findings on women's domestic responsibilities in rural and urban settings. We also discuss the extent of Thai women's ability to control her labor within the domestic group and to make decisions within the household. Finally, we outline indications that differences in domestic roles and degree of authority within the household may have an impact on family welfare. A focus on the domestic role of women reveals linkages between aspects of women's status and the mechanisms of production and reproduction. There are three components involved, namely the domestic cycle as a mechanism of family formation, the role and status of women and lastly the sexual division of labor.

The stages of the female life cycle are developed through different life course events. With reference to rural women in less developed countries, Epstein (1982) postulated five phases of the domestic cycle, namely the preparation phase, adaptation phase, expansion phase, consolidation phase and lastly the dispersal phase. Each phase has different functions and determines the stage of family formation with respect to women.

The preparation phase involves a process of socialization for the younger generation through education in the values of life. The adaptation phase is the socialization process of the younger generation which crystallizes in the establishment of new domestic units. The expansion phase concerns the process of reproduction and child rearing. In this phase, women bear at least two burdens, looking after their children and participating in the labor market. Dixon (1978) has pointed out that the expansion phase would reflect on fertility behavior. She hypothesized that

an increase in women's productivity outside the home can lead to lower fertility. However, this hypothesis is debatable because women who participated in the labor force did not necessarily change their perception of having children.

The consolidation phase is described as a stage when the children are old enough to contribute to the household and older siblings begin to get married. Lastly, the dispersal phase begins with the marriage of children. Women change their role to that of a grandmother so as to instruct the younger generation in traditional customs and norms.

Household Production and the Division of Labor

In the peasant community, labor is divided according to the purpose of the activity. Historically, the most common unit of agricultural production has been the household, in which the domestic group jointly provided labor, possessed at least part of the means of production, and disposed of at least part of the product of its labor. Household production has understandably been the basis for attempts to characterize a type of economy (Chayanov 1966) or mode of production unique to agriculture (Sahlins 1974). Such attempts assume that the identity of the productive units within the domestic group lends itself to the universal character of the economy.

If gender is taken into account in terms of household production, it is often found that the sexual division of labor varies with the level of the complexity of work. Most women in the world, whether rural or urban and of whatever social class, have two things in common: the responsibility for child rearing and for household work. Both reflect women's role and status in the family.

Traditionally, suppression of women was very much evident in the old marriage law in Thai society (Pongsapich 1988). Polygamy was practiced and women were socialized to enjoy their roles as wives. Women had to serve their husbands and took care of household chores. During the period of absolute monarchy (before 1922), women played an active part in farming besides their domestic duties. Their domestic role varied according to the composition of the domestic group and their stage of life. Thai women followed the stages of domestication as mentioned earlier.

At present, Thai women's domestic role has changed in accordance with changes in the economic structure. They currently make up nearly half of

the economically active population. In rural areas where women perform two roles at the same time (working in the field and managing household chores) it is hard to separate women's economic activity from their unpaid contribution (household management). A study of time allocation for agricultural labor revealed that women contributed 65% of the labor for rice cultivation; 100% for vegetable and home gardening; 80% for soil improvement; 50% for plant protection; 70% for farm management; 50% for harvesting; 100% for food preservation and food processing; and 50% for animal husbandry (National Statistical Office 1987).

Thai Women's Domestic Role in Rural and Urban Settings

The domestic role of rural Thai women was examined in an intensive study conducted in 1987. Soonthorndhada et al. (1987) studied forty married women in two villages located in the Northeast of Thailand. The objective of the study was to elucidate women's role regarding domestic capability. Variations in controlling their own labor contribution were observed in the study. The hierarchy of productive and reproductive roles of the women were observed within four categories namely: 1) those who are fully involved in production with a minimal role in domestic work; 2) those who are fully involved in both production and domestic work; 3) those who participate minimally in production as to cope with domestic work; and 4) those who are fully involved in reproductive work at home only. There is some overlap in these categories however, and whether a woman belonged to more than one category depended on her status within the household.

We found that older women were more likely to work in the rice field while younger women tended to take care of household chores. In smaller households, husbands and wives were both involved in crop cultivation, with many of the tasks seasonally determined. During land preparation, husbands and wives who had young children worked differently from couples without young children. These differences reflect changes across the domestic life cycle, status within the household and relative socioeconomic status.

Women in urban settings have different patterns of domestic responsibilities when compared with their rural counterparts. They may face a choice between leisure, child care, housework, work in the informal sector and work in the market. Chutikul (1982) explained factors affecting

a reduction of domestic role among urban women in the sense that mother's participation in the formal labor market is encouraged by higher wages, and wages are increased by her experience rather than by formal schooling. Thus women in the urban sphere must set their alternatives between household work and work in the market.

In a recent study on care of young children in Bangkok, Richter et al. (1991) examined how urban Thai women are managing their child care and work responsibilities. Respondents viewed child rearing as different from the past in three ways. These are: 1) that the cost of living including childrearing is much higher nowadays, meaning that most women with young children must work outside the home; 2) that family distance has increased, meaning that children are more self-reliant at a younger age and that they lack a warm and secure atmosphere; and 3) that modern life and especially living in an urban environment makes child rearing more complicated. Women preferred to rely on relatives and particularly the grandmother to care for young children if possible, but many were forced to turn to non-relatives, day care centers or even live separately from their child. This evidence reflects changes in domestic capabilities among urban Thai women in the midst of change in economic structure and their responsibilities outside the household.

Household Decision-Making

In the same rural study mentioned above, informants were asked to assess their degree of power and authority when particular decisions had to be undertaken, such as household commodity purchases, distribution and marketing of produce, and seeking money for family needs. The older women claimed that they would directly manage or make a decision on these issues. However, women sought advice or agreement from their husbands if a large amount of money was involved. Interestingly, those women who were fully involved in production with a minimal role in domestic work and those women who were fully involved in both production and domestic work were found to play an important role in family management regardless of age, family size, land holdings and economic activities. Most of them said that they controlled the household purse and managed the distribution and marketing of the household's agricultural products (Soonthorndhada et al. 1987).

Richter et al. (1991) found clear status preferences in who would care for young children if no relative was available. They found that for lower status women, neighbors usually cared for young children, while higher status women preferred a live-in servant. The more educated women tended to state a preference for children to enter a nursery or preschool at younger ages.

Impact of Women's Domestic Role on Family Welfare

Regarding resources and knowledge in relation to the domestic role, there is evidence that woman's domestic role and degree of control in the household may have an impact on family welfare. Yoddumnern-Attig (1990) examined the nutritional status of children whose mothers were divided into several groups based on their labor outside the home, on the farm and in the household. Three health variables (nutritional status, child illnesses and parasitic infections) were combined to determine the overall health status of children. She found that the educational level of mothers alone was not always an adequate predictor of children's overall health, as occupation of mothers was found to be a significant factor. This implies that two important factors affect children's health status: the time to take care of children and purchasing power for either children's food or good health services when the children become sick. Yoddumnern-Attig (1990) emphasized that mothers who work more at home or on farm related activities nearby the house tended to have healthier children than mothers in any other group. The children of mothers who work on rented farm land, in particular, are most vulnerable to malnutrition and poor health status. The next most vulnerable group is children whose mothers work both on their own land and on a rented farm.

Conclusion

To conclude, while it is certain that Thai women of different social statuses usually perform their domestic role differently, it should be remembered that women's roles and activities also differ according to their status within the household. In this chapter we examined the domestic role of Thai women both in urban and rural settings. In the past, Thai women played a less significant role in the labor market and their domestic

responsibilities were less complicated. In contrast, at present they have adopted different patterns of domestic activities, both due to changes in societal obligations and to change in individual attitudes and values. The impact of these changes, both on women's individual status and well-being and on the welfare of the family as a whole, remains to be seen.

8

Individual Role Behavior, Expectations and Adaptations: Past to Present

Amara Soonthorndhada

Introduction

Areas in which individual roles may influence women's autonomy include the economic, social, and psychological ability to obtain information and to use it as the basis for making decisions about one's private concerns and those of one's intimates. Dyson and Moore (1983) developed the argument that the equality of autonomy between the sexes in the present sense implies equal decision-making ability with regard to personal affairs. Societies in which females have high personal autonomy relative to males are typically characterized by several of the following features:

a) the freedom to perform and appreciate individual activities, whether those activities take place mainly with husband, kin, children, work mates, fellow members of community organizations, friends or alone;

b) the freedom to allocate resources, including time to pursue leisure and personal activities;

c) the freedom to acquire skills and knowledge to develop individual talents; and

d) the possession of power over decision-making about child rearing, conjugal relationships, entertainment, career, and other aspects of life both within and outside the family (Oppong and Abu 1985).

This chapter describes women's individual role in the Thai context, including reviews of evidence from past to present. In the process, it summarizes key points and information in prior chapters and serves as an introduction to new issues to follow, since many of the aspects surrounding a woman's individual role cross-cut those of her other roles.

Thai Women and Their Individual Role in The Past

Traditional Thai society was characterized by bilateral kinship ties but with a preference for matrilocal residence (Pongsapich 1988; Podhisita 1985; Limanonda 1991). This cultural pattern of family structure to some extent allowed women to acquire authority in the household. Simultaneously, Thai women were socialized to value submissive behavior. This value was an accepted social norm partly because males had a longer and more respected socialization period.

To be socially mature, males had to pass through a rite of passage-ordination as a monk as a traditional practice among Thai Buddhists. Podhisita (1991) explained that in the past a man who never entered the monkhood was considered an "unripe person" whereas the one who did was regarded as a "ripe person". This implies that the person was mature and suitable for taking the role of an adult, such as bearing the responsibilities of family life. By entering the monkhood, males had an opportunity to obtain learning and spiritual training which females did not.

In contrast, females passed through their social and cultural transitions within the household, taught by parents or relatives. What they were taught is that Thai females should be caregiving, good housewives, submissive and less ambitious than males. Consequently, individual capability to make their own decisions or pursue serious authority in the household was not emphasized.

Transitional Period and Changes in the Individual Role

Within the general context of World Bank support for economic development in Thailand, the first five-year plan for development was designated thirty years ago. Since then great changes in economic structure and social development have occurred in Thai society. The

family is no longer the major unit of household production and consumption; family ties have disengaged and family relations among household members are affected by economic influences. The role of husbands and wives, parents and their siblings has been changed from whatever it had been in the past.

A major part of this change is that women have become more economically independent by participating in the labor market. Two main factors which have supported these changes in women's roles are the revolutionary changes in the economy and the opportunity to have further education. These factors are responsible for the expansion in employment opportunities for women.

In the Northeast, for example, a profusion of small industries, primarily managed by and employing women, has sprung up in the past five years to serve large-scale producers in urban areas. These small enterprises undertake a variety of intermediate tasks, from gem polishing to the mass production of shirt cuffs, and give poor rural women opportunities to earn extra income during the dry season. For the nation as a whole, women are extremely involved in the agricultural sector. In rubber production for example women represent 50% of the population actively engaged in rubber replanting, assisting in rubber tapping, latex collection, and maintenance and weeding operations (World Bank 1991).

The Urban Setting

It is generally acknowledged that much of the labor force in the urban economic sectors of developing countries is composed of female workers who have migrated to large metropolitan areas either temporarily or permanently (Fawcett et al. 1984; Khoo et al. 1982; Eviota and Smith 1984). Thailand, as a case in this point, is no exception to this demographic phenomena; many young female rural laborers have taken this option and became employed in various types of economic activities. Among these activities the industrial sector has become quite prominent within the last two decades, with young female laborers enjoying factory work in the Bangkok Metropolis more than domestic labor.

Still, differences exist in terms of the skills and labor entry possibilities among those who are successful in seeking an urban job. From evidence revealed in other studies, in order to seek a job in the big city job seekers needed certain networks to assist them in obtaining employment. Skills or work experiences were not always advantageous criteria for admission into

urban labor force, as sources of information played an important role in job seeking. Those who were acquainted with relatives or friends who had worked at a certain job in an industry had better information about getting a job as compared to those who did not know anyone (Chareonlert and Soonthorndhada 1985).

Living arrangements and family survival strategies may reflect female autonomy to some level of their role. These include adaptation to residence, adaptation to expenditures, and adaptation to the work environment and urban lifestyle. Female workers who migrate from different regions usually live in groups of two or three persons in rented rooms or houses. These residences, although not very comfortable, are convenient for commuting between their residences and their work places. The single workers exhibited different patterns of family arrangement and family survival strategies compared to their married counterparts. The single unmarried women workers usually send a portion of their salary to their parents. The household budgets of both married and unmarried women workers are shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Selected mean expenditures per individual (baht)

Mean expenditure	Firm A	Firm B
Food (per day)	45.5	41.8
Clothing (per month)	639.1	477.7
Entertainment (per month)	707.1	260.2
*Transportation (per day)	-	15.1
**Remittance (per month)	670.3	444.4
Savings (per month)	706.6	640.8
Personal expenditures (per day)	46.0	48.6

* Transportation is provided
** Single workers only
Source : Chareonlert and Soonthorndhada 1985

Concerning the freedom of allocating resources and power over decision-making, it is seen that budget management for employed married women was quite different from that of single women. As found in a study of female Bangkok factory workers, married women's income was spent mostly on food and household expenditures. The employed single women spent more money on expenses for clothing and entertainment. In particular, the entertainment expenses of single workers were almost three times greater than that of married workers (Chareonlert and Soonthorndhada 1985). Such differences are partially accounted for because most of the workers are young migrants who live together and join as well as share similar life-styles.

Educational Opporuntities for Thai Women

Rural Thai women do not have the same access to opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and talents as their urban counterparts. Women in rural areas, particularly those who work in the agricultural sector, spend their long day working on the farm and within the household. It was estimated that female farmers spent 3894 hours per year to cope with their task commitment while male farmers spent 2,294 hours per year to work in the field (Pongsapich and Wiravong 1991). The point raised here is that rural women's workload implies that it is difficult for them to spare time for any kind of professional training, or even to improve their knowledge of child care and nutrition.

Still, there is hope to improve rural women's status with strong support from the government. There are several projects designed to improve the rural standard of living by motivating individuals to participate in community activities, such as health promotion programs, vocational training programs and others. These are discussed in more details in other chapters of this study.

Conclusion

This brief chapter reviewed trends and prospects for Thai women's individual role, in light of freedom of allocating resources, facilitating skills and knowledge to develop women's talents, and freedom of possessing power and decision-making about household matters. Thai

society is gradually changing regarding female role and status. With the change in economic patterns and social evolution, Thai women obviously value their individual role and are adapting their way of life in the midst of a rapid pace of change.

9

Community Role Behavior, Expectations and Adaptations: Past to Present

Amara Soonthorndhada

Introduction

This chapter outlines Thai women's roles in the community, both in terms of their involvement in community development and, to a limited extent, in the political sphere. The discussion will examine women's traditional role in the past, their central role in local level development, and the potential for women's emergence into a leadership role. The extent of women's participation in community development activities depends in part upon their ability to join in various activities, which may be limited by the time they have available as well as by knowledge of local community organizations and national community issues. As will be discussed further below, Thai women have also been legally restricted from moving into a leadership role both at the local and national level. Though this is changing to some extent, such change is gradual and many impediments remain to any significant movement of women into high-level government positions.

Planning for Women's Roles in Community Development

As mentioned in Chapter 6, one of the first steps towards equality in women's status occurred in 1901 when the educational system was first opened to girls. In 1943, the Women's Cultural Clubs were set up with the objectives of cultural promotion and social activities for their members. In 1956, the Women's Cultural Clubs were reorganized resulting in the

establishment of the National Women's Council of Thailand. But as discussed further in Chapter 11, women were not formally included in development planning until the mid-1970's. The aims of the Sixth Five Year National Economic and Social Development Plan (1987-1991) were to integrate women into economic development by implementing the organization of local women's groups; promotion of income generation activities; and the promotion of revolving funds and savings groups as marketing mechanisms for local enterprises. Under these programs, women in rural communities may develop their capabilities by promoting local resource persons for training; skills training; vocational training; and establishing vocational groups.

These programs attempt to move Thai women beyond their traditional responsibilities of household chores, food preservation, weaving, and handicrafts. Rather, women would play a more important role in organizing and allocating their local resources effectively and in so doing improve their quality of life.

Women's Role in Community Development

It should be remembered that Thai women have always played an important role in the community. In this respect Thai society is not as rigid as that of many African societies, as Thai rural women are not as limited in their outside activities. As described by Oppong and Abu (1985), in rural and traditional urban African society, the main non-familial services of pleasure and affiliation are religious activities and groups. These provide important socially approved occasions for women to meet each other and men; times when they can leave home in the evening without risk of gossip. In contrast, Thai women's relative lack of restrictions has meant that they are able to be more concerned and helpful where collective activities are concerned.

In rural communities of Thailand both formal and informal community groups are organized with close technical assistance from either governmental agents or non-governmental organizations. This effort is implemented as part of the government's effort to promote community participation for development. Women are motivated to participate in these community activities for the purpose of improving their living standard. Organized groups at the village level include the savings group; the youth group; the housewife group; the vocational group; the credit

group; and others. These organized groups have the objective of helping community members to manage and allocate their community resources, to serve not only communal benefits but also collective goals.

Participation of women has proved itself as an essential mechanism in the village, both for maintaining traditional practices and for initiating new development schemes. In rural communities women have an important role in managing collective activities, from taking care of food preparation for religious ceremonies to joining heavy work projects. Every year the government implements development projects to improve the living standard of the rural population. Job creation projects employ laborers to work in their own community; bridges, canals, schools, and irrigation channels are constructed and repaired not only for the purpose of income generation but also for community development. Women working side by side with men is quite commonplace in such an environment, either as supporters or actual laborers.

The community role of Thai rural women is also expressed in the form of individual involvement. For example, the position of voluntary health communicator (VHC) in the rural community is performed by both males and females. These local resource persons are responsible for health promotion programs, in close collaboration with local personnel at health stations located in the villages. The traditional birth attendants (TBAs) are another good example of women's community role. They are local women who are trained to give basic maternal and child health services. In the remote areas not every mother can go to deliver their baby at the government outlets, so traditional birth attendants play an important role giving basic help to these mothers.

Women in Leadership Roles

Apart from their role in health services, Thai women are now emerging in local leadership positions. In 1982 women were given the legal right to be village and subdistrict heads. Since then, 266 women have been elected to be village "headmen". Although the number is small in relation to the national total of 60,000 village headmen, this indicates that women are able to take over local administration. In the near future it is hoped that an increase in the proportion of female community leaders would be possible when women can prove themselves that they are capable and effective in such a job assignment.

If politics is viewed as a matter of community concerns, Thai women have proved themselves as having a major role in this arena. Nevertheless men have a stronghold in the national political arena, and Thai women have found it hard to voice their involvement. With an increase in women's opportunity for education and professional positions, women are gradually gaining a political role. Nowadays, women can be appointed to the high ranks of civil administration, can be elected as Members of Parliament and selected as cabinet ministers. These changes lend increasing support to women's achievement in the community role.

However, social inequality still impedes women from undertaking their community role fully. According to law, many high-level government positions are still not open to women. These include the posts of district chief officer, provincial governor, and permanent secretary-general of all ministries. Women are also not admitted to the Police Cadet School, the Military School or Air Force College. These restrictions limit women's advancement in positions of power beyond the local community level.

Conclusion

The general openness of Thai society to change combined with women's autonomy contribute to the ability for women to have an important role in community development at the local level. But Thai women continue to be limited in their ability to move into powerful leadership positions, both by the lack of precedent for their taking such a role and by legal restrictions. The movement of women into higher levels of educational achievement and professional occupations has created an expanding group who are concerned with economic, social and political equality. As discussed in other chapters, the rapid socioeconomic changes in Thailand indicate that continued progress in this area is essential to social development.

10

Occupational Role Behaviors Over Time

Chanya Sethaput
Bencha Yoddumnern-Attig

Introduction

In former, more archaic times, the occupational roles of women were not distinguished. According to Karl Marx, men were economically superior to women because men were controllers or owners of women. The latter took some part in helping their families by preparing the raw materials brought in by men. In addition, men were ideologically the heads of households and primary breadwinners of the family. This perception, though, refused to acknowledge women's productive contributions to the family and obstructed the economic bond between men and women. According to Western ideology, men looked down upon women's work and generally ignored its importance in supporting male occupational activities. Since women usually had no independent source of income, they were forced to depend on men as their main means of financial security. When women started enlarging their roles into the economic and extra-household domains, men began losing their economic power as the only earners.

In Latin America, the concept of *machismo* also affected women's work activities. Women were raised, and their lives centered, around their traditional roles of wife and mother. If they worked outside of the home, they were regarded as low status workers, not equal to men who were the principle familial income earners.

In terms of income differentiation, Neo-classic theory proposes that women receive lower wages because of the comparatively lower amount of human capital. That is, women pay less for education, possess a lower amount of work experience, and thus work less efficiently for production.

Thailand's Situation: Past and Present

In Thailand, it was believed that a lucky woman was one who married a rich man who could support her throughout her life. She need not work outside of the home; her main responsibility being to supervise subordinates, domestic servants, and manage domestic affairs. The intelligent wife should maintain herself in order that she would not be neglected by her husband. If she was a good follower, moreover, she would receive money and property from her husband. For such women, working outside the home caused the husband to "lose face" and thus respect from his peers. He, himself, would feel ashamed that he could not support his wife and children.

While this situation characterized Thai aristocratic society in the past, the beliefs and values associated with it still exist at present. Some women enter the work force for two reasons, the most obvious of which is financial. But they also view it as an opportunity to expand their networks and relationships with the intent of finding a husband. Once they marry, they will stop working and stay at home permanently to care for their children and domestic affairs.

Whether it is in an aristocratic society, or one which is more democratic, Thai women are known for their hard work. Especially for rural Thai women historically, they may appear to have very restricted roles in that their labors are largely unpaid (unsalaried). From a study by Makha Kittasangkha (1979), 83.4 percent of rural Thai women qualified as unpaid family workers. This represented women who not only restricted their activities to the household, but more importantly it encompassed women who took active part in agricultural production. Particularly today, where family size and other social forces, are reducing the number of workers in a family, women's occupational role is becoming even more crucial for ensuring the future financial security of herself and her husband. Likewise, this more visible occupational role is becoming increasingly accepted by Thai society in general (and, in cases, it is expected). Household census data as well as that from national labor force surveys show that the work status and occupations of women are clearly categorized and cross-over into those of men. Nonetheless though, a domestic-centered pattern still exists; women's answers about their main activities were mostly "not work," "stay at home," and "housewife."

Labor Force Participation

Presently, women are now becoming one of the key family income earners, whether they are single or married. However, employed women are not regarded as the main source of family income but a supplementary one. Work status and the roles of Thai women are still limited within the society's cultural and religious frame. Nevertheless, Thai women appear to be more economically active and possess wider occupational role opportunities than women in other Southeast Asian nations. Results from a Thai labor force survey conducted in May 1989 by the National Statistical Office noted that the female employment rate is generally higher than that of other developing nations. This is a unique characteristic of Thailand where men and women play nearly equal roles in the economy. At the time of the survey, moreover, a far greater percentage of employed women were working, compared to men with jobs but not working (Table 10.1).

Table 10.1 Percent labor force participation by sex in Thailand

Activity	Male	Female
Total Labor Force	54.6	45.4
Current Labor Force (< 13 years of age)	55.9	44.1
Employed	56.3	43.7
At work	55.1	44.9
With job but not working	74.7	25.3
Unemployed	47.0	53.0
Looking for work	56.5	43.5
Not looking but available for work	45.3	54.7
Seasonally Inactive Labor Force	31.6	68.4

Source: National Statistical Office. 1989.

In subsistence society, the occupational role of women is closely related to women's status, and this phenomenon is seen in the Southeast Asia region, in general, including Thailand. Thai women who have taken a greater role in economic pursuits have a higher status compared to their counterparts in other regional nations. Stoler (1977) believes that these women can work as equally as men; they can earn enough to support themselves and their children, if their husbands are unable to totally or partially support them (cited in Disaroj 1983:12).

In the above labor force survey, female employment in municipal and non-municipal areas is compared by industry. Results reveal that Thai women in both urban and rural areas are economically active in a wide variety of industries, some of which traditionally fell into male spheres (e.g., construction, transport). The most predominant for urban women is the service sector which covers 38.4 percent of females, opposed to agricultural work conducted by approximately 68 percent of rural women (Table 10.2). Nonetheless, in comparing urban and rural women as per industry, a higher percentage of urban women work in industries which tend to be urban-based (e.g., manufacturing, commerce, services, utilities, transport, storage and communications).

Table 10.2 Percent of female employment in municipal (urban) and non-municipal (rural) areas by industry

Industry	Municipal	Non-municipal
Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting, Fishing	3.3	67.9
Mining and Quarrying	--	0.1
Manufacturing	21.0	12.6
Construction, Repair, Demolition	1.4	1.2
Utilities (electricity, gas, water, sanitation)	0.5	--
Commerce	33.0	10.0
Transport, Storage and Communication	1.9	0.3
Services	38.4	7.9
Activities not adequately described	0.5	--
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: National Statistical Office, 1989.

Correspondingly, a higher percentage of rural women is noted for occupations associated with non-municipal areas (e.g., agriculture, forestry, mining/quarrying). For occupations which cross-cut these areas (such as construction), similar percentages exist for both urban and rural women.

Table 10.3 presents the percentage of employed persons by sex and occupation. Comparisons are made within each group so that the work status of each is seen. Surprisingly, the top three predominant occupational activities are the same for both men and women, namely, farming, craftsmen/laborers and sales. Once again, this trend indicates that women have moved out of the domestic arena and now participate jointly with men in the nation's major occupations. Complimentary between the sexes also exists in that a greater percentage of women possess professional jobs than do men, although the latter far predominate in terms of administrative positions.

Table 10.3 Percent employed persons by occupation and sex

Occupation	Male	Female
Professional	3.1	4.1
Administrative	2.2	0.8
Clerical	2.5	3.6
Sales	7.9	14.6
Farmers	57.6	56.2
Transport, Storage and Communications	5.1	0.3
Craftsmen/Laborers	18.5	15.7
Services	3.2	4.8
Unknown	--	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: National Statistical Office, 1989.

Table 10.4 presents the percent work status of employed persons by sex. Results indicate that the percentage of male employers is three times

that of females. The percentages for both sexes, however, are low (i.e., 1.8 for men; 0.6 for women), and employers represents the lowest ranking work status category for men and women. The largest percentage of women fall within the category of unpaid family workers, largely housewives; but a surprisingly high percentage of men (22.5%) also fall within this middle-range category. The remaining work status positions for women (in declining order) are private employees, own account workers, and government workers. Private employees carries with it the second highest work status percentage for both men and women.

Table 10.4 Percent employed persons by work status and sex

Work Status	Male	Female
Employer	1.8	0.6
Government Employee	7.8	5.3
Private Employee	27.2	24.4
Own Account Worker	40.6	19.7
Unpaid Family Worker	22.5	49.9
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: National Statistical Office, 1989.

Occupational Trends, Regional Industry Changes, and Migration

Labor force surveys conducted by the Thai government thus show that wage labor is a typical characteristic of Thai women's lives, and in 1980 female workers constituted 44.3 percent of the economically active population (Boonchalaksi 1990). This rose to 45.4 percent by 1989.

Complimenting labor force statistics, census data for Thailand from 1960-1980 indicate that in all regions except the Central region, nearly 80 percent of female workers were engaged in agriculture. This percentage compared to the total female work force declined only 4 percent in 1970 and 7 percent in 1980. Most of this decline was due to changes in the

Central region, which declined from a total of 70 percent to 60 percent from 1970 to 1980. In the North and Northeastern regions, the shift away from agriculture was only nominal. Commerce, service and manufacturing are the remaining three important activities as far as female workers in general are concerned. During 1960-1970, the share of commerce remained almost constant in all regions, but services almost doubled in all four regions. In manufacturing, all regions showed a slight increase in the percentage, with the highest increase noted for the Central region. As for the changes during 1970-1980, commerce and service's shares increased in all regions, except in the Central region. Manufacturing almost doubled in all three regions, except for the Central region where it more than doubled (Boonchalaksi 1990).

The shift from agriculture to commerce and services is largely due to structural and economic changes in Thai society as a whole. Accompanying this shift, and the rise of manufacturing, has led to a large-scale change in migration from a rural to an urban pattern and, most importantly, to a rise in female labor force participation.

Although the total number of males exceeds females (Pejaranonda et al. 1984), sex selectivity in migration streams depends on the age of migrants and their destinations. Women are more likely to migrate when they are between 15 and 24 years and 60 years and over. Males dominate in the 25-44 and 50-59 age groups. Further, women tend to migrate at younger ages than men because they drop out of school, enter the labor force, and marry at a younger age than men (Leenothai 1991).

Men represent the highest proportion of intra-regional as well as rural-to-rural migrants, while women predominate in rural-urban migration streams. The volume and rate of female migration has increased and outnumbers the migration of men in Bangkok (Piampiti 1984). A decline in the migration sex ratio for migrants coming to Bangkok is noted from 1970 to 1980 (i.e., 99 to 89, respectively). The increasing predominance of female migrants is partly the result of social changes that have loosened restrictions on their movement, an increased proportion of women enrolling in urban schools, and the Bangkok's economic development which now offers more attractive job opportunities for women than other places (Arnold and Piampiti 1984; Pejaranonda et al. 1984).

Quality of Life, Socio-Economic and Demographic Changes

In looking at Thailand's structural changes, two patterns emerge concerning the health and welfare of the Thai people. On the one hand, an overall positive relationship exists between socio-economic development, small family size and better health for adults and young children (Auamkul and Amornvichet 1984; Chamratrithirong et al. 1988; Limtragool 1979; Rodmanee 1980; Sidhichai 1977).

Alternatively, when migration and female labor force participation are considered, a negative relationship exists between socio-economic development and child health and development arises, possibly due to the incompatibility of parental (mother) and occupational roles. In Thailand, mothers' participation in the labor force leads to the increased use of alternative child care providers, a fostering pattern than allows women greater flexibility in migration for work (either daily or on a long-term basis). As a result, a decline in breast-feeding, increased use of inappropriate breast milk substitutes, early weaning and increased child malnutrition are interdependent consequences adversely affecting child health and development. Children of mothers not involved in the labor force tend to show better physical, emotional and social development (Rodmanee 1980; Yoddumnern-Attig 1990).

A qualitative study on child rearing practices in families with working urban and rural mothers indicates that grandparents play an important role in child rearing during mothers' working hours in both groups. Other relatives of families also help working mothers to care for their children. However, urban mothers, who have no relatives, will hire a baby sitter to take care of the child. After returning from work, the mother will resume her parental role. Furthermore, urban fathers participate more in child care than their rural counterparts (Sirikulchayanonta 1991).

Greater involvement of the father in child care is also confirmed by Richter et al. (1991) in their study on child care decision-making in urban Thailand. Additionally, their study revealed two more important issues concerning working mothers and child care. These include: (1) greater autonomy from the extended family as trust in formal child care grows and family distance due to migration and time pressure continues; and (2) a growing preference for more formal care. As acceptance of nurseries and day care centers grows, ideas about trained child care providers gain prominence and domestic servants become even more difficult to find.

For those who work in the manufacturing sector (i.e. factories in Bangkok), Podhisita and Soonthorndhada (1988) found a difference in

absenteeism between female workers of different age groups and marital status. In short, older and ever-married women tended to have more absenteeism than younger never-married women. Their findings also revealed higher absenteeism among workers with young children (especially those below three years of age) than among workers with older aged children. This suggests that children place an added burden on mothers who work outside of the home, and that there exists a need for appropriate family planning and welfare programs on the part of the government and manufacturing sector.

Out of this same study, Soonthorndhada (1991) also found that abortions and stillbirths were higher among female migrant workers compared to workers who were non-migrants. Overall, female workers who had abortions constituted 0.136 women or about 85 per 1,000 live births. The stillbirth rate was also high at about 10 per 1,000 live births. This may be due to the physically-intensive work required in many factories in addition to other occupational hazards which adversely affect female health.

Child Labor

Child labor, either in the home or the formal work force, is connected to educational opportunities. Knodel et al. (1991) found that in parents' opinions, the average level of sufficient education for boys is higher than that of girls. In order to become economically self-reliant in the future, parents felt that boys needed a higher education than girls. Since more girls than boys do not continue their education to a high level, they are more likely to enter the labor market earlier than boys of the same age (Archavanitkul and Havanon 1990).

Presently, there is a high demand for child labor, because wages paid to children are much lower than adults and child laborers are more obedient to supervisors than adult workers. The demand employers placed at employment agencies is higher for girls than boys, thereby raising the agency's commission for replacing girls at a higher rate than for boys. The high commission fee employers must pay the employment agency for replacing girls may be one of the reasons that girls' wages are lower than boys (Chutikul et al. 1987).

Girls and boys who enter the labor market at very young ages are usually taken advantage of by their employers (Tinakorn 1981; National

Youth Bureau 1986). Both girls and boys receive less than the minimum wage, they are forced to do heavy work in unhealthy environments for more than 8 hours a day, and they receive very little rest and only a few days off in a year. All of these conditions are extremely harmful to the physical and mental health of the children (Archavanitkul and Havanon 1990; Richter and Ard-Aum 1989).

Prostitution

In late nineteenth century Thailand, an expansion in the export economy was accompanied by a large-scale influx of immigrant traders and the establishment of trading communities. The values and practices regarding sex roles and marriage systems within such communities were very different from those of traditional rural Thai society, and their spread brought the practices of polygamy and concubinage closer to the ordinary people (which used to exist only among the court and aristocracy). Prostitution was also introduced on a large-scale for the first time, in part due to the predominance of young males within the long distance migration streams (Phongpaichit 1982). Much later, the presence of foreign military personnel in Asia, during a succession of wars in recent decades, helped to spread prostitution and its economic side (Wehner 1973).

The evolution of the sexual service industry in Thailand is thus the result of a number of historical, economic and social factors coming together in a particular configuration (Phongpaichit 1982). Propaganda associated with Thailand's tourism industry also does not help in stopping prostitution; in fact, it worsens the situation (Godley 1991). Problems also exist in how prostitutes view their occupation. According to Phongpaichit (1982), being prostitutes and/or masseuses are considered by such women as one way to earn a living. It is designed to sustain the family units of a rural economy which is coming under increasing pressure.

During this era especially, child prostitution also appears for the first time. Child prostitution in Thailand involves both boys and girls, but it affects a much greater number of girls. Many of the latter come from poor families in rural areas, and they are deceived, bought or procured into prostitution; some even suffer various forms of torture (Archavanitkul and Havanon 1990). The magnitude of child prostitution has been intensified due to the impoverishment of rural families, changes in villagers' attitudes towards prostitution, and the new consumer-oriented culture. While the child prostitution problem is widespread in Northern Thailand particularly,

popular and scholar consensus concurs that there are indications that more girls from the Northeast region will be forced into prostitution in the future (cf. Thairath 1988:20). [Note: This region represents Thailand's most poverty-stricken area; alone, it also contains approximately one-third of the Thai population.]

Conclusion

Over the past several decades, women's occupational role has grown beyond the domestic domain. In cases of certain activities and occupations, women are now entering jobs and professions traditionally assigned to men. This has been brought about largely through the nation's rapidly expanding economic sector which has also contributed to enlarging the gap between the rich and the poor. From many poor rural families, the migration of females for work in urban centers represents one coping strategy for dealing with this economic disparity.

As noted by Oppong and Abu (1985), a woman's ability to mediate between her occupational role and that of other roles (parental, conjugal, community) depends partly on the context, flexibility and formality of the occupation. The trend today is that woman who are involved in secure professions, which pay adequate salaries, have the greatest number of options in accommodating their occupational and parental roles. In many instances, this accommodation is based on obtaining alternative child care providers, the qualifications of which are rising in the minds of wealthier mothers.

Among women who are unskilled and involved in temporary, low-paying jobs, their alternatives are extremely limited. Their only mechanisms are to quit work and live off of their husband's wages (if they are married), secure a daytime child care provider (at a very low rate of pay) or send their children back to live with elderly parents in their natal village. If these are not feasible and a woman becomes pregnant, abortion is her only way out; she secures her occupational role by eliminating (at least temporarily) her parental role.

The increasing number of women entering Thailand's manufacturing, service and commerce sectors will undoubtedly increase over the next five to ten years. To secure the lives and livelihoods of their children, strategies must be developed whereby women's occupational role can be more easily accommodated with their parental role. In some businesses

and factories in Bangkok, this has begun through the establishment of in-factory day care centers. This is indeed a hopeful sign, but it is only the first step in the role mediation process.

11

Integrating Women in Development Planning: Suggestions for the Present and Future

Chanya Sethaput

Introduction

This chapter traces the integration of women into the nation's development plans over the past thirty years. Since 1961, when Thailand inaugurated the First Development Plan with the aim of increasing economic growth, Thai society has been tremendously changed. National development has affected both economic and social structures. One major change is in the status and role of Thai women. Formerly, the female population was forgotten in Thai history with the exception of a few heroines. Women were regarded mainly as domestic workers and followers at home. Only men were considered to be heads of households. Thai women did not fully participate in educational programs, economic activity or community development, regardless of national development planning schemes.

After several decades of national development, it was found that an emphasis on economic growth alone could not raise the well-being of the total population of the country. Gaps were apparent both between the male and female population and between the rural and urban population, especially in terms of per capita income. According to this new concept of development, human resources were considered to be the most important factor in national development, and women's role was a major source for change. Because Thai women are numerically equal with men, women's participation in developing the nation would mean that development goals could be reached more quickly.

Changing Attitudes

Attitudes toward the status and role of women and their relationship to development changed most notably after the General Assembly of the United Nations declared the International Year of Women in 1975. At the meeting in Mexico City in that year, the issue of integrating women into the development process was raised. It was agreed that efforts should be made to promote women's development as equal partners with men. In this meeting the objective of development was defined as "to bring about sustained improvement in the well-being of the individual and of society and to best benefit for all" (Papanek 1977:14). Such efforts to change women's role and improve their status was based on the idea that women were an important factor in development process. Social development could proceed and advance only when both men and women could work together in that process. In addition, during the Decade for Women (1975-1985) the country members of the United Nations implemented specific development plans and programs for women.

Historical Commitments

Regardless of international planning for integrating women into development programs, the degree of commitment to the success of such programs is questionable for most countries including Thailand. Following is a review of Thai economic and social development plans in regards to women's issues, from the first five-year plan in 1961 to the current (Seventh) plan.

The First National Development Plan (1961-1966) emphasized the establishment of economic infrastructure, economic growth and national income. Nothing in this plan was specifically related to women. The Second National Development Plan (1967-1971) aimed to develop the labor force, including programs for employment and education in accordance with labor force needs. Social development was augmented together with economic expansion. The objectives of social development were peaceful living and social equality. Women's issues were not specifically addressed, but they were included in public health development efforts to improve maternal and child care.

The Third National Development Plan (1973-1976) still focused on economic growth but paid more attention to regional development, population planning, the labor force and employment. In this plan, the

government recognized the need to support women in education, income generation, work stability, health and family planning. Much of the motivation for these programs came from evidence of problems concerning urban migration of rural women who got undesirable and unsuitable jobs. Unfortunately these plans did not seriously address women's issues, beyond saying that women's status should be upgraded. Women were still seen as "receivers of social welfare" just as children, aged and the disabled.

By the time of the Fourth National Development Plan (1977-1981) the United Nations had declared the Decade for Women (1975-1985) as an outcome of the international meeting in Mexico City. As a result the Thai government tried to strengthen plans for women in national development. For the first part, the Plan summarized general problems and suggestions for improving women's status and role. The strategies were divided into three dimensions. The first strategy was provision of education to women as the basis of employment. Job equality among men and women was a goal as well as occupational training for women. Lastly, the revision of laws that discriminated against women was planned.

The Fifth National Development Plan (1982-1986) stressed the development of social infrastructure and expansion of social services to target groups including women, children, youth and hilltribe people. To achieve policies for women's development, six programs were set up as follows:

1. Intensive improvement of the quality of work, skills, job opportunities and alternatives for women.
2. Increased educational opportunities for women.
3. Nutrition and health education for women.
4. Expansion of health services for women.
5. Encouragement of women's role in art, cultural and religious activities.
6. Establishment of a national women's development committee as a coordinating organization.

The Sixth National Development Plan (1987-1991) consisted of ten programs, but included no specific programs for women as did the former plan. Women's activities were integrated in some programs. For example the human resource, social and cultural program mentioned the importance of supporting women's role in decision-making participation at all levels (household, community and the nation). Further, in the strategy for

increasing the state's efficiency and capability to solve the problems of rural people, it was stated that women in the childbearing ages should learn about nutrition and childrearing.

The Seventh National Development Plan (1992-1996), which started in October 1991, also integrates policies and plans for women. Specifically, there are six major programs and 20 minor ones, all of which are aim to develop Thai women and their roles in society. The six major programs are as follows.

1. Program for developing women's potential and quality of life.
2. Program for promoting women's legal equality and protecting their security.
3. Program for developing economic, social and political participation by women.
4. Program for improving women's development mechanism.
5. Program for campaigning and disseminating information on women.
6. Program for research on women and development.

Most notabe in the Seventh Plan is that family stability is emphasized, with promotion of parental shared responsibility in childrearing. Sexual ethics are initially mentioned as being important for both men and women. In addition, the plan also refers to female labor force participation as playing an important role in Thailand's labor market, especially as compared with neighboring countries.

In reviewing National Development Plans from the first plan to the current one, it is seen that women's concerns have not been addressed continuously, and that the policy on women has fluctuated. In the few first plans, women were classified as welfare receivers the same as children and old persons; development efforts concentrated on men since they were considered to be solely responsible for supporting their families. Though several programs for women were planned in response to the United Nations' International Women's Year, including the establishment of a national women's development committee, in later plans women were no longer regarded as a special group. Is it possible that women's status has been favorably improved? Has the long-term planning done by the Committee on Women been successful in upgrading women's status and role?

Though women do not currently receive special attention in the current national development plan, it should not be assumed that women have achieved equal rights during the "decade for women" (1975-1985). As a

matter of fact, it may be that Thai women have not made a concerted effort to claim equal rights because they already realize their significance. Thai women do not work in a "backward sector" but often work together with men. In many communities the remittance of female migrants is the main source of household income. In such cases women's work is not a source of supplemental income like it may have been in the past.

Although there are a few notable examples of successful business women in Thailand, it should be remembered that most work long hours to make enough income to survive day to day. These include a number of female heads of household who are responsible for supporting their families because they are divorcees, widows, or permanently or temporarily separated from their husbands. Though it is difficult to estimate the prevalence of female supported households from censuses and surveys it is widely believed that this is a growing problem. The needs of these households, whether they are formally or informally headed by women, should be taken into account by development plans.

The special needs of women are in addition to the general need for social welfare planning in Thailand. Most workers are not covered by any sort of retirement plan, and older women without family members to support them are particularly at risk. The ideology viewing men as the major breadwinners in Thai society is difficult to overcome, particularly in regards to the differential in men's and women's wages for similar work. Recent efforts to obtain longer maternal leave with payment for government workers were unsuccessful. If women's concerns are not recognized by those in power, it is difficult to fight for equality; but it must be remembered that labor laws and social welfare policies are still underdeveloped in Thailand.

Recommendations

In brief, the statuses and roles of Thai women have not been fully recognized in terms of law and policy. Following are recommendations for integrating women into future development plans.

1. To expand non-formal and informal education for women who lack opportunities to develop their skills, especially rural women.

2. To provide further support for women in single-parent families and female supported households.

3. To continue improving laws concerning women's employment and wages.

4. To attempt to stem the outflow of female migrants from rural areas by involving women in community development.

5. To change attitudes regarding women's rights and equality under the law.

6. To allow women to take part in policy making by appointing women to such posts as the National Development Board.

7. To promote women's ability to be self-reliant and recognize their crucial roles in Thailand's development.

12

Role Strain, Deprivation and Conflict

Kerry Richter

Role Changes and Conflicts in a Modernizing Thai Context

Throughout this book, we have outlined how rapid social and economic changes in Thailand have had an impact on women's roles, both in terms of changing decisions, behaviors and personal, familial and societal expectations. Implicit in this discussion, though perhaps not directly stated, is that these changes create a situation where women's traditional roles no longer fit her current life. In this situation women must sometimes act in ways that are unfamiliar to their background or the way they have been raised. While this is not to say that men do not face the same issues, the case can be strongly made that women are more extensively affected.

One reason for this is that broad economic changes have moved young workers out of rural areas and out of the agricultural economy. As discussed in Chapter 6, the necessity and/or desire for young women to leave home to obtain work elsewhere means that they may spend their adolescent years living far from their family. While young men had always been permitted and even encouraged to have a social life outside of the family, girls were socialized to remain close to home and to fulfill many family obligations.

Older women are also affected by these changing expectations. While Thai women have always had a relative degree of power within the household and typically managed the household budget, they were still expected to be submissive to men. This included their own husbands as well as men in the outside world. In Thailand's ever-modernizing society, these expectations conflict with the emerging opportunities for women in higher-level government positions and the wider economy. At the same

time, women's power within the household has eroded as the household ceases to be the primary unit of production, i.e., most or all household income is earned outside of the family.

Besides the fact that traditional roles for women do not suit the modern world, Thai women are also faced with role conflicts that are exacerbated by economic changes. Strain occurs when women do not have time or resources to fulfill their obligations and/or desires. Many describe the rural lifestyle, with the family household as the unit of both production and consumption, as being "simple" or "easier" than modern life. While it should be remembered that women who work in agriculture face a heavy workload, they still are better able to combine their roles of parent, daughter and worker than today's urban worker in the formal sector. A major reason for this is that, similar to many developed countries, women are still expected to be the major care givers within the family and domestic sphere, even though they work outside the household. While in rural areas there are likely to be many family members to care for children and do other domestic tasks and where husband and wife may work side by side, urban women are constrained by distance from family and time pressures.

Role Strain, Deprivation and Conflict Within Women's Major Roles

Sources of role strain, deprivation and conflict that have been described or alluded to in the previous chapters are summarized below. Many of the issues discussed have not been examined in any systematic way and so are research topics of urgent importance. As Oppong and Abu (1985) outline, role strain may occur due to financial/resource constraints or time constraints, or may involve problems in interpersonal relationships. Role deprivation occurs when the expectations for a given role are not fulfilled, and implies that the role is of high priority in a person's life. Roles may conflict to a greater or lesser degree, or they may not conflict at all. All three concepts are discussed together within the seven roles framework.

Parental Role

As described in Chapter 7, mothers of young children in urban areas are increasingly strained by the need to earn income outside the home. Like urban women throughout the world, they must try to combine occupational, domestic and parental roles in the face of increasing time and resource constraints. Richter (1991) and Richter et al. (1991) are currently completing a qualitative and quantitative study of child care in Bangkok which examines attitudes and determinants of child care strategies and their interaction with fertility decision-making. One of the major findings of this study is the degree to which mothers live separately from young children if they have no one to care for them while they are working, even though qualitative evidence suggests that this is a choice of last resort.

The rapid and pervasive drop in fertility in Thailand may have negative effects as well if viewed in the context of parental role deprivation. The fact that parents have only one or two children means that there may be no one to care for them in their old age; and if children migrate at a young age, the period of time that parents and children live together may be quite short. These issues, touched on in Chapter 5, will also be addressed by a research study on "The Old-Age Security Motive For Fertility" currently being completed by the Institute for Population and Social Research.

Occupational Role

Many of the new jobs resulting from industrialization and the expansion of the service industry have been specifically designated as "women's jobs". In part this is because women are seen to be obedient and manageable workers, and because they will accept lower wages than men. Many of these jobs are specifically open to young unmarried women, who will inevitably lose their jobs as they age. Some married female workers employed in manufacturing try to hide their married status in order to keep their job. This has led to an increasing rate of abortion among female factory workers since the pregnancy obstructs their work status. While the relatively greater ability of single women to obtain well-paying jobs certainly creates strains in women's expectations for their occupational achievement, it also may create role conflict if women are better able to make a living than their brothers and (potential or actual) husbands.

Conjugal Role

The status of the Thai wife has been compared to the hind-legs of an elephant. In terms of role, she was in charge of the domestic domain, while her husband occupied the political or outside domain. Women's and men's roles were more or less specific. Today, however, men and women have to be more flexible in their roles and duties due to economic changes and financial as well as time pressure. Their roles should therefore become mutually cooperative, and their statuses more egalitarian. The effect that these changes will have on marital stability, including the existence of the *mia noi* or minor wife, has not yet been explored, and research which emphasizes changing expectations for marriage in the light of conflicting and changing roles is badly needed.

Domestic Role

Thai women of different social statuses and at different stages of the life cycle usually occupy different domestic roles, as discussed in Chapter 7. Due to societal changes, Thai women at present have adopted different patterns of domestic activities. The impact of these changes is left to be researched more in detail.

Kin Role

Women in the childbearing ages also have parents who may require their care, even though they live at an increasing distance from them. In Chapter 5 Pramualratana outlines how daughters remain the major care-givers or at least monitors of elderly parents even when sons are co-resident. Even while the old people he studied were aware of the pressures their children faced, a clear picture emerges of role conflict for women who feel a deep obligation to care for their parents.

Community Role

Women have always been active in local level community development efforts, though not always in a leadership role. As Soonthorndhada points out in Chapter 9, recent changes in the laws regarding positions open to women along with the increasing number of qualified women indicate that

this may change. Still traditional expectations for women's role mean strong resistance for women to have political power in Thai society.

Individual Role

Adolescents leave home at younger and younger ages. While ideal age of marriage is rising due to increased educational and occupational opportunities for women, distance from the family and increased interaction with the opposite sex may lead to early premarital sex. This places young women in the vulnerable position of premarital unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS. As Soonthorndhada points out in Chapter 6, emotional and intellectual development of youth is being neglected and inequality may be increasing.

Current Situation

Over the past few decades, women and men in Thai society have experienced innumerable socioeconomic, demographic and cultural changes which have had a momentous impact on their roles and statuses. Both women and men must adjust their roles and duties accordingly to maintain their function in the family as well as in the society. The evidence presented here, however, would indicate that women are more strongly affected by these changes. We may draw together our findings by synthesizing the changes in Thai women's roles and statuses into three main points:

First, women in contemporary Thai society tend to extend themselves into the public sphere more than women in the past. They are more likely to work outside of the family enterprise, and they are achieving higher educational levels than was true in the past. According to the law and public recognition, women in Thailand have relatively high status in the Asian region, as evidenced by the fact that several important positions in the society are held by women. At the family level, however, working in the public sphere may be in conflict with the traditional role of wife/mother, grandmother and sister. Though evidence previous studies reveals that role conflicts exist to a great extent among women at lower socioeconomic levels, similar issues are encountered by professional women. Several social problems are due largely to these role conflicts,

which lead to strain when there are no built-in or ready-made mechanisms to alleviate the problem.

Second, women tend to lose their traditional area of power, i.e., the domestic domain, where their roles, duties and properties were acquired. This may occur for several reasons. When the husband and other family members are working outside of the family enterprise, the woman may no longer have the same degree of control over the household budget. Many women may be *de facto* female heads of household if their husbands migrate for job opportunities elsewhere; and remittances may be irregular and insufficient. Land scarcity means that daughters may be given education as an inheritance rather than the house and land, which was the traditional pattern particularly for the youngest daughter who cared for the elderly parents. But young women may leave school earlier than her brothers if there are attractive job opportunities; and it is unclear whether these opportunities provide sufficient support for a life time.

And third, one of the main things that we have learned from preparing this study is how difficult it is to disentangle and separate women's roles. The conjugal role is intertwined with the parental role; and the occupational role does not exist in isolation from women's family responsibilities. Any program designed to integrate women into the development process, or to support family welfare, must recognize this fact and incorporate these considerations into the project design.

Conclusion

In dealing with women roles categorically and analytically, then, we must look not just at the change within one single role over the history of a society or the single lives of its women, but at the evolution of women's roles and statuses as a whole cluster of culturally-defined relationships which mutually support and give meaning to each other. As discussed in Chapter 4, women's roles are dynamic, affected by the major forces of history, culture and consociates. Many of these have been discussed in the preceding chapters. A major emphasis, though, has been placed on women as opposed to men within this system of change. Perhaps a more interesting view would be to see how Thai women nowadays view the choices and actions of each other -- for example, how a housewife views a secretary, a female farmer sees a factory worker or businesswoman, and vice versa.

What all of this boils down to is one important point: we must remember that culturally-defined roles and their timetables are categorical. They offer each woman, and cohorts of women, only general instructions about how to become a certain type of person -- a farmer, a poet or a member of parliament, for example. Each woman, though, must interpret their import for their own unique situation and course of conduct. Each woman is born with the potential to become a hundred different kinds of person, for following a thousand possible careers. Although the temptation is always to generalize, to lump people into patterns, we must not forget that to become human -- no matter what the role -- is to become particular and to know it. In the existentialist phrase, each of us must live the meaning of her -- or his -- own life. We can only interpret their actions; women, themselves, are the real actors selecting and directing how they will play out their roles in the drama of Thai life.

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