

THE GENDER BASED DEVELOPMENT OF THAILAND

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By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the direct and causal link between the exploitation of women as a source of unpaid or cheap labour, and the rapid economic growth of the economies we consider newly industrialized. Thailand has been chosen as the case study because it serves to exemplify the kinds of effects gender based development has upon women. The hypothesis that was tested is that the exploitation of women - for example as unpaid labour in the home or the agricultural sector, or as a source of cheap waged labour in hotels or factories - is a necessary condition for the accelerated economic growth of Thailand.

The first chapter deals with ~~*~~feminist theory concerning patriarchal-capitalist relations. With heavy emphasis on the structuralist argument of such feminist theorists as Mies, Lim, Enloe, Hartman, Harstock and Lewenhak, the connections between capitalist economic arrangements and the underlying, hidden overtones of patriarchy are explored at length. The current condition of women in western as well as Thai society is related to the structure of capitalist-patriarchy and the process of housewifization.

In the second section of the first chapter, the

historical aspects of women's work is related to the current economic context. It is demonstrated that clear linkages exist between the type of work women do in the home and the pay they receive in the capitalist workplace. It is hypothesized that because women's work was traditionally relegated to the private sphere that it has been undervalued, and thus, considered less economically viable.

Chapter two examines the historical development of Thailand. This section is divided into several phases - beginning with the 1950s and proceeding into the contemporary stage. It is established that Thai development was, and currently is, significantly oriented towards production for export. These include the manufacturing sector, such as electronics, textiles and agricultural production. By nature, economies that have such heavy orientation on export are reliant on the cheap labour of its populace. In the case of Thailand, this includes predominantly women.

The third chapter explores specifically the sex selective migration patterns of Thailand and its relation to women's employment in the agricultural sector. It was found that it is primarily young, unmarried women, ages 15-25 that are leaving rural areas of Thailand for Bangkok in order to earn a living. The kinds of changes that are occurring in agricultural production - for example, the mechanization of

earn a living. The kinds of changes that are occurring in agricultural production - for example, the mechanization of farming - are seen as having a direct effect on young women's abilities to find employment in rural areas. It is demonstrated that with the advance of technology in the rural areas of Thailand, the social status of women has been affected in both positively and negatively. On the one hand, women's status in terms of decisions making patterns has improved. On the other hand, the traditionally high value ascribed to women vis a vis their reproductive abilities has diminished significantly. For instance, women are no longer viewed as the reproducers of the next generation of labour power. As such, men are not required to live in the matrimonial house since the religious conventions surrounding marriage and family have been relaxed.

Chapter four deals extensively with gender and Thailand's industrial sector, primarily the electronics, garment, and textile industries. It is established that Thailand's ability to attract offshore multinational investment is highly contingent upon it being able to provide semi-skilled, cheap labour. Thai women represent just such source of cheap labour. Most of the multinationals operating in Thailand are from either Japan, other South Asian countries, or the United States. Women's employment statistics in these industries are staggering. They comprise

in the electronics industry. The link between gender and development is probably no more evident than it is in these two economic sectors.

The second aspect of chapter four concentrates on the informal sector of the Thai economy. This sector, unlike any other, is reliant upon the exploitation of women, especially young, uneducated women. The links between the tourism industry in Thailand and prostitution as a form of income generating activity are made very obvious. There are over 2 000 000 prostitutes in all of Thailand, 800 000 of whom are young women under the age of sixteen. The relationship between Thailand's needs for foreign currency and the high rate of prostitution associated with tourism are further illuminated.

It is concluded that indeed Thailand's development is highly contingent on the exploitation of women as a source of unpaid or cheap-waged labour. The most profitable sectors of the Thai economy tend to rely significantly on the labour of women. Women are, thus, indisputably the cornerstone of Thailand's economic growth. Yet, Thai women are disadvantaged in almost every aspect of their lives. They receive less education, have higher rates of illiteracy, receive lower wages, lack access to many occupations and are virtually invisible in Thai political life. Thai women have, as it was initially hypothesized, been profoundly affected by the gender

based development of their country.

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THE GENDER BASED DEVELOPMENT OF THAILAND

CHAPTER I

Prompted by the rise of Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs) in Asia, recent years have seen a resurgence of literature concerned with the issue of development. Despite this flood of studies, little analysis has been devoted to the study of the effect of women as economic actors on the growth of those states considered newly industrialized. Consequently, we are left with a set of theories that cannot account for the contribution of women, whether at home or in the work place, to the development of Newly Industrialized States. This is not surprising, given the fact that low value has historically been attached to work done by women, both in the formal and the informal sectors of the economy.

Underlying this thesis, therefore, is an interest in exploring the direct and causal link between the exploitation of women as a source of unpaid or cheap labour and the rapid economic growth of economies we consider newly industrialized. Thailand has been chosen as the case study because it serves as an excellent example of the horrifying effects development strategies, such as those adopted by NICs, have upon women. The hypothesis I will test is that **the exploitation of women -**

for example as unpaid labour in the home or the agricultural sector, or as a source of cheap waged labour in hotels or factories - is a necessary condition for the accelerated economic growth of Thailand.

Initially this hypothesis may appear counter-intuitive. It runs, for all intents and purposes, contrary to the logic of capitalism. Prevailing assumptions about capitalist modes of organization have always maintained that it is irrelevant to the capitalists who is being subordinated. What is of relevance, is that profit levels are continuously being increased. In this sense, the hypothesis on which this work is premised may seem contradictory to classical liberal economic thought.

Viewed from the feminist perspective, on the other hand, capital accumulation and economic growth are not independent of social factors. That is, underpinning any economic system, and in this case the capitalist system, is a social system of patriarchy. This system of patriarchal control over women is an integral part of economic expansion. Without us having certain ideas and attitudes about what constitutes the appropriate spheres of masculinity and femininity, which in turn segregates work in the home and outside the home according to sex and gender roles, the exploitation of women as both economic and social actors would not be possible. The term capitalist-patriarchy, therefore,

has come to denote the structural system which functions to maintain the economic exploitation and the social oppression of women. Thus, the virtual exclusion of women - their lives, work and struggles - can only be understood at the theoretical level from a survey of dominant feminist perspectives concerned with patriarchal-capitalist modes of organization.

According to such theorists as Mies (1986), Enloe (1983, 1989, 1990), Lim (1983), Hartman (1981), Harstock (1983), Flax (1989) and Lewenhak (1988), the exploitation of women as both social and economic actors has its origins in the establishment of the nuclear family and contemporary capitalist economic arrangements. As women's concerns and their function were relegated to the home and family, so did their value decline as a source of paid labour outside the home. [Accordingly, the connection that exists between the unpaid work women do in the home, the paid work outside the home, and women's role as a source of cheap labour in the development of patriarchal-capitalism, become more apparent.] By assessing this critical link between unpaid and paid work and the process of "housewifization", as it has been termed by Maria Mies, we can then better illustrate the kinds of connections that are forged between capital accumulation and the exploitation of women as both economic and social actors. And at least in practical terms, as students of international

relations and political economy, by understanding women's place within the national and international division of labour, we can begin to investigate the kinds of structural problems inherent to patriarchal-capitalist modes of organization. Concentrating on housework as the source of unpaid labour, therefore, appears to be a natural starting point. First, however, a brief overview of the feminist paradigm, mainly its formulations concerning patriarchal-capitalism and the process of housewifization, would seem appropriate.

Patriarchal-Capitalism and the Process of Housewifization:

Contemporary feminist research has been attempting to comprehend the extent to which our society is structured by relations of domination and submission, relations constructed primarily out of differences due to sex, race and class. Yet, according to Nancy Harstock, "we lack theoretical clarity about how these relations of domination are constructed, how they operate, and how social theories and practices have justified and obscured them" (Harstock, 1983:1). For this reason, feminism as a theoretical paradigm has focused its attention on variables such as patriarchy and gender to understand how the cultural, political and economic domination of the female sex has been made possible. And as Jane Flax (1989:56) points out, the fundamental purpose of feminist theory is to analyze how we think, or avoid thinking about, gender and its connection to the social system of patriarchy. In essence then, we must come to understand what aggravates and thus determines all of the interlinking forms of exploitation and oppression concerning women.

Heidi Hartman defines patriarchy as,

a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establishes or creates interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women (Hartman, 1981:177).

Hartman further insists, that even though patriarchy is itself hierarchical, and men of differing classes, races or ethnic groups have different places within the patriarchal system, they are nevertheless, all united in their shared relationship of dominance over women: men are, contends Hartman, "dependent on one another (despite their hierarchical ordering) to maintain their control over women" (Hartman, 1981:177).

Whereas the concept of patriarchy has symbolized the historical depth of women's exploitation and oppression, the concept of capitalism, argues Maria Mies, "...is expressive of the contemporary manifestation, or the latest development of this system" (Mies, 1986:38). Women's problems today therefore, cannot be simply explained by referring to the traditional forms of patriarchal control. Nor can they be explained, insists Mies,

if one accepts the position that patriarchy is a 'pre-capitalist' system of social relations which has been destroyed and superseded, together with 'feudalism', by capitalist relations, because women's exploitation and oppression cannot function without patriarchy, that the goal of this system, namely the never-ending process of capital accumulation, cannot be achieved unless patriarchal man-woman relations are maintained or newly created (Mies, 1986:38).

Patriarchy thus, from the feminist perspective, constitutes the mostly "invisible" infrastructure upon which the capitalist modes of production are built. These concepts are intrinsically interconnected. To achieve any measure of

success, inevitably, women have to struggle not only against capitalism, or patriarchy, but against all capitalist-patriarchal relations - beginning with that of man and woman, and proceeding to the relationship of human beings to their modes of production, and ending with the dependency relationship between the North and South. And if feminism must maintain its struggle against capitalist-patriarchy on all fronts, so to speak, then analysis of this structural manifestation must be extended to include accumulation on the world scale - that is the functioning of the global economy as well as the international division of labour. To ascertain how women fit into this process of world accumulation is thus central to understanding the functioning of patriarchal-capitalism.

How are we to recognize then, the patriarchal social relations and their origins in capitalist societies? It is difficult to identify, points out Heidi Hartman, relationships among men, and between men and women as being systematically patriarchal. And further, it is even more difficult to demonstrate how capitalism and patriarchy do not come into conflict (as the logic inherent to both of them suggests that they should) over the use of women's labour power. However, by exploring "the tension of this conflict over women's labour power...we will be able to identify the material base of patriarchal relations in capitalist societies, as well as the

basis for the partnership between capital and patriarchy" (Hartman, 1981:181).

Maria Mies suggests that the process of collusion between capital and patriarchy was violent by its very nature, where "...first certain categories of men, and later certain peoples, were able, mainly by virtue of arms and warfare, to establish an exploitive relationship between themselves and women, other peoples and classes" (1986:74). Within such a structure of modes of production, conquest and war, rather than the progressive development of productive forces, became the most efficient means of achieving development. Thus, contends Mies,

[t]he ...patriarchal division of labour is based...on a structural separation and subordination of human beings: men are separated from women, whom they have subordinated, the 'own' people are separated from 'foreigners' or 'heathens'....[I]n the modern 'western' patriarchy this separation has been extended to a separation between Man and Nature (1986:74).

This process of subordination and exploitation, according to Mies, was extended by white European man to the colonized world. As colonization progressed, it became increasingly evident that a parallel process was taking place in the relationship between women of the North and South. As women of the South were progressively degraded from the previously high status they held in their societies, the status of women of the North was gradually beginning to rise

to that of dignified ladies.

This 'naturalization' of colonized women is the counterpart of the 'civilizing' of European women....These two processes did not happen side by side, are not simply historical parallels, but are intrinsically and causally linked within this patriarchal-capitalist mode of production (Mies, 1986:95).

Hence, understanding the logic of the above noted process allows us to begin to ascertain how the housewifization of the Western woman took place.

According to Mies, the concept of family and of housewife only came into being towards the end of the 18th century. Families as we know them today, insists Mies, did not exist prior to colonization and the emergence of a strong bourgeois class. It was the bourgeoisie capitalists who first introduced the notions of private family life with the stay-at-home wife. It was also the bourgeoisie, insists Mies, "which established the social and sexual division of labour characteristic to capitalism. [They declared] 'family' a private territory in contrast to the 'public' sphere of economic and political activity" (1986:104). This process was given impetus by the development of an ideology grounded in the idea of romantic love, which subsequently eroded any and all independence women had prior to the emergence of this class. Women became, under this new ideology, subordinate and domesticated.

The process of housewifization, seen as a rise in

social status by the bourgeoisie, was not so easily accepted by the proletariat class. Unlike the bourgeoisie, with their ideals of a domesticated woman, proletarian men had little interest in keeping women in the home, indeed, in practical terms, little economic ability to do so. Women of the lower classes had always worked to either supplement the incomes of their families or to support their families outright; staying at home seemed ludicrous, if not simply impractical. Moreover, poor women were a source of profit for the emerging industrial capitalists, although their employment outside the home stood in direct opposition to the ideological underpinnings of the bourgeoisie. As capitalist relations advanced, it became evident that women who were overworked, to the extent that they represent potential producers of subsequent labour power, were incapable of providing healthy children, who too can be exploited for waged-labour. It became necessary, consequently, to domesticate the proletariat women as well.

Therefore, the state had to interfere in the production of people and, through legislation, police measures and ideological campaigns of the churches, the sexual energies of the proletariat had to be channelled into the strait-jacket of the bourgeois family. The proletarian woman had to be housewifized too, in spite of the fact that she could not afford to sit at home and wait for her husband to feed her and her children (Mies, 1986:105).

In this way, the housewifization of women forced its

way into the working classes. This strategy of housewifization succeeded, arguably, because women lacked any clear knowledge of contraception, and because the state and church were able to drastically curb women's autonomy over their bodies. And to the extent that women in the colonies were a source of opposition to the ideology of housewifization, they too became domesticated when it was deemed necessary by the logic of patriarchal-capitalist accumulation.

The housewifization of women, however, had not only the objective of ensuring that there were enough workers and soldiers for capital and the state. The creation of housework and the housewife as an agent of consumption became a very important strategy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By that time not only had the household been discovered as an important market for a whole range of new gadgets and items, but also scientific home-management had become a new ideology for the further domestication of women. Not only was the housewife called on to reduce the labour power of costs, she was also mobilized to use her energies to create new needs (Mies, 1986:106).

Subsequently, this ideology became utilized in the struggle for higher wages for men. The increase in wages became justified on the basis of needing to be paid a sufficient amount to have one's wife stay at home and take care of the household and children. Household activity, was thus, relegated only to a private domain, and began to be viewed as worthless. And, in contrast to the Marxist contention that working men had no material interest in the

creation of the nuclear family and housewifization, Mies points out, that

[p]roletarian men do have material interest in the domestication of their female class companions. This material interest consists, on the one hand, in the man's claim to monopolize available wage work, on the other, in the claim to have control over all money income in the family. Since money has become the main source and embodiment of power under capitalism, proletarian men fight about money not only with the capitalists, but also with their wives. Their demand for a family wage is an expression of this struggle (1986:109).

Hence, as women have become associated with the home, and subsequently home work in their role as housewives and mothers, it becomes increasingly important for us, as students of international relations and political economy, to understand the interplay that exists between what women do as unpaid labourers and what effect this may have on them in their role as waged-employees. It is to this matter of reevaluating women's work that I turn therefore, in order to further illuminate women's position as the exploited class in the patriarchal-capitalist modes of production. Moreover, given the recent economic instability throughout the globe and the shortages of employment possibilities in the formal sector of the economy, the issue of women's exploitation as a source of paid and unpaid labour becomes even more important to assess, especially in the case of Thailand, as vast numbers of Thai women, primary young, single women, are forced to look to the informal sector (for example, prostitution) for purposes

of simple survival.

Mies, Hartman, Lewenhak, Enloe, Harstock, Flax and Lim provide a heavily structure oriented feminist argument. There are, however, several of their points with which I must take issue. First, there seems, from the review of the feminist structuralist literature, little room for women's agency. Second, it is assumed that the extent of patriarchal control under capitalism is even more horrifying for women than it was under any other previous stage of economic development. Third, it is implied by Mies and her cohort that women's condition under capitalism is in fact worse than it was under feudalism, for example, when women had more autonomy over their bodies and labour.

These arguments by Mies, appear to contradict what is readily observable - that women's condition in western societies has in fact improved with capitalist development. There are numerous instances where women have risen to a status at least equal to that of men. This readily observable evidence seems to contradict Mies's thesis - that capitalist development is to the detriment of women. And although I myself have chosen Mies's argument to underscore my study of Thai women, I wish to point out that I do not want these contentions to detract from the fact that I myself believe that women are both able and willing to change their current situation. To accept fully Mies's contentions would be to

concede that one, there is in fact a well planned out conspiracy between men to exploit women - an argument that is neither provable or disprovable - and second, that women have absolutely no power, or for that matter, willingness, to ever change their condition. It would appear instead, that the tension that exists between men and women, patriarchy and capitalism, is an ongoing tension. One that with time will see women demand a higher status for themselves, and one that will as a consequence, allow women to take back control of their bodies for themselves. This is, contrary to Mies, a more practical and optimistic assessment.

Second, Mies emphasises the fact that women's overall social and economic condition has deteriorated under capitalist-patriarchal relations. In some cases there is evidence to support her claims. For example, Thai rural women's status has in fact deteriorated with the advance of technological and medical development. They no longer have the same social position they once held in the villages when their reproductive capacity was held in high regard. Today many women are capable of bearing healthy children with the aid of medical innovation. There is no need, therefore, to hold in high esteem the reproductive function of women as it no longer has the same value it did when only a few of the children born survived. Consequently, as there is no need to bear as many children, women have lost their value as the

producers of the next generation of labour.

On the other hand, it is reasonable to argue that women's condition has improved under capitalist development. There is no clear evidence that life was easier for women in feudal times, nor that if women had a choice they would wish to return to that period. It is possible to contend that women's situation under capitalist arrangements has improved in absolute but not relative terms. Women may have, under capitalist relations, gained access to more material wealth, yet in many instances their overall condition has changed only slightly. Housework today, takes up as much time as it once did, and women's leisure time has in fact decreased. Furthermore, there is no denying that women are still paid less than men in most, if not all, categories of work.

The above noted issues aside, there are, nevertheless, reasons for basing this study on the theoretical formulations of structural feminists. There is little in the way of theories, other than what has been cited here, that explore the link between capitalist development and patriarchy. And although women's agency does not fit conveniently into these formulations, it does not take away from the strength of these contentions. Mies, Enloe, Lewenhak, Hartman, Harstock and Flax, unlike many other feminists, have been able to draw the connection between the devaluation of women's work in capitalist arrangements and the assumptions about women made

in a social system of patriarchy. The reality is that it is women who are the predominant sex to have to bear most of the burden of exploitation in patriarchal-capitalist societies. This exploitation stems primarily from the fact that even under capitalism (economic arrangements that in theory make no distinction between the sexes) we still have underlying assumptions about what constitutes feminine and masculine work categories. That is, our economic arrangements are predicated on a social system of patriarchy that subjugates women.

The Revaluation of Women's Work:

While it is not considered work by economists, household labour represents the world's largest service industry (Kome cited in Wilson, 1993:58). Since substantial contributions to the economy are provided by the services performed in the home, many feminists have argued that these should be included in the calculation of the GNP. However, because no cash value is attached to housework, it has not yet come to be recognized as a worthwhile commodity.¹ Thus the calculation of GDP and GNP have not only been misleading, but also exploitive of women's status within the capitalist economy. For example, GDP is defined by the World Bank as **"all goods produced and services rendered ...by residents and non-residents in a country"** (Lewenhak, 1988:2) The all in this definition is misleading because in respect to work, it covers only that which brings in a cash return, or products and services that are officially registered as having been exchanged for cash or an internationally acceptable equivalent. Therefore, the GDP, as it is presently calculated leaves out the value of vast amounts of subsistence work and

¹According to a Cornell University analysis, a married woman's housework is worth approximately \$5.50 per hour after taxes (\$7.64 before taxes) and about \$10 000 (US) a year. For further information see, **"Good Unhired Help" The Hamilton Spectator**, 28 January, 1993.

local small-scale marketing and bartering of goods produced, as well as the everyday self-maintenance required of each of us, without which there would be no able bodied employees. Furthermore,

...every time a woman leaves home to take a job, the move is counted as an addition to the GNP, instead of simply a shift in the type of work being done. Since more women have been entering the job market in recent years, this makes the GNP look as though it is growing faster than it really is. Conversely, by leaving housework out of the GNP, economists have vastly underestimated the total amount of productive work being done (Crittenden Scott, 1984:316).

It is essentially women who are heavily involved in subsistence kinds and conditions of work. Above all, they are involved in the everyday maintenance not only of themselves but of other members of their families. Accordingly, insists Sheila Lewenhak, "women's economic contribution is the largest single item of their national economies which has not been counted in these national economic indicators" (Lewenhak, 1988:2). Because the unpaid work in the home has been masked by such terms as "housework", "domestic work" and/or "family duties", it has been easy to conceal the intensive exercise of a wide range of skills, carried out by women at the same time. In order to evaluate the unpaid work of women therefore, maintains Lewenhak, it is essential that these terms are discarded in favour of more exact descriptions of jobs done in the home. For Lewenhak then, the definition of work must

comprise "...all activities which people carry out in order to live - or in an effort to satisfy wants" (1988:15).²

Historically, work was never as narrowly defined as it has become in industrialized capitalist societies. At some point during the change from subsistence to exchange economies, work came to signify only the activities which

²The definition provided by Lewenhak is by no means exhaustive. However, it is the small first step in a series of steps toward redefining our present conception of what constitutes work. There are several difficulties involved in providing an adequate definition of unpaid work. And as Lewenhak herself points out,

[s]ome methods of measuring the value of unpaid work are patently inadequate. Those based solely on the length of time spent on various jobs per day, or for long periods, omit the important factors of skill and energy used; measurements of the number of calories required to replace energy used omit skill and both leave out hazards encountered in the course of work, whereas time rate wages negotiated by trade unions take all these elements into account. Another suggested basis of computation is the comparative cost of keeping adults and children in an institutional home. Yet another method uses the opportunity-cost concept, which measures how much a woman would earn in a paid job for the equivalent time she spends on household work. A variant is to assess a wife's earnings before she gave up paid employment to become a full-time homemaker and her prospective earning capacity had she not done so, and then to offset that amount against the probable market costs of replacing her services at home" (1988:11).

As these attempts at defining work demonstrate, arriving at an appropriate definition may be far more laborious than feminists may have thought. For this reason, and as my own project is simply attempting to outline the various linkages that exist between paid and unpaid work, I am willing to accept Lewenhak's definition, though I may not agree with it whole heartedly.

bring in a cash income. Many of these activities have little to do with sustaining oneself or with satisfying wants. In fact, even childbearing and childrearing have come to have little, if no value, in our society. Hence, the work that we do in simply sustaining ourselves or providing for ourselves the necessities of life have come to be associated with servitude rather than appreciated. Cleaning, the maintenance of hygiene and food processing, activities necessary for us to be able bodied employees, are sometimes referred to as menial, and consequently, those that do them (primarily women), have come to be viewed as inferior in a patriarchal-capitalist economic structure. Had we acknowledged the fundamental importance and necessity of much of what women do and what these activities involve, arguably, we would have never allowed the subordination of women, and the duties they perform, into the categories of "low-paying" or "non-paying". To this end, Maria Mies, Linda Lim, Sheila Lewenhak, Susan Wilson and Cynthia Enloe are correct to point out that without patriarchal relations underpinning capitalist structures, this kind of devaluation of what women do would not have been possible.

Recognition of Unpaid Work:

Unpaid work makes its impact on the market economy indirectly. It is generally recognized that unpaid work done in the home "lowers the cost of reproduction of the labour force and subsidises male paid labour" (Lewenhak, 1988:21). Moreover, to whatever extent women are a source of paid labour in a country, it may also subsidise them. Either some unpaid person - in the vast majority of cases a female - is working to maintain another woman who has a full time job; or the woman with paid employment is working to maintain herself to an extent that only few men do given the discrepancies in wages between the sexes. Wives and mothers are not the only sources of unpaid labour in the home. For the most part, children are also participants in household activities. The earlier a child starts unpaid work inside the home as well as outside for pay, the more value they are thus to the family. Specifically for this reason in modern China, for instance, official policies have been developed to encourage people to wait to marry until they are in their late twenties. As such, by the time children are ready to leave the home they have contributed as much or more in valuable work to their families

as was expanded on raising them.³

In the case of both the male and female employees, those who do unpaid work in the home also subsidise employers. That is because employers would otherwise have to pay higher wages to cover the higher living costs incurred by their employees if they had to pay cash at market rates for all essential services at present provided for them in their own homes in return for subsistence only. The calculation of the "family wage" is, hence, a tacit recognition that women are working at home to maintain the male employee. This custom holds whether the man shares his income with his family or not, and whether he has a family or not. So long as work is labour intensive, suggests Sheila Lewenhak (1988:22), the employer-employee system, like subsistence economies, requires the production of children through the family system.

In this sense, unpaid work done in the home has the effect of lowering the costs of production for capitalist economies. Women not only sustain their male counterparts, but are also assumed to be free and willing breeders of the next potential source of labour. This attitude on the part of the capitalist producers towards women has been unwavering,

³The contribution of children to the overall structure of the family's economy is not necessarily measured simply by monetary worth. The point which I wish to make here, is that a child's contribution to the family in terms of labour value goes far to offset the resources necessary in raising them.

although the private family is becoming less necessary and/or attractive to most men in the 1990s.⁴ Men no longer have to marry to have their subsistence needs met. They may choose to remain single or may become divorced and remain divorced, leaving women to cope with the financial support of children and housework for themselves and the men in their lives. Women today, unfortunately, have to carry out family work without having the security network provided to them by families. In living-together arrangements, the woman may pay her own bills and do all the housework as well, leaving men free of the burden of having to pay for the services of a wife.

Essentially, the advance of the feminist cause, whether in the first or third world, has done little to weaken the position of men. In fact, their disposable incomes have increased with the rising rates of divorce and the lack of legal incentives for them to take any responsibility for their

⁴The disillusionment of today's family unit is considered to be an important enough issue for the United Nations to designate 1994 the International Year of the Family. "The United Nations general assembly felt society's most fundamental and important unit deserved special attention" (Priest, 1994:A7). And according to author Jo Boyden in her book **Families: Celebration And Hope In A World Of Change**: "The family faces what may be its most difficult challenge in history. Never before have there been so many dramatic social and economic changes in so short a time" (1994:A7). For further discussion, see Alicia Priest, **Why is Nestle Sponsoring the Year of the Family?** **The Hamilton Spectator**, February 22, 1994:A7.

children. Men in Thailand, much like men in our own society, have chosen a similar path. With the relaxation of cultural conventions, Thai men are becoming less likely to choose marriage over living-together arrangements. Furthermore, in rural Thailand, women are dually discriminated against. Not only has their economic value become less important with the advance of technology, but with less emphasis on religious conventions (for example, young women's virginity is not as highly garded as it once was), woman have lost their social status as well. Men are not required, as they once were, to live in the homes of their brides. And, as a result, women have lost the inheritance of the parental house. Unfortunately, today, more so than at any other time in history, men have the ability to have all of their needs met without having the financial burden of a family.

The Links Between "No-Pay" and "Low-Pay":

Attitudes about women in the home, under a structure of patriarchal-capitalism, are quite easily transferred to the work place. For example, historically because of the "marriage bar" it was expected that women would have a paying job for only a short period of time. This was one of the principal reasons that women were neither given adequate training for advancement nor given the same level of pay for the same work as men. Coupled with the myth that women never had to be the providers in the family, as well as the failure to acknowledge the unpaid work women do in the home, provided much of the justification and the readiness even on the part of women to accept lower wages.

Because of their exclusion from trades practised by men, a lack of training and the assumption that women's wages would supplement the family income rather than provide it, the prevailing evaluation of women's work was that it was worth less than that of men (Wallach Scott, 1982:171).

Not only were women in the development of capitalist economies paid less than men for the same work; cultural attitudes about women's capacities also led to the designation of many jobs as being suitable only for women. As Wallach Scott attests:

Employers hired women as mill operatives, they said, because their small, graceful fingers could piece threads together easily. In addition the

female temperament - passive, patient and careful - was thought to be perfectly suited to boring, repetitive work (**work that is similar to that of housework**) (1982:171-172 emphasis not in the original).

The specific jobs done by men and women may have varied from industry to industry and even within industries during the early periods of industrialization, but the separation of male and female work was almost universal. Thus, this pattern of separate realms of work for men and women has remained undisturbed and continues even into the present. The notion of separate spheres of work is so deeply entrenched, insists Wallach Scott, that the division is presumed to extend to the first workplace, where "Adam delved and Eve span" (1982:172).

These established patterns of women's low pay in the early development of capitalist economies combined with the segregation of jobs according to sex, were often the result of mechanization.

Machinery that extended the division of labour, simplified and routinized tasks and called for unskilled workers rather than skilled craftsmen was usually associated with the employment of women. From the point of view of the skilled workers displaced by machinery feminization meant the devaluation of their work (Wallach Scott, 1982:173).

The increase in female white-collar labour, primarily in office work, was, and is, in fact, a variation on the same theme. The secretary (once known as a "female typewriter") and the telephone operator replaced the machine operatives as

the typical female worker. Their work was much less dirty, and less labour-intensive than that of mill operators, nonetheless fundamental similarities between the situation of the blue and white-collar female employees remained. Occupations were still segregated by sex, now in the office instead of the mill, and the cultural stereotypes of women's capacities prevailed. It was typically acknowledged that women's fingers raced over the typewriter keys as skilfully as if they were playing the piano. And according to their employers, women's abilities to greet strangers pleasantly, their reliability and their tolerance of highly routinized and repetitive tasks - tasks much like those involved in doing housework - made them ideal for the office.⁵

But as women have now begun to recognize their self-worth and demand higher pay, the unfortunate consequence has been the devaluation of the essential work women do in the home. Consequently, women are faced with a double-edged sword scenario -as their value increases as a source of labour outside the home, so their value decreases as a source of unpaid labour inside the home. Moreover, as vital production and service jobs such as food-processing, manufacture of beverages, catering, cleaning, laundering, nursing, child care

⁵For more information concerning the mechanization of women's work, see Joan Wallach Scott, "**The Mechanization of Women's Work**", in Scientific American. Vol. 247, #3, Sept. 1982.

and the teaching of infants and children moved increasingly out of the home, they became, and to this day remain low paying employment. These factors in evaluating women's work are characteristic of almost every country in the world, even those that were at one point self-proclaimed socialist economies.

These same circumstances that prevailed in our own society in the not too distant past, are prevalent today in most of the developing world. The expectation of marriage and family, states Lim (1983:77), divert many young women in the NICs from seeking career oriented goals. It is assumed by employers, and for that matter society at large, that women only work to subsidise their family's income, or if they are single, for "pocket money" while she is being taken care of by her family. In addition, it is widely held that women do not have the need nor the inclination to be career-oriented and upwardly mobile in the job hierarchy, and so they don't mind dead end jobs with no prospect for advancement. "They also have certain feminine social and cultural attributes that make them suitable to certain kinds of detailed and routine work, such as...assembling electronic gadgets" (Lim, 1983:78).

The current restructuring of the world economy is a further source of concern for women. The so called "deindustrialization" of certain key economic sectors in industrialised economies and the subsequent displacement of

by capital, and thus allows capital to recruit a readily available supply of female labour to these jobs at the same time that it keeps women - especially married women and young mothers - as a "reserve" of labour (Sokoloff, 1987:21).

Curiously enough, and this has probably been an unforeseen consequence of the recent economic restructuring throughout the world, women in the developing and developed world are finding themselves doing similar types of work. As women in the industrialized world are preparing to take on the role of semi-skilled employees in electronics and service sectors, they are increasingly competing with women from NICs for the same employment, and are probably employed by the same multinational companies. Nevertheless, for women in the West this new phenomena represents a set back in terms of feminist goals. For women in the NICs, on the other hand, employment by multinationals is considered beneficial. As Linda Lim points out:

Given their lack of access to better jobs, women workers usually prefer multinationals as employers over local firms since they offer higher wages and better working conditions and often have more 'progressive' labour practices and social relations within the firm" (Lim, 1983:83).

In fact, it may be argued that the activities of multinationals in labour-intensive, export manufacturing in the NICs might in the short run contribute to a reduction of sex wage differentials - in other words, a reduction in the patriarchal components of capitalist exploitation. To the

extent that these multinationals contribute to the growth of demand for wage labour and to the upgrading of skills in the NICs, insists Lim, the wages of women will rise. Yet, in the long run, as the development of NICs becomes more balanced, the patriarchal components of capitalism will need to be reinstated so that the economic exploitation of women may continue.

On the other hand, participation in the labour market in the developing world for women represents some of the same struggles that women of the industrialized world experienced only a few decades ago. Much of the attitude involving discrimination against women in the NICs is generated by so called "women's work" - work done in the home for no pay - being undervalued.

Socialized to accept this sex role in life, she has little motivation to acquire marketable skills; is often prevented by discrimination from acquiring such skills; and, even after she has acquired them, may be prevented by discrimination from achieving the employment or remuneration that those skills would command for a man (Lim, 1983:77).

This discrimination is largely based on the patriarchal assumption that a woman's role is domestic and that she is therefore unsuited for many types of wage employment: either because a woman's productivity is considered to be lower than that of a man, or because her productivity may be adversely affected by her domestic responsibilities. Hence, as Linda Lim suggests, both the demand for, and supply of, female

labour are determined by the culture of patriarchy, which assumes a woman's role in the family is natural and consigns her therefore to a secondary and inferior position in the capitalist wage-labour market.⁶

Another problem facing women in the job market is that of employer reductions in the number of hours of paid employment. As it has been noted, most of the profitable part-time work for women in the service sector is for large corporations. However, such part-time work usually does not provide women with either enough money or the opportunities for adequate child care provisions. Many married and single

⁶On this point, Cynthia Enloe has pointed out that the maintenance of patriarchal-capitalist relations is not as simple a task as may have first appeared. In Enloe's assessment the ideology of capitalist-patriarchal relations to be maintained means that NICs must increasingly militarize themselves to curtail opposition. As Enloe suggests:

In the Philippines - as in South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand - governmental insecurity stems from a keen awareness that state maintenance rests on 19 year old women factory workers and on the gender ideologies of dexterity, docility, and family obedience that enable foreign and local entrepreneurs to mobilize them. Patriarchy alone - without police and military reinforcement - is seen by elites as inadequate to sustain the kind of discipline they need in order to reassure foreign investors that their societies are 'good bets' for profitable investment (1983:408).

For further discussion, see Cynthia Enloe, **"Women Textile Workers in the Militarization of Southeast Asia"** in Nash and Fernandez-Kelly ed. **Women Men and the International Division of Labour**. State University of New York Press, Albany:1983.

mothers, therefore, have come to consider various types of "home-based work" arrangements appealing. In the recent past, especially during the economic downturn currently experienced by capitalist economies, there have been attempts to increase the amount of work done by women at home. These have included not only traditional types of jobs such as sewing and knitting, but also a rise in home-based work in the banking, insurance, telecommunications and computer industries. Such a move represents a great cut in costs for most companies, as workers are paid for exactly the amount of work they do, usually on a piece rate basis, and employers are not required to pay for office space or health care benefits. In this case, employees have themselves taken on the costs of operating a business by being required to buy their own terminals, paper and pay for phone calls. In the case that their equipment breaks down, it is the employee who must bare the costs of having it fixed and the loss of hourly wages.⁷

⁷In a survey done by the Financial Post, March, 1994, it was found that in 1986 the average home-based businesses made about \$20 000 per year in profits, and was treated as a hobby. In 1994, a similar survey done discovered that an average home-based business was bringing in anywhere from \$30 000 to \$60 000 a year in profits. One woman has even managed to do \$6.5 million in business from her home. On the other hand, according to Ryerson Professor, Barbara Orser "...[the] remuneration for home-based businesses is not generally as good as other employment....[H]ome-based business people earn about 68% of what people employed by companies earn for the same type of work".

For further discussion see: The Financial Post, "Home Business Becomes A Target Market", March, 19, 1994.

Most importantly, this practice of "home-based work" is being instituted just as there have been moves to organize office employees. However, as increasing numbers of women are accepting contractual work at home, it becomes significantly more difficult for them to organize. It is likely that a similar situation will exist in Thai society as soon as its own economy will reach the pinnacle of industrialization. Home-based work, on the whole, is an effective means of controlling costs by corporations. And since most of those affected are women, their burden under patriarchal-capitalist relations is increasing.

On the other hand, there are several advantages to women working at home. Recent studies by Christensen (cited in Sokoloff, 1987:26) have revealed that women by an large prefer to work at home, mainly because it allows them to care for their children. Home-based work arrangements, nevertheless, are not necessarily ideal situations. As Christensen claims:

When women work at home as a way of balancing work and family they report feeling socially isolated and stressed; if they are professionals, they feel they are sacrificing their careers. Further, while home-based clerical workers continue to care for their children and themselves (whether because they cannot afford other arrangements or because the structure of their work allows them to do so), professional women are more likely to use supplemental child care (cited in Sokoloff, 1987:26).

Finally, Sokoloff attests, that whatever the

occupational status of the home-based worker, men working at home are far less likely to be responsible for child care than are women working at home. Thus, working at home, Sokoloff suggests, is a way of combining income-producing activities with child care for women only. It appears to provide the much sought after "flexibility" in working hours for men rather than for married women and single mothers with children.⁸ Repeatedly research has shown that it is women and not men who suffer the loss of leisure time whether their work is more "flexible" to the demands of family or not. It appears that regardless of the kind of work women do, whether they are professionals or blue-collar workers, the responsibility of juggling family life and work rests with them and not their spouses. It is not surprising then, that some Thai women have come to be apathetic about their situation. They see no way out. No matter how you stack the deck, it seems, it is men who come out on top and it is women who are made to suffer the consequences.

Consequently, with the restructuring of the

⁸An additional point to be made here is that even with the availability family leave, men are still reluctant to take on the responsibilities of child care and housework. To illustrate, one has to look no further than the recent case provided by Eastman Kodak Ltd. Although Kodak allows 17 weeks of time off for either a man or a woman after the birth or adoption of a child, in the four-year span that family leave has been available only 90 out of 1 400 employees taking the leave have been male. For further information, see "**Male Mindset**", The Hamilton Spectator, 28 January, 1993.

industrialized and newly industrialized economies and the proliferation of low-paying, semi-skilled and part-time service jobs in Thai, as well as our own society, it appears that the time is ripe for making some revisions when it comes to the value placed on the work that women do. Women cannot simply be excluded from issues of economic development and relegated to the status of consumers of household goods. For as it has been demonstrated, their contribution to the development of the economy is immense - as most of the world's women not only represent a source of cheap labour, but unpaid labour as well.

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THAILAND

CHAPTER II

Before we can begin looking at the question of gender based development in Thailand, and the NICs more generally, it is essential for us to get a perspective on both the historical and current economic development trends which have shaped the country. This approach to the study of Thailand is necessary precisely because gender based development strategies cannot be understood outside of the context of a country's historical economic development and its place within the capitalist market economy.

According to Robinson, Byeon, Teja & Tseng (1991:1), Thailand's economic performance over the past several decades is an excellent example of successful development - development which combines adjustment with growth. The achievements of the 1980s exemplify this record. Early in the decade, like many of the other capitalist economies, Thailand did undergo a downturn in commodity prices, as it was hit especially hard by the global recession. Nevertheless, prompted by what has been termed a "pragmatic policy response" by the government, Thailand was able to restore its macro-

economic balance and was, therefore, poised to take full advantage of the improved international economic environment by the mid-1980s. Since then, spurred on by a rapid increases in investments and exports, Thailand has been experiencing a so called "economic boom" - a boom, that, argue Robinson, et al, is spectacular even by the standards of a region which is notable for its economic vitality.⁹

⁹Thailand, literally the "Land of the Free", is situated in the western part of the Indochinese peninsula, bordered by Myanmar, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cambodia and Malaysia. John L.S. Girling, a noted historian and international relations specialist, in his book Thailand Society and Politics, explains:

The area that is now Thailand has been part of the Funan Empire, centred on the lower Mekong valley and with a culture derived from India, which flourishes from the first to sixth century A.D....The Mon people, who were settled in the Chaophaya valley, the heart of present Thailand, then founded the independent kingdom of Dvaravati, which became subject in the eleventh century to the Khmer Empire, with its capital at Angkor. The Thai people, however, were originally one of the minorities of the kingdom of Nanchao, in Yunnan, southwest China. Groups of Thais gradually "infiltrated" south, overcoming and settling amidst the Indianized Khmers (Cambodians), Mons, and Burmans. From the foundation of the Thai kingdom of Ayuthaya (1350), the Thais "borrowed from Cambodia their political organization, material civilization, writing and a considerable number of words." From the Mons and Burmans, on the other hand, "the Siamese [Thais] received their juridical traditions, which were of Indian origin, and above all Sinhalese Buddhism and its artistic traditions....The Thais absorbed this cultural heritage, creating in turn their own distinctive civilization: a product of Indianized concepts of king and state, Theravada Buddhism, and indigenous beliefs,

The Development of Thailand - A Historical Perspective:

At the end of World War II, Thailand was essentially an agrarian society. It was heavily dependent on rice, which at the time accounted for 25 percent of the GDP and about one half of all total exports. Thailand, during this period, had only a very small manufacturing sector and virtually no basic infrastructure. Over the following 40 years, Thailand was able to achieve an impressive rate of progress: its real GDP in the late 1980s early 1990s averaged 7-8 percent growth per annum, its outputs and exports became increasingly diversified, and its poverty levels were dramatically reduced. By the end of the 1980s, the adoption in the preceding years of no less than six, five year economic plans, had set the stage for Thailand to make its transition from an agricultural to an industrial and service-based economy. Thailand is thus, currently on the verge of joining the swelling ranks of Asia's newly industrialized economies or NIEs.¹

Thailand's economic progress, for purposes of

customs, and social organization. This remarkable synthesis of externally derived and indigenous spiritual, political and social ideas and activities was characteristic of the Ayuthaya dynasties that followed (mid-fourteenth to mid-eighteenth centuries) - and it still is, with the assimilation of two new elements: the impact of the West and the influx of Chinese (1981:17-18).

simplification, can be divided into three distinct phases of development. The first phase, covering the years of 1950-1972, was characterized by rapid growth and increases in development, "driven from the late 1950s by the adoption of an industrial strategy that was oriented to the private sector and by rapid improvement in infrastructure" (Robinson et al., 1991:4). Thailand's growth during the second phase of its development, which lasted from 1973-1985, was severely overshadowed by economic problems of an extraneous nature, (ie. the oil shock of 1973, and the ensuing Middle East crisis). Thus the government's attempts at maintaining reasonable levels of growth had to encompass policies for domestic adjustment; as any aspirations to maintain reasonable levels of development through expansionism in the late 1970s had to account for the need to restore both the internal and external economic balance. The third phase of development, spanning the years from 1986 to the present, is the period in which Thailand embarked on a path of remarkable economic expansion.¹⁰

¹⁰In the view of Karel Jansen, growth in Thailand has been rapid, also from a comparative perspective. The growth record does not match the star performers...such as South Korea or Taiwan, but it is very respectable. Of the 100 non-oil and oil-exporting developing countries listed in the 1987 **World Development Report** of the World Bank, only 13

The First Stage - 1950-1972:

The first two decades of the postwar period in Thailand can be described as generally very successful in terms of economic performance and development. Its GDP growth averaged about 5.2 percent in the 1950s, and with the utilization of a comprehensive development strategy adopted by the Thai government, its average growth at the turn of the decade had accelerated to 7.4 percent.

Accordingly, insists Jansen (1990:48), despite the rapid economic growth of Thailand during this period, the real GDP per capita doubled, and the proportion of the population living below the poverty line fell dramatically. At the same time, inflation rates and the deficit remained at moderate levels.

The development strategies of the Thai authorities during this time, were mainly focused on the build up of the manufacturing sectors. However, investments in irrigation and the transportation sector - investments in the form of aid made available by the U.S. government who saw Thailand as the

had higher rates of growth of the per capita GNP over the period 1965-86,...and few of these could match the macroeconomic stability that accompanied Thai growth: inflation has always been moderate in Thailand and, by 1988, the external debt was still easily manageable (1990:48).

last line of defense against the spread of communism in Southeast Asia - also contributed to high rates of growth in agricultural exports.¹¹ For the most part, during this phase, other than brief flirtations with state enterprise, Thai authorities adopted industrialization strategies based on the private sector. With the creation of a Board of Investment (BOI), the Thai government was able to promote investment incentives geared towards import substitution, while the role of the public sector was shifted more towards the build up of existing infrastructure and the creation of new infrastructure projects. This approach to economic development was supported by very conservative financial policies on the behalf of Thai authorities. The government deficit consistently averaged below 2 percent of the GDP during this period, while the monetary growth remained limited to 10-15 percent annually.

From 1963 onward the exchange rate in Thailand was

¹¹According to Richard Stubbs, the increase in American economic aid to Thailand was spurred on by security considerations, which "led to a particular emphasis on improving the transportation and communication infrastructure. A high proportion of aid funds was spent on highways, airport facilities, and deepwater ports. By the mid-1960s Thailand had developed a national roads system where none had existed before and, as an indirect consequence, had acquired a relatively capable civil engineering sector" (1989:527). For further interest see Richard Stubbs, "**Geopolitics and the Political Economy of Southeast Asia**", International Journal, XLIV summer 1989.

formally linked to the U.S. dollar, to which it remained fixed until the mid-1980s. Thailand's economy continued to be very open, with capital controls primarily limited to outflows. As well, even given Thailand's increased interest in tariff protection at this time, trade did nevertheless, begin to account for a greater and greater share of the GDP.

As a result of these policies, investments soared during the 1960s, financed primarily by increasing domestic savings. Industrial output grew rapidly, initially in the agroindustries (such as food processing) and in textiles, and then in heavy industries such as petroleum refining, chemicals and transport equipment (Robinson et al., 1991:6).

And although agriculture continued as a mainstay of the economy, its share of the GDP began to drop sharply, as the dominance of such crops as rice began to be challenged by new exports; for example, textiles and electronics.

Thailand's development at this time, greatly facilitated by the influx of American dollars into the substantial improvements in infrastructure, most notably in irrigation, electrical supply, and the growth of the transportation industry, accelerated the expansion of Thai commercial banking.¹² All of these improvements, in turn,

¹²The expansion of the Thai economy at this time was greatly encouraged by the influx of U.S. aid into the country. Much of the growth during this period, can be attributed, according to Stubbs, to the windfall of millions of U.S. dollars channelled into the Thai economy (1994:6).

The major impact of American aid, ...was experienced

gave rise to Thailand's budding manufacturing industry.

By the end of the decade of the 1960s, however, it was becoming painfully clear to economic policy makers that given Thailand's small domestic market, an efficient import substitution scheme could not be achieved. The adoption of an industrialization strategy during 1950-1972 was evidently contributing to problems of structural deterioration, and as a consequence, to an imbalance of trade. Manufacturing

from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s. The construction and operation of a number of bases (which housed as many as 48, 000 at the height of U.S. involvement in the fighting [in Vietnam]), the spending by US personnel on leave, the increased exports to Vietnam and aid disbursements combined to raise total annual amounts pumped into the Thai economy from around US\$27 million in 1963 to about US\$318 million in 1968....

Overall, the United States injected into the Thai economy US\$650 million in economic aid between 1950 and 1975: US\$ 940 million in 'regular military assistance' between 1951 and 1971; US\$760 million in 'operating costs' in the acquisition of military equipment, and in payments for the Thai division in Vietnam; US\$250 million for the construction of US bases; and US\$850 million in expenditure by US military personnel [on so called Rest and Relaxation, which included vast sums of moneys spent by US soldiers on Thai prostitutes]. This amounts to nearly US\$3.5 billion spent by the US in Thailand over the period from 1950 to the closing of US bases in Thailand in 1976 (1994:6).

For further discussion see Richard, Stubbs. "**Malaysia and Thailand: Models for Economic Development at the Margins?**" in Shaw, Timothy M., and Larry A. Swatuk ed., **The South In the New Worl (Dis)Order**. McMillan Press, London:1994.

a consequence, to an imbalance of trade. Manufacturing exports, at this time remained at a relatively low level, while export diversification was still confined to nontraditional agricultural products. Nevertheless, imports of raw materials and capital goods by import-substituting industries were growing rapidly. And, although the impact of the current trade imbalances was somewhat offset by the increase in the service sector associated with the Vietnam War, balance of payments deficits did nonetheless emerge in late 1969 and early 1970. Hence, during the 1970s the Thai government was deliberate in its efforts to shift economic policy away from import substitution and gear it towards export-oriented industry. As such, despite even the continual tariff regime which favoured import-competing production, the growth of the manufacturing sector became increasingly export oriented.

Like many in the developing world, Thailand during this period was both eager and willing to accept the economic policies espoused by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. And given the government's general acceptance and support of private enterprise, Thailand began to view multinational corporations as a source of capital to replace state investments. Multinational activity, according to the Sarit regime, would serve as the quickest and the most effective way to expand the industrial sector. TNCs, argues

Kevin Hewison, were also viewed as a potential source of technical and entrepreneurial skills, and the pillars, of state economic policy. A recent study suggests, "that about half of the TNCs operating in Thailand established their operations between 1963-1972" (Hewison, 1987:58). Interestingly enough, the growth of TNCs in Thailand corresponds with the height of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. While U.S. involvement in Thailand, argues Stubbs (1994:6), cannot be the sole reason for the major economic boom that occurred during the 1960s and early 1970s, it was undoubtedly a contributing factor. Further:

even though the Thai economy suffered a number of major setbacks in the mid-1970s including the cutting back of US aid and military expenditures, the closing of its borders with Indochina and the oil pricing crisis, it showed a remarkable resilience. Indeed, the US aid and expenditures that were injected into the Thai economy had a long-lasting impact and set the stage for future economic development (Stubbs, 1994:7).

Thus, with the embrace of the Americanized version of liberal economics and the whole-hearted acceptance of multinational activities, Thailand's path towards the establishment of a strong manufacturing sector with the emphasis on the development of an export-oriented economy was firmly entrenched by the early 1970s.

The Second Stage - 1973-1985:

As swiftly as industrialization began in the 1950s, it continued during the decades of the 1970s and 1980s. Under the guise of liberalism and an atmosphere of relative political stability in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Thailand was able to attract significant amounts of foreign investment for its industrial development. This was the period of cheap oil, cheap rice and low wage rates.

During the early stages of this phase of Thai development, however, the industrial world was rocked by sudden oil price increases, political instability in the Middle East and the rising opposition against American involvement in Vietnam. As a result, Thailand began to experience some of the worst economic conditions of its post-World War II history. The decline in foreign investment during this period, was compounded by the withdrawal of the U.S. from Vietnam, the student-led revolt of October 1973 and the resulting political tension. Real GDP growth for a time fell below the levels of the previous decades. Moreover, inflation rose sharply and a substantial deficit emerged, leading inevitably to an increase in Thailand's external debt and thereby to debt servicing problems. Nonetheless, in large part because Thai authorities were quick to adopt adjustment

policies before any of these issues became acute, Thailand was able to stem the tide and return to more stable rates of economic growth. Thailand's difficulties during the early 1970s, in comparison to some of the other developing countries, were considered moderate.

The manufacturing sector in the early 1970s, was able to weather much of the economic storm by replacing foreign capital investment with local investments, and by increasing its focus on export-related activities to earn foreign exchange in order to offset the rising import bills for oil and the declining income from the agricultural sector. On the whole, reflects Yamklinfung, even with a world wide recession, the manufacturing sector was still growing at a much higher pace than agriculture during the early to mid-1980s: "that is 10.2, 9.2, 8.6, 9.0, and 5.6 per cent per year...compared to 4.6, 4.1, 3.9, 3.0, and 2.9 percent for agriculture" (1987:284).

Thailand's adjustment to the two oil shock's in 1973 and 1979 has been considered quite remarkable, as it was swift in its attempts to adopt policies which would return it to single digit, and thus tolerable, levels of inflation. The major crisis in the Thai economy, however, would come during the mid-1980s.

By 1985, according to Kevin Hewison, the Thai economy faced its first fiscal crisis of enormous proportions. The

initial focus of concern for the Thai authorities, insists Hewison, was the mounting debt problem. The economic crisis of 1985 however, was much more extensive than may have first appeared to policy makers. With the economy entering into one of the worst phases in Thai history, the situation seemed dismal to both the Thai government and its business elite. Bankruptcies were reported to be on the rise in the first nine month of 1985, while investment and factory approvals were both on the decline. For the first time in 1985 some of Thailand's most profitable companies were reporting decreases in revenues: for example, "the large Saha Phattanapibul group reported its first loss in several decades" (Hewison, 1987:61).

This economic crisis, suggests Hewison, did not confront only the capitalist class and state managers. The fact was that the economic downturn effected average people.

Throughout 1985 farmer's groups protested the decline in prices they were receiving for their crops, with falling commodity prices having a severe effect on the countryside. Urban dwellers were not immune either, with officials putting unemployment at two million (10 percent being university graduates) and warning that it was rising rapidly. The Board of Trade reported 100 000 lay-offs in the first half of 1985 (Hewison, 1987:61).

Furthermore:

A far-reaching development that occurred during these years was a slow down in the rate of cultivated land, as the limits of Thailand's land frontier began to be reached. Thus, Thailand's

relative abundance of land, which had been a dominating influence on the pattern of development over the past 120 years began to fade, reinforcing the shift towards labour-intensive manufacturing that was already underway (Robinson et al., 1991:10).

This downturn in the previously rapidly expanding economy of Thailand, can be understood if placed in the context of international capitalism. The recession of the early 1980s felt by the industrialized western economies was slow in its impact on Thailand. This may have been because Thailand was able to borrow quite readily from overseas, thus for a time at least, cushioning the impact of world wide recessionary times. The rise in oil prices in the late 1970s and early 1980s were circumvented by Thai authorities because of the ability of some developing countries, Thailand included, to borrow from private funds on rather favourable terms.

It is not clear exactly which particular policies or combination of policies were able to restore Thailand to its previous levels of economic development - several strategies, however, have been cited as contributory. First, domestic prices and energy prices were raised to world levels, eliminating the disincentives to energy conservation that had previously contributed to the deficit. Second, controls on domestic interest rates were relaxed under the fifth economic plan. This, coupled with progress made in reducing inflation,

allowed for more positive real interest rates and for the increases in the monetization of the economy; thereby ensuring the resilience of the domestic banking system and industry.²

The third set of events which set the stage for Thailand's rejuvenation, an often ignored phenomenon, was the influx of Japanese direct investment into the country. Attempting to deal with its own trade imbalances, Japan began to look first, to South Korea and Taiwan, and then to Thailand and Malaysia as safe-havens for their industrial ventures. As pointed out by Stubbs:

...Japanese investors were seeking areas to invest which were close by, which had a reasonable level of economic and social infrastructure and which possessed a relatively competent state bureaucracy with which they could deal....[T]he Japanese found that first Thailand and then Malaysia suited their purposes admirably. The economic infrastructure that had been put in place as a consequence of the prosperity produced by US involvement in the region allowed the Japanese companies to use the two countries as export platforms for manufactured goods and to compete with companies from South Korea and Taiwan in the important US and European markets as well as in the Japanese market which was slowly opening up to imports (1994:14-15).

Moreover, surveys done in Japan, according to the Economist (1987:17), place Thailand as the most favourite foreign location for the direct investment of the Japanese manufacturing industry. The figures published by the Bank of Thailand attest to this, as the combined levels of American and Japanese investment from the early 1970s to the late 1980s have roughly equalled 30% of all direct investment in

Thailand. The actual figures for Japanese direct investment are rather astonishing; from 1973 to 1983 the total of all trade with Japan has risen from US\$ 1, 140 million to US\$ 3, 771 million respectively. This represents 18.3 percent of all Thai trade during this period (Rieger, 1985:40).¹³

¹³For additional information on the extent of Japanese investment in Thailand, see Richard Stubbs, "**Malaysian and Thailand: Models for Economic Development at the Margins?**" in Shaw, Timothy M., and Larry A. Swatuk ed., **The South and the New World (Dis)Order**. McMillan, London:1994; the **Economist A Survey of Thailand**. October, 31, 1987, and Rieger, Hans Christoph, **Asean Co-operation and Intra-ASEAN Trade**. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies: Singapore, 1985.

The Third Stage - 1986-1994:

Since the unfortunate economic downturn in 1985, Thailand has experienced a boom unparalleled in its postwar history. Real GDP in Thailand has risen by an average of 11 percent per annum; the rise in the GDP is considered both high in absolute terms and in comparison to other NICs in the area. Accordingly, manufacturing output and exports have increased and have now become more diversified. More than half of the export growth over the period of 1986-1994 has been due to nontraditional exports - that is, computer parts, consumer electronics, travel goods, and toys. At the same time, in connection with the rapid growth of the manufacturing sector, Thailand has begun to undergo a real-estate boom. This, in turn, has led to the further development of Thailand's financial and service sectors. Moreover, the tourism industry, has also been on the rise for the first time since the withdrawal of the U.S. troops from Thai military bases in 1976. The current boost to the Thai economy has come primarily from three sources: first, a wave of new foreign direct investments, particularly in manufacturing sector, from such countries as Japan and other Asian NICs; secondly, an increase in the manufacturing exports which has grown by 29 percent annually in volume; and thirdly, from domestic wages

remaining relatively low in Thailand, especially by comparison to its Asian, newly industrialized competitors.

Nevertheless, by the early 1990s it was becoming evident that the rapid expansion of the Thai economy was bringing with it a number of significant problems. Infrastructural bottlenecks - although problematic for a number of years - have become increasingly serious, especially in terms of the transportation industry, port capacity and water and electrical supplies. Moreover, shortages of skilled labour, particularly that of engineers and electricians, have emerged. The most significant consequence of Thailand's extraordinary economic growth, however, has been the development of uneven income distribution between the rich and poor and the urban and rural populations. As well, given the Thai government's heavy emphasis on the expansion of the manufacturing and service sectors - which, for all intents and purposes, are even more heavily dependent than any previous phases of development on the participation of women in the marketplace as both unwaged and cheap-waged labour - the social costs to rapid economic growth have also become blatantly obvious.

The present cycle of Thailand's economic success, with its embrace of export-oriented trade, is by no means unique in its adoption of gender based development strategies to spur on a so called "economic miracle". Indeed, it is with this

stage of development, that this project is most concerned; particularly because the effects of gender based development have been especially poignant during this period. Thailand's prostitution levels have risen to unprecedented levels as the government and its policy makers are quick to embrace sex-tourism as a means obtaining foreign currency. The economic significance of sex-tourism, for instance, in paying for economic development can be revealed by the following data:

Receipts from tourism amounted to \$US 3.16 billion (in 1988), and are estimated to rise to \$US 7.2 billion by 1996. This compares to the value of the largest exports (also 1988): textiles: \$US 1.23 billion, electrical equipment: \$US 1.48 billion, rice \$US 1.5 billion, rubber: \$US 1.28 billion (Bell, 1991:66).

Furthermore, wages paid to women in Thailand, in the government's effort to speed up industrialization, are considerably lower than the wages paid to women in already industrialized, or other newly industrializing economies. Because wages are set so low, most Thai women require outside subsistence-type activities to subsidize their incomes. For the most part, these include work in the service sector as either domestic labour, waitresses, barmaids, masseurs or prostitutes.¹⁴

¹⁴In the late 1980s, according to statistics provided by Sippanondha Ketudad in his book, The Middle Path For The Future Of Thailand: Technology in Harmony with Culture and Environment, 1990, more than 25 percent of the total population of Thailand is considered as living below the poverty line. The vast majority of these are women involved

The issue of feminization of poverty has been largely ignored by Thai policy makers, as has the fact that the current rates of growth experienced by Thailand are highly misleading. Statistical analyses of Thailand, points out Joan Harkness, rave about the continual growth of the Gross National Product: "about 10.46% for 1989; estimated 9.9% for 1990; estimated 9.2 for 1991; estimated 9.0% for 1992" (Harkness, 1992:1). But economic benefits derived from development strategies do not accrue equally in all regions. In fact, quiet the opposite has been true.

Th[e] economic boom benefits a minority of the population, while the rest are becoming marginalized. Gross Domestic Product is often quoted as surging upward. But one statistic that is seldom quoted is that of internal income distribution. There are telling numbers: Bangkok with only 16% of the population has 45% of the GDP, whereas the northeast with 35% of the population has only 14% of the GDP. This discrepancy becomes more blatant when you include the richer, more accessible central region in with Bangkok, resulting in 33% of the population of the country accounting for 64% of the GDP (Harkness, 1992:1).¹⁵

in subsistence type work, whether in the agricultural, manufacturing or service sectors.

15

Table 3. Income Distribution

Shares of GDP by Region:		Shares of Population:	
Bangkok	45%	Northeast	35%
Central	19%	North	20%
Northeast	14%	Central	17%
North	12%	Bangkok	16%
South	10%	South	13%

1986 Statistics: Thailand Development Research Foundation,

The vast majority of economists intrigued by Thailand's so called "economic miracle", tend to gloss over much of the differentials in urban-rural development. These disparities between the rich and poor will reach a crisis situation within this decade if nothing is done. Seldom though, are Thai authorities and the business elite interested

1989.

Reprinted from, Harkness, Joan. **"Thai Non-Governmental Organizations and Their Foreign Funders"**, Paper #7, Working Paper Series Thai Studies Project. Women in Development

Consortium in Thailand. An Institutional Linkage Programme

funded by the Canadian International Development Agency

York University, 1992.

Table 4. Relative Per Capital Income Ratios

Growth	----- Annual			
	1981	1988	1981-88	1986-88
Region				
Bangkok	100	100	6.1	8.9
Central	50	42	3.2	5.7
North	42	38	4.6	12.8
South	44	37	3.5	9.0
Northeast	29	25	3.6	13.2
Agriculture	100	100	3.4	14.9
Nonagriculture	230	224	3.0	4.1

Based on National Statistics Office, 1990.

Reprinted from Muscat, J. Robert. **The Fiftthe Tiger A study of Thai Development Policy.** United Nations University Press, New York:1994.

in the uneven development of Thailand, the focus of both national and international financial institutions is the GNP and GDP figures. This, insists Harkness, conceals the kind of marginalization that is taking place in Thailand, as well as making real development initiatives more difficult.

By simply looking to economic indicators and the statistics provided by development agencies, Thailand's growth can be interpreted as a remarkable economic achievement. But if we are to look at the social conditions of Thai society - conditions that have been the result of policies directed towards economic expansion at all costs - a very different picture of Thailand emerges. Fraught with increasing poverty, landlessness, external debt, massive rural-urban migration, prostitution and extremely high incidence of crime, the true image of Thailand cannot be farther from the one depicted by that of Thai authorities. This picture is particularly appalling in the face of the fact that Thailand is on the brink of joining the ranks of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore as the newest, Newly Industrialized Country. ¹⁶

¹⁶All indicators are pointing to Thailand as the next major economic player in Southeast Asia. Is there anything to stop the expor-oreinted economy of Thailand from becoming a NIC? Plenty, according to the Economist, The Financial Times and The Far Eastern Economic Review. These are just a few of the problems mentioned that may work to hold back Thai growth:

- 1) Thai Airways, the domestic airline, does not have enough aircraft to cope with current tourist traffic and cannot afford more. It can take almost as long as

The question that emerges from this discussion, of

a tourist's average stay in Thailand (6.5 days) to get on a flight from Bangkok to Phuket, the resort most foreigners want to visit. And that is outside the peak December-January season....

2) The education system suffers from a fault found in other countries with long histories of proud independence: schools turn out too many yesterday's skills (bureaucrats) and not enough today's (engineers and managers).

3) Although...propos[ed] heavy spending on telecommunications, the country's telephone system is woefully inadequate. International calls from Bangkok can be crystal clear, but companies that set up outside the city can find they have to wait months for a telephone. Some Japanese companies have installed their own radio-telephone systems in the meanwhile.

4) Although there is no shortage of electrical power, it is difficult to get connected to a grid. At least one foreign investor has had to provide his own power lines to link up his factory to the main system.

5) Unfortunately for investors, changes in government or cabinet reshuffles tend to swing the fortune of various government and non-government projects back and forth with equal frequency. Foreign investors are therefore usually advised to form joint ventures with local partners who know the terrain well.

6) A corrupt Thai bureaucracy and Immigration Department are a headache for many foreigners.

7) Highways in Bangkok are jammed from day-in to day-out with traffic. Infrastructural bottlenecks are becoming commonplace in the country. Failure to straighten out infrastructural shortcomings, and especially Bangkok's intense traffic congestion, could lead to severe investment difficulties.

Information for the above was compiled from the Economist A Survey of Thailand, Oct. 31, 1987; "Beware of Pitfalls for the Uninitiated", The Financial Times Survey Thailand, Friday, December 4, 1992; "No Highway" Far Eastern Economic Review, August 1993, Vol. 156, #31.

course, is what is a NIC? Prior to any detailed answer to that question, it must be pointed out that the term NIC is somewhat misleading; differing people with differing objectives employ this term in a variety of ways. For most, this is a catch-all phrase, one that throws together all of those states that have shown propensity towards unprecedented levels of growth in the past few decades. Such an all-encompassing term cannot characterize all of the salient features of the Thai economy and the differences that exist between Thailand and the other Asian NICs. For one, the Thai resource base and population distribution are at variance with those found in the four existing Asian NICs. Generally, the NICs have a resource base that is extremely limited. By contrast, Thailand has an immense and rich agricultural base. As well, it has problems of rural underemployment that are unknown in places like Singapore. For many such reasons, the term "NIC" must be employed so with much greater care and specificity than is usually the case.

According to both the Merrill Lynch Securities Ltd and Sippanondha Ketudat, the conventional definition of a NIC is, "a country with a US\$ 2, 000 or more Gross Domestic Product per capita in monetary terms and [in which] the manufacturing sector generates more income than any other sector" (1990:9). To be considered a NIC, the share of the manufacturing to GDP must exceed 30%. It is likely that Thailand will reach that

goal by either the mid or late-1990s.

The interest in Thai development did not emerge overnight. For the past thirty years the government of Thailand, beginning with the Sarit regime of the 1950s, has been active in attempting to attract foreign investment into the Kingdom. With the aid of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, Thailand has opened itself to multinational corporations and provided enormous incentives to private capital - all in an effort to secure the levels of growth that have become commonplace in Southeast Asia. The current period of rapid economic expansion can also be directly linked to the business interests of the government; for example, the former Chatchai Choonhaven government was staffed with businessmen who stood to benefit tremendously from the impetuous development strategies adopted in Thailand.

The [former] government encourages massive influxes of foreign money with tax holidays and access to local markets....Japanese investors surged into the marketplace in 1989 and in 1988 the Taiwanese gained a higher profile, followed by South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore (Harkness, 1992:4).

As a result, the forest industry in Thailand, for instance, has been restructured to provide space for reforestation projects in the north and the northeast. These projects, contrary to popular opinion and the propaganda of the government, are not geared towards replenishing the natural forest. Rather, they are designed for the planting of

so called "economic forests" - such as, eucalyptus trees which are cut and sold, most likely to the Japanese, for the use in their pulp and paper industry. Schemes such as those noted above, allow the government to bolster GNP statistics, making it appear that the development of Thailand is far more advanced than is necessarily the case.

Moreover, land speculation is a massive industry in Thailand, with many of those involved are in some way or another connected to a former or present government. The speculation in real estate has resulted in the escalation of the prices of land, excessive amounts of absentee landlords and the construction of housing in the form of condominiums that are only affordable to the affluent. Little, if nothing, has been constructed in the form of low-income housing in Thailand in the recent past. Real estate interests have in some ways contributed to the current boom in construction within the Kingdom. Bangkok, for example, and other urban centres in the country are experiencing massive hotel construction and a burgeoning condominium market. This is to say nothing of the sex-trade that is also springing up around the tourist industry.

The textile industry, the electronics, computer components and toy industries have also been the benefactors of Thailand's dependence on the expansion of its economy through export-oriented growth. These industries, however,

unlike forestry and farming - which have grave environmental consequences for the Thai countryside - are enormously costly in human terms. The conditions in the Thai factories, whether they are multinationals or local companies, are often unsafe, very exploitive of its labour force and employ predominantly female and child labour.¹⁷

What are the social costs then, of all this rapid

¹⁷One has to look no further than to May 10, 1993, when the Kadar Industrial toy factory burned down in Thailand, resulting in the death of 174 young women. Out of the 198 workers who died in that fire, 174 were women, some 450-500 workers were injured that day, 53 are still missing, and as a result 3 000 were left without employment. The factory itself was a fire hazard, nevertheless, women were locked into sewing rooms with the supervisor allowing them to leave their sewing machine only at the end of their shift. Many such factories, with the identical conditions, currently exist in Thailand. There is virtually no government regulations concerning the state of the factories, both in terms of their structures and their employees. Many multinationals, as in the case of Hasbro and Tyco for whom the Thai company was making toys, will contract out their business to local factories in Thailand. With wages being low and the factories being staffed with young women and children, it is no wonder then that the prices of toys we purchase in North America and Europe are so cheap (Kader was making Cabbage Patch and Bart Simpson dolls). Hasbro and Tyco, for their part, insisted they had no knowledge of the inhumane working conditions within the Thai factory, nor were they aware of the wages paid to that company's employees. Hasbro and Tyco did not, however, cancel their contracts with local Thai companies following the incident.

Unofunately, the Kader Industrial toy factory fire was not the first nor the last to take place in Thailand. Shortly following the incident, other such factory fires took place in Thailand. "A fire on July 6 in an illegal factory in Thailand, killed at least 10 teenage girls because they were trapped behind locked doors and windows blocked by iron grills". For further information see Currents, December 1993, Vol.15, #4.

change in Thailand? What is known, is that the development of Thailand has come at a high price for a good many of its inhabitants. The disparities between the rich and the poor are growing at an alarming rate, while foreign developers enter Thailand in hopes of capitalizing on its vast reserve of cheap female labour. Unfortunately, most of those who are willing investors in the Thai economy, tend to conduct their business in the major urban centres like Bangkok. As a result, they get a very false picture of Thailand; they are inclined to see it as only an urban and rapidly developing country. This, in turn, masks the real truth: the fact that Thailand, for all intents and purposes, is still predominantly a rural and underdeveloped country. And even though fewer people in Thailand today are dependent on the agricultural sector, agriculture does nevertheless, support more than half of the Thai population who are in some direct or indirect way dependent on it for their principle source of livelihood. Even to this day, nearly 70 percent of Thailand's population is still involved in some type of agro-industries (Information About Thailand, Thai Studies Office, York University:1986).¹⁸

¹⁸On the issue of poverty in rural Thailand, see Keith Griffin and Ajit Kumar Ghose, "**Growth and Impoverishment in the Rural Areas of Asia**" in Wilber, Charles K. ed., **The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment**. 4th edition, Random House Inc., New York:1988; Phill Hirsch "**Differential Differentiation: Production, Development and Inequality on the Thai Periphery**" in **Proceedings of the International Conference on Thai Studies**. The Australian

In its attempts at reaching NICdom, and quickly, Thailand has done so at the expense of cheap waged or non-waged labour - most of whom are women. The reality that rapid economic growth must come at a price, has escaped the policy makers and the government of Thailand. Thus, it is to the issue of gender based development that we must turn, in order to fully comprehend the extent of the impact that modernization has had on the women of the Kingdom of Thailand.

1.

Table 1. Social Indicators

GDP per Capita (Current U.S. dollars, 1990)	1,454
Population and Vital Statistics	
Total Population (in millions, 1990)	56.08
Population Growth (annual growth in percent 1980-90)	2
Urban Population (percent)	19
Life Expectancy at Birth (years)	
Overall	67
Female	69
Crude Birth Rate (per thousand)	21
Crude Death Rate (per thousand)	6
Infant Mortality Rate (per thousand; 1987)	11
Labour Force (1989)	
Total Labour Force (in millions)	30.3
Employed Work Force (in millions)	29.2
Agriculture (percent of total)	60.1
Manufacturing (percent of total)	10.4
Public Health and Education	
Population per Physician (1988)	4,985
Population per Nurse (1988)	1,692
Adult Literacy Rate (percent; 1985)	91
Primary School Enrolment (percent; 1985)	95

Sources: Data provided by the Thai authorities; and World Bank, Social Indicators of Development.
 Reprinted from, Robinson, Byeon, Teja & Tseng, **Thailand: Adjusting to Success Current Policy Issues**. International Monetary Fund, 1991:2.

2.

Table 2 Indicators of Structural Change Since 1960

	1960	1970	1980	1986
Population (million)	26.26	34.40	44.82	52.97
Population in municipal areas (%)	12.47	13.24	17.03	17.81
Pop. in municipal areas and sanitary district (%)	--	22.76	26.38	--
Bangkok Metropolis Pop. (millions)	1.70	2.50	4.70	5.47

Proportion of BM pop. in total urban pop.(%)	52.02	54.80	61.54	57.98
Agri households (%)	73.87	62.60	55.5	--
Economically active pop. 11 yrs of age & over engaged in:				
A) Agri (%)	82.29	79.28	72.25	58.9
B) Manufacturing (%)	3.42	5.17	5.62	10.9
C) Professional, technical, admin, executive, managerial & clerical(%)	2.57	7.86	10.16	--
Proportion of GNP contributed by:				
A) Agri(%)	38.93	28.46	25.84	24.34 (1985)
B) Manufacturing (%)	10.56	15.99	20.00	21.86 (1985)
Value of Rice in Total exports (%)	30.00	18.00	16.00	9.00
Value of Manufactured goods in total exports (%)	--	5.00	29.00	42.29 (Jan-Oct 1986)

Reprinted from: Yamklinfung, Prasert. **"Thailand Reflections of Changing Social Structure", Proceedings of the International Conference on Thai Studies**. The Australian National University Canberra, Vol.3, Part I:1987.

THAI DEVELOPMENT AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN

CHAPTER III

The increased interest of social scientists, especially those in women's studies, in the economic contribution of women to their national economies, has done much to dispel some of the commonly held assumptions about women's work. For instance, the assumption that the work women do, has very little, if no economic value has been challenged by a number of analysts (Mies, 1986; Enloe, 1983, 1989; Lim 1979, 1983; Lewenhak, 1988; Wallach Scott, 1982; Sokoloff, 1987; Wilson, 1993). Drawing on the available research, this chapter presents an overview of the contribution of women to the growth of the Thai economy. Certainly, the participation of women as wives, mothers, home-workers, daughters, unpaid farmers, consumers, clerical workers, sales representatives, managers and prostitutes cannot be discounted if we are to understand the position of women within the framework of Thai development strategies, and in the wider context of capital accumulation. It is to an analysis of gender based development in Thailand, therefore, that we must now turn our attention.

There are several important reasons for discussing women's work within the framework of the rapid economic growth experienced by Thailand. First, Thailand is currently on the verge of entering the elite group of Newly Industrialized Countries (NIC). Second, the low value historically attached to women's work in patriarchal-capitalist societies, both in the formal and informal sectors of the economy, has contributed to the current disparities between the sexes that exist in the workplace in Thailand. Third, because the type of development adopted in Thailand as it seeks to reach NICdom is highly contingent on the exploitation of young, uneducated women, their contribution to economic expansion cannot be overlooked. In fact, as it was argued in chapter one, the exploitation of women - for example as unpaid labour in the home or the agricultural sector, or as a source of cheap waged labour in hotels or factories - is a necessary condition for the accelerated economic growth of Thailand. In other words, without women being underpaid, and thus, their work being undervalued, it is unlikely that Thailand would find itself on the threshold of being the newest Asian Newly Industrialized Country.

The Economic Contribution of Women:

Although serious differences exist in the types of work women do and the kinds of life opportunities that are available to them in Southeast Asia generally and Thailand in particular, there are, nevertheless, issues that are of concern to all women. First, and foremost, any discussion regarding women must devote significant attention to the nature and the value of women's work. Second, and related issue, is the need to recognize that women are not the secondary workers in their households. Their contribution to household economies alone is immense by any measure. Yet, this assumption about women has been utilized for centuries to justify their concentration in low-paying employment. Moreover, a dialogue about women and the kinds of work they do, cannot simply ignore the problem of availability of education for women, as well as the types of cultural and legal constraints placed on them in patriarchal-capitalist societies, such as Thailand, which inhibit their participation as equal social and economic actors.

Women contribute to their national economies in a variety of ways; most notably through non-monetized sectors of the economy. In Thailand, this includes employment as domestics, unwaged farm labourers, and in the most extreme

cases, as prostitutes. There is, however, currently very little in the way of measurements that can accurately assess the magnitude of the economic contribution that women provide for their families in both rural and urban Thailand. Housework alone, for instance, has an enormous impact on the ability of families to offset the costs of survival.

Time-budget studies show that women's time at housework to vary by such factors as family size, type of community, and their own employment status, but that women more frequently devote long hours to housework - ranging from some 8 to as much as 12 hours per day.. Moreover, in most Asian countries women's housework is shown to encompass not only child bearing and rearing activities and the day-to-day cleaning and maintenance of houses, but a wide array of activities that otherwise would be recorded as economic activities....These activities include the provision of basic services and goods for the household as accomplished through women's processing of food, weaving and sewing of clothes, and care for sick and aging members of the household. In many rural areas, women's domestic loads include as well as the collection of fish, small game and plant foods, or the production of these backyard gardens and poultries, and the collection of fuel and water for the household. Better known as income-substituting activities, women's labour in these reduce household purchase requirements, and enables many households to escape absolute poverty conditions (Miralao, 1984:28).

Further evidence provided by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (1984), revealed that an increasing number of women in Southeast Asia are involved in the burgeoning "informal" sector of their national economies. Their activities have predominantly come to include the making and selling of various hand-made crafts

and other goods, or employment as occasional service workers. For a variety of reasons, mostly because of the patriarchal nature of economic activity, and consequently, because women's participation in the work force tends to be more irregular than that of men, most of women's self-generated employment is overlooked by standard economic measurements.²⁰ What little information is known about women's economic activities in the informal sector, demonstrates that these activities provide some sorely needed income for their families; and for many consumers in the industrialized world, a cheap source of food and other goods. This visible contribution of women to the growth of their national economies, at least at the micro level, does not take away from the fact that most women are still left marginalized and subjected to discrimination at the

²⁰Women's formal labour force participation is often referred to as irregular, because much of that participation is dependent on whether the women are single and without children, or is widowed, divorced or abandoned by her spouse. It is assumed, in most cases, that if a woman is single, she is then provided for by the male head of her household. Her income, therefore, is used to offset any minor economic difficulties of her family, or it is simply petty cash to be spent on some frivolous item. In the case that a woman is divorced, widowed or abandoned by her husband, she is still assumed to be provided for by some other closely related male. In many countries, and throughout most industries, if a woman is married and has children, it is assumed that her labour force participation is no longer required, as she is then necessarily taken care of by a spouse. This, however, is simply not true in most cases. Today, as in the past, many of the world's women are the sole breadwinners for their households. Yet, that fact is rarely acknowledged, leaving women's labour force participation vulnerable to the whims of their employers.

hands of governmental, cultural and legal policies.

Notwithstanding the dramatic rise in women's conventional employment in Thailand in the past several decades - by some estimates, women now account for 65-72 percent of the labour force in Thailand (Bell, 1991:62) - in the urban/modern sector occupations, women are found in large numbers in sales and service work. And with the growth of the export-oriented, labour intensive industries in Thailand, they have now swelled the ranks of manufacturing industries as well. In some cases, women have managed to make substantial inroads in clerical and professional employment. Most Thai women, however, can still be found in the lower rungs of occupational categories.

The lack of available statistics on sex-segregated employment, particularly in Thailand, makes the measurement of women's contribution to the economy more difficult. Yet, the fact that Thailand is in the process of adopting more industrialization strategies based on export-oriented growth - industries that are heavily dependent on women's labour - does allow us to draw some conclusions. Unfortunately, though, the more semiconductors, toys, garments, electronics, and traditional crafts made by women account for the rise in the national revenue of Thailand, the less reference there seems to be to women's role in its economic development.

Gender and Economic Development:

Gender, according to Peter Bell, is the single most important aspect of recent economic development in Thailand. Women, argues Bell (1991), are the cutting edge of "export-oriented growth"; a strategy of development strongly advocated by both the IMF and the World Bank, and whole heartedly accepted by the policy makers of Thailand. The euphoria about the rise of GNP levels, as Bell terms it, and the nirvana surrounding becoming a NIC, has left the question of gender based development to be completely ignored, even by the more vocal leftist, women's groups. In Bell's view, the term "development" is itself objectionable where Thailand is concerned, as Thailand's chosen path of economic growth "...violates important values of equity, economic democracy, ecological balance, and human decency" (Bell, 1991:61).

Women are, indisputably, the cornerstone of Thailand's economic surge. Not only are Thai women responsible for much of the production of the recent economic growth, they have been profoundly affected by it - as consumers, in their role as waged and unwaged labour, in interpersonal relationships, in their conceptions of beauty, femininity and self-identity.

Arguably, the development strategies embraced by Thailand, and the many facets of change now facing its women, have

resulted in intensifying the level of patriarchal oppression, especially in relation to women's status as economic actors.

Women have produced a great deal of the economic growth through their unwaged work in households, agricultural labour (both waged and unwaged), industrial work and service activities (including sexual services). Yet they have clearly not received their proportionate share of the fruits of this development (Bell, 1991:61).

[Thai women, for the most part, have been disadvantaged in almost every aspect of their lives. They receive less education, have higher rates of illiteracy, receive lower wages, experience higher rates of unemployment, lack access to many occupations, and are virtually invisible in Thai political life. All of this in spite of the fact that Thai women have a higher rate of participation than men in the labour force. According to statistics provided by Thompson (1988) and Tonguthai (1990) (cited in Bell, 1991:62-63), women's participation in the labour force exceeds that of men by 66 percent in rural areas and by 55.2 percent in urban areas. Yet, all of these statistics mask the contribution of women to the labour force as a source of unpaid labour in their roles as wives and mothers. Despite this vast economic contribution to the development of Thailand, women have, nonetheless, been "marginalized, exploited and oppressed; they have become a major victim also of what the Asian Development Bank refers to as the feminization of poverty" (Bell, 1990:62).

Much of the exploitation and oppression of women, both socially and economically, can be linked to their work being undervalued. The principal reason for women's work being undervalued in patriarchal-capitalist societies, is a result of centuries of oppression, during which the work done by women was relegated exclusively to the private sphere; and thus, assumed to be their sole responsibility. As was mentioned in chapter one, the skills women develop as home-workers, and in their roles as mothers and health care providers for the sick and aging, are rarely transferable to the public domain. Although women in the formal economic sector could be performing the same jobs as they would as part of their household responsibilities, utilizing the identical skills, the remuneration for this employment tends to be insufficient. The fact that women are paid very little for their skills, has to do, primarily, with the kind of employment that is available to them. Typically, this type of employment exploits the skills that women have acquired in the running of their households. The presumption on the part of the employer, is subsequently: If women are simply using the skills that come naturally to them as women, in their role as mothers and daughters, there is no real justification then for paying them higher wages. After all, they are not doing anything they wouldn't be otherwise doing. Understanding the interplay between the formal and informal sectors of the

economy, thus, becomes paramount, if we are to discern how women's work contributes to the overall economic expansion of Thailand.

Women and the Formal/Informal Sectors of the Economy:

Since the introduction of the concept, there has been extensive debate in social sciences over the definition of what constitutes the "informal" sector of an economy. In one interpretation, the formal/informal distinction, following the work of Keith Hart, has been employed to differentiate wage-employment from self-employment; that is, to differentiate between labour that is recruited on a permanent and regular bases for fixed payment, and labour that is not. This emphasis by Hart on the importance of economic activity in the areas traditionally considered outside of the economic sphere, has led to the view that these activities are productive and supply many of the essential services on which life depends. Women's work in the home, arguably, falls into this category.

In another case, the notion of informal sector has been utilized to differentiate between forms of economic enterprise. Here the informal sector is characterized by:

small scale enterprises which rely on indigenous resources, family ownership, and skills acquired outside the school system; while enterprises in the formal sector rely on international resources which are corporately owned and operate on large scale in markets protected by tariffs, quotas and trade licenses (Heyzer, 1986:4).

A third usage of the concept, developed by the World Bank (1975-1976), makes distinctions within the urban labour

market. The informal sector, as seen by the World Bank, is considered the "unprotected labour market as opposed to the formal 'protected' market" (cited in Heyzer, 1986:4). This distinction between what constitutes the formal and informal sector made by the World Bank is rather ambiguous. Seemingly, the definition of the formal sector, or the 'protected' market, refers to economic activity taking place in the marketplace regulated by both state and international rules; whereas the informal sector, or the 'unprotected' market, refers to unregulated economic activity.

In part, the absence of specific concerns for women in any of the above noted definitions can be viewed as symptomatic of patriarchal-capitalist relations. As there has been little attempt in the social sciences to focus on the labour relations within the family - that is, on how family labour is organized and how work tasks are allocated - it is difficult, therefore, to provide a clear definition of what is meant by the informal sector of the economy. At best, informal economic activity can be characterized by activity, taking place outside of the regulated market place, aimed at offsetting the costs of production for the international market, and utilized by families or individuals to supplement low wages. This definition, inadequate as it may be, can at least in some part allow for the inclusion of the kinds of work done by women.

The exclusion of women from conventional economic analysis, can be attributed to the "invisible" nature of much of women's work in the home. A large proportion of women's income generating activities take place within the home, and, hence, it is often difficult to separate household responsibilities aimed at the market from those aimed at the family. Second, as men are traditionally regarded as the heads of households, though in many circumstances in Thailand this is not always the case, they are automatically assumed to be the primary breadwinners for the family. Third, for the majority of male casual workers, small artisans and small scale producers and traders of commodities, the unfortunate reality is that their wages or incomes are insufficient to guarantee their families' subsistence survival. In many cases, not only women, but children as well, have to be put to work to ensure the survival of the family; thereby allowing for the reproduction of the family unit.²¹

It may be argued that the persistence, and in fact, the burgeoning of the informal economic sector in Thailand, can be attributed to the need to establish structural arrangements that reduce the costs of reproduction of labour for overall economic growth. This structural arrangement has

²¹For additional information on the condition of poor families in Thailand, see Esterline, Mae Handy, ed., **They Changed Their World Nine Women of Asia**. University Press of America, Lanham:1987.

been, for the most part, the urban informal sector. Its presence has been utilized, effectively I might add, by both government and economic policy makers to compensate for the concessions that are made in employment wages to the organized segments of the working class. How else then, could Thailand maintain its low wage levels? The formal sector, for all intents and purposes, operates much like a parasite on the informal sector in Thailand. Since:

The ability of small-scale operators to reduce input costs of goods and services is strongly linked to the large amounts of unpaid domestic labour and cheap labour provided by women, children and others in the informal network of kin and friends. The ability of male small-scale producers to sell their products cheaply under competitive conditions requires that women's and children's work within the small-scale enterprise go completely unaccounted for or be given a lesser value in the computation of labour costs, as compared to adult males (Heyzer, 1986:5).

The fact that so many women are a part of the informal economic sector, is in large part due to the ease with which women's labour can be exploited in comparison to that of men. Moreover, the displacement of women's labour in agriculture, for instance, by technological advances made in this area, has led to a significant rise in migration levels for women. Most of the women entering, either the expanding sex-trade in Thailand or other forms of informal activity, are daughters of farmers uprooted from rural areas. In Southeast Asia, young women today form the major portion of the rural-urban drift.

Statistics on migration in Thailand (Mueke, 1981; Whyte & Whyte, 1982; Arnold & Piampi, 1984; Shaw & Smith, 1984; Heyzer, 1986; Archavanitkul, 1987; Konjing & Wangwacharakul, 1990; Mills, 1990), have demonstrated that migration has been highly selective: the highest rate occurring among single persons ages 15-25. There is a higher rate of movement for young women than for young men under the age of 20. Young rural women, statistically, are more likely to move to Bangkok, as there is a greater demand for certain kinds of female services - for example, domestic labour, masseuses, prostitutes and entertainers in nightclubs.

To comprehend the causes of migration, especially the current sex-selective migration, is of course, a complex task. Usually migration patterns are related to limited possibilities for employment in the rural areas, displacement and dissatisfaction. The issue of sex-selective migration, however, does not lend itself so easily to generalizations. At minimum, efforts to explain these changing patterns of migration in Thailand must begin by placing women's work within the context of wider economic changes taking place in the country. In other words, we must link agrarian structures in which women are located to national economic structures, in order to better understand the nature of the labour surplus being created, and the subsequent development of a labour market which can only absorb a small number of the available

labour force. Consequently, those that are not absorbed in the labour market, are forced to survive from various forms of subsistence employment; almost all of which is located in the realm of the informal economic sector. Furthermore, we must come to discern the types of employment opportunities available to women in the formal sector, whether this employment is segregated by sex or whether employment available to women is considered primarily unskilled and low-paying. As well, we must come to recognize what sorts of discriminatory legal and cultural policies, especially concerning educational opportunities, work to exclude women from the semi-skilled, skilled and higher-paying jobs, and what types of organizations are available to women to combat this discrimination. More importantly, we must understand why men in the formal sector have been able to rise to the status of self-employed and even small-scale employer while women with the same skills and education have not. The principal areas to concentrate on, therefore, are the agro-industries, textiles, electronics, and tourism (which will be dealt with extensively in the next chapter). Initially, though, having insight into the Thai sex-selective migration patterns is necessary.

Migration Patterns in Thailand:

The growth in female migration in Thailand has brought to light the need to conduct extensive research in this area. Today, women outnumber men migrants by a wide margin. Migration as a phenomenon, however, is not new to Thailand; migration to Bangkok and other Thai urban areas has been occurring steadily since the 1950s. The first migrants were predominantly male, coming to Bangkok for seasonal employment and ending up mostly as pedicab drivers. The onset of massive migration in the 1950s, interestingly enough, coincides with the first attempts at urbanization and industrialization in Thailand. Given that migration patterns coincide with the beginnings of Thai economic growth, female migration patterns, as well as that of males, must be viewed in terms of the overall urbanization and development strategies adopted in Thailand in the past four decades.

From the 1960s to 1970s, corresponding with the first, five year economic development plan, 1 out of every 8 persons or 6.3 percent of the entire Thai populace became a lifetime migrants. In and of themselves, these figures do not appear to mean much. Considering, however, that during the same time frame the population in Thailand had increased by 31 percent while overall migration rose by 125 percent, these numbers

begin to create a very different picture. This rise in migration, argue Arnold and Piampiti (1984), was accompanied by an overall shift in the sex composition of migrants. Between the years 1955 and 1960, 70 000 males from various regions of Thailand had migrated to Bangkok. At the same time, 60 000 females made the same move (many of the women migrating with their husbands). By 1965, the numbers of male and female migrants were becoming dramatically altered. That is, between 1965 and 1970, 145 000 males and 153 000 females left their provincial homes for the apparent employment opportunities in Bangkok. By 1978, female migration dominance was becoming even stronger, as females consistently outnumbered male migrants from every region of Thailand. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, migration patterns have shifted to the point that now almost all of the migrant population of Thailand is female. Female migration was, and still is, highest amongst young women between the ages of 15 and 24.²²

²²As significant as the female migration patterns are within Thailand, they are even more significant if we consider the numbers of young women leaving Thailand for employment elsewhere in Asia (Japan, South Korea), or the Middle East. In 1989, "...more than US\$1 billion flowed into Thailand through official channels from the country's overseas workers. In all cases the real value of remittances probably far outstripped that recorded in government statistics" (do Rosario, 1992:21).

According to some economists though, the large amounts of remittances flowing into labour-exporting countries such as Thailand, does little to contribute to the overall development

It is difficult to characterize the typical female migrant, as little is known about her; Thai statistics are appallingly inadequate in this area. What is known, is that the vast majority of female migrants are unmarried and are travelling to Bangkok, or other Thai urban centres, for primarily two reasons: either to further their education or to find employment. According to Archavanitkul (1987:527), female migration consists disproportionately of two types of women; those with the above average education who move to attend school or following the completion of their schooling,

of the country. The problem, as Demitri Papademetriou, a US Department of Immigration policy maker, sees it is that little of the remitted money is actually directed into productive investment. "Studies have found that this money is mostly spent paying off debts, purchasing food and clothing and paying for medical care and education. Those with the money left over tend to buy land and housing or use it to start small scale enterprises. Not much is invested in ways that directly increases the country's capitals stock" (do Rosario, 1992:21). The economic benefits of labour-exporting migration to individuals, however, cannot be easily discounted. There is no doubt that today some Thais live better predominantly because of the international labour migration.

It is interesting to note that the US Department of Immigration does not consider education, medical care and the provisions of food and shelter to be "**productive**" economic activities. It is expected that rather than providing the necessary basic needs for their families, Thai women should invest their remittance into entrepreneurial type endeavour. If Thai women build small businesses, instead of feeding, clothing and sheltering their families, they would then merit more appreciation. For additional information on Thai international migration, see: Louise do Rosario, "**Toilers of the East**" in Far Eastern Economic Review, April 1992, Vol. 155, #13; and Salamat Ali, S. Kamaluddin and Hamish McDonald "**Lure of the Gulf**" in Far Eastern Economic Review, April 1992, Vol. 155, #13.

and young women with no formal education. Both types of women, nonetheless, have the same objective - to find suitable employment. This then, brings us to the wider question of the economic opportunities available to women once they arrive in the urban areas of Thailand.

In the studies by Arnold & Piampi (1984), Archabnitkul (1987) and Mills (1990), it was discovered that those females who were under the age of twenty-five and unmarried were more likely to be economically active than women who were divorced and with children. Even though most young women did find jobs in Bangkok, according to the same studies, this did not mean that the employment opportunities available to them made full use of their abilities. As many as 55 percent of the recent female migrants to Bangkok became involved, in one way or another, with the service sector.

[T]he Survey of Migration in Bangkok metropolis has found that well over half of female migrants take jobs as service, sport, and recreation workers while more than one-quarter become crafts workers, production process workers and labourers. Although 84 percent were farmers before coming to Bangkok, fewer than 1 percent were able to work on farms...even though 13 percent of all women in Bangkok metropolis were farmers (Arnold & Piampi, 1984:153).

As little statistical information as there is on female migrants in Thailand, even less information exists in regards to their adjustment to migration. From what is known, it appears that is not difficult for female migrants with

little education to find employment. Yet, the fact that most of this employment is in the low-wage category, does indicate that economic hardships may be prevalent for Thai women migrants. A large majority of the young women in Bangkok indicated that employment was very important to them, as their primary purpose for coming to Bangkok was to earn money to send to their families. Some 45 percent of rural female labour in Bangkok work essentially to have enough money to send back home (Arnold & Piampi, 1984;156). Consequently, given the type of pressure put on young women to succeed following migration to urban centres, they have come to have lower wage aspirations, further explaining why work, in most cases, tends to be abundant for them. As well, most of these women already come from economically depressed regions, thus, the range of job possibilities for them at home, are as limited as they are in Bangkok. For many of the above noted reasons, research by Arnold & Piampi (1984), Archabnitkul (1987) and Mills (1990) has demonstrated that young migrant female labour is more likely than their male counterparts, or other more highly educated females, to accept menial or degrading jobs (for example, prostitution).

The relationship between migration and employment in Thailand, or in most of Southeast Asia for that matter, has not been extensively developed. Results from Thailand, according to the work of Shaw and Smith (1984), do illustrate,

however, that there are more migrant females in the Thai labour force than non migrant females. Regardless, though:

It should be emphasized that the concept of labour-force participation is difficult to measure and that economic activities of women are seriously under reported in census data....Underreporting may be due...to respondent's genuine belief that certain economic activities of females do not qualify as labour-force activities (Shaw & Smith, 1984:298).

For the most part, family status has a significant impact on whether or not female labour force participation will be honestly reported. For instance, if the employment of the young migrant woman has the effect of increasing the status of the family in the village, it is promptly reported to researchers. If, by the same token, women are involved in informal economic sector activity, such as prostitution, their families will rarely give out that information; although recent years have seen some improvements in this area. As a result, providing any sort of concrete analysis on the subject of female migrant labour force participation has been difficult during the best of times.

In Thailand, several factors affect the entry of migrant women into the labour force. First, in many instances it may be simply a question of supply and demand. Most notably, the demand for male labour has a significant affect on the labour of women. The more abundant the male labour,

the less likely are women to be able to find employment.²³ In most cases, as it is assumed on the part of employers that women are not the "primary" breadwinners, it becomes more important to hire men in times of need than women. Second, the lower the aspirations of female workers, the more likely are they then to find employment. The informal economic sector tends to have a fairly high absorption capacity, especially where women are concerned. Thus, accepting any form of employment within the informal sector, allows women to participate in the labour force at least in a marginal capacity. Third, one factor that will usually facilitate female labour force participation is the willingness to accept unskilled and low-paying jobs. Thailand, has one of the highest rates of female labour force participation of all Asian countries. Its export-oriented growth strategies and

²³A previously overlooked problem on the effect of women's labour force participation, has been the recent migration of peoples from Burma, Indochina, Laos and Vietnam. Currently (Dec. 1993), there are 43 939 immigrants from Indochina, 32 221 Lao peoples (of whom 28 000 are hill-tribe people), 11 603 Vietnamese and 115 Cambodians residing in Thailand, most illegally. The report by the Far Eastern Economic Review, revealed that although most of the Indochinese claim to be political refugees, most in effect, have come to Thailand for economic reasons. "The report says the illegal Burmese workers" for instance, "are mainly involved in farming, mining, charcoal production and construction. They are popular with employers who pay them less than the national minimum wage, which deprives Thais of jobs" (Tasker, 1993:27).

For further information on the issue see: Rodney Tasker, "Last Refuge" in Far Eastern Economic Review, Dec. 1993, Vol. 156, #50.

longing for Nicdom have allowed for 60-70 percent of Thai women to enter the labour force. Needless to say, most Thai women are not bearing the fruits of rapid industrialization. Fourth, is the issue related to female headed households. In families where women are the sole breadwinners, the likelihood of labour force participation, as well as migration from rural centres, is significantly increased. Women in female headed households, are in all instances more willing to accept any form of employment, regardless of their education and how demeaning or tedious the job may be. On the other hand, single women with high levels of education tend to have the highest unemployment rate of all Thais (Archavanitkul, 1987:531).

In terms of employment availability, there appears to be a heavy concentration of female migrants in service sector related activities. As illustrated by Shaw and Smith (1984), 38 percent of Thai female migrants are employed by the service sector and in related activities; such as cooks, maids, and other form of domestic service. This sector has tended to have a notable labour absorption capacity, and has therefore played a pivotal role in migration. Production and other related work has also been significant in absorbing substantial numbers of female migrants. Some one-fifth of all female migrants have been employed in some capacity by this

sector.²⁴

Males, in contrast, were not likely to be found in domestic service, and in very limited numbers, in production type employment.

Much of Thailand's past and current economic development has been highly dependent on the labour of the aforementioned women, whether they were employed in domestic and related services, or in extreme cases, as entertainers or companions for both local and foreign males. The ease with which women will find employment in Bangkok is contingent on whether they are willing to accept various sorts of low-paying jobs. One of the fundamental reasons behind women's acquiescence in entering into low-wage employment, and in this case I am referring to women lacking in educational opportunities, is that women, especially women from rural

²⁴It is interesting to note that in studies published on industrialization and development, it has been determined that child labour force participation increases with that of female labour force participation. "[W]hen women work children also work because they are working in the same settings and there are no alternative settings". Furthermore, "[i]t was found that as the proportion of women in the labour force increases, the proportion of children in the labour force increases....[R]esults...show that it is not dependence that influences child labour, but urbanization" (Drenovsky, 1992:185,192). With increased capitalist development, child labour force participation tends to occur later in life, as there are more possibilities to continue education. This does not mean, however, that it diminishes significantly. For additional discussion see, Cynthia K. Drenovsky "**Children's Labour Force Participation in the World System**" in Journal of Comparative Family Studies, Vol. XX III, #2, Summer 1992.

areas, have spent centuries involved in agricultural labour for which they have never been financially remunerated. Women in Thailand today, as in the past, according to the United Nations, represent anywhere between 60 and 80 percent of the unpaid agricultural labour force (Straudt, 1983:2). Contrary to the perception that the Thai policy makers would like us to have, Thailand today remains very much a rural country, greatly dependent on family food production for its survival. With the increasing rate of economic development, many families, however, have been displaced from their homes in rural areas and have been forced into migration. Understanding women's labour as it relates to the agricultural sector, is as significant today as it was twenty to thirty years ago. Indeed, a great deal of economic growth in Thailand takes place because women have remained uneducated, unskilled - by male standards at least - and unpaid for their labour in agricultural production.

Thai Women, Agriculture and Development:

A significant proportion of people in Thailand live in rural areas and depend on food production for family consumption needs, and on the extra funds from the sale of its surplus. Women are an integral part of agricultural production, as they are involved in storage, crop processing, trade and other agri related income generating activities. Nonetheless, even with the attention paid in the literature to agriculture and its related activities, women - who represent some one-third of all heads of households in rural areas - are often left out of discussions concerning development of agri-production. The prevailing economic development schemes in Thailand tend to favour men. As a result, most of the capital-intensive development strategies have forced women out of income-earning labour in the agricultural sector. Moreover, with the increased levels of manufacturing aimed at export in Thailand, women in rural areas have also been losing their traditional income-generating activities, such as the making and selling of crafts. Rural women, who depend on agriculture for their livelihood, are typically the first to be forgotten, when Nicdom lies on the horizon for the Thai elite.

Women's access to credit in continuing farm production

has always been less than that of men in Thailand. Women who are the sole breadwinners for their families, face even more acute problems when it comes to being able to secure loans. Planners and bank officials blatantly discriminate against women, as they whole heartedly accept that men are the sole providers for their families, and that modernization and development hinges entirely on men assuming productive roles in society. The fact that women are the greatest source of unpaid labour in agri-production, in any county in the world, escapes most of those who flagrantly benefit from the status-quo.

In areas where development programs do exist for women, they are usually geared towards women not as economic actors, but in their roles as wives and mothers. Only sometimes do these programs go so far as to accept women's traditional home economics as a valid contributor to overall development. Unfortunately, though, given the fact that significant gaps exist in educational opportunities for men and women, and until that situation is remedied in Thailand, little can be done to advance the cause of women in agricultural production. The consequence of this, as undesirable as it may be, is that men acquire disproportionate access to, and control over, economic resources, information and income-generating opportunities. Hence, rural development, the sort embraced in Thailand, not only ignores

women as the integral contributors to economic growth, but also tends to increase the already existing disparities between the sexes.

Of even greater concern, is the effect that technological advances have had on women in agriculture. According to Kathleen Straudt (1983:3), the invention of new technologies in agri-industries, have either bypassed or belatedly addressed the traditional income generating activities of women. However, since the impact of technological change in agriculture has varied with the type of technology adopted by the rural community and with the socio-economic structure of the particular family, it has, thus, difficult to provide adequate analysis in this respect.

Some broad generalizations, though, can still be made regarding the affects of technology on the status of Thai women involved in agricultural projects.

In general, new technologies employed in Thai agriculture have largely been found in rice farming .

Most technology packages adopted include high-yielding varieties, fertilizer and pesticides, double cropping practices and farm mechanization. The economic consequences of these technologies are apparently in the form of increased yield, greater farm output, change in the structure of input use, and change income and income distribution (Konjing & Wangwacharakul, 1990:451).

Traditionally, in Thailand, the head of the family (predominantly the male) takes on the main responsibilities

for farm and heavy household work. The wife, on the other hand, is responsible for housekeeping, child-rearing, washing and cooking. Children in rural communities are also expected to contribute their labour to farm production as soon as they are old enough. While children are of school age, they assist their families by taking care of farm animals and helping with light housekeeping. Prior to the employment of new technologies, children were considered a major source of the family's labour, and were therefore kept on the farm rather than allowed to attend school.

With new changes and the modernization of rural communities, the role of children has shifted from that of the family's main source of labour to that of other light farm and household duties. With their relatively small role in mechanized farming, together with increases in household income, children in rural areas have now begun to have higher educational standards. This change has also contributed to overall migration patterns, as the few universities that do exist in Thailand, are found in urban centres. This conclusion is supported by the study of Konjing and Wangwacharakul (1990), who have discovered that overall, mechanized farms have greater income potential and fewer children employed in farm labour.

The other significant change that has occurred with mechanization and modernization of Thai rural farms, has to do

with changes in family decision-making practices. Although male heads of households still have the liberty to make final decisions, women have begun to participate more equally in this process.

In particular, in the mechanized village, the family's joint decision making exists in both rice farming and the adoption of new technology. These imply that farmers who are family heads in the modernized community have liberalized their attitudes and role in decision making by increasing their acceptance of the role and opinion of other members in the family, particularly those of the younger generation who are better educated....Such a tendency of change is quiet strong in the case of small farms in which the family head has to travel temporarily for part-time off-farm jobs and thus must let his wife...take care of farm and family (Konjing & Wangwacharakul, 1990:477).

The major impact of technology on Thai women, notwithstanding some differences in the decision making patterns of the family, have had to do both with displacing women's labour from rural agri-production, and with the resulting changes in the value ascribed women in rural society. In the past, it was customary for both men and women to share most of the farm work: both would plough, sow and act as midwives. "Women raised chickens. Grandmothers look[ed] after home and infants while the husband, wife and older children work in the fields" (Whyte & Whyte, 1982:152). Traditionally, as was previously pointed out by Mies (1986), as girls were raised to be housewives and mothers, women were viewed as at least of equal importance in society as men,

mostly because of their reproductive capacity and their role as family nurturers. A woman's reproductive success was considered economically vital to the survival of the family. The more children the woman bore, the more were likely to survive to go on and work in the fields; and thus, through their labour directly contributing to the income potential of the family. These values, argues Marjorie Mueke (1981), were dominant until about a generation or two ago.

Many of the traditions that are associated with...Thai ethnic identity have directly promoted daughter's economic contributions to their families. Through the custom of uxori-local residence at marriage, daughters brought needed young adult male labour into the family. By bearing as many children "as nature provided", daughters provided for future labour and maintenance of the family's spirit. These traditions thus ascribed special importance to women in society (Mueke, 1981:55).

With the unparalleled changes in Thai demographic and economic profiles, the demand and respect for female reproductive abilities has decreased. Women's role as the producers of family labour has become less vital in modern Thai society. This is because, first, biologically the reproductive capacity of women has increased with the advent of technology. Women are living longer, and as such, are being able to bear children for longer periods of time. Secondly, the dramatic decline in infant mortality rates and the lesser decline in the maternal mortality, have resulted in greater reproductive efficiency of women and a larger

proportion of children reaching adulthood. And thirdly, new economic costs are now associated with childbearing.

Modernization has made formal education almost universal, and made a self-subsistence lifestyle increasingly impractical. New needs for schooling, clothing, transportation, food and supplies have transformed children from producers to consumers. The traditional goal of "two children in three years" held for today's grandmother, but today's mothers want only as many children as they can afford to raise well in a cash economic system (Mueke, 1981:58).

In addition, progressive deterioration of the traditional Thai value system, has meant the loss of direct ownership of houses and agricultural land for women; further weakening the social status of women in agricultural societies. The current land scarcity in Thailand has significantly altered the peasant lifestyle of Thai families. No longer are self-subsistence farms possible, as improved technology has raised farm income levels and productive efficiency. The failure to define women's domestic activities as an enabling function for agricultural production, not only reduces the production potential for women, but also serves to keep them economically powerless - forcing them into a relationship of dependence with their spouse. Yet, women spend a great deal of their time in menial labour activities, which even on mechanized farms, contributes either directly or indirectly to overall farm production. A case in point, is the provision of water, which is essential for family

survival. Not only is water directly necessary for the utilization of many improved agricultural technologies - for example, water for irrigation, for mixing chemicals, for livestock and poultry - but a significant proportion of most women's day is spent carrying water for domestic needs as well. This time, could otherwise be applied to more productive activities.

As previously noted, access to relevant technologies is a source of great problem for women. Most of the technology in farm production in Thailand is directed at cash crops, crops that are controlled by men, and to which women have little access. Agricultural research tends to work in a similar manner. As it is aimed at improving cash crop production, newly developed technologies are, therefore, distributed and/or are purchased by men; hence, excluding women from both their use and the profits they generate. Women, however, are not inferior farmers, according to Fortmann (1979) and Dulansey (1979). They are as progressive in their views and abilities as their male counterparts. Women in rural areas, not only have to be practical, they also have to be expert planners and managers as well. In most instances, the life and death of a family rests entirely on the ability of a woman to manage the available resources, both during good and bad times. Daily planning not only requires that women fulfil their farming responsibilities, but that

they oversee child care and the maintenance of their homes. All of these tasks are time, and energy consuming necessitating that women prioritize their chores according to weather conditions and the availability of resources. Consequently, women are forced to make some important cost and benefit decisions. Yet, with all their expertise, they are discriminated against by administrators and bankers who rarely recognize the contribution of women to overall farm management. And in the case of female-headed households, households that are often the poorest and least able to afford credit or to take the risk in implementing new technologies, development strategies are even more discriminatory. Single women are at a greater disadvantage than single men in acquiring money. Thus they are forced to make harder decisions about the investment of their resources.

These factors, coupled with growing cultural changes, have had a grave effect on women. Without the cultural beliefs in women's reproductive capabilities, and with the loss of economic potential for women in agriculture, no longer is there a need for matrilocal residence at marriage, nor for female inheritance of the paternal house. Furthermore, in the case of divorce, a woman today has no special claim to the parental house, the claim she held for centuries, when according to tradition, it was the sanctuary of her spirit and not her husbands. As a result, when established cultural

values are forsaken, women not only lose their domestic status, but their economic leverage as well (Rayanakorn, 1990).²⁵

With the integration of women into development strategies, some recognition of their contribution (although no longer valued even in respect to tradition) to household maintenance would be acknowledged. This would be especially significant for low-income families in which various sorts of income generating activities are dependent on the participation of all family members and not just the male of the household. But, as long as economic growth is conceptualized in sex terms, little will be done to advance the status of women, whether economic or cultural, in Thailand. As such, any strategies for development that favour men and take away from women, cannot be viewed as equitable. Unfortunately, however, measurement tools and indicators on women and women's economic participation in relation to agriculture, are far from evolved. "Much of women's work is [still] unpaid, yet agricultural work, water, and fuel collection contribute to [large-scale] production for consumption and sale" (Staudt, 1983:6).

Clearly, women have, under the current development

²⁵See Rayanakorn, Kobkun "Women and the Law in Thailand and Canada". Working Paper #6, Thai Studies Project, York University, Toronto:1990.

strategies permeating the Thai country side, suffered immensely. They have lost their traditional place in Thai society. Consequently, their value as nurturers and home providers has lost its utility. Moreover, the fact that women gain very little access to technological resources in agricultural production aimed at export, is, in some sense, not surprising. In all patriarchal-capitalist societies, the control over women is a necessary condition if economic expansion is to occur. Without there being ideas of what constitutes appropriate spheres of femininity and masculinity, and the harsh enforcement of these attitudes in Thai society, segregation of work according to sex and gender roles, and thus, the exploitation of women, could not take place. Without the existence of patriarchal-capitalist relations, it is unlikely that women would represent the world's greatest source of unpaid labour in agricultural production. They would, in other words, have to be paid for their work as mothers, child-rearers, houseworkers, food processors, and the care takers of the old and sick. And until those in authority realize that without the free labour of women agricultural production would be at a stand still in Thailand, notwithstanding the fact that the majority of Thai populace would not even be able to feed itself, it is doubtful that the current state of women in Thai agriculture is to be remedied.

GENDER AND THE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THAILAND

CHAPTER IV

The integration of women into the development process as equal economic partners with men has been accepted by member governments of the United Nations since 1975. Thailand's economic and political elite, during the same period under U.N. pressure appeared, on the surface at least, to approve new strategies for development that focused resources on women. Yet, the upsurge of interest in women's relationship to the development process has been aimed, for the most part, in producing only superficial changes in Thailand. For Thai women, the process of equal integration into the economic process has been nothing more than symbolic attempts on the part of the government and development agencies to live up to a commitment made during International Women's Year (1975). Few concrete local projects have been implemented in Thailand that are aimed at recognizing the economic resource and potential of women. Most of these, are programs provided by the Thai government to educate women in childcare, sewing, and family planning (Van Esterik, 1989) -

skills that do little to encourage women's economic growth. Development agencies are at this moment merely involved in the measurement of key indicators and the creation of documents on women in the development process. As Childers points out, "this [is] the safety-value syndrome - the diversions from the business of development which propose small projects which do not threaten overall structure - the ghettos into which women's issues can be swept while the real business of development goes on" (cited in Van Esterik, 1989:1).

It is clear, nonetheless, that little has, and will, be done for women in terms of recognizing their overall contribution to the growth of the Thai economy. Under a prevailing structure of patriarchal-capitalism, a structure that presupposes the social and economic subjugation of women, there is, for all intents and purposes, no need to change the status-quo. The allocation of economic resources, remains in the hands of those who fail to appreciate women as a source of wealth. Women continue, in patriarchal-capitalist societies such as Thailand, to be viewed solely in their role as mothers, wives and the cornerstone of unpaid and cheap-waged labour. Women, in service and export-oriented industries especially, pay a heavy price for this ideology. The integration and acknowledgment of women's economic potential should be a key issue in the development process. Yet it is not. In a perfect world, it would be evident that

appreciating women's contribution to growth of the Thai economy is not simply in the interest of women, but is indispensable to the overall process of equatable development. Yet, it is unlikely to occur under a system of patriarchal-capitalist control. Regardless, though, "attention must be paid to the work of women not only because that is good for women. Those who plan development policies must also realize that it is good for development" (Papanek, 1979:147)

Thai Women, Industry and Development:

Although there has been much activity, development planning efforts still fail to recognize fully **women's actual and potential contribution to the development process or the effects of the development process on them.** The imperatives for rectifying these inadequacies are based on both economic and equity concerns. Women are key actors in the economic system yet their neglect in development plans has left untapped a potentially large economic contribution. Women represent the majority of the population yet they are concentrated at the bottom of the ladder in terms of employment, education, income and status. Both economic growth and social justice call for increased attention to the integration of women into the development process (Overholt et al., 1986:1, emphasise not in the original).

The fact that women's contribution to the development process is wholly ignored, is not surprising. Traditional; patriarchal attitudes about women have done much to encourage the current sex-segregation of employment, whether in Thailand, or elsewhere in the world. Moreover, the intense concentration of the Thai economy on export-oriented growth, has encouraged women to swell the rungs of labour intensive industries. Thai growth, as it has been noted by Linda Lim (1979, 1983), Cynthia Enloe (1983, 1989, 1990), Irwan (1989), Charoenloet (1989), Jansen (1991) and Charoenloet (1991) is contingent on women (especially uneducated, migrant women) being confined to unpaid work in the home, to marginal service jobs in the urban informal sector and to labour intensive jobs

in manufacturing. It is the official economic policy of Thailand, indicates Supachai Panichpakdi, the Democratic Party's supervisor of finances and industry, that wages be kept low in order to be competitive. "We have become less competitive because of rising wages" Supachai stated in an interview in 1993.²⁶ This type of thinking has had a great impact on women involved in the industrial sector. It is their labour that has contributed to economic growth rates of 13 percent per annum in Thailand. Most, if not all, export-oriented development strategies have depended on women being segregated in labour-intensive, yet low paying employment. This is the type of employment that is usually found in the electronics and textile industries.

Since the 1960s, "offshore sourcing" by multinational corporations (MNCs), in technologically sophisticated industries, with rapidly growing markets, has seen global expansion. This presence of MNCs in developing countries has brought with it widespread female employment, especially in Asia, but also increasingly in Latin America and Africa. "Offshore sourcing", according to Linda Lim (1979:126), refers to the location by MNCs, domiciled in the developed countries of manufacturing plants in the developing countries, specifically those producing for export. Semi-finished goods

²⁶ For further information, see "Compete or Die" in Far Eastern Economic Review August 1993, Vol 156, #31.

and intermediate components are assembled in the offshore location and then returned to the parent corporation for finishing and sale. Finished goods can also be returned to the home country, or directly exported to the third country markets. Offshore sourcing tends to concentrate in labour-intensive industries, all of which have traditionally employed women in the home countries of the MNCs, and now do so overseas.

The epitomy of offshore sourcing industry, is the electronics industry - which makes anything from clocks and radios to sophisticated intermediate products, such as the integrated circuits and micro-processors, vital in production of satellites, aircraft and computers. Faced with labour shortages and labour control problems in the 1960s, the United States was the first to move the majority of its labour-intensive production elsewhere. This move was quickly followed by the Japanese and European companies. By the mid-1970s there were perhaps a million workers employed in the offshore electronic industries in all of Asia. By the 1990s, this number has rise so significantly that it is now impossible to estimate how many people, in Southeast Asia alone, are employed by it. The one statistic that is available, is the numbers of women employed by offshore textile and electronics production. **Women comprise some 85% of the estimated 800 000 workers in the textile and garment**

industry and some 90% all labour in the electronics industry in Thailand (Far Eastern Economic Review, July 1993).

The chief attraction to MNCs in establishing offshore production in developing countries, is the abundant supply of extremely cheap, industrious and docile female labour. The wage rates for women in Thailand and for women in Canada, doing the same type of assembly line work, differs immensely. In some cases the difference could be as great as 5% of the wage of a Canadian woman (to say nothing of the comparison to male wage ratios). In addition, host countries anxious to attract foreign investment, as in the case of Thailand, have offered the MNCs a wide array of attractive incentives. Typically, these include the establishment of Free Trade or Export Processing Zones. Free Trade and Export Processing Zones (EPZ) are fully equipped industrial zones which include the necessary infrastructural facilities as well as factory buildings necessary for manufacturing; most of these are provided by the host government. Coupled with exemptions from all import and export taxes granted by the host government to MNCs for establishing their firms, developing countries have become very attractive for foreign investors. Furthermore, to reassure MNCs of the stability of Asian countries, many have introduced restrictive labour legislation, in some cases prohibiting labour organization outright. The political stability and labour docility required by multinationals, has

been provided for them by politically repressive measures, often enforced by military dictatorships and martial law regimes. This was the case in Thailand until 1992.²⁷

The electronics industry, similarly to traditional labour-intensive export manufacturing industries, such as textiles for instance, overwhelmingly employ women in the assembly process. Electronics has become the most common form of female wage labour in the modern manufacturing industry in Thailand specifically, and in Southeast Asia more generally. Why are women drawn to employment in multinational manufacturing industries and why are MNCs employing them?

²⁷With a new and considerably more liberal government coming to power in September 1992, most people in Thailand have had their hopes raised that things in the country may change for the better. "For just about the first time in Thailand's murky political history, there is an elected figure running the country who is tainted by neither corruption nor authoritarianism", according to the Far Eastern Economic Review, Aug. 1993, Vol. 156, #31.

Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai has promised to clean up the corruption in both the bureaucracy and the military of Thailand. Moreover, his economic policy, unlike that of his predecessors, has emphasised the combining of growth with a stable society; something that the 'soft authoritarianism' of Thailand had not allowed up to this point. However, to date, Leekpai has had little affect on the clean up of the mess left him by the previous government: nor has he been able to bring to justice the military leaders of the Choonhaven government responsible for the bloody attack on Bangkok demonstrators in May of 1991. A Thai tribunal has ruled that military generals remain protected by an amnesty they virtually gave themselves. As it seems, Leekpai has a lot of work ahead of him if he is to accomplish the kinds of extensive reforms he has promised.

For additional information, see Far Eastern Economic Review, Nov. 1992, Vol. 155, #47.

One answer, supplied by the Malaysian government, is that:

The manual dexterity of the oriental female is famous the world over. Her hands are small and she works fast with extreme care. Who, therefore, could be better qualified by nature and inheritance, to contribute to the efficiency of a bench-assembly production line than the oriental girl (cited in Lim, 1979:128)?

Manual dexterity and good eyesight may be prerequisites to assembly line work, however, there are other, more pressing reasons for women being employed by, and accepting employment in, electronics and textile manufacturing. Lim (1979), Jacobson (1983), Hongladarom & Guyot (1983), Guyot (1985), Pongsapich (1986), Neville, (1986) McDonald & Witayapanyanon (1986), Irwan (1989), Charoenloet (1989) and Jansen (1991) suggest that women are, for one, more amenable to accepting all types of menial employment, as their expectations for careers are not as high as that of men. And secondly, women, apparently, have a greater docility and willingness to subject themselves to the rigid discipline and tedious monotony of the assembly line. Men, on the other hand, are regarded as troublemakers, insubordinate and too restless to perform routine work. To ensure loyalty and obedience, the manufacturing sector has even gone so far as to only hire inexperienced, young women, age sixteen to twenty, most of whom are migrants from rural areas, having on average of no more than nine years of formal schooling.

The discipline and productivity questions aside, women generally, are cheaper workers than men. Women in Thailand, as in most of Southeast Asia, represent one of the cheapest sources of labour found anywhere in the world. Single women dominate low-wage employment in Thailand as they are chiefly preferred by both local and multinational employers. Given the reluctance of companies to pay for maternity leaves, and given their expectations that young women will go on to marry and thus be replaced by yet younger and cheaper labour, it is not surprising then, that Thai women are so poorly compensated for their work. In addition, to keep costs at their lowest, employers do not compete with each other by bidding on wages. They attract perspective employees by offering fringe benefits tailored to a specific sex. For example, female employees are given cooking lessons, fashion and make-up classes and are encouraged to participate in beauty contests (Van Esterik, 1989:11). These methods, coupled with effective controls over union activities by the Thai government, have ensured that labour docility and low wages for Thai women exist for years to come.

The instability of employment in the manufacturing, export-oriented sector, such as textiles and electronics, has

been readily accepted by Thai women.²⁸ In the case of

²⁸The Thai textile and clothing industry has had to cope with adjustments to increases in local production and the changing world market. The rapid expansion of Thai fibre and garment industries in the 1980s has generated hefty revenues making it now one of the leading sources of the country's income. The rise in manufacturing of textiles has come at a price. The increase in the number of yarn and fibre manufacturers is likely to push local supply to its saturation point, while many of the newly industrializing low-labour-cost countries with large populations (ie. Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam) have begun to snatch up market shares. The supply of textiles for export is rapidly surging, as Thailand continues to establish more and more textile factories. Although the 1990s are considered to be recessionary times, Thailand has still managed to increase its textile trade; 1991 accounted for 6 550 000 million baht in textile trade.

Outside of clothing and textiles, Thailand is nurturing a budding leather and leather products industry. Conditions within the leather industry are considered buoyant, exports rising some 80 percent in the 1988-1989 fiscal year, the last statistics available. Exports represent anywhere between 20 and 40 percent of the growth rate for the industry. According to Bunluk Bunyaratankornkit, president of the Leather Club of the Association of Thai industries, "Thailand could soon become a major world leather product manufacturer centre as foreign demand has been growing rapidly" (Bangkok Post, 1988:68).

In terms of the electronics industry, Thailand has seen a major resurgence of its market share. "Thailand, with a buoyant electrical product industry, **an inexpensive...labour force** [most of whom are women] and generous government incentives, appears to overseas electrical and electronic goods manufacturers an ideal location to set up production facilities" (Bangkok Post, 1988:65, emphasis not in the original). Most of the electrical and electronic products manufactured in Thailand are Japanese; including, National, Sanyo, Toshiba and Hitachi, just to name a few. The electronics industry in Thailand has currently branched off into other, labour-intensive manufacturing markets. They are now in the process of gearing up for production of electric bulbs, neon tubes, ballasts and other smaller household gadgetry.

For more information, see: "**Plunging in With a Vengeance**", Bangkok Post Economic Review, June 1988; "**Clothed in Stylish Satisfaction**", Bangkok Post Economic Review, June

economic downturns, it is predominantly women, and not men, who experience layoffs. One of the reasons that manufacturers prefer to hire young, single women, is because there is usually a high turnover rate where they are concerned. Most will leave in a few years to marry and have children. Furthermore, the prevailing patriarchal assumptions that women's employment in wage labour is temporary, represents only a secondary income, is optional for themselves and the survival of their families, and is in fact, only pocket money, guarantees that women are the first to go during difficult, economic times. This, however, is clearly not true in cases where a second income is required by families because of the high cost of living in urban areas, or where a high proportion of males are unemployed and women are the sole breadwinners. Despite the financial burden that most Thai women experience, there is, nevertheless, a tendency to regard them as an army of reserve labour, which is easily absorbed by the informal economic sector (i.e. domestic employment) when lay offs are imminent.

1988; "Whipping Up Global Admiration", Bangkok Post Economic Review, June 1988 and Thongchai Nonthleeruk, "Textile, Clothing Industry Must Adapt Itself To Survive", Bangkok Post, 13 November, 1992, Vol. IV, #46.

Women Entrepreneurs and the Managing of Thailand:

Labour intensive industries in Thailand, especially assembly lines, are almost exclusively staffed by women. On the other hand, jobs requiring extensive physical labour, are considered the male domain; for example, fishing, construction, and mechanical repair. Supplied this information, it may appear as if all employment in Thailand is segregated by sex. This is not necessarily the case. Women in Thailand, although may have a long way to go, have, nonetheless, began to permeate management level positions. Entry into middle and upper management, though, is open to only well educated and highly skilled women. Yet, the mere fact that the rate of women climbing the corporate ladder, so to speak, is growing rapidly, should give us a sense of hope that with the expanded development and industrialization, the employment opportunities for all women in Thailand will increase. Several interesting studies, notably, that of Hongladarom and Guyot (1983), the Thai Studies Office (1985), Guyot (1985), Pongsapich (1986) and Far Eastern Economic Review (1993), all point out that currently, the appointment of female managers and CEOs, especially within MNCs, is on the whole, well received. When referring to female managers in Thailand, it must be specified that these are women with post-

secondary education, who are of Thai, Sino-Thai or Chinese origin. These are an elite group of women, and not, as previously presented, a corp of industrial working women. However, before discussing the role of women as entrepreneurs/managers in Thailand, one need be aware of the fact that there is a severe shortage of sex-specific data. All that can be provided here are some general trends and illustrations.

The bases of the argument for the revolutionary changes in Thai management have come from the hypothesis set forth by anthropologists Sharp, Skinner and Kirsch (1975:176), who argued that the pattern of occupational specialization in Thailand follows a sexual division of labour. That is, women specialize in economic type activity and men specialize in political type activity has been the widely touted argument for the entry of women into the managerial ranks in Thailand being possible, if not even necessary, for the rapid growth of its economy. The noted anthropologists favoured several explanations for this sex-segregation of occupational categories in elite Thai society: Thai males aspire to the status of monkhood, but since this is an arduous undertaking, they settle for civil service positions, as they are, too, associated with Buddhist-related values by their connection with the king. Women, on the other hand, in a highly patriarchal society, who cannot aspire to such religious

greatness, are left in control of economic resources, tied as they are to worldly attachments. The role of women, is thus relegated to what are considered "secondary" occupations. How does this ideology then, translate into modern employment opportunities?

According to the Thai Studies Office (1985:9), although the overall proportion of women executives is lower than that of men, women are, nevertheless, holding their own quite well. They have a significant share of all executive positions, some 20 percent by all accounts, and in Bangkok itself the number stands at 27 percent. Predictably, the proportion of female executives is higher in municipal areas than in rural areas, where most of the entrepreneurial enterprises are still family run firms, most likely related in one way or another to agricultural production. As far as availability of information, it is difficult to determine what types of positions women really hold in family run businesses, as they are registered in the name of the male heads of families. Even though male heads of families are listed as the proprietors of small scale family enterprises, women do generally share equally in the running and managing of the business. Unfortunately, as there is little breakdown statistically on gender, occupation and industry of occupation it is difficult to discern what types of enterprises these women are managers of and whether they occupy middle or upper

management positions.

A further complication in compiling sufficient data on the managerial occupations of women, is the fact that membership in the Association of Thai Industries is by industry and not individual member. By combining the available information from various studies, we can estimate that about 30-40 percent of Thai managers in municipal areas are women. A smaller number of these are top executives, and a larger proportion are at the departmental level. Many of the firms who provided information on their executives, were large conglomerates; for example, Bangkok Bank, National (Thai) Bank, Thai Toshiba, Thon Buri Automotive (assemblers of Mercedes-Benz) and Siam Motors (assemblers of Nissan). No obvious pattern could be observed in the type of industries managed by women. They include such "unfeminine" enterprises as the production of cement, automobiles, refrigerators, electrical appliances, radios, televisions, aluminium, and gypsum board (Thai Studies Office, 1985:10).

It is of interest to note that MNCs are more likely to employ female executives than are local firms. On the whole, one out of three high ranking executives employed by multinationals were women, by comparison to one out of eight employed by local firms. According to Guyot (1985:4), there is a tendency for MNCs to provide women with more managerial opportunities than may otherwise be available. This does

seem consistent with Lim's thesis, that capitalist penetration of multinationals into the Third World is to the advantage of women, at least in the short run.²⁹ MNCs, according to Lim, tend to be less discriminatory against women, as their rationale in recruiting managerial staff has more to do with merit and less to do with extraneous characteristics such as gender or race. The acceptance of women into managerial positions has not come with complacency on the part of Thai men. To date, there are still very few Thai female executives. It will be interesting in the future to note the extent of the resistance of Thai men to these structural changes. Unfortunately, though, given the lack of available statistical information it is not possible today to ascertain how women executives came to have their positions in Thailand, and if they experience managerial problems similar to, or different from, their male counterparts.³⁰

²⁹See Lim, Linda Y.C., "Capitalism, Imperialism, and Patriarchy: The Dilemma of Third-World Women Workers in Multinational Factories" in Nash and Fernandez-Kelly, Women, Men and the International Division of Labour, SUNY, 1983.

³⁰In the survey sponsored by the Far Eastern Economic Review, entitled Managing Asia, all indications are that management styles in Thailand between men and women are quite similar. Nor was there significant differences between the styles of Asian managers and their North American counterparts, aside from a few minor cultural disparities. In terms of financial remuneration for their work, over 90 percent of Asian female executives disagreed that men should get paid more for the same work. The number in Thailand itself was a little lower, where 18 percent of women agreed that it was alright to pay a family man a higher wage than

It is appropriate to assume that educational opportunities have a significant relevance to employment possibilities. Providing education to women is dually important, as they are constrained in their advancement by both cultural and legal provisions. Until recently, and only with the election of a semi-democratic government in 1992, has the question of education been addressed in Thailand. Previously, education opportunities were only available to Thai elites who could afford it. Thailand has always maintained a strong traditions of making education highly competitive, resting on the assumption that quality is far more important than quantity. "For instance, before the expansion of private universities and the pursuit of overseas training [1979], ...7% of Thai high school graduates entered university" (Duggan, 1991:145). Only a small proportion of the 7 percent were women. By 1989, the participation rate of high school graduates in university education rose to 23 percent. This is still a relatively small number by comparison to European and North American standards.

Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Amnuay Viravan has been successful in sounding the alarm in relation to providing affordable education to the Thai populace. He stated: "In the

single women.

For further discussion, see "**Managing Asia**", Far Eastern Economic Review, Sept. 1993, Vol. 156, #37.

past Thailand has grown because of cheap labour and abundant resources but in the future growth will depend on education and technology" (Bangkok Post, Dec. 1992). Thailand must, if it intends to succeed in a highly complex market place, expand its national education program. This expansion in education, for all intents and purposes, has to include women, and not simply women from wealthy backgrounds. If Thailand is to compete, since much of its industrial complex is established on the labour of women, it must, therefore, provide them with educational opportunities that exist outside of cooking classes and beauty pageants. This may mean having to alter the Thai constitution. Under the current structure, Thai women do not enjoy equal protection under the law. They are not accorded a status of a disadvantaged group, as women are in Canada, for instance: "Thai Constitutional law has failed even to achieve a minimum standard of formal legal equality between men and women" (Rayanakorn, 1990:7).³¹ This absence of an equal protection clause, leaves Thai women vulnerable to discrimination, with no actual legal basis to challenge it. This has been especially evident in respect to education and employment. It is legitimate for Thai employers to advertise jobs for which being a male is a prerequisite. By the same token, not accepting women into higher educational strata, is

³¹See Section 23 of the 1978 Constitution of Thailand.

also acceptable.

The women of Thailand, however, are not without hope by any means. Social and economic changes brought on by rapid industrialization have given momentum to serious reconsideration about what constitutes equitable employment, wages and treatment of employees. Since the early 1990s, hundreds of thousands of Thai workers have went on strikes, demanding better wages and working conditions. Most of these have occurred within the labour-intensive industries, where women are the primary source of labour.³² It seems, thus, that with the advance of industrialization, coupled with the changing of migration patterns, the Thai female labour force has awoken to the need for bettering their condition.

³²For current information, see: Blake, Myrna "Constrains on the Organization of Women Industrial Workers" in Women in the Urban and Industrial Workforce: Southeast and East Asia, Manila, 1992; "Fields of Factories Changing Employment Patterns Help Unions" in Far Eastern Economic Review, Nov. 1992, Vol. 155, #44; "Back to Work Organized Labour Seeks to Restore its Influence" in Far Eastern Economic Review, Nov. 1992, Vol. 155, #44 and "Rendered Surplus" in Far Eastern Economic Review, July 1993, Vol. 156, #28.

Thai Women, Development and Informal Sector Activity:

One of the fundamental contributions that women make to the growth of the Thai economy is through their involvement in informal sector activity. This activity includes, for the most part, domestic employment, unwaged farm labour, and of particular importance in Thailand, employment as prostitutes, masseuses, and nightclub entertainers. The burgeoning of the tourism industry in Thailand has come to the attention of scholars with the establishment of American military bases in the country during the Vietnam War. This industry has since grown to unprecedented levels, accounting for a substantial portion of Thai foreign exchange earnings. For instance, in the late 1980s, the net income from tourism accounted for about 24.2 billion baht annually in comparison to 23.6 billion baht from textile production, the second highest revenue earner at that time (Elliot, 1987:55). Thai tourism, however, is highly dependent on the trade in female sexuality. That is, men come to Thailand on vacation not for the scenery, but for the company of its women. Yet, this industry, is promoted by the I.M.F. and the World Bank as a proven strategy for development. There is probably no greater example of the kind of contribution women make to economic growth than that of sex-tourism. If not for the sexual exploitation of young

women in the name of economic growth, it is doubtful that Thailand could call itself the Fifth Tiger.

Since its beginnings, tourism has been a powerful force in the process of global integration. More than any other form of investment or capital accumulation, the tourism industry has symbolized a country's entry into the world community. Host country's policies that promote tourism necessarily imply its willingness to meet the criteria of foreigners who desire political stability and safety. As attractive as this strategy of development is for Thai elites, the reality for the labour force within the country are quite horrifying. For example, the industry of tourism is highly contingent on low-skilled labour. And inevitably, to minimize costs, capital has always defined as "unskilled" those jobs that can be considered women's work. These are the jobs that women apparently have the know-how to do, and can thus perform easily. As women in patriarchal societies are presumed to be naturally adept at cleaning, washing, serving and cooking, and since tourist employment needs precisely these jobs to be performed, by defining these as women's work, costs can be kept at a minimum. Cynthia Enloe (1989) contends that nearly seventy-five percent of workers within the tourist industry are women. What this does, in the long run, in terms of overall development, is create a nation of waitresses and barmaids.

These, however, are not the most brutal aspects of the tourism industry. It is the practice of sex tourism, that has had the most horrifying effect on women, by fostering a global sex trade in which women (and children) are the predominant victims. To illustrate this point, take for example Thailand: Bangkok has approximately 119 massage parlours, 119 barbershops-cum-massage parlours and teahouses, 97 nightclubs, 248 disguised brothels, 394 disco-restaurants (Enloe, 1989:36), approximately 800 000 commercial sex workers and an estimated 200 000 child prostitutes (Van Esterik, 1991:141). The statistics for the entire country are even more staggering; there are some 2 820 000 prostitutes in all of Thailand, 2 000 000 are adult women and about 800 000 are young girls under the age of sixteen (Sitthiraksa, 1991:94).³³ All of these provide, or in other words sell, sex to male customers. The women who are forced to work here as prostitutes are primarily migrants from the rural areas of Thailand, where agricultural development strategies have left them marginalized. Having little education, and subsequently, no real skills to offer perspective employers, young women

³³There is a ongoing debate on the number of prostitutes in Thailand. There are, for all intents and purposes, no reliable estimates. The Thai Ministry of Public Health down plays the numbers, whereas the estimates provided by various non-governmental organizations (NGO) and End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT) religious groups are much higher. It is likely that the real numbers lie somewhere in between.

have few choices but to enter into informal sector economic activity; either as domestics, for which there is inadequate remuneration, or as prostitutes. On average, a "beautiful" masseuse can earn up to 25 000 baht (US\$1250) a month, while a bonded girl (one that works to pay off the debts incurred by her family) is lucky to see 25 baht (US\$20) a month. "Normally, most prostitutes have to service 3-5 customers per night 60-150 customers per month. However, this number will double or triple during the holiday seasons such as Christmas, New Year, Chinese New Year and the traditional Thai New Year" (Sitthiraska, 1991:95). Cynthia Enloe insists, therefore, that:

Sex tourism is not an anomaly; it is one strand of the gendered tourism industry. While economists in industrialized societies presume that the 'service economy' with its explosion of feminised job categories follows a decline in manufacturing, policy makers in many Third World countries have been encouraged by international advisers to develop service sectors before manufacturing industries mature. Bar hostesses before automobile workers, not after (1989:36).

What these sorts of policies have been successful in accomplishing, is the evolution of a network of male travellers to developing countries, especially in Southeast Asia, with the specific intention of purchasing the sexual services of indigenous women. For sex tourism to flourish on this unprecedented scale in Thailand specifically, and elsewhere in Asia more generally, requires that on the one

hand, women in the developing world are economically desperate enough to have to enter prostitution, and on the other, for men from affluent countries to assume that women are submissive, passive, lack economic vitality, and are theirs for exploiting. Arguably, sex tourism is an important element of the Thai domestic as well as international economic system; it underpins a socially condoned structure of patriarchy. Without there being certain ideas about masculinity and femininity - and the harsh enforcement of these in patriarchal-capitalist societies - it would be impossible to sustain, for any length of time, the present economic structure. The very nature of international tourism, based as it is on the sexual services of women, necessitates the existence of a patriarchal social order. To make significant strides in understanding the sex trade phenomena occurring in Thailand, nonetheless, requires that we look to the national and international economic forces that drive women into employment as sexual servants.

According to anthropologist Penny Van Esterik (1989:2), the chief forces influencing Thai women today are industrialization and international tourism. The link between these is not necessarily direct, yet it does influence employment opportunities available to women. An often ignored issue concerning gender, especially in Thailand, is the connection that exists between prostitution and development

strategies. Prostitution, in and of itself, is not a new phenomena in Thailand. What is considered new, is the extent of Thai prostitution stemming primarily from the tourism industry; a strategy of development that is wholly supported by the Thai political and economic edifice. Although prostitution is in fact an old form of income generating activity, it has, nevertheless, only began to flourish on such an unprecedented scale since the penetration of Thailand by international capital. There is a history of prostitution in Thailand going back as far as the brothels of Ayutthaya (14th to 18th century). The Thai form of prostitution is unique, however, in that it has not risen out of a 'geisha' system as in Japan or the temple prostitution of India. Thai women serviced, predominantly, commoners and not high ranking officials, and only rarely were owned per se.

An additional form of prostitution that developed in Thailand was the servicing of Chinese men, imported in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century for tin mining, building railroads and other menial labour. Often, traffickers kidnapped young Chinese girls and brought them to Thailand, where they were placed in brothels or bought by individual men. By the 1930s, "...there were 151 licensed brothels in Bangkok--126 Chinese, 22 Siamese, and 3 Vietnamese" (cited in Van Esterik, 1991:139). With the Vietnam War and the rest and recreation business associated

with American GIs on Thai bases, the commercial facet of prostitution increased, bringing with it more massage parlours, nightclubs and bars.

American GIs obtained mia chao or rented wives to entertain them during their rest and recreation in Bangkok. [An] estimate[d]...70 000 soldiers were entertained on seven day leaves in Bangkok in 1968-69. Soldiers were accommodated in new hotels and swimming pools, air-conditioning, 24-hour coffee shops, massage parlours, and bars, all at very cheap prices. Between 1967 and 1971, the taxes paid by massage parlours, nightclubs, hotels and restaurants amounted to 360 million baht. The GIs changed the public display of prostitution. While the Thai and Chinese prostitution was relatively discreet, GIs treated Thai prostitutes like 'girlfriends', and walked openly with them arm-in-arm down main streets (Van Esterik, 1991:140).

During the early seventies, Thailand, with its burgeoning of both prostitutes and entertainment places, saw an unparalleled rise in sex tourism, which is, for all intents and purposes, more blatant and more extensive than anywhere else in the world. The organized tours of Japanese, European, American and Arab men, allows them to choose vacation sex-partners from magazines and travel brochures. Tourists, through their travel agents or weekly travel advertisements, may also pick up information detailing the wide range of sexual services, costs, locations and specialties available in Bangkok and other tourist resorts. Single men especially, are offered publications such as the Single Man's Travel Guide to Southeast Asia by their airlines, hotels and travel agencies. For instance, a brochure put out by the Rosie Reisen Travel

Agency of Germany notes:

Thailand is a world full of extremes and the possibilities are unlimited. Anything goes in this exotic country, especially when it comes to girls. Still it appears to be a problem for visitors to Thailand to find the right places where they can indulge in unknown pleasures...Rosie has done something about this. For the first time in history you can book a trip to Thailand with exotic pleasures included in the price (Phongpaichit, 1981:16).

Moreover, "[i]n Bangkok, the Grace Hotel is famous for catering to the sexual demands of Arab clients. The Hotel has become the place where women gather daily and bargain their prices with clients. The Hotel gets a percentage of this" (Heyzer, 1986:59).

These organized tours have decreased in frequency since the late 1980s, thanks to the protest of many women's groups and non governmental agencies who brought sex tourism to light in international media. However, those protesting the sale of sex in Thailand face harsh criticism from, of all places, the government, tourist officials and the police, all of whom benefit financially from the prostitution of young Thai women. The Thai government may be embarrassed by Bangkok's reputation as the "Brothel of Asia", but it is not willing to jeopardize the revenues that the sale of sex brings to Thailand. It is, after all, the country's third largest earner of foreign exchange. "The benefits of tourism", according to the late director of the Tourist Authority of

Thailand, Col. Somchai Hiranyakit, "are greater than the disadvantages" (Mingmongkol, 1981:24). In 1993 alone, 6 million tourists came to Thailand, 54 percent of them from other East Asian countries such as Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong (Asian Wall Street Journal, Feb. 1994:8). By all estimates, it takes only nine foreign tourists to create a new service job in Thailand (The Economist, 1987:8), not to mention related employment associated with informal sector activity.³⁴

³⁴The sex tourist industry has now given rise to a spinoff industry in Thailand - that of the mail-order bride. According to Thai statistics, "in 1986, 4 907 Thai women married West German men, compared to 4 371 in 1985 and 2 258 in 1980" (Sitthiraksa, 1991:100). Mail order companies conduct their business openly in Thailand, advertising in newspapers and popular magazines. The information provided by women who reply to the advertisements is distributed to male clients. The women are then brought to the country of origin of the male client, where the man can make his selection. That is, he can keep the woman, send her back or exchange her for a new one. Male clients have up to three month to test out their purchase, they can go through as many women as they wish, since satisfaction is guaranteed by the mail-order bride business.

From the women's experience, they not only ha[ve] problems with the language, but also with the male's 'psychological disorderliness' and their 'husbands' regarding them as goods' from which they were determined to receive 'maximum benefit'. As women were 'products from the catalogue', it is not at all surprising that clients would try to obtain maximum benefit from them, even pushing them to prostitution in order to become profitable. One Thai women...recounted her experiences of being ordered "to put his shoe in my mouth and crawl on the floor while he was masturbating" (Sitthiraksa, 1991:100-101).

During the early 1980s the destination of most Thai mail-order brides was Europe. Now the business has begun to flourish in North America. According to the Toronto Star

One of the critical aspects of the so called "trafficking in human flesh" is the numbers of children involved. By some estimates, in Thailand alone, there are 800 000 child prostitutes. In almost all cases, they service the pedophiles of Europe, North America, Middle East and Asia (Far Eastern Economic Review, Jan. 1994; ECPAT-CANADA, 1993; Bangkok Post, Nov. 13, 1992). Thai men also indulge in child prostitution, many of whom believe that "deflowering" a young girl will revitalize their sexual potency. Many of the child prostitutes are very young, uneducated girls from Northern villages of Thailand (10 percent of child prostitutes are male). Most are sold into prostitution by their families who

(Nov. 9, 1991) and **Maclean's** magazine (March 25, 1991) there are several mail-order bride services operating in Canada. Asian women are often imported in groups of 20-30 to work in so called massage parlours in Toronto, Ottawa and Calgary. In one case, a 16 year old Asian girl had to be taken to hospital shortly following her arrival, because the managers of an "entertainment club" forced her to have intercourse with more than forty men in one night.

The trafficking in women and children has mushroomed in Thailand, unfortunately with little concern from Thai officials. The women going abroad rarely expect to be involved in prostitution, yet many are swayed into it. Having, in most cases, no real passports, not speaking the language, being under the constant supervision of unsavoury "entertainment club" owners, the majority of these young women find that they have little choice but to succumb to the wishes of those that have brought them into the country. With no visible escape, women are sold and bought at the whims of their male owners. Although slavery is not legally sanctioned in Western Europe or North America, the trade in female sexuality has demonstrated to the contrary.

For additional information see: the Arts and Entertainment Network's Investigative Report, "**The Women Trade**", or the film **The Women of Bangkok**.

can barely support themselves. Others are run-aways, and often abused children.

The most striking of these, is the participation of UN forces in the child sex trade. In a Toronto Star article (Nov. 6, 1993) it was pointed out that UN peacekeeping operations in Asia have contributed substantially to the rise in child prostitution. Fear of sexually transmitted diseases, especially AIDS, have prompted soldiers, and other male tourists, to favour "virgin" girls rather than women. A virgin can garner as much as \$400-\$700 per customer for her services. This is approximately twice the going rate for a seasoned veteran. According to the Geneva Report, the younger the child, the better, the less chance there is of contracting AIDS. A great number of the young girls servicing the UN peacekeeping troops are from Thailand, sold into prostitution by their families, or else stolen from rural Northern villages.

The fear of AIDS is very real in Thailand, some eight million Thais are at risk of contracting the disease. 400 000 to 600 000 Thais have already contracted HIV, and an estimated 35 000 will develop symptom in each of the next six years (Bangkok Post, Dec.11, 1992). The number is expanding at 600 new cases a day (Davy, 1994:A7). Thailand, with its burgeoning sex tourism industry, has one of the most explosive AIDS rates in the world. The brothels, cafes and massage

parlours are breeding grounds for the HIV virus, and with some 2 000 000 prostitutes in the country, it is not surprising that it has spilled over into the mainstream population.

Between 50 and 70 percent of Thai prostitutes are already HIV positive.³⁵

A real problem is the lack of education about AIDS in Thai society at large. Denise Davy of the Spectator, in her recent report on Thailand, suggests that not only are Thais ignorant about AIDS, many insist that women not wear condoms. Men, whether they are local Thais or tourists, are willing to pay an extra 50 to 100 baht (\$2.50-\$5 Cnd.) if a prostitute will not want any sort of protection. In the view of Penny Van Esterik (1991:143-144), the Thai government is seriously at fault for neglecting the AIDS issue. Their anxiety over a loss of revenues from tourism has led them to actually clam down on AIDS related publicity, thereby emphasizing the importance of prostitution for the tourism industry. In fact, points out Van Esterik, the international media's focus on sex

³⁵The spread of AIDS in Thailand has been so extensive, also because the majority of Thai men frequent prostitutes on a regular basis. They then, pass the virus on to their wives and girlfriends. Those women who are pregnant, in turn, pass it on to their unborn children. It is socially condoned for Thai men to visit prostitutes, the more sexually viral the man, the more respect he deserves. Furthermore, the fear of minor wives (second wives) by most women in Thai family life, prompts them to be complacent when it comes to men acquiring the services of a prostitute. It is, in the end, cheaper than having to provide for a second wife.

tourism was a real boost to Thai tourism overall; a campaign against AIDS would hardly disswade those seeking to visit Thailand's vast array of sexual servers. On the contrary, 34 percent of international tourists surveyed stated that a tough campaign on AIDS by the government would make them even more eager to return.

Many of the women's groups operating in Thailand are appalled at the government's insistence in doing so little about either prostitution or the impending AIDS crisis. Women are the ones blamed for the spread of AIDS, as they are also blamed for having to have to sell their bodies on the street. Rarely is the connection between development strategies, beauty myths and prostitution made. Yet, women have become the most important economic commodity of Thailand. Family wealth, which once dependent on the success of the son, now rests on the shoulders of young women. They are sold and bought, much like a piece of meat at the supermarket. In some respects, the sale of women is even simpler, one can bargain over the price of ones daughter, the price of meat in the supermarket is not up for debate. Daughters are sold to pay for new homes in Thailand, if they are lucky, by families who have been left marginalized by agricultural policies aimed at export. Those with non-mechanized farms are hardly able to sustain themselves, competing for profit in the market place is definitely out of reach for most of them. Young women,

ages 12 and up, are sold into prostitution as a means of paying off high debts incurred by their families in their struggle for development. The surprising part, is that young girls don't question their families (mostly their father's) decisions to sell them; they have been taught throughout the centuries to be duty-bound to their families at all costs. This includes sacrificing their bodies as well as their souls.

Young girls have become big business in Thailand. Many are tricked into prostitution with offers of well-paying restaurant and factory jobs. Many others are sold by parents who are so desperately poor that selling their daughters has become their only means to feed or house other family members (Davy, 1994:A1).

For their part, the Thai government has caught on to the importance of women as economic commodities. They vehemently promote beauty contests, encourage women to enter beauty related professions and insist on the suppression of information associated with sexually transmitted disease. Factories, especially the electronics and textile industries, are also involved in the exploitation of women's sexuality for a profit. Van Esterik contends:

Work in the garment industry producing fashionable clothes for local sale and export bears no direct relationship to prostitution. Yet the mechanisms connecting the two vocations are in place. First, many women workers are exposed to constant sexual harassment from men who hold positions of power over them. This was referred to by the English phrase "lay down or lay off". Young women can find themselves sexually exploited for no more reward than the privilege of keeping a low paying job. Second, with low wages factory women who have debts

may turn to part-time prostitution....[W]omen who lose regular factory work seek work in hotels and service industry where opportunities for prostitution are easily available. The potential advantage for women who leave factory work for prostitution must seem enormous. The monthly pay is much better for prostitutes....If women become prostitutes, they may have more resources to send home to their families as well as the opportunity to display their fashionable hairstyles, clothes, cosmetics, and jewellery they have learned to value in the factory context (1989:21-22).

Arguably, the sexexploitation of young women has become an enormous and profitable business. Whether this is done directly through prostitution, or more indirectly, through the organization of beauty contests, in some cases by factories themselves, women in Thailand have learned that the quickest route to success is to sell their bodies. This is probably the most appalling consequence of rapid economic growth insisted upon by Thai elites in their hopes of becoming the Fifth Tiger. Women are the backbone of the Thai economy, in their role as cheap wage factory workers, unpaid farm labour, domestic servants, and as unfortunate as it may be, most importantly - as prostitutes. It is highly doubtful that the tourism industry in Thailand would thrive as much as it does, if it were not for the desperation of young Thai women to earn enough to feed their families. It is also doubtful that so many young women would have to degrade themselves to this extent, if it were not for the rapid pace of industrialization, which leaves so many young women

marginalized. There are no easy solutions to this ominous problem, and until something can be done, the gender based development of Thailand is sure to continue, if not worsen.

CONCLUSION

It can be generally acknowledged that little value is accorded women's work, although women do contribute in a variety of ways to their national economies. In the words of Miralao writing for a **UNESCO** publication:

Derived from historically evolved cultural and economic structures that favour men's participation in formal economic activity while privatizing the basic human socio-economic services of women, the neglect of women's labour has had dire consequences on their status in society (Miralao, 1984:29).

Women's social gains in Thailand through their participation in informal economic activities have, by a large, been negligible. The roles allocated to women, do not fall within the recognized definitions of economic activity and are, thus, not deemed as legitimate. As a consequent, their subjugation under a pervasive system of patriarchal-capitalism is extensive. Upon entering recognized, or formal sector employment, in a patriarchal-capitalist structure, women are constrained from advancement by traditional sex-role ideologies that define a women's place in the home.

These constraints are manifest in both subtle and openly discriminatory practices. The sex-typing of occupations, for instance the payment of low wages, the institutionalization of substandard working conditions in

female dominated professions, and other similar types of discriminatory hiring and promotion policies, function to subjugate women and confine them to the bottom rungs of occupational categories. These same constraints are also evident in the denial of access to technological education and resources for women. Women, hence, are systemically displaced from technological development and any hope of equal status and empowerment in Thai society.

The debilitating effects of withholding technological resources from women, especially in Thailand, are clearly evident in the marginalization of women in the agricultural sector. The economic difficulties experienced by Thai women, whether in the agricultural, service or manufacturing sectors, are only compounded by the requisite assignment of all child rearing and household responsibilities entirely to their gender. These responsibilities necessitate an additional demand on women's time, and consequently, result in the "women's double day" scenario.

Systemically pervasive attitudes feed the existing prejudice in the already intolerant labour market, whose sole aim is to maximize profit at any cost (including human). Women in Thailand experience limited access to education and training programmes. This in turn, strictly constrains and marginalizes any role women may achieve in the formal sector labour market. In fact, women in Thailand are encouraged not

to enter career fields in science and technology, but rather, to enter service or beauty related vocations.

To date, Thailand's economic growth has been highly contingent on the exploitation of its female gender as a source of cheap labour. This has been possible in the past four decades of Thai development because women have not been empowered with equal status, as their male counterparts, in Thai society. Having to thus rely on the skills acquired in the care of the home and the rearing of children, the employment opportunities for Thai women have been extremely restricted. Over 85 percent of those involved in the textile industry are women, and women constitute some 90 percent of those employed on the production lines of electronic manufacturers. The manual dexterity, docility and the high tolerance to tedious and routine labour of Thai women have been praised the world over. But, given their status in Thai society, it is not at all surprising that women have flocked to the manufacturing sector for employment, regardless of the exploitive nature of that enterprise.

The vast majority of the women involved in menial labour in Thailand are single women migrants from the Northern countryside of Thailand. Most do not attain any more than nine years of formal schooling. This leaves them with few opportunities for employment and extremely vulnerable to the erratic nature of employment in export-oriented industries.

During the periods of economic downturns, young single women, who are expected in a system of patriarchal-capitalist control to have a man to support them, are the first to lose their jobs.

Yet, the majority of young single women in Thailand are actually supporting their families, and are not supported by them. To lose employment, as menial and degrading as it may be, represents dire consequences not only for young Thai women, but their families as well. To compensate for lost employment in the formal sector, many will enter prostitution to provide the much needed income for their families.

Thai economic growth has been so swift and expansive in the past four decades on the one hand, because women have been socially marginalized in Thai society, and on the other, because women have been economically exploited. The areas of concern for this theses have been the agricultural sector, as well as the textile and electronics industries. There are other economic spheres in which women are exploited left to be examined; however, it was not possible to analyse these areas at this time due to the lack of statistical data and research available on Thailand. The bulk of research that is available, rarely concerns women's issues and is non-gender specific. At the present, it is virtually impossible to locate data which indicates how many women participate in informal sector economic activity, or for that matter, how

many women are employed by the service industry. Therefore, it is my suggestion that data be compiled by gender on Thai export-oriented industries, which, in turn, will be of great benefit for those wanting to examine the status of women in the context of economic growth in Thailand.

Thai women have made some inroads in managerial positions. The women who have made significant advances in business, however, are highly educated and represent the elite of Thai society. This is in contrast with the corps of industrial working women upon which much of the research in this paper is based. Currently, most of the Thai female executives are employed by multinational firms. Multinationals, according to the Lim (1983) study, are more likely to hire Thai women than local firm. Multinationals tend to be less discriminatory against women in their hiring practices, as their rationale in hiring has less to do with gender and race and more to do with merit. Local firms, on the other hand, are still predisposed to discrimination against women on the basis of gender. This occurs, most likely, because women have no special status as a disadvantaged group in the Thai constitution, and hence, they are barred from making any legitimate claims on the government to redress the problem. Unfortunately, though, there is very little in the way of statistics in this crucial area of research. Thus, all I was able to compile were some general

trends and illustrations. The lack of availability of literature in this area is, of course, of great concern. It would be my suggestion, therefore, that further research be conducted in this area. The more that we may come to know about women's role as entrepreneurs, the better will be able to provide a balanced picture of Thai economic growth.

One of the fundamental contributions women make to the growth of the Thai economy, is through their participation in informal sector activity. In Thailand, this primarily includes employment as prostitutes and prostitution related occupations (masseur, hostess, exotic dancers). Prostitution in Thailand has its modern origins in the tourism industry. Although prostitution may be a very old form of income generating activity, the sex trade has only begun to flourish with the mass influx of international capital into Thailand; most notably, with American soldiers taking their rest and relaxation time in Bangkok during the Vietnam War. Thailand has seen an unprecedented rise in sex tourism since the early seventies with the burgeoning of prostitution and prostitution related industries. The sex tourism industry in Thailand is more extensive than any where else in the world. The organized sex tours to Thailand that were common place during the 1980s, have been instrumental in expanding the revenue base from the tourism industry - it is now the country's third largest source of foreign currency. It takes

only nine foreign tourists to create one service sector job in Thailand. The number of informal sector employment created by the same number of foreign tourists is probably even greater.

There are grave consequences to the Thai populace, and especially to Thai women, from the expansion of the sex trade. The number of documented AIDS cases has grown to 600 per day (Davy, 1994). Thailand, today, has the most explosive growth of AIDS anywhere in the world. With the rampant spread and consequent fear of AIDS, the trade in child prostitution has grown exponentially. There are now some 800 000 child prostitutes servicing the demands of the sex tourism industry (Sitthiraksa, 1991). But the Thai government, anxious about any loss of revenues from tourism, is currently clamping down on all AIDS related literature and education. This reaction to the AIDS epidemic by the Thai authorities' serves only to emphasize the significant role of prostitution in the tourism industry. The Thai government may not like Bangkok being referred to as the "Brothel of Asia", yet they are unwilling to jeopardize the income that this unregulated sex trade brings to Thailand.

Women's bodies have become the most important economic commodity of Thailand. International pressure must be put on Thai authorities to protect young women and children from the exploitation and disease of the unregulated sex trade. This is a human cost too high to pay for the immediacy of economic

growth. The need to become the next Asian, Newly Industrialized Country must not be bought at the expense of women and children.

The export-oriented development of Thailand has had some significantly negative effects on Thai society, especially on its women and children. According to Bell:

Export-oriented development has affected rural life by intensifying the capitalist penetration of agriculture, leading to what economists have hailed as "unlimited supplies of labour". This has caused new waves of migration from the countryside and quickened the pace of female entry into sexual services, low paid factory or domestic work, and subsistence living in the slums (1991:70).

Ironically, faced with this dilemma, most of the Thai elite either refuse to hear the truth, or fall back on the argument that all growth is accompanied by inequality, Thailand being no different. Eventually, the "trickle-down effect" will take hold and magically, it seems, remedy the situation. Yet, a model of development solely based on export-oriented growth is extremely fragile; it relies predominantly on the constant influx of foreign capital, non-waged and cheap waged labour of women, inexpensive manufactured goods, and on the sexual orientation of tourism. Thailand has in some sense been fortunate to enjoy all of the above for the past four decades. This, however, does not excuse the victimization of women and children, nor does it detract from the fact that the Thai economy is extremely susceptible to external shocks.

Industrialization in Thailand has come at a very expensive price, one for which women are expected to bare the burden.

It is my concern that there is so little available research regarding women in a country that is about to be embraced as the next economic powerhouse. Women may fuel Thai economic growth, yet they are virtually non-existent in Thai political life, receive less education, have higher illiteracy rates, receive lower wages, experience higher rates of unemployment and lack access to many occupations. Unless these problems are redressed, the condition of Thai women is unlikely to improve in any meaningful way. In this sense, it is in the interest of Thai women, especially those involved in development programs, to come to understand the patriarchal and capitalist nature of Thai society. Given the pervasiveness of this ideology, simply legislating to alter the structure of economic institutions will not be enough. It is my suggestion that this ideology be confronted on two grounds: first, it must be eradicated from the Thai culture and only then can the changes within the economic institutions follow. Otherwise, the predictions for women's condition in Thailand are grim indeed.

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