Changes in Social and Economic Relations Among Rural Women in Northern Thailand

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Abstract

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This research explores various changes which have taken place in social and economic relations among rural women in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand. It mainly focuses on the income-generating activities of Northern rural Thai women which are aimed at improving their social and economic well-being. Based on field work and interviews with selected members from five rural women's economic development projects in Chiang Mai Province, changes in social and economic relations and how the projects have benefitted Northern rural Thai women are presented in the following manner. Members' social and economic relations are examined within the context of capitalist-patriarchy which continues to produce exploitative and oppressive relations in many developing regions around the world. However, I suggest that forms of rural women's economic development are taking place in Northern Thailand outside of mainstream capitalist development. Within this context, I conclude that rural Thai women are benefitting from the five economic projects presented in this thesis as they continue to achieve moderate income levels, leadership roles, control over their own finances, employment in rural areas, and resistance to patriarchy and the negative consequences of global capitalism. This kind of rural women's economic activity is seen as an alternative to the mainstream processes of economic development and is a form of resistance to capitalist-patriarchy and its devastating consequences.

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Chapter One

Women's Economic Development

1.1 Introduction

The debate concerning women's economic development has been a controversial one for several decades. In the world economic-system, based on the capitalist mode of production, women's integration into waged labour has evolved into a leading topic in development studies. Many aspects of development research throughout the world focused on integration as a tool for women to initiate social change (Taplin 1989, Boserup 1970). Integration in the early 1970s meant that women needed to be included in industrial labour (Pearson 1998:172). Some argued that integration had positive implications for women (Lim 1990:111 c.f. Pearson 1998, Ninsin 1991). Research in Ghana suggests that women who worked in the formal sectors of the economy were better off economically than most women who remained in the informal sector (Ninsin 1991). It has been fairly recent, however, that research informed by feminism has highlighted the negative aspects of integration for women in developing countries (Thomson 1996, Kaosa-ard 1995, Rosa 1994, Mies 1991). Studies on formal sectors of the economy in Southeast Asia and Mexico indicate that although many women have been incorporated into the industrialization process, most worked as low-paid waged labourers who facilitate the process of capital accumulation (Bell 1997, Arizpe and Aranda 1986). Further research into the informal sectors of the economy in Kenya and Thailand suggests that women in agriculture and home-based production work as paid labourers and independent commodity producers with inadequate social protection (Suda 1996, Kaosa-ard 1993, Lee 1993). In Thailand, the informal home-based sector is defined as "...lacking in structure, with no labour regulations, no clear cut employee/employer relations in work arrangements, and low capitalization" (Lee 1993:84). Questions then are why has the majority of women's work in developing countries resulted in low pay, limited

employment, and loss of social standing as certain aspects of the development process resulted in shifts from subsistence economic activity through cash-crop production to waged labour?

The United Nations' Fourth World Conference on the Status of Women, held in Beijing, the People's Republic of China (1995), addressed questions of change in social and economic relations for women as they are integrated into waged labour. During the conference, an estimated 40,000 delegates, representing international, national, and non-governmental organizations (as well as numerous volunteers) from around the world set forth to define the structural causes of women's changing social and economic relations in both advanced and developing countries. The conference is important to this study for two reasons. First, the conference helps identify the social and economic problems most women in developing countries are facing as they enter into waged labour. Second, delegates identified women's social and economic relations as conditioned by economic structures and political processes:

> ...the actual development of these economic structures and policies [financial, monetary, commercial and other economic policies] has a direct impact on women's access to economic resources, their economic power and consequently the extent of equality between them at the individual and family levels as well as in society as a whole (Fourth World Conference 1995:74).

The delegates identified poverty, brought about by shifts in women's economic activities, as a critical problem for some women. Women's poverty was addressed at the international, national, regional, community, and village levels in an attempt not only to identify the global magnitude of the phenomenon, but, more importantly, as an undertaking to improve women's social and economic situations at the individual levels. To overcome female poverty, delegates maintained that significant improvements needed to take place in women's vocational training, employment opportunities, and income levels in both the formal and

informal sectors. Crucial to achievement in the areas of employment and income earnings were greater opportunities for individuals in economic potential (to promote more equitable distribution of productive assets, wealth, opportunities, income, and services), decision-making, and leadership participation (Fourth World Conference 1995:23-27). Throughout the conference, delegates advocated changes in allocation of economic resources, power, and control as tools to improve women's social and economic relations.

Delegates also identified the need to incorporate gender perspectives into all aspects of economic policy-making, including objectives and implementations, as critical to changes in women's economic opportunities and autonomy (Fourth World Conference 1995:23-27). Delegates mainstreamed gender perspectives as a means to place women in the forefront of economic development (Jahan 1995:213), then put emphasis on "strategic" gender needs. Although strategic gender needs vary according to specific circumstances, strategic objectives implement changes in the gendered-division of labour and women's lack of power, access, and control (Moser 1993:39). In an attempt to challenge the subordinate position of women in these areas, delegates called for a type of women's economic development which emphasizes strategic gender needs and addresses the structural causes of the "feminization of poverty[1]":

> ...women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to economic resources, including credit, land ownership, and inheritance, lack of access to education and support services, and minimal participation in the decision-making process (Fourth World Conference 1995:22).

Delegates' strategic economic development models emphasized the need for more women to participate in the planning of economic development. It was argued that more women should contribute to the definition of economic policies (e.g., the formulation of financial, monetary, commercial and other economic policies, as well as tax systems and rules governing pay).

Delegates felt that women, particularly in developing countries, should demand increases of productive capacity through access to capital, resources, credit, land, technology, information, technical assistance, and training. It was argued that sustainable economic development for women needs to make visible the full extent of the work of women by including unpaid work in the unremunerated and domestic sectors.

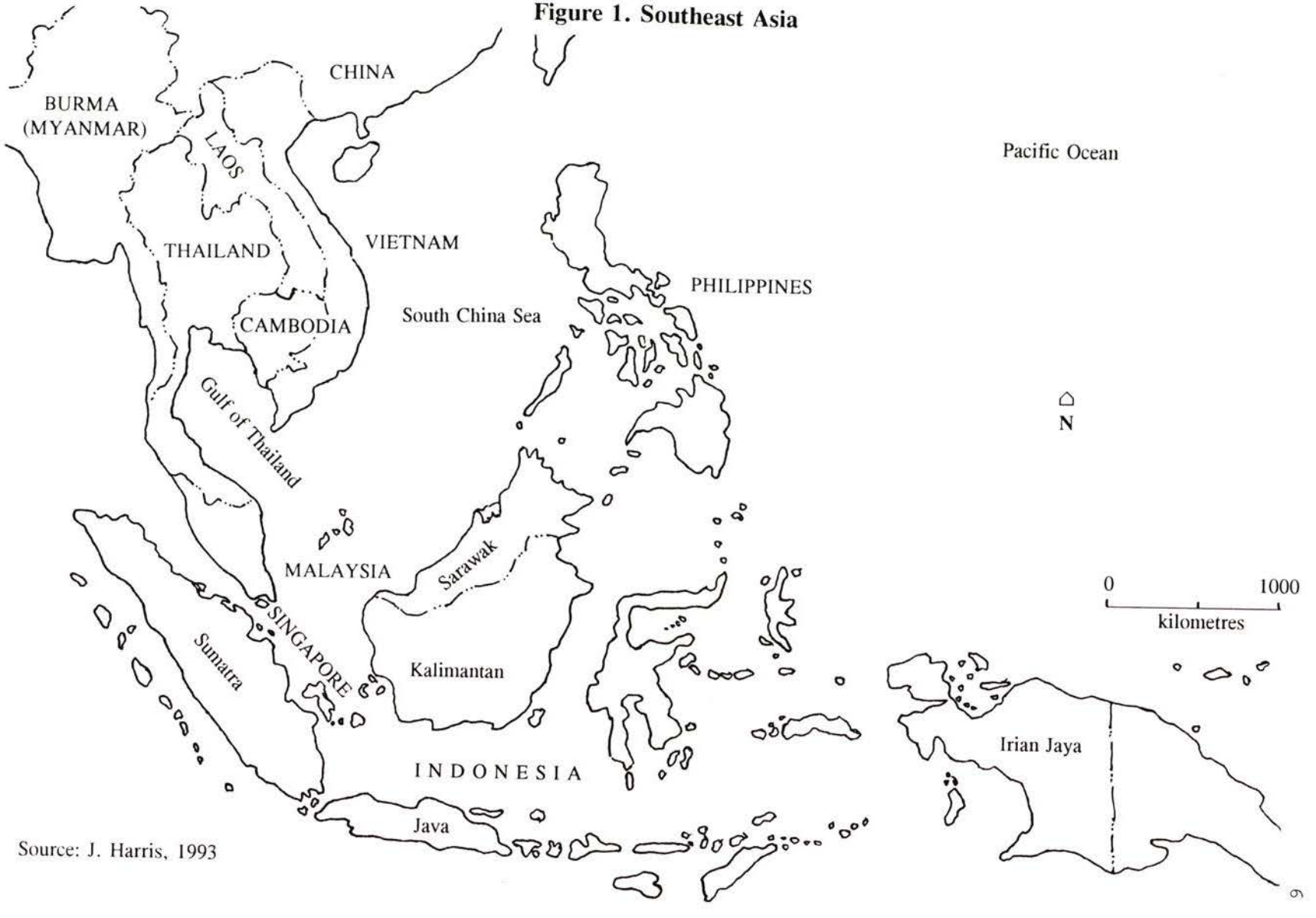
Delegates also addressed the role of international, national and non-governmental organizations in women's economic development. It was suggested that development and donor agencies continue to support women's economic and social development by incorporating not only gender issues but class perspectives in policies, objectives and implementation as well. In order to do this, international development agencies need to support disadvantaged women through the allocation of economic capital, design programs to which low-paid women gain access and control over economic resources, and to review the impact of economic programs to ensure that working-class women "...do not bear a disproportionate burden of transitional costs" (Fourth World Conference 1995:26). Economic support for women should serve low-income, small and micro-scale women entrepreneurs and producers, both in the formal and informal sectors. It was suggested that national development agencies must create development policies for working women which promote more equitable distribution of productive assets, wealth, business opportunities, income, social services, and social protection. Legislative and administrative reforms need to give working women full and equal access to regular employment, appropriate and steady pay, and safe working conditions. It was further suggested that economic development through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and women's associations must establish pressure groups and monitoring mechanisms, and develop legal assistance, education, training, and retraining policies that ensure women acquire a wide range of skills to participate in the ever changing labour force (Fourth World Conference 1995:23-27).

One of the Southeast Asian countries whose delegates contributed to the construction of these strategic models was Thailand (see Figure 1). Thailand is of particular interest to discussions on women's incorporation into waged labour. As Thailand continued to industrialize and commercial agriculture intensified (see Chapter Three), many rural Thai women found themselves pushed out of subsistence and cash-crops production and into paid agricultural work (Kaosa-ard 1995). Although the majority of rural Thai women (and men) work in the agricultural sector today, as Thailand continues to industrialize, the percentage of rural Thai women in the paid agricultural sector continues to fall (Thomson 1996:2). For the country as a whole, rural female employment in agriculture dropped from 70 percent in 1972 to 58 percent in 1987 (Yoddumnern-Attig 1992:2). The bulk of research on female Thai labour suggests that although Thai women continue to find themselves more and more dependent on waged labour, the majority of rural Thai women are not finding substantial employment in the manufacturing, commerce, and service sectors of the Thai economy (Thomson 1996, Yoddumnern-Attig 1992, Paitoonpong 1982):

> Industrial development has resulted in Thai rural women being proletarianized, yet jobs within the formal sector and the lack of access to the means of production for these women remain limited (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:4).

The lack of access to employment in the formal sector of Thailand's economy has also resulted in female migration into unplanned urban areas (Thomson 1996, Koanantakool 1993, Thorbek 1987). Bangkok's population increased from about three million in 1971 to six million in 1993 (Turner 1998:1354, Yoddumnern-Attig 1992:2). From 1980 to 1985, it was estimated that over 60 percent of the migration stream were women from rural areas (Yoddumnern-Attig 1992:2). This has resulted in rural Thai women clustering in low-paying jobs in all sectors and industries including manufacturing, commerce, and services. Research demonstrates that they do so without the benefit of training, job security of any kind, or much hope

Figure 1. Southeast Asia



Source: J. Harris, 1993

for advancement (Thomson 1996:2). The majority of these women work two shifts (16 hour days), send remittances back to their families, receive about half of the minimum wages set by the government, and earn less than all men working in the same field (Bell 1997, Thomson 1996, Paitoonpong 1982). Because the low cost of female labour is one of the most important factors in making Thailand an "international market-oriented success story" (Thailand's Report on the Status of Women 1994:5), many rural Thai women have found themselves oppressed as a result of state sponsored market incentives which provide external investors with economic advantages. This type of development has contributed to lower paying jobs, limited employment, and loss of social standing for many working Thai women (Bell 1997).

The purpose of this study is to evaluate changes in certain rural Thai women's social and economic activities as they continue to be integrated into waged labour. Specifically, this study addresses women in rural, Northern Thailand and income-generating projects aimed at improving Northern rural women's social and economic well-being. Studies on change in Northern rural women's work suggest that within one single generation women have moved out of village-based production and into manufacturing, services, and commerce. One of the more noticeable shifts took place in the 1980s, when rural women in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand began to move away from home-based (and often unpaid) employment into non-farm, wage-paying employment (Kaosa-ard 1995:2):

> The economic role of the rural women in Northern Thailand [Chiang Mai] has shifted substantially along with rapid economic and social change. While their economic contribution to the family remains high, the nature of the contribution has been altered. As the amount of land per head dwindles and commercial agriculture intensifies, Northern rural women are increasingly found to be involved in paid agricultural work...or in village-based employment in handicraft and simple manufacturing industries ...in which [female] wages are often piece rates,i.e. a fee per unit of output produced or per unit of area (Kaosa-ard 1995:8-9).

This shift is of particular interest because of the important role Northern rural women play within household economies. Northern women's contributions to household cash is on average almost half (46 percent) of the total household income (Kaosa-ard 1995:13).

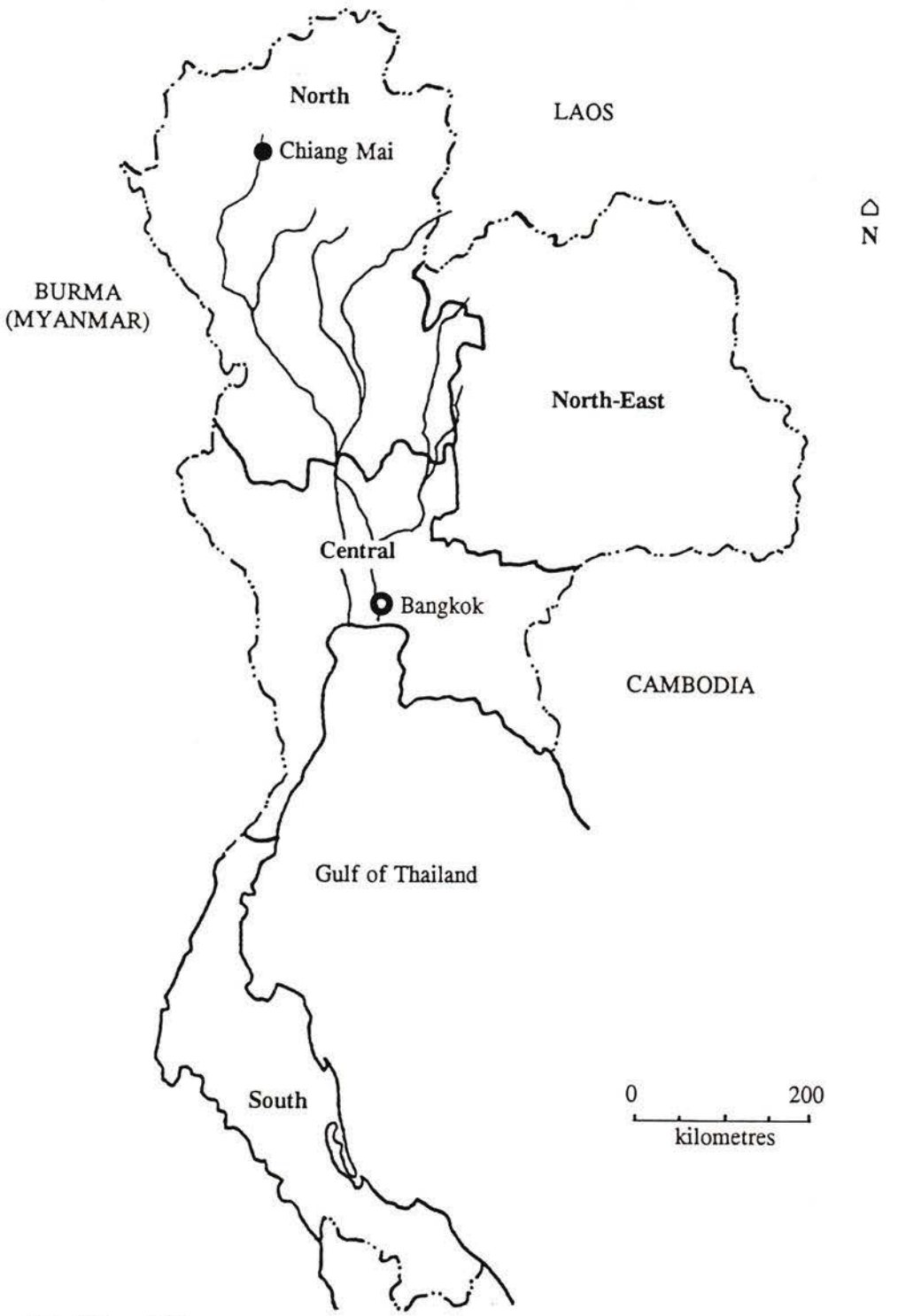
1.2 Rural Women's Economic Development in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand

Geographically, Thailand is divided into four regions: the North[2], the Northeast, the Central Plains, and the South (see Figure 2). Although social and economic conditions of Thai women vary among these four regions, in general Northern Thai women are more rural and less educated when compared to Northern Thai men. Most Northern rural women have four or less years of schooling, and approximately 16 percent aged 15 years and above are illiterate (in contrast to 8 percent for Northern rural males) (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:14). Although labour force participation is proportionately high, Northern Thai women are under-represented in terms of economic ownership (approximately 8 percent of working females are employers in contrast to 16 percent for males), and political leadership. These disparities are said to be imbedded in the social, economic, and political sectors of Thai society:

> Thai society seems to have an indifferent attitude towards the underprivileged position of Thai women as a whole... although the contemporary position of the few advantaged urban women with strong socio-economic family ties and strong professional backgrounds has improved significantly compared to that which existed in the early twentieth century, primarily in the areas of economic independence.....sexual prejudices unfortunately have not been totally removed since laws and government regulations continue to favour males (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:14-20).

By the 1990s, the majority of the research looking at change in women's social and economic relations in the Chiang Mai area indicates that waged labour has not benefitted rural Thai women because incomes of most rural women are low compared to men and urban waged labourers (Thomson 1996,

Figure 2. Thailand



Source: P.J. Warr, 1993

Kaosa-ard 1995, Gray 1990). This is especially evident for women in the lower income segments of Chiang Mai's rural society. Although women's incomes are vital to the existence of the family, disparities in wages and employment opportunities between Northern Thai men and women continues (Kaosa-ard 1993:10).

Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand has a population of 161,541 (Turner 1998:1354). The city's main industries include agricultural marketing, other commercial trade, manufacturing of handicrafts, and tourism (Koanantakool 1993:10). The area is an important regional centre for commercial trade including transhipment to Bangkok of such commercial agricultural items as fruit, vegetables, and rice. Chiang Mai City also serves as an important commercial centre in the manufacture, sale, and distribution of handicrafts, such as pottery, silver work, and weaving. Most of these handicraft products are produced by low-income rural women in the Chiang Mai area:

> ...more rural women are engaged in village-based or home-based activities [handicrafts] than men...this is partly because the women can combine housework [taking care of children, the elderly, and farming] with home-based employment (Kaosa-ard 1993:11).

Although many rural women in Chiang Mai Province work as non-paid family workers on family farms, they also hire out their labour to other farms. Although female workers are as active in waged agriculture production as their male counterparts, in the Chiang Mai Province women earn 10-20 baht ($0.42-0.84 CND) less per day than men (Kaosa-ard 1993:10). The agricultural work force in Chiang Mai is aging rapidly as rural women, especially the younger generations, continue to move into manufacturing, commerce, and service industries found in Chiang Mai City and the surrounding areas. In 1993, the export of manufacturing products brought in more than 300,000 million baht ($12,652,000,000 CND) in national earnings (Thomson 1996:2). The majority of those employed in

manufacturing were women. These women were employed in assembly work and were paid anywhere from 65 to 85 baht ($2.74-3.58 CND) a day (Kaosa-ard 1993:12, Gray 1990:47).

The demographics found in manufacturing or export-oriented employment in the Chiang Mai Province are much the same as throughout Thailand. Women, ages 15-20 years, form an estimated 80 to 90 percent of the labour force (Thomson 1996:2). In the Chiang Mai area, the main manufacturing industries are ceramics, furniture, food canning, garment-making, and assembly of electronic components in the industrial estate at Lamphun (Gray 1990). Women in commerce generally trade within their own villages, selling fresh and cooked foods in the markets. Service employment in the Chiang Mai area more often than not means rural women work as domestic help which is a stepping stone for rural women who want to enter urban employment (Kaosa-ard 1993:13). For Northern rural women, 'integration' has meant work in the manufacturing centres of Lamphun or in the informal sectors of Northern Thailand's economy which include cash-crop production, independent commodity production, low-paid farm labour or domestic work. Women in the informal sector work with no labour regulations or job guarantees, and are generally paid low-piece or day rates. Nine years of education is required to work at the Lamphun industrial estate. The only social protection offered the industrial workers is a social security system (Kaosa-ard 1993:12).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study addresses rural women in Chiang Mai Province and five income-generating projects aimed at improving their social and economic relations. Chiang Mai was chosen as the primary research site because of the dramatic shifts in rural women's economic activities currently taking place. Several different issues regarding change in rural Thai women's social and economic relations are pursued throughout the work. These different issues are described in greater detail in Chapter Four. Overall,

the objective of this study is to identify changes in social and economic relations as Thailand's political and economic development process continues to push Thai women into waged labour. Specifically, this study asks in what ways have the five projects studied, changed Northern rural women's social and economic relations?

1.4 Theoretical Concerns

My main theoretical concern is incorporating gender and class issues into the analysis of change in Northern Thai women's social and economic relations. Although political economy theory sees social and economic relations as conditioned by economic and political structures[3], feminist critiques of the perspective include the charge of androcentrism, in particular the total disregard of women's social and economic history and the lack of analysis of women's positions within capitalist social relations (Maroney & Luxton 1987:2-3). Similar claims have been made against other mainstream development theories; modernization, dependency, and neo-marxist theories. By examining theories of development, one can see how gender and class issues have been overlooked and why they are important to an analysis on women's social and economic relations.

Modernization theory (1950 and 1960s), was initially developed as a way to explain social change and global economic disparities that followed the Second World War. During this time, "underdevelopment" was assumed to be a natural state and "modernization" was believed to be the change from a traditional, underdeveloped society to a modern, developed, industrial nation-state (Goldthorpe 1984:133, Leys 1982:332). The modernization perspective assumed a linear transformation of a traditional society through the introduction of technology and social organizations that characterize the "...socially advanced, economically prosperous, and relatively politically stable" nations of the West (Hulme and Turner 1990:35). Modernization was premised on the creation and maintenance of the basic structures[4] and institutions of a capitalist society (Alavi

1982:289).

The weaknesses of modernization theory vary greatly from the standpoint of gender and class perspectives. First, modernization theory's assumption of underdevelopment as a natural state ignored a country's history; particularly colonialism, internal consequences of the building of a nation-state (Berberoglu 1992:10), and analysis of the historical context of women's social and economic relations (Taplin 1989). Second, modernization theory favored GDPs, GNPs, and analysis on a formal market level. Concentration on national markets discourages analyses of informal sectors, especially agriculture, where the majority of low-income peripheral women work (Riley and Meja 1997, Pearson 1996, Suda 1996, Mies 1991). Third, modernization theory does not properly examine external class relations, linkages between advanced and developing societies, or dependency on foreign capital which are:

> ...the result of the historical development and contemporary structure of world capitalism...and the economic, political, social, and cultural policies generated by the resulting class structure (Andre Gunder Frank c.f. Berberoglu 1992:26).

Not looking at the structure of world capitalism limits analyses on women's social and economic relations as changes in their relations of production and the continuation of a gendered division of labour are overlooked. The failure of modernization theory to address global capitalism led to a new body of literature on dependent development.

Understanding the exploitation of underdeveloped nations by advanced capitalist nations is central to dependency theory[5] (Wilson-Moore 1996:4). Considered radical for its time (1970s), dependency theory became a tool for progressive scholars who no longer defined underdevelopment as a natural state (Berberoglu 1992:25). Instead, underdevelopment was seen as having been constructed by the world-system, shaped by the advanced capitalist elites in Western nations who owned and/or controlled multi-national corporations which dominated the world-capitalist market.

Although dependency theory focuses on the world-capitalist market, issues of internal class and patriarchal relations are ignored.

First, the world-system of nation-states is the essential unit of analysis in dependency theory. For the most part, analysis of local class and gender struggles are overlooked in favor of global forces, unequal exchange among countries, and dependency on the world-system (Crane & Amawi 1997, Charlton 1989, Berberoglu 1987). Dependency theory tells researchers very little about internal class structures brought about by the consequences of peripheral capitalism (Alavi 1982, Petras & Cook 1973:146), or about relations between the nation-state and indigenous women:

> ...the dependency and world-systems theoretical approaches provide frameworks for understanding how international economic accumulation and inequity limit the power of nation-state institutions and even impinge upon households and women. In this perspective, however, it is tempting simply to view women as the last victims in one great chain of exploitation, with little or no recognition of the ways in which [indegenous] women respond to both national and international forces (Charlton 1989:5).

The dependency perspective does not view women as agents of social change or powerful forces of resistance. The failure of dependency theory to address class issues led to a revitalization of classical Marxist theory (Maroney & Luxton 1987:12).

Neo-marxism argues that an analysis of social class and class struggles at both national and international levels needs to be carried out when looking at social and economic relations. Within a neo-marxist context, national and institutional questions such as unequal trade and foreign debt are replaced by issues of class and imperialist exploitation on a world scale (Berberoglu 1992:39-40). As noted by James Petras (1973:146):

> While the discussion utilizing the concept of dependence has advanced our understanding of the impact of the United States on Latin American underdevelopment, little work has been done that attempts to link the notion of external dependence *with the internal class structure.* We need to examine the internal linkage that *permits* foreign forces to penetrate a country and create a dependent situation. More specifically, this involves an examination of the relationship between external investors and the social classes within a country.

As the appropriation of surplus value (profit) by the capitalist classes (transnational and national bourgeoisie) continues to grow, more and more marginal segments of the peripheral population are drawn into wage-labour employment (Berberoglu 1992:43). Although neo-marxist analyses of international capitalism highlighted internal class relations and waged labour, contemporary critique says the perspective is blind to gender:

> Feminists have criticized it [Marxism] for largely ignoring women, for a sex-blindness which disguises sexism, and for failing to theorize gender. As a result of this encounter, the relationship between marxism and feminism has been subject to a rigorous and extensive examination. At issue is the relative weight of class structures and sex/gender systems as fundamental determinants of different modes of production and social formations (Maroney and Luxton 1087:12).

When gender is brought into analysis, one sees that a large number of exploited waged labourers are women and that this position is based, in part, on internal class structures. Gender and class intersectionality considers the implications of gender stratification in forming and maintaining class inequalities (Maroney and Luxton 1087:12). Critiques such as these led theoretical discussions directly into a feminist political economy which is inclusive of both class and gender issues. Heather Jon Maroney and Meg Luxton's (1987) Canadian feminist political economy, theorizes gender as a fundamental social structure which is related to other structures of inequality such as class. As noted by Maroney and Luxton (1987:11):

> Feminists working in a framework of class analysis have pointed to the mediation of gender by class structures. Some, following Heidi Hartmann (1979), have argued that patriarchal solidarity among men of different classes is responsible for the maintenance of women's oppression. Other have begun the task of rethinking class as a gendered structure.

Focus is now on how gender and class intersect and are the basis for social inequality in any given society. Critical to this study is a gender and class analysis on rural Thai women's social and economic relations.

For the purpose of this work, gender and class perspectives on social and economic change includes analyses of global capitalist development and patriarchal relations (Bell 1997, Bhopal 1997, Riley & Mejia 1997, Mies 1986), the construction of women's economic development through political and economic policies (Rosa 1994, Mies 1991, Arizpe & Aranda 1986), women in the informal sector of society (Riley and Meja 1997, Pearson 1996, Suda 1996, Mies 1991, and Pines 1982), unwaged domestic labour (Dickinson 1997, Suda 1996, Riley & Mejia 1991, Mies 1991, Taplin 1989, von Werlhof 1988, and Maroney & Luxton 1987), the social and historical context of women's social and economic relations (Maroney & Luxton 1987, Paitoonpong 1982), relations of production (Bell 1997, Mills 1997, Tantiwiramanond & Pandey 1991), issues around gender and development (Riley and Mejia 1997, Pearson 1996, Shiva 1995 c.f. Riley and Mejia 1997, Mies 1991, Maroney & Luxton 1987), steps to incorporate women into the development process (Moser 1993, Buvinic 1983), and the female agent (Bell 1997, Theobald 1997, Somswasdi 1991, Maroney & Luxton 1987). It is important to include a gendered and class analysis in this study as the inter-dependency of class and gender are the basis of inequality for rural Thai women in Northern Thailand.

1.5 Organization of the Study

It is the purpose of this research to try and learn from viewing the world from the standpoint[6] of rural Thai women and the ways in which they construct economic strategies as their country develops. Knowing the

perceptions and attitudes of rural Thai women participants may help to develop a better understanding of the way in which current economic development projects affect those women's social and economic relations, and will serve to further the understanding of the development process which is combining traditional labour practices with capitalist social relations. This is a complex interplay between the various political, economic, and social forces that make up the processes of economic development for rural Thai women today.

In the following account, Chapter Two develops gender and class perspectives on women in capitalist development, a theoretical account on how capitalist development has changed class relations, gender relations, and women's work. Chapter Three presents historical changes in rural Thai women's social and economic relations as Thailand became dependent on the capitalist mode of production. Chapter Four deals with research methodology. Chapter Five presents research findings of five rural economic development projects in Chiang Mai. And finally, Chapter Six concludes on changes in social and economic relations among rural women in Northern Thailand.

Endnotes

1. A term adopted to focus attention on the correlation between poverty and women within the context of increasing female unemployment, continuing segregation, low wages, and unpaid labour (Armstrong and Armstrong 1987:218-220).

2. The North is Thailand's second poorest region after the Northeast.

3. Mainstream political economy's most important underlying assumption is that no economic system can exist for long without a stabilizing political framework of some sort (Cox 1995:40).

4. Modern, industrial societal structures included manufacturing, public educational systems, banking and trade institutions, communications industries, road networks, a transportation industry, an urban population, nuclear families, and a middle class (Larrain 1989:88-90).

5. Andre Gunder Frank (1971) first categorized the world into two separate economic systems. These systems were perceived in terms of a metropolis of developed, industrialized nations and a satellite of undeveloped nations (Hulme and Turner 1990:47). What linked the two economic entities together were trade and investment. Immanuel Wallerstein's (1974) world-systems analysis added a third component, the semi-peripheral or developing nations, to the dependency model and defined the global-economic structure through a core (the main industrial producers), the semi-periphery (those in the process of increasing industrial production), and periphery (agricultural producers and suppliers of raw materials and cheap labour) paradigm. Within both Frank and Wallerstein's models, the advanced capitalist nations slowly and unevenly absorbed developing societies into the capitalist world-market (Taplin 1989). This absorption allows the core to exploit labour and extract resources and wealth from the periphery, while regulating what technology and capital for development were allowed to flow back in. This concentric relationship governed the political and economic systems of the underdeveloped world, subordinating the peripheral nations within the capitalist world-system (Alavi and Shanin 1982:3).

6. The standpoint of women is a method and a theory in which "...actualities of women's everyday/everynight worlds are situated outside textually mediated discourses...directing the researcher to an embodied subject located in a particular historical setting" (Smith 1991:107-108).

Chapter Two

Women in Capitalist Development

2.1 Introduction

Within contemporary feminist thought, the expansion and operation of capitalism has received considerable attention in discussions on women and development. Although feminist theorists agree that capitalist development has had an impact on women's social and economic relations, there has been considerable debate over the controlling forces of capitalism and the ways in which these forces change women's economic activities. A number of different feminist theories have given substantial attention to class and gender structures as a controlling force, while other feminist writers have focused on aspects of capitalism such as the world-economy and the market, and the political forces of the international political system and the nation-state. Alternative analyses present different interpretations of women's incorporation into waged labour or various forms of income-generating activities. Critical to the theoretical discussions in this chapter are the interconnections between global capitalism, gender, and class, and how these interconnections change social and economic relations of rural Thai women.

2.2 Capitalist-Patriarchy and Women's Work

It is believed by most feminist researchers that global capitalism has changed women's social and economic relations in developing societies. Although some feminist work suggests that these changes in relations benefit peripheral women by providing jobs within the capitalist system (Lim 1990:111 c.f. Pearson 1998), most have focused on how global capitalism has created a decline in women's social equality and economic importance (Pearson 1998, Bell 1997, Bhopal 1997, Riley and Mejia 1997, Mies 1986). Those who claim that global capitalism creates social subordination and economic exploitation conduct analysis through a

"capitalist-patriarchy"[1] perspective. Within a capitalist-patriarchy framework, it is the political and economic forces of capitalism and the presiding patriarchal relations in a given society which are associated with women's inferior positions in the global labour market.

Maria Mies (1986), in her discussion on global capitalist development and patriarchal relations, sees capitalism and patriarchy as intersecting, concluding that the capitalist mode of production would not exist for long without a stabilizing patriarchal or male-dominated political force. Hence, she collapses capitalism and patriarchy into one concept - capitalist-patriarchy. Capitalism and patriarchy act as condensed symbols for the social and theoretical relations between class and gender (Weir 1987:78). Capitalist-patriarchy's primary purpose is to accumulate capital through capitalist class relations and a gendered division of labour:

> The Reader will have observed that I am using the concept 'capitalist-patriarchy' to denote the system which maintains women's exploitation and oppression...its primary purpose is to accumulate capital which can not be achieved unless patriarchal relations are maintained or newly created (Mies 1986:38).

Capitalist-patriarchy suggests that the capitalist mode of production and patriarchal relations have significantly contributed to low incomes, limited employment in both the formal and informal sectors, and an inferior social status for many working women in peripheral regions.

The perspective of capitalist-patriarchy examines export-oriented manufacturing, dependency on foreign capital, and the linkages between advanced and developing societies. Feminist research suggests that these above factors involve exploitation of female waged labour, extraction of a nation's resources, and indebtedness created through borrowing from financial institutions in the core countries (Pearson 1996:342). It has been suggested that young, uneducated rural women from developing societies are drawn into low-paying agricultural and export-oriented

production because they need jobs. Multi-national corporations, in search of the cheapest source of labour to facilitate capital accumulation and expansion, draw upon this need, and hires mostly these women (Pearson 1998, Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991, Taplin 1989, Mies 1986, Deere 1976). Unlike earlier colonial relationships, multinational corporations now move factories to less industrialized countries in search of a cheap, easily available and manageable labour force:

> ...the globalization of capital, or in other words, the New International Division of Labour was propagated as a new development strategy. This strategy was basically not new. As Wallerstein pointed out, capitalism rose and functioned as a 'world system' right from its beginnings in the sixteenth century. What was new was a restructuring of what has been called the International Division of Labour (IDL). Whereas the old International Division of Labour meant the import of cheap raw materials from the colonies and ex-colonies and the production of high-cost, machine-made goods in the industrial countries, the new IDL meant the relocation of whole factories to cheap labour countries like Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Malaysia, Thailand, Mexico ect...Whole labour-cost intensive plants like textile, electronics, toy and other industries were exported by multinational corporations of the United States, Japan, Germany to so-called world market or free production zones [specialized economic zones and free trade zones]. In all these relocated or run-away industries the vast majority of the labour force was and is female (Mies 1991:111).

Multinationals' dependency on peripheral women's subservient economic activities are evident in feminist research on urban employment within the free trade zones of Malaysia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka (Rosa 1994), and on rural employment in Mexico's strawberry agri-businesses (Arizpe and Aranda 1986). Both studies conclude that capitalist-patriarchal development strategies depend on peripheral women working for low wages with little social protection. Women's exploitation is constructed by, among other things, peripheral nation-states offerings of market incentives which provide core multinationals with significant economic advantages.

Thailand's semi-peripheral status is a good example of an economic base built on a foundation of capitalist-patriarchy. Research identifies development policies of "export-oriented manufacturing for rapid economic

growth" found in Thailand (as well as in many other newly industrialized countries) to be based on capitalist class relations and a gendered division of labour (Bell 1997, Thailand's Report on the Status of Women 1994, Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991). Thailand's Report on the Status of Women (1994) supports the above analysis. It was made clear through the report on Thai women's status that the success of Thailand's export-oriented industrialization clearly relied on Thai *women* working in labour-intensive manufacturing. The report states that benefits in the world-market are obtained through the "...low-wage, docile, and disciplined workforce that the Thai government guarantees" core investors (Thailand's Report on the Status of Women 1994:5).

Peter Bell's work (1997) suggests that the inferior social and economic relations which are associated with many Thai women working in manufacturing and commercial agriculture are due to the "feminization of Thai production." The feminization of Thai production is a term adopted to focus attention on Thai women's involvement in low-wage labour and production for export. Bell suggests that export manufacturing and feminization of the industrial workforce rest ultimately on the political-patriarchal subordination of many working Thai women who comprise:

> ...an exploited group of female industrial workers in neo-liberal markets and a vast pool of unwaged female-labour working in agriculture, household economies, and informal subsistence sectors (Bell 1997:56).

This suggests that it is not only the relocation of foreign, large-scale manufacturing industries to the newly industrialized nations which changes Thai women's work and labour relations. As far as women in peripheral societies are concerned, the new strategy of globalization of capital and of the feminization of labour in underdeveloped countries also takes place in the informal sectors. Therefore, a discussion on capitalist-patriarchy should include the informal sectors of society where the majority of women in peripheral capitalism work (Riley & Mejia 1997, Suda 1996):

> ...in small-scale manufacturing in cottage industries, home-working, sweat-shops, so-called income-generating activities (handicrafts, food processing, ancillary jobs for industry, garments, art objects) and in agriculture, including subsistence and cash-crop production for export, work in plantations and food processing, work as unpaid family and low-paid wage labour (Mies 1991:112).

Capitalist-patriarchy suggests that women are relegated to the informal sectors because they are universally defined as secondary or supplementary income earners through the notion of "housewifization" (Mies 1991, von Werlhof 1988, Mies 1986:166). By the term housewifization, it is suggested that the lack of proper integration of peripheral women into the formal sectors of society and their banishment into the informal sectors of the economy have been based on the European view of women's roles as primarily domestic, as supporter or secondary income earners to the male wage earning, breadwinner. It is precisely this definition, and the European connotations behind the construct which make women's unpaid or low paid labour in informal sectors invisible and waged labour in formal sectors secondary (Mies 1991:113). Housewifization devalues women's work which results in 'unfree' waged labour for women in the formal sectors and 'income-generating activities' for women in the informal sectors:

> Above all it [the strategy to 'integrate women into development'] does not mean that women are defined as workers. It is revealing that the phrase which is used does not talk of women's labour. By this three things are achieved. (a) women are basically defined as housewives who are involved in some money-earning production to supplement the male 'breadwinner' income; (b) as women are not defined as workers there need not be any fear of their unionizing or their demanding better wages; (c) what further characterizes all income-generating activities [in the informal sector]: women do not produce usually what is necessary in their local environment, but what can be sold in an external, mainly a foreign market, where the programs are based on the production of superfluous luxury items like handicrafts, lace, flowers, exotic foods for already overconsuming western buyers (Mies 1991:113).

Defining women as housewives and not as workers simply means that female labour can be bought at a much cheaper price than male labour (Mies

1986:116).

The informal sector also includes female unwaged domestic labour which is a large portion of women's work today (Dickinson 1997, Suda 1996, Riley and Mejia 1991, Mies 1991, Taplin 1989, von Werlhof 1988, Maroney and Luxton 1987, Shinawatra 1987, Mies 1986, and Pine 1982). The introduction of capitalist relations has created a double work-load for many women who find it necessary to work as waged labourers but still must fulfill unwaged responsibilities within the family. Social research in Northern Thailand on differential roles of rural women and men in the farming systems of Chiang Mai supports the belief that working rural women also do an enormous amount of unpaid labour in the family. The research suggests that rural women in Chiang Mai spend on average 35 hours per week on non-waged housework including cooking, shopping, cleaning, washing, fetching water, gardening, and looking after children (Shinawatra 1987:69). Hence, women within the Chiang Mai farming systems are struggling to find ways to ease their unpaid labour responsibilities while working for wages within the farming systems. Theoretically, the authors conclude that most female farmers in Chiang Mai Province are overworked rather than underemployed. As Collette Suda (1996) found in Kenya, a double work-load is as much a gender issue as it is a class issue:

> The under remuneration and devaluation of women's reproductive work not only accentuates hierarchical gender-power relations but can also be viewed as part of a social process that furthers structured social inequality among women themselves. Although the demarcations of class boundaries are difficult to discern and highly subjective, many Kenyan middle-class women and their counterparts higher up the socio-economic ladder tend to hire domestic help (mainly poor men, women, or young girls) to assist them with household chores (Suda 1996:78).

Finally, within a capitalist-patriarchy framework, there is the need to look at economic and social relations before a nation becomes dependent on capitalism. Capitalist-patriarchy places emphasis on the need to look at patriarchal relations. As noted by Mies (1986:38):

> Whereas the concept patriarchy denotes the historical depth of women's exploitation and oppression, the concept capitalism is expressive of the contemporary manifestation, or the latest development of this system. Women's problems today cannot be explained by merely referring to the old forms of patriarchal dominance. Nor can they be explained 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.

Srawooth Paitoonpong's (1982) work on Northern Thai rural women states that industrialization and economic development undervalued a large proportion of indigenous female economic roles as capitalist relations removed female labour from its traditional cultural and socio-economic context. Northern rural women's subsistence and simple petty-commodity production in pre-capitalist societies declined as cash-economies and modern agricultural technology grew. Monetization and commercialization displaced rural Thai women's local networks of exchange - reciprocity, crop-trading, and subsistence farming - resulting in a drastic shift in rural Thai women's relations of production (Thomson 1996, Paitoonpong 1982). With this in mind, it is important to look at the social relations women have to production and how these relations organize women's work.

2.3 Relations of Production

Karl Marx described the capitalist market as a source of fragmentation and separation, not as a 'natural' path to societal progression and advancement as believed by modernization theorists (Hulme and Turner 1990). Marx's historical analyses of the capitalist market focused on class relations based on relations of production. Within his relations of production model, the single most fundamental factor is the ownership of the means of production.

As Marx examined capitalist nations' historical systems or modes of production[2], he identified the capitalist classes as the proprietors or owners of the means of production. This ownership marks a distinct social organization in which owners and wage earners become the two major

classes. Marx concluded that changes in control over the means of production become central in understanding class relations within capitalist development. As noted by Berberoglu (1994:44):

> With the principal relations of production that between wage labour and the owners of the means of production, capitalism established itself as a mode of production based on the exploitation of wage labour by capitalists, whose power and authority in society derived from the ownership and the control of the means of production. Lacking ownership of the means necessary to gain a living, producers were forced to sell their labour power to capitalists in order to survive. As a result, the surplus value produced by labour was appropriated by the capitalists in the form of profit. Thus, private profit, generated through the exploitation of labour, became the motive force of capitalism.

Relations of production and Thai women's class positions have been studied by several different authors (Bell 1997, Mills 1997, Tantiwiramanond & Pandey 1997, Kaosa-ard 1995 and Tantiwiramanond & Pandey 1991). These authors agree that there is not one exclusive factor which explains Thai women's relations to ownership of the means of production. For this very reason, Thai women's class relations should be examined within the context of several factors including foreign dependency, the nation-state, regional differentiation, gender oppression, changes in internal class structures to owner and worker relations, and separation from previous ownership and control. The intrusion of capitalism and its patriarchal practices are encouraged by the state. This resulted from and maintained dependency on foreign capital. There are regional differences, however, in the degree to which the local economies are capitalist. These differences point to class and gender intersectionality within the four separate regions of Thailand.

Peter Bell's (1997) work examines capitalist relations between owners and wage earning classes in Thailand and class relations through international and national relations. Bell concludes that foreign investors and multi-national corporations own the majority of the means of production in Thailand. He argues that the strategy of export-led growth

Thailand has pursued has changed Thai women's relative economic activities. Many rural Thai women work as wage earners in foreign owned export-oriented manufacturing, earning little income while producing high profits for the foreign capitalists. In Robert Muscat's (1994) research on Thailand's development policies, Bangkok is treated as the centre of foreign capitalist class activity. Muscat argues that not only foreign but Thai capitalists in Bangkok have in a sense "colonized" the Southern, Northeastern, and Northern parts of Thailand through ownership and control of the majority of the nation's industry and wealth. This form of intra-colonization has not only resulted in a need for many rural Thai women (and men) to migrate from other regions in Thailand to Bangkok to find work, but has helped construct an urban/rural dichotomy. Thailand's urban industrialization has had negative impacts on rural women's (and rural men's) abilities to find work within an industrial market unless they migrate to urban centres (Thomas 1996, Thorbek 1987). Thai urban centres, especially Bangkok, have become the mecca for owners of the means of production and rural Thai women have become the wage earners.

Santikarn Kaosa-ard's (1995) research on Northern rural women indicates that although Northern Thai women have more access to production than Northeastern Thai women, women in Northern rural areas have less access to production than women in Northern urban areas. Kaosa-ard demonstrates that Northern urban women are more likely to be owners of shops and stores than Northern rural women, as well as having better access to higher education or vocational training. Darunee Tantiwiramanond and Shashi Ranjan Pandey's (1991) research considers women's socio-economic backgrounds when assessing relations of production. While Mary Beth Mills (1997) considers gendered aspects of class relations with a focus on the Thai male-dominated ownership and control over production, Tantiwiramanond and Pandey examine the advantaged and disadvantaged female. While Tantiwiramanond and Pandey's class analysis sees the advantaged or newly emerging Thai female middle class (professionals and

independent business owners) as likely owners, Mills' gender analysis concludes that Thai males are more likely to be owners of production than Thai females. These differences point to class and gender intersectionality.

Changing social and economic relations of rural Thai women involve changes in their relations of production. As capitalism persists in Thailand, ownership of the means of production continues to change and Thai people have become more dependent on a monetary economy. One of the greatest forms of dependence is seen by rural Thai women whose income goes to meeting family necessities - food, clothing, medicine, homes, and care for both children and the elderly (Bangkok Post 1998:10). The gendered wage gap, sexual harassment, glass ceilings, and unequal access to education and credit are real barriers for rural women in Thailand. Although more rural Thai women are working, they are often clustered in low-skilled, low-wage sectors and are under-represented at management levels (Bangkok Post 1998:4). It is mostly poor rural women in the Northeastern and Northern parts of Thailand that have no control, no access, little land, and find it hard to survive in their capitalist country. For these women, concerns are no longer just social issues but have become economic imperatives:

> The process of economic development is inherently disruptive, involving urbanization, commercialization, changing gender roles, and the uprooting of traditional-based agrarian communities. If there is a widespread perception - not to mention a reality - that the benefits of this process are being distributed unequally, and that some groups may be actually becoming worse off, social cohesion and consensus that holds societies together may weaken (Naya and Plummer 1997:134).

The economic crisis has caused rural Thai women to lose their jobs, and their only alternatives are vending on the streets of Bangkok, working in other jobs for below minimum wage, or returning to their villages for the uncertain business of rice farming (Bangkok Post 1998:10). Two of the

major problems facing Northern rural women today are how will they provide for their families and how do they gain and maintain control over economic matters?

2.4 Issues around Gender and Development

Gender as a social construct was introduced into the development discourse in the 1970s. The focus on gender was influenced by such western feminist writers as Annie Oakley (1972) and Gayle Rubin (1975) who "...were concerned about the manner in which the social problems of women were perceived in terms of their sex - namely the biological differences between women and men - rather than in terms of their gender - namely social relations between women and men" (Moser 1993:3). Although initially, the concept of gender was created to avoid biological determination, some contemporary feminists are now suggesting that the concept has failed women because gender, as a social construct, is not found in public discourse:

> By introducing this apparently scientific concept into the development discourse, feminist scholars hoped to make research on women and development more acceptable to fund-giving organizations, to the scientific community. The term 'gender' sounds less threatening, is more abstract, does not suggest that every man has something to do with the problem of women's oppression and exploitation. It [gender] removes this problem again from a political to an academic discourse level and thus neutralizes and blunts the social movement for the abolition of capitalist-patriarchy as a system (Mies 1991: 110).

It is true that the integration of gender into the development discourse has not resulted in the dramatic shift in women's equality as had been originally hoped. But should the concept of gender be dropped altogether? Not all writers are advocating the complete abandonment of the concept. Instead, it has been suggested that gender needs to move into other areas of analysis (Riley and Mejia 1997, Pearson 1996, Shiva 1995, c.f. Riley and Mejia 1997:32). Vandana Shiva (1995) accurately identifies

two shifts in levels of gender analysis which need to take place during the present period of globalization and world trade:

> 1) gender analysis needs to move from the exclusively domestic paradigm (either limited to the household or to the country) to analyze gender relations among actors globally; and 2) gender analysis needs to move from the impact and victimhood paradigm to a structural and transformative paradigm (1995:19). These shifts mean that gender analysis of globalization cannot limit itself solely to its impact on women but needs to take into account the gender biases of paradigms, processes, policies and projects of global economic structures. It needs to take into account how women's concerns, priorities, and perceptions are excluded in how the economy is defined, and how economic problems and solutions are proposed and implemented (Shiva 1995, c.f. Riley and Mejia 1997:32).

A third shift in analysis would include how women's voices and actions are shaping the dynamics of global capitalism.

Before suggested shifts in gender analyses was proposed, the primary way in which to analyze the relationship between global economic structures and gender was to look at the growth of waged labour, particularly in the transition to industrialization (Pearson 1996:341-342). A second approach, however, is brought about by the shifts in analysis that Shiva and others suggest. A fuller understanding of women within capitalism would extend outside the formal factory-type workplaces and into other productive activities which help shape the national and international systems of capitalist accumulation. It is rightfully suggested that a fuller understanding of gender would look at social relations outside of work, including political structures, intra-household relations, and culture (Kandiyoti 1998:145, Pearson 1996:339-340).

Before moving onto the discussion of policies surrounding women's development, it is important to mention that some feminist researchers are also questioning whether or not the push for women's integration into development should have taken place at all (Mies 1991, Alvares 1988 c.f. Mies 1991:120). Hindsight shows that development has drawn peripheral women into the market economy and out of subsistence production. This has

been demonstrated through the above debate, as seen through empirical data presented in Chapter Three, and through the account of rural women's experiences found in Chapter Five. Further integration created greater changes in rural Thai women's social and economic relations. The question is have these changes been good or bad? The move into waged labour has destroyed rural Thai women's social networks of trade, has contributed to their poverty and their already existing double work-load, and has resulted in lower wages, exploitation as workers, and further gender subordination as women. Once thought of as a way to help women, women's integration into waged labour is now seen as further eroding women's social and economic relations (Mies 1991:119):

> Would it not be better, as Claude Alvares (1988) suggests, to stop this development as soon as possible and allow poor people in general and poor women in particular to keep control over their material base of existence and to work for their own subsistence instead of for export and capital growth (Mies 1991:120).

In order to answer this question it is important to first examine the ways in which women have been integrated into development. Integration is not solely based on incorporation into industrial waged labour. Women's development has its own history which is important to theoretical discussions on gender and class as one can see how Thai women's relations of production are influenced by the structure of women's economic development.

2.5 Women in Development

Caroline Mosers' (1993) research on gender planning in development takes a historical look at political and economic approaches to women's development from the 1950s on. These approaches reflect changes in macro-level economic, social, and political policies toward women's economic development. The various policy initiatives reflect how the political and economic paradigms of their time integrated women into the development

process and are as follows 1) welfare, 2) anti-poverty, 3) equity, 4) efficiency, and 5) empowerment (Moser 1993, Buvinic 1983). Of interest is the way these approaches correspond in time with the development perspectives presented throughout this chapter and the background data presented in Chapter Three. Note how the heading given each category reflects the social and economic relations of women within state-policy.

The welfare approach, introduced in the 1950s and 1970s, was a residual model of social welfare under colonial administration. Because of welfare policy's compatibility with the prevailing development paradigm of modernization, it was continued by many neo-colonial governments as well as nation-states attempting to modernize. The focus was on women's reproductive roles as mothers in addressing areas of food-aid, malnutrition, and family planning. Relief aid was provided directly to low-income women, who, in their gendered roles as wives and mothers, were seen as those primarily concerned with their families' welfare. Although the welfare approach was an attempt to raise women's status it did not succeed because welfare, as an economic development strategy, was not self-sustaining since it made women recipients of food-aid instead of subsistence producers.

The anti-poverty approach was introduced from the 1970s onwards. Within the anti-poverty framework, women's poverty was seen as the problem of underdevelopment. The approach recognized the productive role of women yet sought to meet their practical needs to earn an income. Implicit to practical needs was the "basic needs strategy," in which the primary purpose was to meet the basic needs of women; food, clothing, shelter, and fuel, as well as social needs such as education, employment, and political involvement. Underlying this approach was the assumption that the origins of women's poverty were attributable to their lack of access to private ownership of land and capital, and to sexual discrimination in the labour market. The aim was to increase the employment and income-generating options of low-income women through better access to productive resources

and increasing productivity in activities traditionally undertaken by women.

The policy on equity was introduced in 1976 and remained in the forefront of economic development ideology up until 1985. This shift in paradigms was historically based on the failure of modernization development policy, the influence of Ester Boserup's book, *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (1970), and the United Nations' Decade for Women. The focus of the equity approach was the demarginalization of women within the development process. They were to be moved into their national economies in an attempt to develop women's productive roles and improve their status. Women were to become active participants, not merely recipients of the development process, on the presumption that economic growth and equity for women were compatible objectives for women's development. Equity's primary concern was with inequality between men and women in both public and private spheres of life and across socio-economic groups.

The efficiency approach, predominant since the 1980s debt crisis and the deterioration in the world economy, attempted to make national development more efficient and effective through women's economic contributions. Women's roles were seen primarily in terms of their capacity to compensate for the national decline in social services by extending their work day. Thai activists have criticized this approach which meets practical gender needs at the cost of longer working hours and increased unpaid work, and because it is a top-down approach, without gendered participatory planning procedures. This type of women's economic development, made in the name of greater efficiency, has resulted in declines in income levels, severe cuts in government social expenditure programs (particularly women's education), and reduction in food subsidies. These cuts have also resulted in an increase in women's unpaid work. The push for export crops has often meant increased agricultural work with less time for the production of subsistence family crops.

The most recent concept found in women's economic development is

empowerment. Empowerment was articulated first by women activists in developing societies. The term acknowledges inequalities between women and men and the origins of women's subordination in the family, but also emphasizes the fact that women experience oppression differently according to their class, colonial history, and current position within the international economic order. It seeks to meet "strategic" gender needs (e.g., changes in the gendered division of labour, power, access, and control) indirectly through bottom-up mobilization around "practical" gender needs. Practical gender needs are defined as food, water, shelter, and fuel (Moser 1993). Empowerment maintains that women have to challenge oppressive structures and institutions that subordinate them, and stresses the importance of women's organizations in such a challenge.

Northern Thai rural women have been involved in all five of the development stages presented above. What is of importance to this work are the types of integration the five women's economic development projects presented in this thesis are involved in and did integration improve the social and economic relations of the rural Thai women studied?

2.6 Thai Perspectives on the Female Agent

Several different authors have written about Thai feminist thought, resistance, and the female agent (Bell 1997, Theobald 1997, Somswasdi 1991, Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991, Prasith-rathsint 1989, Kanchanchitra 1987). The countless number of women's organizations and resistance groups found in Thailand represent the defiant nature of Thai women as they struggle for an alternative, non-patriarchal, non-exploitative mode of economic development (Bell 1997). Although most agree that Thai feminist thought is heavily influenced by Western feminist thought (Theobald 1997:155, Tantiwiramandon and Pandey 1991:10), Thai women's struggles within their own development process have meant that Thai feminism has generated its own identity with an independent history:

> ...the word feminist is explained differently in the Third World, specifically in Thailand. There is no feminist movement in Thailand as a unified theory. Those using it assign levels of meaning to it: welfare, autonomy, choice and justice. Compared to the categories of feminism in the West - liberal, Marxist, socialists and radical - there is no similar category in Thailand. Suppressed by the anti-Communism policy of the government, socialist, Marxist, and radical groups hardly exist in the open. What is prevalent, however, are the three main categories: conservative (nationalist), liberal (individual rights), and progressive (collective welfare) groups. Conservative groups, emphasizing the home-bound, nurturing role of the women, are sometimes called "classical" groups, and progressive groups, speaking about violence against women such as forced prostitution and rape, are called "new generation groups". Progressive groups are sometimes labelled as "radical" because any vocalization of "right" or "justice" is "leftist" enough to be regarded as "radical" (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:10).

Specifically, conservative or traditional Thai groups are seen as nationalistic in ideology, hierarchical in structure, and family oriented in activity. Conservative Thai groups are linked with the Royal Thai Family and high ranking government personnel. Liberal Thai groups, however, are more professional in social location, small yet hierarchical in structure, and oriented towards individual rights. Liberal Thai groups have won wide support from the Thai public and foreign governments but lack independent income-generating programs and local resources to be self-reliant. Progressive or radical Thai groups are defined as emancipatory in ideology, small and participatory in structure, and oriented around collective consciousness. Progressive groups link Thai women's struggles with the global feminist movement and are closely identified with NGOs and grassroots development projects.

What is of importance to this work is the agency of the rural Thai women studied in terms of their conscious decision to integrate themselves into the capitalist economy to generate incomes and improve their social and economic relations.

2.7 Conclusions

Changes in social and economic relations among rural Thai women are

studied within the class and gender perspectives presented in this chapter. Critical to the overall conceptual and theoretical framework are the development and operation of capitalist-patriarchy as the dominant economic system in Thailand, class relations between advanced capitalist nations, newly industrialized nations, and Thailand, analyses of the nation-state, formal markets, and informal sectors of the Thai economy, analyses of the intermeshing of class and gender relations in Thailand, discussion of Thai urban/rural differences and their intersection with class and gender, and the Thai female agent. Thai women's agency is seen in the rural projects presented in this thesis and is studied historically. The following chapter presents the political and economic processes which have contributed to capitalist development in Thailand and Thai women's responses to changes in their social and economic relations.

Endnotes

1. Maria Mies' historical analyses of capitalist-patriarchy centers around gender oppression and the simultaneous development of capitalism, colonialism, the scientific revolution, and the witch-hunt in Europe (see Mies 1986, Chapters 2 & 3). Although Mies is a central theoretical figure in this work, she does not use the phrase feminist political economy.

2. Historically, modes of production have gone from ancient, to feudal, to capitalist. Relations of production within these systems have been between patricians and slaves, lords and serfs, and capitalist and waged labourers (Morrison 1995). Samir Amin (1982) outlined the development of peripheral capitalism by recognizing the following modes of production: primitive communal, tribute-paying, slave-owning, simple petty-commodity, and capitalism.

Chapter Three

Thai Women's Changing Social and Economic Relations

3.1 Introduction

Thailand differs from most Southeast Asian countries in that it has never been colonized, it has a long history of bureaucratic centralism, and it carries the status of being a major food exporter (Muscat 1994:4). Thailand was slated to become a newly industrialized country (NIC)[1] by the year 2000, joining the select company of "the Asian Tigers" - South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Thailand's "economic miracle"[2] has been a direct result of capitalist development, the building of a nation-state, national and export-oriented industrialization, and direct foreign investment. Although this rapid development is extraordinary, only a minority of Thais have benefitted greatly from the country's economic growth. In the early 1990s, it was recorded that the richest 20 percent of the population made as much as 56.48 percent of the nation's total income, while, at the same time, the poorest 20 percent of the population earned only 4.05 percent (Thai Development Newsletter 1995:1). The economic downfall of Thailand in 1997 was so sudden that books by financial experts praising Thailand's miracle were still being sold throughout the world (Prasartset 1997:17). It is estimated that anywhere from one to four million Thai people will be unemployed during the current economic crisis, many of them women with families to support and parents to take care of (Noi 1997:43).

This chapter identifies political and economic processes which have significantly contributed to capitalist development in Thailand, and presents a historical overview on how these development stages changed Thai women's social and economic relations. The salient forces which have influenced Thai women's social and economic relations are examined through class and gender perspectives. Since capitalist-patriarchy focuses on

patriarchal relationships in pre-capitalist societies (Mies 1986:36), this chapter begins by examining Thai women's social and economic relations during the feudal mode of production.

3.2 Women's Social and Economic Relations and Feudalism (1800-1855)

The absolute monarchy and feudal mode of production are two factors which have contributed to class and gender hierarchies found in Thailand (formerly Siam) today. The feudal mode of production operated in Siam up until the mid-nineteenth century. During that time, the *Chakri* dynasty, working through royal and noble elites and the *Sakdina* system[3], owned and controlled the majority of Siam's land, capital resources, and *prai* or corvee labour. Through the feudal corvee system, male commoners were required to work as unpaid labourers for the lords or political elites - the King, the royal family, noble families, and governmental departments. While the male members of the serf household were away, the female members of the household looked after the home, managed the family budget, took care of the elderly and the young, and engaged in subsistence-agriculture activities (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:16, NCWA 1985:12).

Women in different classes engaged in different types of labour. Feudal relations dictated the type of work women were expected to do. Aristocratic and noble women were afforded the luxury of limited child care with little or no domestic duties other then being "passive and decorative" wives and mothers (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:16, NCWA 1985:12). These women were required to uphold the monarchy and male-oriented feudal system through absolute support of their husbands' activities. Support was not given through active participation in political or economic matters but was derived through inactive refrain in higher levels of decision making. Common women however were expected to perform limitless domestic chores in addition to the production of food and other necessities required for subsistence. The overburdened common woman suffered from poverty and destitution, a direct result of the unpaid

labour requirements (of both her, her husband, and her children) needed to support the feudal mode of production, the aristocracy, and elite women.

In order to preserve the existing political and economic order, the structural underpinnings of the formal feudal system extended far beyond the *Sakdina* system. Social relations in general were defined through the hierarchical system of a ruling class and a ruled class, in which social status was constructed around one's sex and blood-relationship to the King (Evers 1976:195). The ascribed status dictated by the feudal system meant that women were born into either ruling or ruled classes, noble women married noble men and common women married common men. Although some commoners practiced polygyny, aristocratic and noble women were more likely than common women to be ruled through the patriarchal, polygynous system of the ruling elite because elite women were expected to bear numerous male heirs in order to continue the royal blood-line or the noble social position of the families (Sookasame 1989:202). Although the matrilocal kinship system gave Siamese women control over economic matters pertaining to the family and their children - including sons - women regardless of class positions remained subordinate to husbands, fathers, lords, and monks (Somswasdi 1991:7, Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:16).

> Dominance of the female in economic matters pertaining to the family and household is due to the matrilocal system prominent during this time, and the fact that Thais still place considerable value on their matrilocal society today. In this respect, Northern Thai women inherit land from their parents, and do not out-migrate when married. As the economy of the household is largely related to women's assets, northern rural women play a central role in the economic decision making of the family. The role of a daughter is largely economic, looking after household production, and bringing in labour both as husbands and children. The youngest daughter is expected to look after her parents in their old age, and thereby inherits the house. It is important to point out that the nature of a matrilocal society does not mean that women considered themselves the leaders of their families (Kaosa-ard 1995:5).

Patriarchal relations meant that the women of Siam had limited control over decisions that affected their own lives. According to the Husband and Wife Law which was in affect from 1361 to 1935, all Siamese women were regarded as legal property of fathers and husbands (Rayanakorn 1991:20). Minor wives within the polygynous system were often presented as "gifts" by the ruling elite to cement political allegiances with neighbouring kingdoms (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:16). Common and peasant women could be sold into slavery against their wills by their fathers or husbands.

The tools needed for economic mobilization and upward mobility, such as autonomy, political participation, and education, were not available to women. Although common women were encouraged to be more independent after marriage than noble women, autonomy was limited to subsistence agriculture. Political or other forms of leadership roles were not an option for women (and most men), and education was only available if more "open-minded male relatives" were willing to teach women how to read and write in the home (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:17). While Buddhist ordination was not class specific and the monastery was the equivalent of an "open university" for males, ordination was gender specific and women were not allowed to be educated in the monasteries (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:16, NCWA 1985:12).

> The greatest achievement in Buddhism is to be born a male ...being born a woman is generally believed in this Buddhist country to derive from sin committed in her previous life; only men can be ordained, significantly, women will gain merit through her son entering the monkshood (Somswasdi 1991:14).

Overall, feudalism initiate a gendered division of labour which relegated women's work to the private sphere and domestic activities, an area Thai women are still confined to today (Somswasdi 1991:12). Feudalism also laid the foundation for rural women's high participation levels in subsistence farming which continued until the mid-1980s (Sookasame

1989:201). Women in Siam were not paid for their work, were limited to reproductive roles and subsistence employment, and had little prestige in the major social institutions of that time. Although the formal hierarchical system decayed, "...the predilection to hierarchy and to a social system in which people group themselves in patron-client networks has become deeply embedded in Thai society, bureaucratic operation, and political behaviour" (Muscat 1994:23).

3.3 Women's Social and Economic Relations and Nascent Capitalism (1855-1932)

Modern Thai political and economic history begins in the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1855, King Mongkut (Rama V) yielded to British colonial pressures and signed the Bowring Treaty, opening Siam to Western foreign trade. Signing the treaty was an act which cloaked King Mongkut's veiled desperation to keep Siam free from encroaching colonialism. This act is often regarded as the beginning of modernization and monetization (the reliance on a cash economy) in Thailand (Muscat 1994, Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:23).

Maintaining control over Siam's financial institutions was one of the primary aims of the King (Muscat 1994). Major territorial concessions (see Figure 3) were made to both the British (parts of Malaya) and the French (much of Indochina) to preserve the independence of Thailand's Central Plains, particularly the region around Bangkok[4] (Warr 1993:9). Although the treaty between Siam and Great Britain helped King Mongkut maintain the kingdom's financial institutions, independence, and absolute monarchy, the new open trade policy did not produce rapid economic growth for Siam (Muscat 1994:17, Warr 1993:10). What the introduction of nascent capitalism and monetization did, however, was create changes in Siamese women's income, employment, and social prestige.

Efforts to avoid colonialism through modernization created social change for the majority of elite Siamese women. To show the British and

Figure 3. Colonialism in 1939

Source: C. Messenger, 1989

French colonizers that the Siamese were as "civilized" as Westerners and thus "unworthy of colonization", a number of women from the ruling classes were educated in foreign languages and Western social etiquette. Queen Saowapa felt that Western knowledge was crucial if the female elite were to support their husbands as leaders during the modernization process (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:17). It was not until the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932 that some elite women's positions began to diverge from supporting the status quo to supporting women (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:27).

From 1855 to 1932, modernizing policies included legal changes in polygyny and the elimination of husbands' rights to sell their wives. (Somswasdi 1991:7, NCWA 1985:13). "Promotion of women's education began during King Chulalongkorn's reign (1868-1910), advocacy of a public role for women during King Vajiravudh's reign (1910-1925), and acceptance of women into the expanding bureaucracy[5] at the beginning of the constitutional monarchy (1932)" (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:17). Although modernizing policies, the avoidance of colonialism, and the introduction of a modern cash economy created education and employment opportunities, and hence a means of social mobility for some women from the ruling classes, it was Chinese immigration which helped undermine the economic rationale of the ancient *sakdina* system and common women's work began to change (Muscat 1994:23, NCWA 1985:13). While elite women entered wage-labour as clerical workers for the expanding bureaucracy, rural women became commodity producers and cash-crop farmers. As women from the ruling classes found themselves moving into higher levels of education and entering the bureaucratic work force, common women stayed in the rural areas working as rice cultivators for rice export.

King Chulalongkorn's policies of modernization and monetization encouraged large-scale immigration of Chinese wage-labour to build rail-transport and other types of infrastructure to support trade expansion (Gran 1983:92). At the same time, serf families were encouraged through

government sponsored land settlement measures to settle in rural areas and harvest rice for export. Profits went to the King and were used to build the urban infrastructure of Bangkok. The benefits of these profits did not go to the Chinese labourers, rural women farmers, or the rural areas. Protecting the monarchist-state through urbanization resulted in the rural/urban class differentiation still found in Thailand today in which Northern rural women's work creates surplus for foreign and indigenous capitalists in Thai urban centres, mostly Bangkok.

The period of absolute monarchy ended with a bloodless *coup d'etat* against King *Prajadhipok*. The People's Party, or the Promoters as the coup group came to be known, was made-up of 141 military bureaucrats and Thai civilians. For seven years the group met in total secrecy, planning to overthrow, what in their own words was described as "...the backwardness of absolutism in a time of modernity and the need for adjustment" (Muscat 1994:29). On June 24, 1932, the Promoters were able to stage a military show of force, seizing power in three hours. Although declared a "revolution" by the group, not one shot was fired and there was no popular support from Siamese civilians (Warr 1993:11).

The *Chakri* regime's avoidance of colonialism and attempts to modernize are now being described as preliminary programs for Thailand's capitalist development (Muscat 1994:15). The main components of economic policy during that time were basically "...free trade, encouragement of primary exports, measures to encourage land settlement for rice production, encouragement of Chinese immigration to expand the labour supply, conservative fiscal and monetary management, maintenance of a strong external financial reserve position through trade surpluses, and minimal government interventions into the operations of the market" (Muscat 1994:46). Politically, the modernization process ultimately led to the end of royal absolutism, the beginning of national policy, and the emergence of a new elite (Muscat 1994:32, Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:17, Evers 1976:206). These processes introduced capitalist social

relations of production, transformed internal class structures which entailed gender, ethnic, and regional divisions in economic activities, and introduced waged employment to many Siamese women.

3.4 Capitalism and the Formation of a Nation-State (1932-1947)

As new social classes began to form with the end of the absolute monarchy, education, i.e., foreign Western education, began to replace birth rights in determining social positions. The chance to acquire wealth in the new era was connected with membership in either the newly emerging political apparatus or the ever expanding bureaucratic systems (Evers 1976:206). Although educated women were, for the first time, recruited to fill the "...rapidly expanding administrative machine created by the central government", membership was limited to clerical positions only and upward mobilization for women within the political and bureaucratic systems was denied (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:17). During this time, a small group of educated women started to demand equality, vigorously criticizing patriarchy by focusing on polygyny and women's rights to better education and labour opportunities (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:27). The rising aspirations among the emerging middle-class bureaucrats and military men overshadowed the women's demands for equality and the women's movement did not emerge again until Thai women were granted the right to vote, just before the Second World War (NCWA 1985:14).

The inauguration of the constitutional regime was held June 29, 1932. The fact that the Siamese either did not support or were indifferent to democracy was evident as spectators for the commencement had to be rounded up by the new regime (Muscat 1994:30). Two prominent leaders of the coup, civilian Pridi Phanomyong and military strongman Plaek Phibun-Songkram (later known as Field Marshal Phibun) set up a succession of military-dominated patriarchal governments (see Table 1). The government did not guard the economic institutions as had the *Chakri* regime during the absolute monarchy. Siam's economic institutions changed as often as

Table TB1. Thailand's Patriarchal Political Force: Prime Ministers

Phraya Mano (military)	1932-1938 (defeated)
Plaek Phibun-Songkram (military)	1938-1944 (government fell)
Khuang Aphaiwong (military)	1944 (resigned)
Tawi Bunyakhet (military)	1945 (resigned)
M.R. Seni Pramoj (military)	1945 (defeated)
Khuang Aphaiwong (second term)	1946 (resigned)
Pridi Phanomyong (civilian)	1946 (resigned)
Thamrong Nawasawat	1946 (coup)
Khuang Aphaiwong	1947 (defeated/coup)
Plaek Phibun-Songkram (military)	1948-1957 (coup)
Pote Sarasin (military)	1957 (defeated)
Thanom Kittikachorn (military)	1957 (coup)
Sarit Thanarat (military)	1958-1963 (deceased)
Thanom Kittikachorn (second term)	1963-1973 (student uprising)
Sanya Dharmasakti (civilian)	1973-1975 (defeated)
M.R. Seni Pramoj (second term)	1975 (resigned)
Kukrit Pramoj (civilian)	1975-1976 (defeated)
M.R. Seni Pramoj (third term)	1976 (coup)
Thanin Kraivixien (military)	1976-1977 (coup)
Kriangsak Chomanan	1977-1979 (defeated)
Thanin Kraivixen (second term)	1979-1980 (resigned)
Prem Tinsulanonda	1980-1988 (defeated)
Chatichai Choonhaven	1988-1991 (coup)
Suchinda Kraprayoon	1991-1992 (resigned)
Anand Panyarachum	1992 (interim government)
Chuan Leekpai	1992-present

*Source: The Fifth Tiger (1994).

did its political situations, and within a short 40 years, what Siam had achieved through avoidance of colonialism had been lost as Thailand became dependent on capitalism:

> During 1932-60, amidst the power struggle among the new ruling elite, the Thai economy became increasingly dependent on the global market economy. From 1932 to 1947, amidst the power struggle among the ruling elites, Thai politics came under the influence of capitalism. After 1947, capitalism became the major mode of production in Thai society under the full market force of export-oriented policy. The changes during the second period (1947-60) began with the US intervention in 1950 which laid the foundation for national economic and social development. From 1957 to 1963, Thailand became a country fully dependent on capitalism, albeit an "underdeveloped" one (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:17).

During the late 1930s, the new administration began using ethnic identity and nationalism as a way to build the nation-state and maintain their power. In the interest of the newly formed nation-state, prime minister Phibun-Songkram (an admirer of both Hitler and Mussolini) "...built up the military and paramilitary forces; adopted the Western calendar; decreed a "modern" dress code [for both women and men]; and, in 1939, changed the name of the country from Siam to Thailand to conceptualize the ethnic basis of the modern nation-state" (Muscat 1994:39). Policies of economic-nationalism called for an "...expansion of the government sector and government economic interventionism generally, employing domestic aliens [Thais] rather than foreigners" (Muscat 1994:39). The long-standing government policy of filling commercial and wage-labour occupations through Chinese immigration was replaced by a deliberate policy of anti-Siniticism[6] in the 1930s, fueled by Thailand's emerging policies of nationalism. On enactment of the Anticommunist Act of 1933, the insignificant communist movement[7] went underground and was relatively inactive. Thailand's political nationalism reached an all-time high as the French and British moved out of the region and the Japanese moved in.

Thailand's infant democracy had little time to grow before the

country was drawn into World War II (1939-1945). In 1941, Japan invaded Thailand after the acting Thai foreign minister (Phibun was away from Bangkok) rejected the Rising Sun's request to allow its armies passage through Thai territory. The bombing of Bangkok coincided with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in the United States. The Phibun government soon became an ally of Japan, and declared war on the United States and Great Britain. During this time, the Thai military invaded areas of northeastern Burma and accepted from the Japanese a reestablishment of Thai control over four northern Malay states Siam had previously conceded to Britain. By mid-1944, allied bombing of Bangkok, inflation, severe shortages, and corruption among officials had taken their toll and Thailand's political economy crumbled (Muscat 1994:42). The end of World War II marks the beginning of urban growth in Chiang Mai Province.

The post-war years brought about a type of forced migration for those living in the north as large numbers of Northern Thais, many of them women, migrated into Chiang Mai City in search of food, shelter, and medicine:

> An exodus of townspeople fearing the Japanese occupation - and the Thai troops sent by Phibun perhaps even more - put great pressure on the land. Scarcity prevailed and disease spread rapidly. A shortage of clothing and effective medicines only made the situation worse. The end of the war brought all those who had fled - plus all those who wanted to be fed - flooding back into the towns in search of food and shelter. Those who recall these immediate post-war years spoke of the numbers of people coming to settle in the city [Chiang Mai] for the first time (Vatikiotis 1984:132)

Khuang Aphaiwong regime's attempts to build a nation-state after World War II also relied heavily on nationalism. One of the main components of economic-nationalism was a strong commitment to capitalist development. Then First Lady *Thanphuying La-iat* utilized her resources and those of other advantaged women, and joined the men in economic-nation building. *Thanphuying La-iat* set up the first Women's Cultural Bureau, the bureau's aim was "...to promote nationalistic spirit in Thai women by

encouraging them to form groups and to assimilate nationalistic values and behaviours" (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:44). The economic-nationalist movement marks the beginning of some of the more prominent Thai women's organizations still in operation today.

3.5 Women's Organizations, International Institutions, and Industrialization (1947-1970)

Shortly after the Women's Cultural Bureau was established, *Thanphuying La-iat* formed the Women's Cultural Club (WCC). The WCC was made up of wives of governors, judges, policemen, and high-ranking military officers. Echoing the goals of nationalism through conservatism and servitude, the WCC's main goals were "...to encourage socialization among elite women in order to improve their home-making role and to make them more compatible partners of their men" (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:44). By 1953, privileged women in most provinces, including Chiang Mai, had organized some sort of volunteer women's associations modeled after the First Lady's WCB and WCC. In general these were private clubs for urban-elite women, known throughout Thailand as the Women's Cultural Promotion Association (WCPA). One mandate of the WCPA was to teach "...new ideas and modern values to rural and less-advantaged women" (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:44).

The success and interest of the WCPAs meant more urban women's associations emerged. Women's groups included housewives, professionals, and members of religious-affiliated institutions such as the YMCA. During this time, the United Nations began to add women's issues to its programs and goals. Because Thailand was an ally of the U.S. and is centrally located in Asia, Thailand hosted numerous international conferences surrounding women's issues. In 1956, *Thanphuying La-iat* set up The National Council of Women of Thailand (NCWT). The NCWT is a national umbrella organization of the International Council of Women (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:44-45). These women's organizations

helped advance rural women's development into the national and international arenas and were among the first to advocate the need for change in Thai women's income, employment, and social prestige as Thailand was drawn into neocolonialism and crony-capitalism. As Berberoglu (1992:75) has noted:

> In Asia, following World War II, a number of societies emerged as appendages of the world capitalist system. Evolving as neocolonies of the expanding U.S. empire in the postwar period, these societies came to serve the economic and strategic interests of U.S. monopolies in providing cheap labour, raw materials, new markets, new investment outlets, and a military outpost through the region. From South Korea and Taiwan to the Philippines, Vietnam, [Thailand], and Indonesia, the countries that came under the U.S. grip served one or more of the above functions and provided the material base for U.S. transnational expansion in the region. By the early 1950s and subsequently, these countries, together with defeated Japan, came under the U.S. umbrella in the Pacific Basin and provided a foundation for the expansion of U.S. transnational corporations.

Thailand's new era was heavily influenced by the United States[8], Great Britain, and new international institutions such as the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (later known as The World Bank[9]) (Muscat 1994:42). Under the Marshal Sarit Thanarat regime (1958-1963), economic development became a major focus of government attention. A coherent set of policies was formulated and pursued with increasing effectiveness, and an institutional framework for development planning and promotion was put into place. For the first time the government was directly involved in the manufacturing sector. A number of state-run enterprises which produced industrial products (e.g. cement, paper, sugar, and tobacco) were established. The private sector was reluctant to invest in manufacturing activities which would have to compete with the state-run industries. Poor management and widespread corruption within most of the state enterprises caused many of the government-run initiatives to fail (Tambunlertchai 1993:139). Agents of the state, local capital, and international capital held such power at

this point that the subsequent period has become known as the period of "Despotic Paternalism" (Warr 1993:11). This patriarchal chauvinism resulted in personal financial gain for urban-elite families. "State-capitalism grew spectacularly in the 1950s, and military officials supplemented earnings by joining the boards of directors of many new banks and firms" (Gran 1983:93). Upon Thanarat's death, his estate was said to be worth somewhere around 150 million U.S. dollars (Muscat 1994:80).

In 1959, the World Bank published a preliminary country report which influenced Thai economic policy in two ways; it recommended investment for infrastructure and a shift from public to private investment:

> First, the [Bank] recommended a fundamental shift in the nature of public sector involvement in the economy - away from direct production, via the extensive and highly inefficient public enterprise sector that existed at that time, and towards concentration on investment in the public infrastructure required for economic development (roads, ports, electricity supply, telecommunications and so forth). Second, the report recommended a change in the government's method of promoting private sector investment (Warr 1993:11).

By the late 1950s, the Thai government followed the World Bank's suggestions and began to modernize through investment in infrastructure. One primary reason for this new direction was to reduce the government's involvement in manufacturing, which had created an onset of government corruption. By increasing private investment, loans and foreign aid made possible massive public investment in electric power, transportation, and communications. Industrialization as a form of economic development became more of a concrete reality as the infrastructure (i.e., electric power, transportation, and communication) of Thailand, especially that of Bangkok, began to grow (Tambunlertchai 1993:139).

Before The World Bank would release a loan, the Thai government was required to establish semi-autonomous agencies which took responsibility for management and mismanagement of projects. Agencies established under such conditions included the Electrical Generating Authority of Thailand

(EGAT), the Thai Board of Investors (BOI), and the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB). EGAT supervised a series of loans for large-scale dams, such as the *Bhumibol* hydroelectricity project. The Bhumibol hydroelectricity project (1964) displaced thousands of rural Thais, many of whom were women forced under the terms of the dam project to re-settle on inadequate farm land. Given EGAT's "semi-autonomous status" at the time, the agency was not responsible for the welfare of the displaced people (McMichael 1996:51-52). The BOI was created in 1958 to assist private investors (Warr 1993:12). The semi-autonomous agency induced private investment by offering attractive tax incentives to industries and later, multinational corporations. Inducements included income and capital equipment tax exemptions, and "tax exemptions or reductions on raw materials and intermediate products" (Tambunlertchai 1993:139). Such incentives encouraged transnational corporations to relocate to Thailand, a reason for the country's massive economic growth. The NESDB began producing regular five-year 'national development plans', initiated in the beginning to guide private investments. Today the national development plans look at social issues which have arisen as the country pursues economic development. Many of these issues revolve around changes in Thai women's social and economic relations and are presented in greater detail below.

The First National Development Plan (1961-1966) was "...broad and vague on the role of industry but it demonstrated the government's policy to promote industrialization through private enterprise" (Tambunlertchai 1993:139). Although most of the public enterprises then in existence remained, these enterprises became relatively less significant as private sector economic activity in manufacturing grew. The Second National Development Plan (1967-1971) continued the push for domestic market industrial development through private investment (Tambunlertchai 1993:139). Since the beginning of the 1960s, there has been a tremendous influx of rural women migrating to Bangkok in search of employment

opportunities and income (Thomson 1996, Koanantakool 1993, Thorbek 1987).

In October 1973, Thamon Kittifachorn's military government was overthrown through student riots. Many students, both female and male, were killed during this time. Pressure from the students caused King Bhumibol to intervene, appointing a national civilian government. Thamon went into exile and the civilian government took over (1973-77). This was known as the "golden era of democracy" and within one year a permanent constitution was promulgated. The Constitution of 1974 enacted laws endowing women and men with equal rights and equal opportunities for women in the workforce on the bases of equal wages. A new law revoked the burdensome consent required of a husband before a wife could enter certain occupations. Women were also granted the prestige of managing property (Somswasdi 1991:8-9, NCWA 1985:14). The new constitution called for the establishment of government institutions to deal directly with issues related to women's development (Kaosa-ard 1995:16). Laws were revoked which previously discriminated against women by banning certain types of employment, (i.e., the Ministry of Interior regulations prohibiting women from becoming public prosecutors, and the Ministry of Justice regulations prohibiting women from becoming judges (NCWA 1985:14). These historical times had direct consequences on international capital:

> International capital did not like the new civilian government that arrived. The 1973-74 strikes by students, workers, and peasants were viewed ominously. Foreign investment stopped, growth slowed, and the World Bank essentially stopped preparing new projects. Only American military aid flows increased. It was not an original strategy (witness Chile under Allende), and it worked again. In the late 1970s Bank flows grew rapidly as a new Thai military government reaffirmed its international linkages...it seems unlikely that before the late 1970s, Bank disbursements alone could have disrupted national finance in Thailand (Gran 1983:97).

The so-called "golden era of democracy" was short-lived. The bloodiest coup within Thailand's history took place in 1976 and Thanin Kraivixien (military) came into power. The parliament was abolished once

more, martial law was implemented, and the 1974 Constitution was abrogated in 1976. Although four constitutions have since been promulgated (1976, 1977, 1978, and 1991) none of these new constitutions provided equal income or employment rights for women (Somswasdi 1991:11).

Until the late 1970s, Thailand was considered a relatively land-abundant country. During this time, agricultural exports were the Kingdom's primary source of foreign exchange, a sector which was the largest source of employment for both Thai women and men. As many as 70 to 80 percent of the total female workforce outside the Central Region (Bangkok) was still employed in the agricultural sector. Non-farm employment played a relatively minor role in terms of Northern rural women's work (Kaosa-ard 1995:5). For those rural women who had migrated to Bangkok, wages were extremely low when compared to international wages. For instance, in 1975 if the hourly wage for female electronics assembly work in the United States measured 100, the relative value for equivalent electronics work in Thailand measured 5. This rate was one of the lowest in the Southeast Asian region, equivalent only to Indonesia which rated 5 as well. The Philippines rated 6, Taiwan and South Korea 7, Malaysia 9, and both Singapore and Hong Kong rated 12 (McMichael 1996:97).

3.6 Women in Thai Development (1972-1982)

Up to the Third National Development Plan (1972-76), women, as a targeted group for development, had not been addressed. When population control and family planning policy gained national importance, women finally became a focus of development planners. Although the Third Plan discussed the need to assess women in relation to labour protection, women were limited mostly to family planning issues (Sookasame 1989:205, NCWA 1985:20).

In the Fourth National Development Plan (1977-1981) women's educational and employment development began to emerge as an important concern for national planning. The Fourth Plan noted lack of educational opportunities and discrimination against women in terms of professional

advancements as two social disparities Thai women faced. Males were identified as having greater educational opportunities, illustrated by the fact that the illiteracy rate at the time for women was 25.2 percent, compared to 11.1 percent for males. The Plan also stated that discrimination, in terms of professional advancement and salaries was evident (Sookasame 1989:204, NCWA 1985:20).

The Fourth Plan stressed the importance of small-scale industries to develop employment and other economic opportunities for women in rural areas. For the first time the Community Development Department, a government organization operating at the local levels, was assigned the task of promoting rural women's economic development. The program operated with an initial 65 million baht from the government, and a 5 million baht donation from non-governmental organizations. Besides women's economic development in rural areas, there was emphasis on women's education, legal, and labour issues. This was a step beyond the traditional ideology of women's development in which family planning was the sole focus. This was also a time when a large number of non-governmental organizations began to focus on women's economic development. (It is interesting to note that two of the five projects examined in this thesis started at this point in time).

After the United Nations declared the International Women's Year in 1975 and the Decade for Women (1976-1985), the Thai government established a National Executive Committee to further implement Thai women's economic development. A Thai delegation was sent to participate in World Conferences on the Status of Women in Mexico (1975), Denmark (1980), Kenya (1985), and Bejing (1995) (NCWA 1985:15). The UN's Decade for Women, World Conferences on Women's Status, and the Fourth National Development Plan took place within the same time frame. Women's economic development as an autonomous heading was finally seen in the Fifth National Development Plan (1982-1986), a direct result of Thai women's efforts to put rural Thai women's socio-economic concerns on the national development agenda.

On a micro-level, the Fifth Plan identified rural Thai women for the first time as a specific target group. The focus was on poverty alleviation with special attention given to the poorest regions (North and Northeast). Income-generation became a top priority for rural women's economic development, with vocational and skill training becoming a major policy of government and non-governmental organizations. Female labour, education, and political matters are also the focus of Plan Five (NCWA 1985:24). Connected to the Fifth Plan was the Long-Term Women's Development Plan (1982-2001). This plan was more detailed than the Fifth Plan and included women who are at the margins of Thai society; agricultural women, Buddhist nuns, women officials, State Enterprise women workers, imprisoned women, and prostitutes (NCWA 1985:25).

3.7 Women's Work and the Building of a Tiger (1980-1990)

Among the various industrial sectors, foreign direct investment had been more involved in manufacturing which accounted for one-third of the total foreign investment inflows during the 1980s. Food, textiles, electronics, chemicals, machinery and transportation equipment, petroleum products, and construction materials were among the major industries with substantial foreign investment. The United States and Japan were the two countries which initially invested the most foreign capital in Thailand. Combined, the U.S. and Japan accounted for over 60 percent of the total foreign investment between 1970 and 1985 (Tambunlertchai 1993:134). Newly industrialized nations in South East Asia, particularly Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore became sources of foreign capital from the mid-1980s on. Japanese and Taiwanese investments had been under the umbrella of the BOI-promoted industries joining with the Thai business elites, while the United States concentrated more within the energy sector, investing outside the BOI (Tambunlertchai 1993:135-136). Although in the past Thailand received less foreign investment capital than most of its ASEAN members, investment in export industries increased throughout the 1980s.

By 1988, foreign investment averaged 38.5 percent of the total equity capital of all BOI-promoted industries (Tambunlertchai 1993:136). Foreign investors had control over the multinational firms as they were the ones supplying capital, expertise, and technology. The integration of rural Thai women into the capitalist labour process was seen extensively through export-oriented and import-substitution industries:

> ...a key to Thailand's international market-oriented success story has been what investors, bankers, planners, and analysts refer to as "the low-wage, docile, and disciplined work force," a very indirect way of designating women. Export-oriented manufacturing of items such as electronics, ready-made clothes, processed food, jewelry, shoes, and leather ware are made mostly by women. They [women] constitute over 70 percent of the workers in each of these industries (Thailand's Report on the Status of Women 1994:5).

Multinational corporations, wanting to make as much profit as possible, limit Thai women workers "...to certain levels of the occupational hierarchy and for them [the workers] there is little hope of learning useful skills" (Charoenloet 1991:1).

From 1986 to 1992, rural Thai women's major source of income shifted from profits to wages as their economic roles continued to move out of commodity production and into waged labour (Kaosa-ard 1995:7). As economic relations changed, so did the average woman's contribution to the overall household cash income. For the whole kingdom, an increase from 24 percent in 1986 to 42 percent in 1992 was seen (see Table 2). For rural women in the North, shares increased from 22 to 43 percent:

> By 1980, it was apparent that Thailand had reached the limits of its agricultural expansion. As the supply of land for cultivation became increasingly scarce, women were the first group of surplus household labourers to leave the agricultural sector. Between 1983 and 1988, there was a net withdrawal of female workers from the agricultural sector, evident even during peak growing seasons. This movement of labour out of the primary sector has enabled the growth of Thailand's export market, which is based on labour-intensive manufacturing. Thus, released from the agricultural sector and readily employed in manufacturing, services, and commerce sectors,

> rural Thai women made the shift from home-based (and often unpaid) employment to non-farm, wage-paying employment in the 1980s (Kaosa-ard 1995:6).

The decline in the agricultural sector resulted in the expansion of the informal sector where most rural Thai women are engaged today. A regular wage is the distinguishing factor between formal and informal sectors, the formal sector is made up of "...regular organized occupations with steady pay, and the informal sector of self-employment, irregular employment, and often intermittent or varying remuneration" (Pine 1982:396). While the informal sector provides an opportunity for some rural Thai women to work outside the home and receive wages, many more rural women generate their income at home on a subcontracting basis with inadequate social protection. The growth in the informal sector has resulted in patterns of "gender segregation" which reinforce supporting or secondary economic status for Thai women, and the preference for Thai women to enter the informal labour force as opposed to continuing their education (Thailand's Report on the Status of Women 1994).

The recovery of the Thai economy and the improvement of the financial condition of the government after 1985 advanced development outside Bangkok. The development of the eastern seaboard included deep-sea ports, industrial estates, exporting processing zones, a petrochemical complex, railroads, and water pipelines. The eastern seaboard was the first region outside Bangkok to experience such rapid industrialization. During the Sixth National Development Plan (1987-1991) agri-based industries were highlighted (Tambunlertchai 1993:145):

> Thailand has become a new agricultural country...The Thai government established the Fourth Sector Co-operation Plan to Develop Agriculture and agro-industry in the mid-1980s, linking agribusiness firms, farmers, and financial institutions with state ministries to promote export contracts...Thailand's agro-exports are linked to the rich and growing markets in the Pacific Rim (especially those of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan), accounting for over 60 percent of Thailand's foreign exchange reserves in the early 1990s (McMichael 1996:103-104).

Rural women in Chiang Mai Province have become commodity producers, growing fruits and vegetables and selling their products to processing plants for export. As of 1990, there were three large-scale export-oriented factories, and 16 small-scale factories in Chiang Mai Province; only one is involved in agro-export. Most of the rural women in the large-scale garment factories are paid piece rates, estimating around 2000 baht a month (Gray 1990:48). Those in the small-scale factories, such as broom or umbrella factories, average 25 to 160 baht per day.

Changes in economic relations are seen through changes in the occupational structure of rural women in Northern Thailand. Although the percentage of rural women working in agriculture and animal husbandry have decreased from 82.2 percent in 1980 to 46.3 percent in 1998, in all other sectors of the economy, labour force percentages have risen. Clerical, sales, and service participation, a good example of Thailand's gendered division of labour, have significantly risen, while increases in professional, administrative, executive, managerial, and government officials are insignificant. Although these occupational changes have taken place, the majority of rural women in Northern Thailand still work in agriculture. For a complete description on the changing structure of women's work in Northern Thailand, please see Table 3.

3.8 Rethinking Thai Women's Economic Development and The Economic Crisis (1990 - present)

On February 23, 1991 there was a surprise military coup, a surprise in that there was consensus that "...Thailand had come to an age when a military coup would prove to be obsolete" (Rayanakorn 1991:21). The last constitution had been the basis of a democratic nation for over 12 years. From 1991 until 1997 however there was no constitution and Thai women were still not legally allowed to enter employment in some areas of government service. Much to the surprise of Thai women advocates, Thai women's work continues to be restricted to the private sector:

> Even though the industrial sector has for some time been promoted, Thailand is still an agrarian society and the contribution of women in the economy is considered domestic affairs. Conceptually speaking, Thailand's development has confined women to the domestic sphere in order to deny them the equal status to that of men (Somswasdi 1991:12).

In 1990, 52 percent of all Thai women participated in the work force, and, at the same time, performed household chores and were responsible for child care. Data available in 1991 on wage differentials showed that Thai women earned consistently less than Thai men in agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, and services. In 1993, the national statistical office showed that 80.2 percent of the women's labour force was between the ages of 35 to 39 years; 57.5 percent of these women worked in agriculture. Although agriculture remains the most important sector for females, Thai women, by and large, are still unpaid for their work, whereas Thai males work as wage labourers (Thailand's Report on the Status of Women 1994:19). Although Thai women may be among the most economically active in Asia, with Thai families proudly acknowledging their working wives and daughters, most Thai women do not have an equitable share in terms of higher-level positions of responsibility and authority in the private and public sectors. As of June 1995, only four percent out of the 391 elected parliamentarians were women. This figure is lower than Malaysia (6%), China (9%), Indonesia (19%), Vietnam (20%), and South Korea (21%). Twelve of the 23 standing committees of the House of Representatives have no female members. Thai women play relatively minor roles in the policy-making bodies of Parliament. These roles are limited to committee work on social welfare for rural women, children, and the elderly. In fiscal year 1995, the Community Development Board's budget for women and children in rural areas was 390 million baht, and in 1996, 500 million baht. Even with this increase, the budget for development of rural women still accounted for less than 0.07 percent of the total government budget (Kaosa-ard 1995:18-20).

On September 27, 1997 parliament approved a new constitution known as "the people's charter":

> Passing the charter has restored some measure of hope in politics, though not in the government. The Constitution has become a talisman of sorts. But putting the Constitution to work for the country will not be easy. Thailand's political system is impoverished. Many citizens vote (for a price) but have no voice in Bangkok. Elected officials are often most effective at representing their own interests. Politicians and businessmen often look after each other a little too well. Over the past few years, billions of baht have been paid under the table to win government concessions, according to one academic. Meanwhile, the baht has plummeted, the stock market is depressed and most lay the blame on the government's inability to manage the economy (Gearing 1997:2).

The government's inability to control the economy was clearly illustrated by the effects of the Asian economic crisis on the people of Thailand. The economic crisis resulted in a massive devaluation of the Thai baht in which many Thai people not only lost their life savings but were robbed of their rights to work. As export-oriented factories moved out of Bangkok literally overnight, the vast majority of these company's employees - women - were left jobless. These women were not paid before the companies pulled out and had no legal means or financial backing to ensure they would receive the money that many of these industrial firms still owe them (interviews 1998). This loss is being felt throughout Thailand, as the majority of these women were supporting themselves, their families, and their parents. This is especially true for the rural women from Northern Thailand as their role in the family is primarily economic (interviews 1998).

3.9 Conclusions

The ways in which Thai women's social and economic relations have changed depends, in part, on their socio-economic backgrounds. As Thai women are finding themselves incorporated into waged labour, some are able to pursue professional careers based on their educational levels and access to urban waged labour. For most Thai women, however, incomes remain low and waged

employment is limited to agriculture (46.3%). For women from rural areas with limited education and vocational skills, work is done in home-based production and the informal sector of Thailand's economy. In this regard, there has been little change in rural women's social and economic relations. Although some Thai women have been able to push through the bamboo ceiling of Thai patriarchy by taking advantage of the changing gender relations within the work force, this is not true for the majority of rural Thai women. Tools needed for economic mobilization and upward mobility, such as autonomy, political participation, and eduction, are still not available to rural Thai women. Contemporary jobs and incomes still create an inferior economic standing, backed by resilient patriarchal institutions in place since the feudal era. Although Thai women were involved in rural women's economic development at the micro-levels, there were no indications that Thai women were involved in the actual development of macro-economic structures and policies (financial, monetary, or commercial) which have a direct impact on Thai women's access to economic resources, their economic power and consequently, their equality in pay and social protection. This sort of decision making was directed more by the global market, international capital, and the nation-state.

Endnotes

1. Newly industrialized countries (NIC) are middle-income countries that "industrialized rapidly and substantially beginning in the late 1960s", using this rapid growth as a way to develop the economic and political structure of the nation-state (McMichael 1996:304).

2. A term foreign and domestic economist are using to describe Thailand's double-digit growth in the late 1980s, a growth which made Thailand one of the fastest growing economies in the world (Bell 1997:55, Muscat 1994:4).

3. *Sakdina* hierarchy divided men into four classes - numerous princes of the royal blood, nobility (upper and lower), freemen commoners (half of labour time was as a corvee labouer), and *that* or slaves (Muscat 1994:21).

4. For centuries, Bangkok has been the metropolis of Thailand. The centralized government, the monarchy, the military, and the headquarters of finance and commerce are all located in this city. Manufacturing facilities have clustered in the region from the very start of Thailand's industrial growth. The industrial and manufacturing sectors are enormous, "reinforced by the traditional concentration in Bangkok of higher education, advanced medical services, the foreign community, the media, and other leading institutions and cultural centres" (Muscat 1994:9).

5. By 1910, Thailand had a working ministerial bureaucracy, whose higher civil servants had regulated working hours and received fixed salaries. The civil servants were, for the most part, among the princes and male members of the nobility. After the revolution of 1932, competition intensified as large numbers of people were needed to run the modernized administration. People from rural areas, [women], and low family backgrounds found it extremely difficult to obtain civil service appointments (Evers 1976:196-97).

6. It was not until the mid 1950s that this type of ethnic chauvinism took an unexpected turn as Thai political factions, seeking control over the government, took up alliances with newly emerging Chinese businessmen. These actions eventually led to the assimilation of the Chinese, or more accurately, the emergence of the Sino-Thai. Ever since, the Sino-Thai has been "...a source of dynamism for Thailand's economic development and a sociological phenomenon that has removed Thailand from the ethnic dimension that continues to trouble and cast a shadow over the future of a number of other countries in the region" (Muscat 1994:42).

7. From 1965 - 1980, the communist movement was a significant problem in Thailand. "Although the movement drew a considerable amount of student support in the middle and late 1970s, neither the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), nor Marxist ideology developed any influence over Thai economic policy" (Muscat 1994:43).

8. The Korean War (1950-53) furthered Thailand's relationship with the U.S., in which the U.S. was seen as a much-needed allie for Thai security.

9. The idea for an international bank which would make large-scale loans to states for national infrastructure projects (e.g., building dams, highways, and power plants) was part of a development plan to restructure the world economy in the 1940s. Hence the creation of the "twin sisters" - the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF provided short term credits to stabilize national economies. The five biggest shareholders are from the "first

world" in which the United States has the largest amount of control of the bank. "In 1993, the 10 richest industrial states controlled 52% of the votes while only 4% of the votes were controlled by 45 African nations" (McMichael 1996:49-51).

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this study is to look at changes in rural Thai women's social and economic relations. Background data in Chapter Three has helped identify some of these changes during capitalist development in Thailand. As suggested by Vandana Shiva (1995), however, a fuller understanding of women within capitalism would extend outside the industrialization process and into other productive activities. For this purpose, this research also examines rural women's economic development projects. Five different rural women's economic projects in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand were studied (for an overview see Table 4). A qualitative case-study approach was utilized, including participant observation, interviews, and secondary data gathered from a multitude of sources (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991:7), as well as quantitative data which were collected through the interview process.

4.2 Preliminary Data and Sample Selection

Preliminary data were collected on five women's economic projects currently taking place in and around the Chiang Mai Province. Chiang Mai was selected as the primary research site for five reasons. First, I had been to the Chiang Mai Province in 1993 and had worked as a student researcher on a study on the impact of modernization and development in Thailand. I had travelled throughout the Northern area and was familiar with not only Chiang Mai Province but with Chiang Mai University as well. Second, the National Research Council of Thailand requires all foreign student researchers to be associated with a Thai University. Having worked with the Social Research Institute (SRI) at Chiang Mai University in 1993, I was able to obtain a second sponsorship through the SRI to conduct research for the thesis. Third, rural women in the Northern Thailand have

a long history of economic activities and social responsibilities which made it possible to look at changes in rural women's social and economic relations over time. Fourth, there are a number of different economic development projects targeting rural women currently in operation in Chiang Mai which made it possible to meet the goal of looking at local, national, and international organizations for a comparative analysis. Fifth, there are several women organizations in Chiang Mai, a number of which were visited for background data on Northern Thai women's social and economic relations. What proved most beneficial to this study was The National Council of Women of Thailand (see Chapter Three) in Bangkok which put me in touch with the Professional Women's Association in Chiang Mai. An informal interview was conducted with the director of the Professional Women's Association in Chiang Mai about the association's current project on management training for rural women.

To collect preliminary data, letters were sent from Victoria, British Columbia to various developmental agencies in Bangkok seeking assistance in locating women's income-generating projects currently in operation in Chiang Mai. Bangkok's National Economic and Social Development Board and the National Commission of Women's Affairs (see Chapter Three) suggested FEDRA's *Mettanaree* Unit and ILO's Homebased Producers' Network projects respectively, the first and fifth projects studied while in Chiang Mai (see Chapter Five). FEDRA's *Mettanaree* Unit is a handicraft project and was chosen as one of the study projects for three reasons. First, the *Mettanaree* Unit is a non-governmental project. Second, this project is linked with Buddhism, a cultural institution which plays an important role in constructing Thai women's social and economic relations as does capitalism. Third, the project is known throughout Thailand as being successful in helping Northern Thai women maintain rural employment within their villages. The Homebased Producers' Network (HOMENET) project is a handicraft project and was chosen for two reasons. First, HOMENET is an international project. Second, HOMENET involves the

United Nations' International Labour Organization, an international agency made up of 174 member States (International Labour Office, 1998). Hence, HOMENET allows for an analysis of an international agency. The other three projects were located following preliminary research in Thailand.

Field research began in Bangkok in October, 1998. Informal interviews were conducted at the Canadian International Development Association (CIDA) with both the Canadian Fund and the Canadian Women's Initiative Fund directors. Fortunately, CIDA has supported a number of different women's economic projects in Northern Thailand and it was through meeting the Canadian Fund director that I found out about Women's Economic and Leadership Development (WELD). WELD was a handicraft project and was chosen for three reasons. First, WELD allowed for an analysis of a Canadian development project. Second, the project was established through the Canadian and the Thai government. Third, WELD formally ended in 1995. This allowed for an analysis of rural women's economic development projects five years after a project had ended. The other two projects were selected once in Chiang Mai (see below).

While in Bangkok, informal interviews were conducted with the directors of the Social Research Institute at Chulalongkorn University. The SRI had further information on the WELD project, as well as background information on rural women's social and economic relations in Northern Thailand. Chapter Five is based on three months of field work in Chiang Mai Province. Before leaving for Chiang Mai, I checked in with The National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) for final approval on the research license and to pick up my foreign researcher's identification card. This card allowed me to conduct field research in the Chiang Mai Province from October through December, 1998.

The first week in Chiang Mai I attended the United Nations' Food and Agriculture's South East Asia workshop. During this time I was introduced to the Chiang Mai Food and Agriculture director and a formal interview was arranged. During the formal interview, the director told me about the Food

and Agriculture's Dried Fruit and Candy project. This project was a useful case study because it is a national project, funded by the Thai government. It is also an agriculture project, a popular form of economic development for women in Northern rural Thailand because of rural women's expertise in agricultural production.

The fifth case study, the Food and Agriculture's Weaving project in Lamphun was located by my Thai research associate (see below) through her work with the Community Development Board (see Chapter Three). It is a handicraft project, funded by the Thai government as well. Most importantly, it is located in Lamphun, an area where three export-oriented, Japanese-owned factories are located. This project made it possible to collect data on women's work inside the factories (i.e., income levels, hours worked, and type of production activities), as well as subjective data on how women within the surrounding villages view the factories and the work of their family and neighbours within the factories.

Although more than one village participated in each of the projects studied, the five projects researched were the only economic projects for rural women in operation around Chiang Mai at the time. In an attempt to cover as wide a range of development opportunities as possible, projects not villages were of primary consideration, specifically projects representative of the different types of rural economic development this research addresses.

4.3 Work With a Thai Associate

With the help of Chiang Mai University's Social Research Institute, English-speaking students from CMU were interviewed for work as an interpreter and guide. An interpreter is essential to a project such as this as limited knowledge of the Thai language would not allow me to conduct thorough interviews. A Thai guide is also necessary for foreign researchers not only for the guide's knowledge of the region but more

importantly, to help make introductions into villages. Out of the 20 qualified applicants, *Pik*, a fourth year public-administration student, was chosen.

Pik was selected for several different reasons, first and foremost for her verbal and written English-language skills, her extensive knowledge of Central and Northern Thai languages, plus her cognizance of various ethnic languages found in the Northern region. This was essential as a number of the rural women interviewed were older women and either spoke in their ethnic tongue or Northern Thai[1]. Second, *Pik* has worked with the Community Development Board and has a background in community development. The Community Development Board is an instrumental part of rural women's economic development (see Chapter Three), and through *Pik's* contacts we were able to obtain a list of rural women's economic projects in the region. Fourth, she knows the geographical region well. She had been born in Lamphun and has lived in Chiang Mai. This proved helpful in that a number of different times we were given the village's name but vague directions on the exact location. With *Pik*'s knowledge of the region we were eventually able to find all five village projects. This was especially important in locating the WELD villages which were two and a-half hours outside Chiang Mai City. *Pik*'s professional attitude and sense of humor were much welcomed as we spent one eight hour day locating the WELD project in *Nonggunk* village. When we finally found the village, we were told that there had been a death in the next village and that all the women were in that village. Although there was no one to interview that day, *Pik* made arrangements for us to come back.

The cost of transportation was of initial concern due to the limited research budget. *Pik's* knowledge of the local transportation systems was a tremendous help and relying on public transportation proved very economical. The majority of transportation to and from the projects were provided by *songthaews*[2] and city buses. At one point, the women we interviewed gave us a ride on the back of their motorcycles. After another

set of interviews, a group of monks gave us a ride in the back of their pick-up truck. For the WELD project, we relied on *Pik* family's pick-up. Another time we took a 'motor-seat'; a large motorcycle side-car back to Chiang Mai City.

Before the interview process began, *Pik* and I went over the interview schedules extensively which helped reformulate some of the questions to better suit the Thai cultural context. We talked about the importance of translating exactly, and not leading respondents in one direction or another. This review helped *Pik* translate the questions more accurately and better understand the types of issues the interview schedules were addressing.

4.4 Primary Data

Data were collected through formal and informal interviews, as well as participant observation of projects - some of which served as follow-ups on information gathered from previous interviews. I interviewed project directors and village leaders in each project, and checked their statements with those of other workers, observers, and participants. Interview schedules (see Appendix B) were constructed around class and gender relations, changes in incomes, productive and paid labour, reproductive and unpaid labour, modernization and development, the economic crisis, Northern Thai women's work outside the projects, Thai women's work in manufacturing, and women's work in the past including women's social networks of reciprocity and trade. Participant observation included watching members work at the projects and in their homes.

Three separate interview schedules were utilized. The first interview schedule was used to interview staff and personnel of the projects, the second to interview rural members of the projects, and a third to interview urban women working outside the projects in Chiang Mai City. The interview schedule for project planners and staff (see Appendix B) was made up of both open- and closed-ended questions and was used to

help identify issues surrounding the following research questions: a) what is the nature of rural women's economic development? (questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 21, & 22); b) which development paradigms is the project based upon and how are these translated into strategies and program objectives? (questions 12 & 13); c) what has been the outcome of the program; is it successful and at what costs? (questions 10, 16, 17, 18, & 19); d) how do women members view the outcomes? (questions 11 & 20); and e) how has the project changed rural women's social and economic relations? (questions 14 & 15).

For this research, a project's effectiveness and success is assessed from the standpoint of the participants. For this purpose, the interview schedule was formulated with both open- and closed-ended questions (see Appendix B) regarding issues surrounding the following research questions: a) what are the members' perceptions and opinions of the project's strategies and implementations, and what was the level of input and degree of control by the members? (questions 18, 34, 35, 36, 37, & 38); b) how do members view the outcome of the projects based on such criteria as: level of income, changes this creates in patterns of consumption and standards of living, direction of the flow of capital generated; whether into, out of, or within the community? (questions 16, 17, & 22); and c) to what extent have members moved into occupations outside the household and, if so, how do they view this, their new socio-economic status, and how do they integrate this with their domestic labour? (questions 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 39, & 40). Other research issues addressed through the members' interview schedule are as follows: a) demographics of women working in projects (questions 2, 3, 4, 4a, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, & 9a); b) historical changes in women's social and economic relations (questions 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 41, & 42); and c) the economic crisis (questions 27a & 28).

Further data collection became necessary for comparative analysis of rural and urban women's work. Hence, during the research process, a third

interview schedule was added to the schedule (see Appendix B). The formal interview schedule consisted of eleven questions addressing issues of women's urban waged labour and earnings (questions 1 - 11).

Out of the 110 people interviewed, 43 are rural women members of the projects, seven are village leaders, five are project leaders, 50 are women working outside the projects in Chiang Mai City, and five are working either in research on women's development or on women's projects which do not focus on economic issues. Three out of the five projects visited have at least 30 members each (the *Mettanaree* Unit, The Food and Agriculture Weaving Project, and WELD). The remaining two projects (The Food and Agriculture Candy Project and HOMENET), consists of seven and six members respectively, all of whom were interviewed.

While in Chiang Mai, the Northern Women's Development Foundation (NWDF) and the Thai Women of Tomorrow (TWT) projects were also visited. NWDF is currently involved in a project on AIDS and the education of female factory workers in Lamphun. TWT is a project in the highlands working on changing social roles for rural women by focusing on skills training and education in an attempt to keep young women in school and out of prostitution. Informal interviews were conducted with the directors addressing issues of rural women's work in the factories, changing social roles for women in Northern Thailand, cultural values, sustainable development, and Thai feminist thought.

4.5 Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected in Bangkok from the Canadian International Development Association, Chulalongkorn University's Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn's main library, and The Thailand Development Research Institute. In Chiang Mai, secondary data were collected from the Chiang Mai University's main library, social science library, The Social Research Institute library, The Hilltribe Study Centre, The Women's Study Centre, and the Chiang Mai Regional Statistics Office.

Secondary sources included international publications on Thailand's political, economic and social development, government policies for the development of women in Thailand, and ethnographic work on changes in Thai women's social and economic relations. Academic studies included work on Thai women and socio-economic development, sociological reports on industrialization and changing roles of rural women, women's legal position in Thailand, low-income female migrants, and Thai feminist thought. Topics of dissertations examined included ethnic pluralism, the growth of capitalism and waged labour in Northern rural Thailand, and industrialization's impact on family relations in Chiang Mai. Data were also gathered from regional economic development projects' documents outlining policies, objectives, methods, practices, and program assessments. Quantitative data includes national and regional government census on household socio-economic status, labour force participation, gender and regional wage differentials, and industrial enterprise. The vast majority of secondary data collected had already been translated into English, if not, *Pik* translated the work.

The secondary data proved crucial to the development and analysis of this study as a number of the works collected were specific to the Chiang Mai area, Northern rural women, and their social and economic relations. The vast majority of secondary data is academic, produced by highly educated Thais. As has been noted by Samir Amin (1997) for western scholars to truly understand the social situation of peoples in less developed countries, scholarly works from these countries must be considered.

4.6 Limitations to Research

One limitation to this research is that follow-up interviews with members were not conducted to help clarify data gathered. A second set of interviews with the same people would have provided the opportunity to substantiate data and explore avenues which needed further explanation.

When concerns such as this arose, I did talk with others involved with rural women's economic development in an attempt to clarify issues.

Working as a foreign researcher has advantages and drawbacks. On the one hand, it was beneficial to be a foreign researcher and an outsider since I did not have preconceived notions or values about the rural women I was working with. This allowed me to be receptive to all avenues of investigation. For instance, I was told by several people in Chiang Mai City that I should not go to the rural areas to conduct interviews with rural women because rural women "...did not know anything." On the other hand, limited Thai language skills restricted spontaneous conversations with respondents. Members of the Food and Agriculture project said they liked the interview schedule because the questions were easy to understand which "...allows us to speak for ourselves." The only drawback, they said, was that they could not speak to me directly but needed to speak through the interpreter (field notes 1998). Despite this and other limitations mentioned, the following chapter tells the story of changing social and economic relations of those rural women interviewed in Chiang Mai Province.

Endnotes

1. Central Thai is considered to be the national language of Thailand.

2. A *songthaew* is a small pick-up truck with two rows of bench seats in the back. *Songthaews* generally run on fixed routes throughout the city and the surrounding villages but may also be rented for private use.

Chapter Five

Five Economic Development Projects for Rural Women in Chiang Mai Province

5.1 Introduction

Economic development for rural women as a form of resistance to poverty and capitalist-patriarchy is a major focus of most development agencies in operation in Northern Thailand today. NGOs, governmental, and multi-lateral projects have all set out to improve Northern rural women's social and economic relations as Thai women become more and more dependent on a monetary economy. The purpose of this chapter is to critically examine such income-generating projects with emphasis on changes in members'[1] social and economic relations as they continue to move out of subsistence and cash-crop farming and into commodity production and waged labour. Feminist research suggests that the integration of rural women into waged labour is a socially destructive process. Research shows that incorporation, especially through equity and efficiency policies, has created exploitation and relegated women into informal sectors of the economy. At other times, however, it has been argued that changes are a source of empowerment for rural women. Questions at this point then are how have members' social and economic relations changed and are the five economic development projects studied beneficial to rural women?

The chapter is arranged in three sections, first, descriptive data on the five economic development projects studied are presented (see Table 4). Within the summary, emphasis has been placed on funding and management to demonstrate agencies and governmental responses to rural women's economic development. Village leaders and members' roles within the projects are highlighted to illustrate social relations, and members' production activities and types of pay are addressed to mark economic relations. Second, the impact these economic projects have had on rural

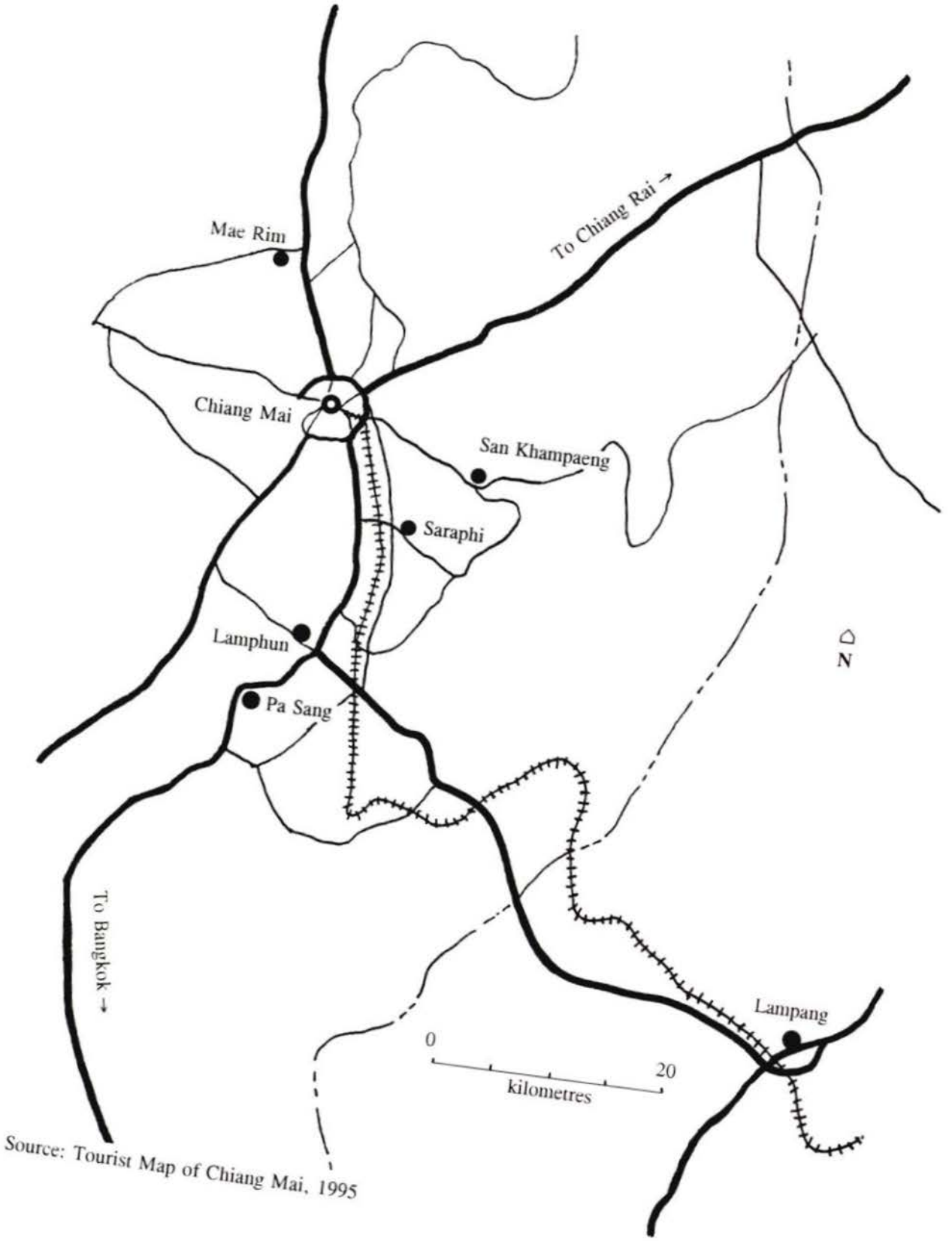
women's social and economic relations is discussed. Employment and income levels are compared to men, other women in the villages, and urban employment to help demonstrate members' current social and economic standing in relation to gender and class. Social prestige is measured through agency, government, community, and family responses to the projects as well as through the self-reported views of the members. Finally, a critical theoretical application is presented with emphasis on women's agency. The information presented in this chapter is taken directly from interviews unless otherwise stated.

5.2 Project One - FEDRA's *Mettanaree* Unit

The Foundation for Education and Development of Rural Areas (FEDRA) is a provincial, non-government organization. FEDRA was founded in 1974 by *Ven. Phra Thep Kawi*, one of Thailand's most respected monks. Known throughout the country for his activities in grassroots development, the foundation's aim is to assist the rural poor through economic development. Although initially FEDRA worked in one village with 23 members, the foundation today hosts 34 villages, 1,652 members, and three provinces (Chiang Mai, Lamphun, and Mae Hong Son).

In 1978, shortly after the formation of FEDRA, *Ven. Phra Thep Kawi* devised an economic development project at the *Wat Pa Darabhirom*[2]. This now famous Wat is located near the village of Rim Tai, Mae Rim district, about 20 kilometres north of Chiang Mai City (see Figure 4). The economic project at *Wat Pa Darabhirom* is divided into two main sections, the first being the handicraft sector which is for women in the surrounding villages, and the second an agricultural sector which works with the men. Although FEDRA has several different projects working within these two main sectors, including educational training for younger girls and boys, revolving funds[3], and food, rice, or buffalo banks, it is the women's handicraft or *mettanaree*[4] unit which has helped women members cope with changes in their social and economic relations. The *mettanaree* unit

Figure 4. Chiang Mai District



Source: Tourist Map of Chiang Mai, 1995

consists of several types of homebased, handicraft programs including sewing, embroidery, crochet, knitting, wicker-work, fresh flower decorating, and ceramics. The unit's main objective is "...to surmount traditional skills to an occupational scale so the village women can supplement the family income other than through agricultural sales" (pamphlet one:5).

Funding

FEDRA carries the status of NGO in Thailand although it relies heavily on donations from private donors, other NGOs, governmental organizations, and international funding organizations. The major national contributors to FEDRA include The Association for the Promotion of Business Women in the Northern Region (NGO), the Social Welfare Council of Thailand, the Office of Private Education, and the Ministry of Education. International organizations include Bread for the World, UNICEF, The Asia Foundation, the Dutch NOVIB Foundation, and the Japanese Asia-African Foundation. FEDRA initially donated 300,000 *baht*[5] ($12,653.00 CND) to the Wat Pa Darabhirom to start the *mettanaree* unit. Today, the project's leading source of income is the co-operative store[6].

Management and Administration

FEDRA's main goal is to promote self-sufficiency for rural women. Implementation of decisions is encouraged from the onset to be from the bottom-up so that eventually, the village group functions independently of the head office. Village groups are made up of generally older women (see Appendix A) who had, as young girls, learned handicraft production from their mothers and grandmothers. The group applies for FEDRA sponsorship by submitting a proposal demonstrating the women's abilities to enter into one of the handicraft programs. Village groups are selected for sponsorship by *Ven. Phra Thep Kawi* and his working staff[7]. Once a village group has been approved, the first step is for the women within the group

to select a village committee and a village leader. The village committee consists of community leaders from that village - usually the village head-man, the selected village leader, co-op shareholders, and women members. The village committee's job is to help coordinate the income-generating activities and to mediate when problems within the group arise. Village committees take the leadership role and village leaders become the liaison between the *mettanaree* unit, the village committees, and women members within their group.

Village Leaders

One village leader is elected by members of each village group. Women who are chosen have already demonstrated leadership capabilities, are familiar with the different skills each woman in the group has, have backgrounds in or knowledge of business matters, and are proficient in the type of handicraft the group will produce. Clients place orders with the FEDRA officer at the Wat, the officer then distributes the orders to the various leaders from different villages. It is the village leader's responsibility to pick up the orders and raw materials[8] from the officer and take the orders back to the village group. The village leader decides which member will fill what order, picks the patterns and designs used, recruits outside members when large orders need filling quickly, and trains new members if the group expands. It is the leaders' responsibility to make sure the order is completed and returned to the Wat on time, to meet with the village committee on a monthly basis to discuss problems or needs, and to acquire new skills through training. The success of the project depends substantially on the ability of the village leaders because the leaders control the village-system.

Members' Responsibilities

To be a member of the project the women must pay an entrance fee. The maximum limit is 20,000 baht[9] ($844.00 CND) per person. If a woman is

unable to pay she may still join but is expected to financially contribute later, paying the project what she can. Once a member joins the project, she can begin training in new patterns and techniques. Instruction lasts anywhere from one day to one week, is done either at the Wat or in the participating villages, and is conducted by the leader of the village group, an officer from the Community Development Board, or participants from other economic projects. The members are instrumental in planning their own programs, in choosing village leaders, in organizing village committees, and in managing the co-operative store.

Occupations within Project

Out of the 10 women members[10] interviewed for this project, four women crotchet, one crochets and sews, two crotchet, sew, and launder, and one trains new members, washes, and irons. One woman holds three positions; embroiderer, janitor for the project, and salesclerk in the project's shop. The other worker crochets and is the leader of the group. The women work as independent commodity producers, subsidized through NGO, government, national and international agencies' funds and equipment. The members work either at *Wat Pa Darabhirom* or in their homes.

Embroideries are generally decorative designs done by hand. Products such as pillow cases, sheets, and table cloths are decorated in detail with fashionable designs and pleasing patterns. This type of intricate work elaborates upon the products that have been sewn together by machine. For instance, when a hotel in Chiang Mai City orders 500 pillow cases, FEDRA supplies the white cotton cloth and the seamstress pins the patterns, cut the cloth, and sew the fabric. The pillow case is then given to an embroiderer who completes the product with intricate needlework designs. For example, should the product be a place-mat, the seamstress pins, cuts, and seams, then passes the product on to the woman who crotchets. A white border is crocheted around the piece with a single thread and a hooked needle. At that point the product is given to the

laundress. In the evenings the laundress washes the place-mat either by hand or by machine. During the day, the products are laid out to dry in the sunlight. Once dry, the workers spray the products with water proofing mixture, and then iron the product. The laundress returns the finished product to the village leader who returns the completed order to the Wat.

Income Levels

For the *mettanaree* project, women workers are paid by the piece, the amount depending on distribution. If a piece is made to fill an order and sells for 500 baht, the worker earns 450 baht (or 90%) and the village leader 50 baht (or 10%). If however a product such as a doily is sold through the co-op store and sells for 17 baht, the *mettanaree* unit receives 10 baht (or 59%) and the village leader receives one baht (or 10% of the *mettanaree* unit's 10 baht). The woman who made the product is paid 5 baht (or 29%), and FEDRA is given 2 baht (or 12%). If the workers sells a product directly to a customer, she receives 100% of the profits although this is extremely rare.

Per month[11] (see Table 5), members reported varied earnings of 300 baht ($12.65 CND), 300-400 baht ($12.65-16.87 CND), 600-900 baht ($25.30-37.96 CND), 1,200-1,500 baht ($50.61-63.26 CND), 1,500 baht ($63.20 CND), 2,000 baht ($84.35 CND), 2,100-2,400 ($88.57-101.22 CND), 2,400-3,000 baht (101.22-$126.53 CND), and 3,000 baht ($126.53 CND). The woman embroiderer who also works as a janitor for the project makes 2,500 baht ($105.44 CND) per month. The village leader reported making 2,000-3,000 baht ($84.35-126.53 CND) per month. Out of the ten women workers interviewed, only four were shareholders. Yearly incomes from members' shares range from a low of 70 baht ($2.95 CND) to a high of 3,800 baht ($160.27 CND). The village leader's dividend for 1997 was approximately 4,500 baht ($189.79 CND).

5.3 Projects Two and Three - Maeson Bantang's Food and Agriculture Weaving Centre & Bankaw's Fruits and Candy Factory

Rural women's resistance to changes in social and economic relations are evident through the Food and Agriculture government organization. Operating on both the national and provincial levels, the Food and Agriculture Department has had a positive impact on rural women's economic status in the Chiang Mai province. I argue that such a success is attributed to the provincial director, village committees, village leaders, and women members' active roles in the implementation of the governmental projects. In 1998, the Food and Agriculture Department had 1,060 on-going projects with 60,879 members. For the purpose of this research, two projects were visited. First, the handicraft weaving centre, located in the village of Maeson Bantang, Lamphun District[12], 30 kilometres south of Chiang Mai City. And second, a dried fruits and candy factory, located in the village of Bankaw, Saraphi district, about 20 kilometres southeast (see Figure 4).

Funding

Both the weaving centre and the dried fruits and candy factory are funded by the Royal Thai government and the Ministry of Industry through the Thai Food and Agriculture Department. The government has allocated a five year maximum interest-free loan of 200,000 baht ($8,435.26 CND) per economic project - the Maeson Bantang's weaving centre received a 128,000 baht ($5,398.57 CND) government loan to begin operations. Villagers submit project proposals drafted by the women who would be members of the project, the Food and Agriculture provincial director decides which programs will receive support and the amount of funding. Once the loan is approved, the village leader controls all financing for the project. The village leader and the women members are the ones who are financially responsible for raw materials and other production costs.

Members may also borrow money from the local government, other development organizations, or sell shares to local Thais to start or expand a project. The Bankaw's fruit and candy factory borrowed an additional 300,000 baht ($12,652.89 CND) from a local government bank (at 7-percent interest), and sold 2,100 shares totaling 105,000 baht ($4,428.51 CND) to help begin the project, buy raw materials, and build a workshop. The United Nations' Development Program (UNDP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) also helped finance the fruit and candy project by donating ovens and candy makers.

Management and Administration

Although funding and policy objectives are influenced and controlled from the top-down, participation is encouraged from the beginning to be from the bottom-up, much like the *Mettanaree* Unit implementation. Once a project has been approved, management and supervision are primarily at the village level; each village group elects a village committee and a village leader who are responsible for decision making. The village leaders' main responsibilities are to control finances, make final decisions on packaging, and to mediate when differences among group members arise. The director of the provincial office believes that the key to these two projects' huge successes is the amount of participation at the village level. In her words, "...it is not the Thai government which makes the projects work, it is the strength of the women within the individual groups."

Occupations in Weaving Centre

Out of the 10 members[13] interviewed, eight of the women work as weavers. They are self-employed, weaving at home and bringing the final product to the handicraft centre's shop to sell. These women weave cotton products and are paid by the piece; yarn[14] is either purchased from the shop or bought in Chiang Mai City. One woman weaves silk and teaches members in

other projects her craft. The final member runs the handicraft centre, is the shop's owner and the village leader. The women work as subsidized independent commodity producers, either at the weaving centre or in their homes.

Weaving is done by hand, taking anywhere from one day to weave a *pha-sin*[15] with a simple pattern, to three days for the more complicated or traditional *gao*[16] patterns. Length of time is based on the individual skills of the weaver as well as the amount of time she has to work on a product. Before weaving begins the yarn has to be wound onto an umbrella swift,[17] the warp length has to be measured, and then strand[18] onto the wooden loom - a process which takes an additional four days to complete. The base of the woven product is made out of the warp yarn and the interlacing out of investment yarn. The investment yarn is spooled onto the centre of hand-made wooden shuttles and by foot the women control the loom's steel reed causing the warp yarn to shift. As the base separates, the women push the shuttle through the gap. Catching the shuttle on the opposite side, the reed shifts the base once more, and the shuttle is glided back through again.

Income Levels in Weaving Centre

Members are paid a piece rate, profits depend on whether or not members bought the yarn themselves or if the project supplied the yarn. If a member uses her own yarn, the owner of the handicraft centre's shop - the village leader - pays the member a piece rate for her labour. The profit made when the shop sells the product goes to the member as well. If the project supplies the yarn than the member still sells her product to the project's shop for a piece rate. Yet in this case 2/3rds of the profit goes to the leader and 1/3rd is put back into the project to cover costs.

By the piece, members reported being paid 150-600 baht ($6.33-$25.30 CND) depending on the *pha-sin's* pattern. Per month (see Table 5), members' reported average earnings of 600 baht ($25.30 CND), 1,200-1,300 baht

($50.61-54.83 CND), and 2,000 baht ($84.35 CND). Three members reported 1,200-2,700 baht ($50.61-113.88 CND) and two members reported 2,080-2,600 baht ($87.73-109.66 CND). The woman who weaves silk is paid 25,000 baht ($1,054.41 CND) for every five metres, she said it takes six months to weave such a piece. For one month she reported making 4,167 baht ($175.75 CND) depending on how much time she can spend on the job. For one month of teaching silk weaving, she is paid 12,000 baht ($506.11 CND). The leader of the project says in one month, the project averages a 10,000 baht ($421.76 CND) profit, she was unwilling to state her monthly income.

Occupations in the Dried Fruits and Candy Factory

The dried fruit and candy project consists of only seven members and one village leader. Six of the women interviewed identified themselves as general workers - making dried fruit and candy and packagers. The seventh worker identified herself as a general worker and the project's manager or accountant. The seven women are capitalist waged labourers and work at the factory. The one room factory is connected to the leader's home and was built by the leader and her husband. The factory is where the women separate, weigh, package, and store the final product before distribution.

Behind the factory is an open area where the women make a number of different products including dried tamarinds, mangos, pumpkins, and chili. During our time at the project the women were making dried tomatoes and banana candy. The women first wash and slice the whole tomatoes. Slicing is done by hand with a small-paring knife. The tomatoes are soaked in a hardening substance overnight, the next day the saturated tomatoes are place in a sugar and water syrup to soak for two more days. The tomatoes are then hand-placed on screens and set in the sun to dry for one day, and moved into an oven to dry for three more. As the tomatoes are soaking and drying, the women workers prepare the banana candy. The bananas are peeled and put into a large mixing machine. As the raw bananas are blending, a mixture of coconut juice, sugar, and water is added. The sweeteners and

bananas are blended and heated for four hours or until the substance has turned a dark purple. At that point, the women roll the candy out on a large steel table to harden. With a hand-held steel-grid cutter, the hardened banana mixture is sliced into bit-size pieces. The women then individually wrap each piece of candy by hand. Making the dried fruits and candy takes anywhere from one to three days and are produced throughout the year unless it is harvest season. During this time, the project will shut down and the women work in the fields.

Income Levels in the Dried Fruits and Candy Factory

Women workers are paid a daily wage based on the product they are producing, the standard rate is 80 baht ($3.37 CND) for an eight hour day or 10 baht ($0.42 CND) an hour. When dried tamarind or banana candies are made, their rate is 100-120 baht ($4.22-5.06 CND) a day as these products yield higher profits. General workers on average are earning 2,500 baht ($105.44 CND) a month (see Table 5). The woman working as the accountant for the project reported earning 3,000 baht ($126.53 CND) a month, the leader averages around 5,000 baht ($210.88) a month. All women said they worked eight hour days, averaging 5-7 days a week depending on family or religious obligations.

5.4 Project Four - Women's Economic and Leadership Development Project

The Women's Economic and Leadership Development Project (WELD) was a bi-lateral government project in operation from 1990 to 1995. WELD was established by both the Royal Thai government through the Thai Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation (TEC) and the Canadian government through the Canadian International Development Association (CIDA). WELD funded 61 income-generating and leadership projects for rural women throughout Thailand - 21 government projects, 34 NGO'S and six WELD monitoring programs (pamphlet two:3). A number of these programs were stationed in the Chiang Mai Province and, although WELD is no longer in

Thailand, are still in operation today[19].

There were eight original handicraft projects in the Pa Sang district, approximately 50 kilometres southwest of Chiang Mai City (see Figure 4). Three of those eight projects were visited for this research; women interviewed were from the villages of Nonggunk and Donloung and the town of Mae Range. These three projects' primary objectives were to improve the economic status of Northern Thai women in rural areas. This goal was achieved as the projects strengthened and reinforced Northern women's roles as income generators, entrepreneurs, business managers, and economic leaders.

Funding

The three handicraft programs were initially funded by WELD and the local government. WELD contributed 10,000 baht ($421.76 CND) as a one time donation to each of the projects, this money was used to buy looms and yarn, and to establish shops for distribution. The local government provided three years of additional assistance by donating 7,500 baht ($316.32 CND) the first year, 15,000 baht ($632.64 CND) the second, and 30,000 baht ($1,265.29 CND) the third. When WELD ended in 1995, an additional 10,000 baht ($421.76 CND) was given by WELD to each of the participating villages. The three projects visited had each established a revolving fund with the WELD donation. Today, members may still borrow money from these funds at three percent interest.

Management and Administration

Implementation of programmes was the responsibility of the WELD Administrative Unit under the guidance of the Implementation Committee (IC) and the working sub-committee (WSC). Projects were divided into responsive and proactive programmes, responsive projects were requested by government or NGOs through proposal submission and WSC approval. Proactive projects were initiated by the WSC and IC and were structured around the

basic needs and traditional skills of Thai women. The projects in Pa Sang district are examples of proactive projects. As with the other economic projects discussed above, the village leaders and the members implement the projects.

Occupations

Out of the ten women interviewed[20], two are weavers, two dye yarn and weave, one spins and weaves, one strands the yarn on the loom, and two dye, spin, and weave. One woman identified herself as the market manager, saying she did not weave because she was "no good at it". The other woman dyes, designs, and owns the weaving centre and shop. The women are subsidized independent commodity producers who work at the weaving centre or in their homes.

Weaving has already been described through the Maeson Bantang's weaving project. What is unique about WELD is the natural dye process. Although not all the women in the project worked with natural dye (some use chemicals), three of the five respondents who reported dyer as their occupation use natural dyes. This traditional practice is one of the reasons WELD was initially attracted to the Pa Sang district.

For natural dying, the village men first go to the forest and bring back tree bark for the women. Certain tree bark yields different colours. For instance, the "umbrella" tree produces green and the "conjected" tree violets and browns. The dying process is quite simple; the key is knowing which bark produces which colour. First, the women soak the yarn in water overnight. The next day they bring a separate bowl of water to a boil and put the bark in, letting the bark boil in the water for three hours to extract colour. The saturated yarn is then put in the mixture of bark and water. The women leave the yarn in the substance until the yarn changes colour, time depends on the desired shade. Once the proper colour is achieved, the dyed yarn is put in a bucket of clear water until the yarn stops fading and is then set through a chemical substance.

Income Levels

Members are paid piece rates, amount of income per month depends on amount of time worked and the skills of the individual worker. On average, the women members are working 7-8 hour days, 6 days a week. Per month (see Table 5), women reported earning 1,300 baht ($54.83 CND), 1,560 baht (65.79 CND), 2,080 baht ($87.73 CND), 2,600 baht ($109.96 CND), two reported earning 3,120 baht ($139.51 CND), and one reported 3,900 baht ($164.49 CND). One women reported working 7 hour days, 7 days a week and making 7,000 baht ($295.23 CND). The village leaders in Nonggunk and Mae Range reported 5,200 baht ($219.32 CND) and 6,000 baht ($253.06 CND) respectively. The village leader in Donloung was unwilling to report her monthly income.

5.5 Project Five - Rural Women Homebased Producers' Network Project

The Rural Women Homebased Producers' Network (HOMENET) was initiated in 1988 under the auspices of the International Labour Organization - Women's Employment and Development Department (ILO-DANIDA). HOMENET operates in Indonesia and the Philippines as well as in Thailand, researching employment patterns and conditions of work of rural women homeworkers. HOMENET seeks to improve rural women's economic status through employment promotion and social protection (minimum wages, shorter workdays/weeks, maternity protection, and the elimination of sexual harassment) for rural women working in the informal sector - namely - rural women who lack access and control over resources and the means of production. It is HOMENET's belief that employment and social protection for women will be achieved through networking and, much like WELD, establishing linkages between rural women's grassroots organizations, NGOs, and government agencies.

Networking is envisaged as a means to empower rural women homeworkers by "...integrating them with more market outlets, sources of credit, suppliers of raw materials, and technology" (Yoodee and Lazo

1993:32). The main goal of networking is to encourage the Thai government to talk about and support the informal, homebased, rural female working sector. The main problems confronting homebased groups are the absence of a central market mechanism to set prices, inconsistent supply of raw materials, the lack of revolving funds, and an absence of quality standards and government controls (Lee 1993:84).

In 1989, HOMENET's sub-regional project in Chiang Mai set up eight pilot projects in collaboration with the YMCA's Women's Development Institute (WDI)[21], Chiang Mai University's Economic Department, FEDRA, the provincial Community Development Department, the Northern Industrial Promotion Centre, the Department of Industry, and Friends of Women's World Banking Association. For the HOMENET project in the village of San ton muang, an officer from the WDI introduced the project leader to networking advantages, management skills, marketing techniques, and production activities. Because the area has a number of mulberry trees, the WDI recommended HOMENET assist in establishing a *sa* paper economic project in the village. San ton muang village, Sankhampaeng district, is approximately 20 kilometres northeast of Chiang Mai City (see Figure 4).

Funding

The *sa* paper project was started by the project's leader six years ago through HOMENET and the Department of Industry loans. The loan was for 50,000 baht ($2,108.81 CND) at eight percent interest, the leader has since put in an additional 500,000 baht ($21,088.15 CND).

Management and Administration

Although HOMENET provides initial funding, training, and marketing outlets, the leader is in charge of the project/business; is responsible for paying back loans, hiring waged labour, fulfilling orders, and distributing products. In the words of the project's village leader, "...before the project was set up, housewives worked as *tum na tum souns*

(farmers and sellers in cash-crop production). Now-a-days we harvest only once a year which means the rest of the year the women have no work. This [no work] is due to the lack of rain or the fact that many people have sold their land to developers. The goal of this project is to help housewives who were once *tum na tum souns* have work."

Occupations

Interviews were conducted with the village leader and the six members of the San ton muang *sa* paper group. Out of the six women interviewed for this project, two make the *sa* paper, one assembles the products, two assemble the products and package products, and one assembles and quality-checks products before distribution. The women work as capitalist waged labourers combined with subsidized independent commodity production and work at the project.

The one room workshop is connected to the leader's home, and is the size of a two car garage. The workshops are open air sheds where the products are assembled and packaged. Behind the workshop is where the women make the *sa* paper. Hand-crafted products include photo-albums, personal diaries, travel note-books, sketching pads, greeting cards, mailing envelopes, picture frames, and storage boxes. The products are generally dyed either black or white, carry elaborately drawn etchings or sketches, or are decorated with pink azaleas, silver emblems, or gold patterns.

Sa paper is made from the bark of mulberry trees found either in San ton muang or the surrounding villages. The bark is taken from the branches and soaked overnight. The following day, the women boil the bark for seven hours, cool, run the bark through a chopper and beat it into paper pulp. Rectangular bamboo frames (2 x 3 metres) of fabric are used to drain and mold the paper fiber, the fiber is then placed in the sun to dry. After curing, the paper is peeled-off the fabric and either hand painted with designs, glued onto cardboard which is used to make boxes and frames, or

left to sell as individual sheets.

Income Levels

Women are either paid by the piece or receive a daily wage, depending on the work they do. For the women who make the *sa* paper, they are paid 2 baht ($0.08 CND) a page[22]. They average 60-70 pages in an eight hour day, making 120-140 baht ($5.06-5.90 CND) a day. Per month (see Table 5), this ranges from 3,120 to 3,640 baht ($131.59-153.52 CND). The women who assemble and package make 80-85 baht ($3.37-3.58 CND) a day or 10-11 baht ($0.42-0.46 CND) an hour. Per month, this averages out to 2,080-2,210 baht ($87.73-93.21 CND). The village leader did not report her monthly earnings.

5.6 Changes in Members' Social and Economic Relations

The primary research questions were designed to determine if the projects were beneficial to rural women and to help tell the story of changes in their social and economic relations (see Chapter Four). Based on data presented above and in Chapter Two, the following section presents these research findings. The rural economic projects studied are capitalist in nature in that the primary focus was to incorporate rural women into income-generating activities and waged labour. This assimilation was done at the local level, providing rural women with rural employment in their own villages. The survey demonstrated average income levels for members, employment opportunities in rural areas, and leadership roles within the villages. The strength of the rural women within the individual groups have made the projects successful. Members revealed a number of other significant findings about the future direction of rural women's economic development in Northern Thailand, urban waged labour, age relations, internal gender relations, and external class divisions, all of which were used in the discussion on members' social and economic well-being.

The economic projects proved to be beneficial to members because the

projects helped members maintain regional income averages. Members reported an increase in income, when monthly income levels were examined as a whole (see Table 5), the mean income of members was at least at or slightly above the regional mean. Members' monthly incomes ranged from a low of 300 baht to a high of 7,000 baht, with a mean monthly income of 2,369 baht. When compared with an estimated average income for women in Northern Thailand of 2,323 baht[23] (see Table 6), members' incomes from the projects were within regional averages. Along with an increase in income, interviews with members revealed shifts in economic activities. As one member explained:

> we used to farm, now we make handicrafts...income from handicraft production is better than income from agriculture because we can do crafts all year around unlike working as seasonal farmers and *Tum Na Tum Souns* (cash-crop production) (interview 1998).

Projects were also beneficial to members as an increase in members' social prestige were evident. Members reported positive changes in their leadership roles and responsibilities. The majority of the members said that joining the projects had given them a sense of power and that members, as a group, influenced village activities. Leadership roles meant members established co-ops, controlled prices, made decisions on product design and packaging, helped other women organize into groups, and taught new members. Members reported that neighbors and families thought it was good that they worked in the projects. Families and neighbors had high regard for the projects and what the projects had done in terms of a positive influence over the economic roles of the members. Members were seen within the community as economic leaders, business women, and entrepreneurs as they traveled to Bangkok to show new products at craft shows or to Chiang Mai University to learn marketing and distribution skills.

The study also found that autonomy was evident in members' control over their own financial situations. Among those interviewed, one member told us that the income she earns from the project allowed her to be financially independent of her children:

> ...if I want to give money to the Wat, I give my money. I do not have to ask my daughter to give me money for the Wat or to buy new cloths or to go out with the group. It is my money so it is my decision. Otherwise I would be dependent on my daughter for everything (interview 1998).

Members said they have obtained power and control through business and leadership roles within the community, and economic freedom within their households. When members were incorporated into the projects as rural business women and entrepreneurs (as many of the older members were), their status within their communities were higher than if they were incorporated into the projects as rural waged labourers (as most of the younger women were).

Age as a key social and economic relationship became visible through the interview process (see Appendix A). First, interviews with members revealed that the projects' workforce was aging rapidly as many younger women in the villages refused to work in the projects. Interviews with younger members revealed that they did not like the projects because the pay was low and the work was tedious. Instead, a conscious decision to integrate themselves into the urban capitalist sector was seen as the younger generation wanted to "...go to Chiang Mai City, go to college, and get a job in an office." Most younger members interviewed said they were working in the projects because there were no jobs in the city due to the economic crisis. As one young member noted:

> I do not want my friends to know I am working here [in the project] but my mother does not have much money and I must work here until I find a job in the city...because of the crisis, right now there are no jobs for women (interview 1998).

Younger members said they wanted to move out of village-based production and into urban-based waged labour. What was unique to this particular situation was Chiang Mai City's proximity to the villages in the sample.

Rural women who work outside the projects reported incomes ranged from a low of 1,760 baht to a high of 6,360 baht (see Table 7). Although the mean of rural income was 3,483 baht, slightly higher than the 2,369 reported by members, it must be noted that the higher paying, waged labour jobs reported (e.g., factory workers, government officer, and government secretary) were not available to older women. As more than one member interviewed for this study said:

> Women under 30 years go to work in the industrial areas and the [Chiang Mai] City. Older women's jobs are as weavers in the villages... because factories and shops in town do not hire older workers (interview 1998).
>
> ...weaving will increase in the future because you have to be 35 years or younger to work in the factories. Once you are 20 or 25 years old, or pregnant you are laid off. Only the women are laid off, then they come back to the village and weave (interview 1998).

The projects were beneficial to the members because the projects provided rural employment for older members who, due to their current social and economic relations, were unable to obtain jobs outside their villages because of their age.

The study also found an age difference in perspectives when describing the projects. Many of the older members interviewed said the younger women in the villages did not want to work in the projects because they saw the projects as "traditional" and handicraft work as "old fashioned." The older members did not describe their work in the projects as old fashioned but rather as ancestral:

> *TNTS* [cash-crop production] is my main job, weaving and sewing are my second job. My mother and grandmother were weavers, it was their second job too. First, my mother taught me to farm, then she taught me to weave...women my age wove when they were

> little and are still weaving today. It is the younger women who are changing, not the older women (interview 1998).

Benefits from work in the urban capitalist economy were see in that most of the young women in these villages owned their own motorcycles, went to school in Chiang Mai City, and then returned home that same night. As previously noted in Jennifer Gray's work (1990) on rural women's transition into waged labour, although young women in the Chiang Mai area go to the urban core to work, the majority were able to commute instead of migrate. This has helped keep family ties intact which provided social protection for many rural women. Due to time constraints while in the field, family ties, as a form of social protection for working women, were not pursued to a great extent. This is not to say, however, that further research into family relations would not be beneficial to the subject matter at hand. Members said how important it was to keep the projects going so when the young women needed jobs, they could return to the villages and work in the projects. One member told us the number of weavers in her project had increased by 100, in one year, because so many younger women had lost their jobs in Chiang Mai City. Regardless of age or perceptions, the projects proved to be an economic "safety-net" for the young and old alike as it provided jobs which helped rural women maintain control over their social and economic situations during the economic crisis.

Throughout the interview process, changes in respondents' social and economic relations were revealed as members talked about becoming dependent on a monetary economy. Members interviewed said they used to work as *TNTS* (farmers and sellers in cash-crop production) but most of their farm land had been sold to developers because, the members said, they needed money to buy food. Because they had sold their land, they went to work in the projects and hired out their labour to other farms. As one respondent explained about the selling of land around the Mae Rim district:

> About 10 to 20 years ago, the villages main income was agricultural products. Today, people don't work in agriculture. The income from agriculture has decreased and they are earning money from other jobs. Some had to sell their land to businesses [which built an exclusive golf club and expensive, private homes]. This is why there is no more agriculture, because people sold their land. A person who has no land must go to the city and look for a job or work on other peoples farms. Today, 50% of the villagers income is from work outside the village (interview 1998).

The impact of capitalist development in Chiang Mai Province was three fold. First, selling the land changed the way in which members made a living. The interview data indicated that 25 members relied on the projects as their only source of income, and 13 members relied on both the projects and farming. Out of these 13 respondents, 11 reported working in cash-crop production and as farm labourers, only two members still relied solely on subsistence farming for food (see Appendix A). As one member observed:

> In the past, women grew their own vegetables, chilies, rice and we never had to buy food to eat. We always had plenty for everyone. Neighbors would give you food... In the past, we had little money but little need to buy anything. Today, we have more money but much more is bought (interview 1998).

Reliance on a monetary economy suggests a loss of social and economic well-being. Members talked extensively about the need for money to buy rice and water. Members said the money they earned from the projects went mostly toward food, water, and electricity.

Second, the survey revealed that members' networks of exchanges had been altered. As more than one member interviewed noted about the change in reciprocity:

> ...in the past, five baht would buy beef and you would make curry and give it to the families around you. Today you can not make food for others [because you do not have money to buy food for others] (interview 1998).
>
> ...my neighbors no longer give me vegetables or rice (interview 1988).

Reliance on a monetary economy suggests a loss in reciprocity and other traditional community networks of exchange.

Third, a change in members' relations of production was seen. As one member responded about the changes in owning and renting land:

> ...now, businessmen own the land and women have to rent land to grow rice. Harvested rice is divided into two sections; one-half goes to the owner of the land, and the other half to the grower. If there is not enough rice you have to go to the seller. This is bad because in the past if you had land you could grow food even without money. But today, you have to have money even to buy food (interview 1998).

When speaking about their last twenty years, members did talk of their loss of control of the means of subsistence production, a loss of access to food producing land and agricultural resources, and the loss of their position in traditional social and economic reciprocal exchange. Some members said this was a good thing because they did not like farming, "...it was too hot and the work was too hard." For many, the subsistence economy meant a double-work load, poverty, and subordination. Others, however, said their lives were better in the past and that they have not benefitted from capitalist development in their country. As one member told us "...we were all fine, everything was fine until Thailand started to develop" (interview 1998).

Most members felt that Thailand's development process was, overall, damaging and that the economic projects had improved their social and economic relations over the past twenty years.

One way improvement was achieved was through members' control over the factors and means of production within the projects. Limited control was seen in two ways. First, the flow of capital[24] remained primarily within the projects and the surrounding villages which supplied the natural resources. Second, all members within the projects had kept their jobs during the economic crisis. The flow of capital and job security were due to the members' control over technologies, resources, and knowledge.

As the village leader for the Fruit and Candy project explained:

> When the economic crisis threatened jobs here, the Food and Agricultural department recommended some of the members be laid off. This outraged the members in the projects. The members met and decided to keep all members employed during the crisis by cutting back hours not members. Not only are members still employed but those in other villages who supply the bananas and tomatoes remained with us as well (interview 1998).

Although the ability to control the situation was a direct result of members' partial ownership, at the same time, ownership was contingent on international loans. This points to a need to look at linkages between rural women's economic development in Northern Thailand, national funds, and international capital.

Planners made it clear that funding, from the Thai government, was directly linked to all five of the economic projects presented in this thesis. In discussions with the provincial director of the Food and Agricultural projects, funding linkages were noted between the Thai Government and the Ministry of Industry in Bangkok; the Provincial Agricultural Office in Chiang Mai City; the District Offices of Saraphi and Muang, the villages of Bankaw and Maeson Bantang; and the weaving and candy projects. This demonstrates a profound reliance on national funding for rural women's economic development in the Chiang Mai area. The question at this point then is where does the Thai government get its money? As one respondent correctly observed when asked about national funding, "...the Thai government borrows its money for rural women's economic development from international lending agencies." This points to the complex nature of capitalist relations and market integration in what is loosely called "women's economic development". It shows that the significance of the projects studied lies not so much in the projects themselves but the broader economic processes (i.e., international capital and the current economic crisis that destabilized urban based wage-labour relations), as well as the broader social arrangements (i.e., inter-

national funding and aid for rural women's economic development in Northern Thailand). When the economic crisis hit its peak in 1998, the Thai government went bankrupt meaning it no longer had foreign reserves to pay back international loans or national funds to contribute to rural women's economic development. Interviews with village leaders suggested that if, or more accurately when, funding stops the projects will no longer exist, ownership will cease, and members will lose the control of production they gained through the development projects. Rural women's economic development in Northern Thailand is dependent on international capital.

Planners and members had created a strong resistance component to the current economic and social situations of "rural women". This class- and gendered-based consciousness was found not only in the policies and objectives set forth by planners and staff, but also in members' abilities to change their own social and economic relations. One of the best examples of resistance to internal gender subordination was evident through the *Mettanaree* Unit's response to capitalist-patriarchy in one of its more oppressive forms. According to the respondents, before the project was set up in 1978 a number of rural women, who were facing extreme poverty, became involved with prostitution. Members described the prostitution as a form of "forced participation." It was considered forced in that most of their land had been sold to developers, they were no longer able to pursue farming activities in the area, they needed money to buy food, and they were starving. Planners of the *Mettanaree* project strongly opposed prostitution as a means of income by providing disadvantaged women - rural women with little education or skills outside of farming - a way to earn money through rural employment. Members said their social and economic relations had improved because now, they were seen as professional business women, leaders, and entrepreneurs within their own communities and not prostitutes. The resistance to existing gendered economic roles resulted in an even greater improvement in the

social and economic relations of members' daughters. When asked about opportunities for their daughters today, one member responded:

> ...twenty years ago many wives and mothers were forced into prostitution because there was no longer a way to make money. But today, because we have money [from the projects], we are able to send our daughters to school (interview 1998).

The majority of the members in the *Mettanaree* project redefined their social and economic relations in the public sector by taking on business and entrepreneur roles, and reproduced public roles for their daughters by sending them to universities or technical colleges (see Appendix A). Education was described as a tool daughters could use to enter into waged labour in the formal sectors of urban-based employment. Moving into waged labour was described as positive simply because "...waged labour means more money." Whether or not members saw urban employment as better than rural employment depended on the type of work in the urban areas. Several women talked about the pollution from the industrial zone in Lamphun and the health hazards associated with factory work. The factories were seen as one of the only types of employment available for rural women in a changing market but did not express a strong desire for their daughters to work there. Instead, most members we spoke with said they would like to first, see their daughter go to university or technical school, and then work as a government official.

Resistance to existing gender oppression was also seen through members' challenge of the gender-based educational system found in the cultural institution of Buddhism. Interviews with members revealed that boys, regardless of their family's socio-economic backgrounds, were educated through the Wat, fed and clothed by the monks, and respected by all members of Thai society for their participation in Buddhism. Members of the *Mettanaree* Unit challenged the male dominated system, members said that Thai girls had the right to be educated in the same manner as Thai boys. Members hoped Buddhism would incorporate more economic development

projects for rural girls who can not afford to pay for an education. One of the more noticeable changes in social relations was seen in the need to obtain an education if Thai women wanted to find work in urban waged labour. Interviews with urban women workers (see Table 8) revealed higher educational levels than members, higher income earnings, and extended waged labour participation.

Labour force participation and incomes were also considerably different for women and men. Reported male occupations and income samples represented more waged labour for males than females, and higher income earnings (see Table 9). The mean monthly income for men was 5,361 baht and for members' was 2,369 baht. The disparities in mean incomes for women and men illustrate the extent of the gender bias in achieved social and economic relations in Chiang Mai. However, when gender in relation to class issues evident in the urban/rural dichotomy were considered, social and economic relations of females improved relative to males. For the most part, males have been incorporated into waged labour and were working in an urban setting. These two factors contributed to a higher income for males. The significant effect of waged labour and urban employment to higher income earnings was also evident in females' waged labour and urban production samples (see Tables 10 - 12). Thai men (urban or rural) were better integrated into waged labour than Thai women and this integration did mean that men (and other urban workers) were making more money than rural women[25].

Because of the Northern Thai peoples' dependence on a monetary economy, the question here is not should rural Thai women be integrated into waged labour but what are the money making opportunities for these women? Members said their options were to make money or face extreme poverty and that employment opportunities were limited to working in the projects or farming. Options were limited because they were rural and because they were older women. Limitation was due in part to regional class issues and gender relations found in Northern Thailand, and in part

to the growth of capitalist-patriarchy.

WELD and HOMENET's resistance to capitalist-patriarchy were seen through the projects' progressive feminist perspectives and these views' connections with national and global feminist movements. Although WELD and HOMENET reflected the understanding that rural Thai women's basic needs come first and foremost, the projects' progressive outlooks pushed members to think and challenge the state's response to rural women's economic development and the continuation of gender-divided labour found within patriarchal capitalism. Resistance to the nation-state's limited response to rural women's economic development was most evident through members' discussions on the "non-existent" channels of distribution. Members said the Thai government had not established a formal channel for distribution of rural commodities. According to the respondents, international companies have come to Bangkok to request rural based handicrafts, however, the Thai government does nothing in terms of sending these orders to rural areas or setting up direct channels of distribution for rural women's handicrafts. Members said that in order to export out of Thailand, rural projects first had to form their own company. Forming an export company is a financial luxury three of out of the five projects could not afford because of high costs. HOMENET and the Candy projects were the only two projects which had international markets (see Table 4). HOMENET had set-up its export company through the YMCA. With the help of the Food and Agriculture provincial director, the Candy Project was able to establish its own export company. Although both projects were linked with Nalapan[26], Thaicraft[27] and OXFAM[28], these were alternative forms of trading which were not regulated by the government and were limited in terms of rural projects' access. Members said that marketing and distribution were the number one reasons for joining a project. WELD members stressed the need for international development agencies to supply a rural project with markets during implementation, and ways to tie the rural projects to the markets after the agency left.

Regardless of the resistance element, members had strong incentives to enter the world capitalist market. This included entrance into urban employment, manufacturing related waged labour, fair trading, and open market arrangements. Emergence of capitalist relations were seen as village leaders reported profits (not wages) from the projects as well as from bought shares. Engendered labour practices which subordinate women were evident in that wages were mostly piece rates (i.e., a fee per unit of output produced or per unit of area), there was a lack in job security, limited labour regulations, zero-sum benefits (i.e., raises, pensions, maternity leave, or health insurance), and work was centred in the informal sector. One explanation for the continuation of members' work in the informal sectors was found in projects' polices. On the one hand, members have challenged gender and class relations found in the employment opportunities and educational systems of Thailand. On the other, projects' policies reinforced gender and class relations.

The projects' policies and objectives (except WELD and HOMENET's) defined members as "secondary income earners." In spite of the contribution Northern Thai women make to the family income, women's work was thought of as a supplementary source. The majority of the members interviewed said they had worked for most of their lives yet they too identified themselves as secondary earners. In the words of one member interviewed:

> ...because the men are the main income earners and are the leaders of the family, the women do not need to look for work. The women may make handicrafts or work in the fields when the crop is done but the men must always have a job. It is their responsibility not the women's (interview 1998).

Although members talked about class divisions found in rural and urban distinctions, gender oppression found in religious and educational institutions, and changes in their social and economic relations brought about by the growth of capitalism, most did not describe housework in

terms of unpaid labour, demonstrate a desire to move out of the projects, or identify themselves as the primary income earners for their families.

5.7 Conclusions

In the final analysis it is concluded that the projects have benefitted members, regardless of their age. Income levels were above regional means, social prestige had been achieved, members demonstrated control over their own financial situations, older women were able to find rural employment, younger women were able to work during the economic crisis, members demonstrated control of the factor and means of production, and challenges to gender disparities, capitalist-patriarchy, and low rural class standings were seen. The length of time these projects have been in operation demonstrates rural women's abilities to act, successfully, as their social and economic relations change. Most saw the projects as a form of social and economic protection and said the projects should continue so rural women would always have work in their villages.

Numerous changes in social and economic relations were revealed during the interviews as well. Some of these changes were due to reliance on a monetary economy, other changes were due to the projects. Members' mothers and grandmothers had been subsistence and cash-crop farmers as well as weavers and sewers. Members were taught these trades but, as they sold their land for money, members were required to work as waged farm labourers. Members no longer produced weaving as commodities for trade but produced weaving for monetary exchange. Older rural women begin working in what is now termed homebased production, younger rural women moved into waged labour. Despite the criticisms that have been generated in response to women's integration into waged labour, rural Thai women expressed the desire to be incorporated into the global market. It is concluded that it is not the projects which limits Thai women's socio-economic advancement. Instead, it is the relations of these women as defined through capitalist-patriarchy which creates social injustice and inequality.

Endnotes

1. Although North American literature on women's economic development projects often refers to the women within the projects as beneficiaries, the women interviewed for this research refer to themselves as members. For this reason, women working within the projects are referred to as members not beneficiaries.

2. Wats are Buddhist temples, found throughout Thailand (except in the south which is predominantly Muslim). Wats are also found in every village, and are the centres of activity. Much of the training for members of the projects studied was conducted in the village Wat.

3. Individuals or group representatives may borrow money from their projects. Because the money borrowed is taken from the project's profits, the loan is actually money the members have put into a savings group. Hence, the system has adopted the name revolving fund (Surarerks 1988:97).

4. *Mettanaree* translates into English as "giving kindness to women" (Surarerks 1988).

5. All monetary figures are based on the October 28, 1998 exchange rate of one Canadian dollar per 23.71 Thai baht (Bangkok Post:October 28,1998).

6. In 1991, the *mettanaree* unit opened *Sahakorn Phatthana*, a co-operative store to promote self-sufficiency. Members of the project as well as surrounding communities were encouraged to buy shares in the co-operative to help support the project's activities. At the time of the interviews, one share cost ten baht ($0.42 CND), with a minimum of ten and a maximum of 2,000 shares per person. The dividend rate is as follows: reserve money 10%, shareholders' dividend 40%, committee's bonus 10%, fund for keeping dividend rate level 10%, fund for expanding work 10%, fund for training 5%, and fund for public benefits 5% (pamphlet 5). At the time of the interviews, the co-operative had 814 shareholders and 700 members. Out of the 700 members, 362 of them were shareholders as well, making 1,176 the total number of village shareholders. Members do not have to buy into the co-op to work with the project.

7. FEDRA's working staff includes two vice chairmen, two secretaries, two treasurers, two market managers, two fund raisers, two receptionists, two committee members, one manager, and one official (pamphlet 5).

8. FEDRA pays for all raw materials (e.g., thread, yarn, cloth ect...) used in handicraft production.

9. There were no restrictions put upon the women should they pay less than the maximum limit of 20,000 baht.

10. In total there are 70 members in the village group. Some of the members identified themselves as first generation, others second depending on how long each had been with the project. Length of time with the project ranged from a low of one year to a high of 15 years, all but two members interviewed have been with the project for over 10 years.

11. The women reported working anywhere from two to eight hours a day, some said they could not speculate because the amount of time spent depends on the number of orders they have and how quickly these orders need to be filled. Others merely said they work "all day," as long as they are not attending weddings, visiting cousins, taking care of children, or harvesting. All 10 women interviewed said

they worked six to seven days a week. This type of hourly and weekly work schedule is the same for the other projects visited unless otherwise noted.

12. The Lamphun district accommodates three Japanese owned export-oriented manufacturing factories.

13. In 1997, there were 40 members in the weaving project. Within one year, that number had jumped to 100 members because the factories in Lamphun have been laying women off due to the economic crisis. Members felt that in the future the numbers will increase even more because companies do not hire older women.

14. Investment yarn costs 450 baht ($18.98 CND) and yields 66 skeins.

15. Traditional clothing such as the *pha-sin* and *pha-sorong* are ankle-length tubular cloths for women and men respectively, which are worn with a blouse, shirt, or jacket (Harris 1993).

16. Distinct to the Northern area is the *gao* flower design made up of small, tiny golden-colored flowers - one woman we interviewed was working on a *gao* pattern which was 100 years old.

17. Warp yarn is purchased for 900.00-999.00 baht ($37.96-42.13 CND) per bag, the women estimate 66 skeins per bag of yarn. Investment yarn costs 450 baht ($18.98 CND) and yields 66 skeins (interviews 1998). The skeins twirled onto an umbrella swift which keeps the yarn from getting tangled while the women unwind the yarn onto the warping board and shuttle. The wooden and tin umbrella swifts at the handicraft centre were made mostly out of milk or coffee cans by the women themselves, and are hand operated (field notes 1998).

18. In one continuous piece, the warp yarn is extended, parallel, across the top of the loom's frame, brought down in a right angle to the front of the frame, curved around the frame's front, brought back up, perpendicular to the frame's centre, and extended on through the middle of the frame. The women pull the yarn on through the steel reed. This separates into two parts the odd from the even numbered strands which then allows the weaver to run her interlacing weft yarn through. Finally, the strands are tied to the back of the frame where the weaver sits (field notes 1998).

19. Although the project formally ended in 1995, the project's main shop is still in operation, looms built with WELD funding are being used, women are working as weavers and dyers, and revolving funds initiated through WELD have been maintained.

20. The women interviewed did not know the number of original members in the project.

21. The YMCA was established in 1970 and the Women's Development Institute (WDI) in 1989. WDI's financial support comes from the YMCA budget and donations, the institute's main objective is providing economic assistance to northern Thai women. WDI's activities include publishing monthly newsletters (distributed to community development workers, village headmen, and non-government/government organizations), setting up revolving funds, establishing marketing outlets, and providing vocational training at the village, subdistrict, and districts levels. Vocational training provides instruction to women who may or may not have the basic knowledge and skills to use raw materials from their local areas to produce goods for increasing family incomes (pamphlet 4:2).

22. One sheet sells for seven baht ($0.29 CND).

23. The figure 2,323 baht was extrapolated based on the level of income increase from 1988 to 1992. It should be pointed out that regional figures were estimated before the economic crisis. With the high levels of unemployment and cutbacks in all sectors of the Thai economy, 2,323 baht was assumed to be higher than the average regional wage. The national regional figure represented all cash income, for both urban and rural women who engaged in all forms of income generating (business owners, waged labour, independent commodity production, and cash-crop farming).

24. Flows of capital included credit, finished and unfinished materials, and production equipment such as looms, paper screens, and workshops.

25. For the eleven members interviewed who worked as waged labourers, the mean daily rate reported was 80 baht ($3.37 CND). Daily minimum wage set by the government ranged from a low of 65 to a high of 137 baht per day ($2.74-5.78 CND) in Chiang Mai City. Exact amounts depend on the type of work a person does (interviews 1998, TDN 1997:48, Gray 1990:51). Members' daily wages fell within government standards in spite of the fact that members work in a rural setting as subsidized independent commodity producers (interviews).

26. Nalapan is a market in Bangkok which distributes homebase industries' products on a national and international level.

27. Thaicraft specializes in the sale of handicrafts from all over Thailand. It began as a church-funded project and later evolved as a self-sustaining NGO (Yoodee 1996).

28. Oxford Famine Relief (OXFAM) is an international charitable organization that works with international development projects.

Chapter Six

Changing Social and Economic Relations Among Rural Women in Northern Thailand

6.1 Introduction

This study has focused on some of the more interesting issues surrounding change in rural Northern Thai women's social and economic relations. These issues were both internal and external to the situations of the women studied, and included various factors such as age, educational levels, gender relations, class divisions, and regional disparities. Historical analysis included patriarchal relations, national development, the growth of waged labour for rural Thai women, and global capitalism. It was concluded that the projects studied were beneficial to rural Thai women. Projects not only created positive changes in the women's social and economic relations, but provided rural women with a tool to improve their quality of life, the lives of their daughters, and other members of their families. It was further concluded that internal gender and class issues, and relations based on capitalist-patriarchy were the basis for social injustice and inequality for most rural women in Northern Thailand.

6.2 NGO, National, and International Development

Examples of non-governmental, government, and international levels of policy making and implementation were examined. The NGO studied - the *Mettanaree* Unit - worked within the parameters of grassroots development. The NGO's development policy was one of anti-poverty. The primary goal was to enable members to meet basic needs (e.g., food, water, and shelter) through subsidized independent commodity production and limited control over the means of production. Income and employment were increased, giving low-income rural women access to productive resources which increased productivity in activities traditionally undertaken by the members. The NGO built productive roles upon knowledge and skills members already had

while it maintained traditional reproductive roles. Working within Tantiwiramanond and Pandey's (1991) model for Thai women's groups, the NGO exemplified the conservative (nationalist) typology due to the strong Buddhist influence, hierarchical structure, and emphases on reproductive roles.

The two Thai projects studied - the Food and Agriculture projects - worked on a national level. Both projects' development policies were ones of anti-poverty as well. The fundamental goals were to help disadvantaged rural women achieve basic needs for everyday living through strong productive roles in subsidized independent commodity production. While the national weaving project maintained traditional productive roles which work in tandem with members' reproductive roles, the national fruit and candy project promoted wage-labour. Due to its links with the Royal Thai family, high governmental departments, and traditional gender relations, the weaving project operated more on a conservative (nationalist) level (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991). The fruit and candy project, however, with its focus on waged labour, made it fit more closely within a liberal (new generation) model rather than a conservative one (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991).

The two international development projects presented in this thesis were WELD and HOMENET. Working within an international context, both agencies' developmental policies were anti-poverty and pro-empowerment. Objectives were to meet what Moser (1993) identified as strategic needs (e.g., changes in the gendered division of labour, access, power, and control) indirectly through bottom-up mobilization around basic needs. WELD's international income-generating programs were established to help members meet their basic needs through subsidized independent commodity production. Business, leadership, and entrepreneur roles were established to help members meet strategic needs through empowerment. HOMENET's international implementation through subsidized independent commodity production and waged labour helped members meet basic needs as well. The

focus on teaching new vocational skills and leadership roles challenged existing gender relations. The feminist component found at the international level was progressive in that policies recognized inequalities between women and men, and objectives improved women's incomes, social inequality, and legal protection in the informal sectors of the Thai economy. These goals are linked to global feminist movements (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1991). However, the term 'strategic needs' (i.e., a change in the gendered division of labour, access, power, and control) appeared only in the policies and objectives of the international projects studied.

Both similarities and differences were found within the three tiers. On the grassroots, national, and international levels, subsidized independent commodity production was the main mode of production (see Table 4). Waged labour was not incorporated into the projects' policies and objectives until rural women's economic development reached the national and international levels. At that point, only a handful of those interviewed worked as wage-labourers. Although members worked as waged labourers, it did not mean that they made more money than the members who worked as commodity producers. As Mies (1991) had accurately observed, women's economic development does mean that most rural women are in 'income-generating activities' and are not defined as 'workers'. As Thai gender and class relations demonstrated, rural Thai women work in the informal sectors of the economy, pursuing traditional productive roles. The projects did little to redefine this gendered division of labour. Rural Thai women worked as handicraft producers, in income-generating projects, to help supplement their families incomes. Interviews with members revealed that they were unfree labourers in these projects. This inability to move around within the market was based on their secondary income earners status and their ages, educational levels, and rural backgrounds. I believe that changes in Thailand's gendered and class division of labour, improving Thai women's access to macro-level economic

structures, and allowing more power and control over the means of production would help rural women overcome poverty and should be of concern in economic planning and implementation. The fact that all five projects' primary policy objective was anti-poverty indicates that members are striving to meet basic needs and that poverty is a major social and economic concern for rural women in Northern Thailand.

6.3 Capitalist-Patriarchy

Global capitalism created one of the biggest changes in rural Thai women's social and economic relations as demonstrated through the country's dependence on foreign capital and patriarchal relations. The building up of Thailand's urban infrastructure set the stage for industrialization and dependent capitalism. Thailand became dependent on international banking systems and export-oriented manufacturing to maintain capital accumulation, pay back loans, and trade on the world-market. Capitalist-patriarchy had a direct impact on the capitalists' abilities to accumulate wealth in Thailand by exploiting female rural wage-labour. Previous works suggested that the majority of rural Thai women within the development of capitalist-patriarchy moved into low-paid work in the formal sectors or piece-waged work as demonstrated through the informal sectors. Thai women's work centered around capital accumulation for male-dominated political and economic forces. As capitalist-patriarchy continued to grow in Thailand, the country's political economy became dependent on world trade. As noted by Shiva Vandana:

> ...the establishment of the WTO [World Trade Organization] has drawn all domestic issues into the global economy, and all matters related to life - ethics, values, ecology, food, culture, knowledge, and democracy - have been brought into the global arena as matters of international trade. For this reason the perspectives and positions of women in the remotest village have come into direct collision with the perspectives and power of men who control global patriarchal institutions (Vandana c.f. Riley and Mejia 1997:30-31).

As demonstrated through interviews with members of the projects, women's social and economic relations did change as their country came under control of global capitalism. As Thailand became more dependent on capitalism, members' economic relations shifted from subsistence and trade to piece rates and wages. Capitalist-patriarchy pushed young rural women into urban waged labour while older rural women were relegated to village-based production. Older rural respondents reported a devaluation in their unwaged labour as evident through the decline in subsistence farming and the loss of traditional networks of exchange. This resulted in a greater need to combine productive and reproductive roles as women engaged in village-based production and paid farm labour along with housework, elderly care, and child care. Respondents indicated that capitalist-patriarchy did not improve their social and economic relations but instead created gendered policies and regulations which excluded members from competing in the capitalist world-market. A gendered division of labour was evident as older respondents worked as weavers and crocheted, and younger respondents entered female-dominated professions such as nursing, teaching, sales, clerical, and domestic work. A number of different women interviewed in the rural areas as well as Chiang Mai City said they were employed in the export-oriented factories in Lamphun. The gendered division of labour was further evident in that the women interviewed worked as assembly workers. Not one of the women said they had managerial positions within the factories.

6.4 Conclusions

In the final analysis, it is the political and economic forces of capitalist-patriarchy which exploit, subordinate, and oppress rural Thai women. The integration of Thai women into the global capitalist process has limited social and economic advancement. However, as the success of the projects studied illustrates, women's economic development at a local level has significantly improved some women's social and economic well-

being. For the most part, the projects studied were outside global capitalism and are better seen as anti- rather than part of Thailand's capitalist-patriarchy policies and practices. First, the projects represented a kind of resistance to and a reclaiming of some of the control women lost due to the indirect consequences of globalizing capitalism. The difficult transformation from subsistence and cash-crop farming to independent commodity production and wage-labour was eased through women's economic development at the local levels. Second, women did not have to migrate to Chiang Mai City or Bangkok to find work. Rural women, especially older rural women, were able to find rural employment. Third, women took on leadership roles in their communities, shedding old forms of patriarchal oppression such as lack of education and forced participation in prostitution. And finally, women's economic gains - not men's - became the primary source of family income for many during one of Asia's most critical economic times to date. Within these terms, economic development no longer simply means capital accumulation for the male-dominated capitalist classes. As this thesis has demonstrated, women's economic development suggests increased incomes, higher rates of rural employment, and social prestige for the female-dominated rural poor. Of course, the processes of women's economic development are not universal. To obtain a truer understanding of women's economic development, case studies which include changes in family relations, household levels of analysis, and capitalist development in other countries need to be considered. Finally, theoretical discussions should focus more clearly on the processes by which women resist exploitation by global capitalism and oppression by patriarchy, as well as theoretical discussions on women's work outside of mainstream capitalism.

Tables and Appendixes

Table TB2. Sources of Income by Year and Gender
(1976-1992)

Sources of Income by Years	Females (percentage per year)	Males (percentage per year)
Wages and Salaries		
1976	38.5	32.4
1988	60.0	51.5
1992	64.3	48.5
Profits		
1976	47.2	61.1
1988	38.3	47.0
1992	33.7	49.4
Other		
1976	14.3	6.5
1988	1.6	1.5
1992	2.0	2.1

*Source: Women in Development: Enhancing the Status of Rural Women in Northern Thailand (1995:30).

Table TB3. Changing Occupational Structure for Women in Northern Thailand

by Percentage of Labour Force

Occupations	1980	1991	1998
Professional, technical and related workers	2.2	4.3	7.3
Administrative, executive, managerial workers and government officials	0.2	0.2	1.2
Clerical and related workers	0.6	2.3	4.9
Sales workers	6.8	15.2	20.5
Agricultural, animal husbandry and forest workers, fisherman and hunters, miners and related workers	82.2	59.0	46.3
Transport equipment operators, communications and related workers	0.1	0.4	0.3
Craftsmen, production workers and labourers	5.8	13.6	16.0
Service workers	2.1	4.7	4.4
Total	100	100	100

*Sources: 1980 Population and Housing Census, Report of the Labour Force Survey February 1991, Report of the Labour Force Survey, May 1998.

Table TB4. Five Women's Economic Development Projects
Chiang Mai Province

Project	Type	Production Activity	Type of Production	Size	Sector	Initial Funding	Market
Mettanaree Unit	NGO/ co-op	crochet/ embroidery/ sewing	subsidized independent commodity producer	medium-scale/ 70 members	informal	FEDRA	local/ national
F/A/C	government/ co-op	dried fruit/ candy	capitalist waged labourer	small-scale/ 7 members	informal	Food and Agriculture Department	local/ national/ international
F/A/W	government	weaving	subsidized independent commodity producer	medium-scale/ 100 members	informal	Food and Agriculture Department	local
WELD	bi-lateral (Thai & CIDA)	natural dye/ weaving	subsidized independent commodity producer	medium-scale/ 30 members	informal	Thai Government/ CIDA	local
HOMENET	tri-lateral (Thai, YMCA &ILO)	*sa* paper	capitalist waged labour & subsidized independent commodity producer	small-scale/ 7 members	informal	Women's Development Institute/Thai Government/ ILO	local/ national/ international

*Source: Interviews 1998

Table TB5. Respondents' Average Incomes by Projects

Projects	Estimated Monthly Incomes
Mettanaree Unit	B 300
Mettanaree Unit	B 350**
Food & Agriculture - Weaving	B 600
Mettanaree Unit	B 750**
Food & Agriculture - Weaving	B 1,250**
WELD	B 1,300
Mettanaree Unit	B 1,350**
Mettanaree Unit	B 1,500
WELD	B 1,560
Food & Agriculture - Weaving	B 1,950**
Food & Agriculture - Weaving	B 1,950**
Food & Agriculture - Weaving	B 1,950**
Mettanaree Unit	B 2,000
Food & Agriculture - Weaving	B 2,000
WELD	B 2,080
HOMENET	B 2,145**
HOMENET	B 2,145**
HOMENET	B 2,145**
HOMENET	B 2,145**
Mettanaree Unit	B 2,250**
Food & Agriculture - Weaving	B 2,340**
Food & Agriculture - Weaving	B 2,340**
Food & Agriculture - Weaving	B 2,340**
Mettanaree Unit (Village Leader)	B 2,500**
Mettanaree Unit	B 2,500
Food & Agriculture - Fruits	B 2,500

Food & Agriculture - Fruits	B 2,500
Food & Agriculture - Fruits	B 2,500
Food & Agriculture - Fruits	B 2,500
Food & Agriculture - Fruits	B 2,500
Food & Agriculture - Fruits	B 2,500
WELD	B 2,600
Mettanaree Unit	B 2,700**
Mettanaree Unit	B 3,000
Food & Agriculture - Fruits	B 3,000
WELD	B 3,120
WELD	B 3,120
HOMENET	B 3,380**
HOMENET	B 3,380**
WELD	B 3,900
WELD	B 3,900
Food & Agriculture - Weaving	B 4,167
Food & Agriculture - Fruits (Village Leader)	B 5,000
WELD (Village Leader)	B 5,200
WELD (Village Leader)	B 6,000
WELD	B 7,000

** Reflects the mean of income range reported.
*Source: Interviews 1998

Table TB6. Income Status of Thai Women by Regions
(1976-1992)

Regions and Years	Average Incomes of Women (baht per month)
North	
1976	479.1
1988	1,071.7
1992	1,697.8
1996	2,323.0**
Northeast	
1976	314.0
1988	900.6
1992	1,392.4
Central	
1976	505.9
1988	1,312.0
1992	2,567.8
South	
1976	420.8
1988	1,131.9
1992	2,796.2
Greater Bangkok	
1976	809.8
1988	2,671.7
1992	5,844.6
Whole Kingdom	
1976	498.1
1988	1,414.7
1992	2,731.8

*Source: Women in Development: Enhancing the Status of Rural Women in Northern Thailand (1995:29).
**Estimation was based on previous four-year growth as data on women's income after 1992 was not available.

Table TB7. Rural Female Employment by Monthly Incomes
in Chiang Mai Province

Occupations	Estimated Monthly Incomes
Grass Cutter	B 1,760
Wood Carving	B 2,000
Pickup Chilies for Market (X 2)	B 2,200
Broom Factory	B 2,340
Sales Clerk	B 2,500
Caddie	B 2,640
Weaving	B 3,000
Domestic Work	B 3,080
Seamstress	B 3,300
Factory	B 4,000
Factory (X 2)	B 4,500
Weaving	B 5,000
Government Officer	B 6,350
Government Secretary	B 6,360

*Source:Interviews 1998

Table TB8. Urban Female Employment by Monthly Incomes
in Chiang Mai City

Waged Labour Occupations in City	Estimated Monthly Incomes
Photocopying	Unpaid Family Labour
Receptionist	Volunteer for YMCA
Ticket Taker on Bus	B 600
Typist (part-time)	B 1,000
Accountant (part-time)	B 1,500
Typist	B 2,500
Sales Clerk (handicraft shop)	B 2,500
Janitor	B 2,970
Sales Clerk (liquor store)	B 3,000
Sales Clerk (music shop)	B 3,000
Cook	B 3,000
Janitor	B 3,080
Janitor	B 3,300
Cashier (university restaurant)	B 3,800
Clerk (video store)	B 3,900
Photocopying	B 4,000
Laundromat	B 4,000
Dormitory Worker	B 4,100
Housemaid (luxury hotel)	B 4,500
Shop Keeper (YMCA)	B 4,500
Cook	B 4,500
Silk Weaving (tourist factory)	B 4,500
Security Guard (university dormitory)	B 4,600
Frame Shop	B 5,500
Dormitory Manager	B 5,800
Church Administrator	B 6,000

Tourist Guide	B 6,000
English Tutor/Florist	B 6,000
Government Official (agricultural)	B 6,360
University Administrator (civil serv.)	B 6,360
Nurse's Assistant	B 7,000
Lottery Ticket Sales	B 7,000
Receptionist	B 8,000
Nurse	B 9,560
Customer Service (bank)	B 12,000

*Source: Interviews 1998

Table TB9. Male Employment by Monthly Incomes
in Chiang Mai Province

Husbands' Occupations	Estimated Monthly Incomes
Construction	B 2,200
TNTS (farmer and seller)	B 2,500
Barber	B 2,500
TNTS (farmer and seller)	B 2,600
Grass Cutter	B 2,640
Fruit Seller	B 2,640
Construction	B 3,380
Heavy Equipment Operator	B 4,000
Construction	B 4,000
Water Tank Construction (son)	B 4,000
Village Chief	B 4,000
Security Guard	B 4,000
Tractor Driver	B 4,400
Wat Construction (son)	B 4,400
Construction	B 4,400
Fruit Seller	B 4,500
Project Manager	B 5,000
Project Manager	B 5,500
Construction	B 5,500
Construction (Wats)	B 7,000
Security Guard	B 8,000
Manager of Gas Station (Brother)	B 8,500
Government Employee	B 15,000
Teacher	B 18,000

*Source:Interviews 1998

Table TB10. Respondents' Daughters' Employment by Monthly Incomes in Chiang Mai Province

Daughters' Occupations	Estimated Monthly Incomes
Food Stall Operator	B 4,000
Seamstress	B 4,400
Seamstress	B 4,400
Sales Clerk (department store)	B 4,500
Nurse	B 5,000
Factory Worker (silver/jewelry)	B 5,000
Sales Clerk (construction materials)	B 5,000
Sales Clerk (department store)	B 6,000
Teacher	B 7,700
Collections Agent (phone company)	B 10,000

*Source:Interviews 1998

Table TB11. Female Commodity Producers by Monthly Incomes in Chiang Mai City

Commodities and Goods	Estimated Monthly Incomes
Garlic	B 2,500
Wood Carving (home)	B 3,000
Food Cart (street)	B 4,200
Food Cart (university)	B 6,000
Grilled Bananas Cart (street)	B 7,200
Weaving (home)	B 11,000
Banana Pancake Cart (street)	B 16,500

*Source:Interviews 1998

Table TB12. Female Business Owners by Monthly Incomes in Chiang Mai City

Shops and Businesses	Estimated Monthly Incomes
Dress Shop	B 5,500
Sewing Stand	B 7,500
Laundry Business	B 9,000
Beauty Shop	B 9,000
Water Shop	B 10,000
Shop Owner (magazines, snacks)	B 10,000
Cellular Phone Shop	B 12,000
Camera Shop	B 70,000
Computer Store	B 300,000

*Source:Interviews 1998

Appendix A

Demographic Background

Throughout the five projects studied, common demographic patterns appeared. Overall, similarities of the sample were seen in age, marital status, number of children, educational levels, ethnic background, productive roles, reproductive roles, wages, and sources of income. Variations were, however, seen in women's income levels. Because of this difference, and because income levels are a key factor in the analysis of economic status, income levels are presented in chapter five.

Age

Of the 43 women interviewed within the projects, ages ranged from a low of 20 to a high 67 years. Of those interviewed, 11.65%[1] (n=5) were in their twenties, 25.63% (n=11) in their thirties, 30.29% percent (n=13) in their forties, 18.64% (n=8) in their fifties, and 13.98% (n=6) in their sixties.

Marital Status and Number of Children

Married was the marital status most often reported with 81.55% (n=35) of the 43 women currently married, 9.32% (n=4) single, 6.99% (n=3) widowed, and 2.33% (n=1) was no longer with her husband[2]. Of the women interviewed about number of children, 20.97% (n=9)[3] had none, 27.96% (n=12) had one, 30.29% (n=13) had two children, 13.98% (n=6) had three, 2.33% (n=1) had four children, and 4.66% (n=2) have six. Twenty-seven (37.5%) of the

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[1]Due to rounding error, the following percentages do not add up to 100 percent.

[2]It should be noted that the respondent did not say "separated" or "divorced" but said that "her husband had left, that he was gone." Divorce is rare in Thailand and close social cohesion remain strong, but the extended family is being replaced by the nuclear family (Muscat 1994:284).

[3]Four out of the nine respondents were not married. Although nuclear families are becoming a social norm, children outside of marriage is an anomaly (interviews 1998).

seventy-two children reported were female.

Educational Levels

The mode for women's educational levels was *Prathom* four which is equivalent to four years in primary school. Out of the 43 respondents, 58.25% (n=25) had four years of primary school, 11.65% (n=5) completed *Mattayom* three which is equivalent to three years of secondary education, and 4.66% (n=2) completed *Mattayom* six or high school. Only 2.33% (n=1) had a bachelors degree from a university, and another 2.33% (n=1) a diploma from the technical college. Both these women were in their twenties.

The educational levels of the respondents are significantly different from the educational levels of the respondents' daughters[4]. Out of the twenty-seven daughters reported, 25.02% (n=6) ranged from day care to *Mattayom* two (second year of secondary school) and 12.51% (n=3) had completed *Mattayom* six (secondary school) and were currently working. 25.02% (n=6) were either in the process of or had already obtained bachelor degrees from universities and 20.85% (n=5) diplomas from technical colleges. Only one of the respondents said her daughter had obtained a master's degree and none of the respondents' daughters were studying for doctoral degrees. The remaining 25.02% (n=6) listed only occupations for their daughters, without reporting daughters educational levels.

Ethnicity

Out of the 33 women workers interviewed[5], 54.54% (n=18) identified themselves as *Yong* and 42.42% (n=14) as *Muang*. The *Yong* are ethnic Chinese from the southern Hunan province and are found in both the highlands and

[4]The women at the *mettanaree* unit were not asked this question.

[5]Women in the *mettanaree* unit were not asked this question.

lowlands of Northern Thailand. These people were generally crafts people, working as weavers and carpenters. The term *Muang* implies "city people" or "Northern Thai people" and is used by the people in the Chiang Mai province to distinguish themselves from the hill-tribes living in the highlands. *Muang* does not literally denote urban city dwellers but instead means people who are no longer traditional or primitive. None of the respondents referred to themselves as *Tai* meaning people from Thailand, Cambodia, Loas, Burma, or Vietnam. One respondent told us, "...most people here do not keep track of their ethnic backgrounds and histories and do not be surprised when respondents identify themselves as *Muang* and not Cambodians, Loatians, Burmese, or Vietnamese." It is interesting to note that only one (3.03%) of the 33 respondents called herself Thai meaning people from Thailand. This helps illustrates that a woman's regional identity is more relevant than a national identity.

Productive and Reproductive Roles

Out of the 43 women interviewed about their productive roles within the projects, 46.60% (n=20) identified themselves as subcontractors, 30.29% (n=13) as employees of the projects, and 23.30% (n=10) as self-employed. When asked about position or roles within the family unit, most respondents, 65.24% (n=28), identified themselves as mothers, 13.98% (n=6) as mothers and grandmothers, 9.32% (n=4) as wives, and 4.66% (n=2) as daughters. It is interesting to note that only one of the 41 respondents[6] identified herself as a housewife. This helps illustrate that reproductive roles are more central to northern Thai women's self-identity than is the role of housewife.

Wages

Wages are based on paid-labour and additional income maintained through the economic projects. Out of the 43 women interviewed, 74.56% (n=32) were

[6]Two respondents did not answer this question.

paid piece rates and 25.63% (n=11) a daily wage. Only 9.32% (n=4) of the respondents earned additional income through dividends, while 2.33% (n=1) earned additional income through profits.

Sources of Income

Out of the 43 women interviewed, 58.25% (n=25) reported the project as their only source of income, 30.29% (n=13) reported both the projects and farming. Out of these 13 respondents, 25.63% (n=11) women worked as subsistence and cash-crop farmers, only 4.66% (n=2) worked as subsistence farmers earning no income. 4.66% (n=2) worked in the project and an additional job in their villages; one woman was a shop owner and the other worked at her family's food-stall. Interestingly, 6.99% (n=3) reported having worked outside their villages; one woman worked as a salesclerk, one woman did Wat construction, and the other woman worked as an officer of finance. All three women reported that the economic crisis had caused them to lose their jobs, meaning they had to return to their villages and work in the projects.

Appendix B

Interview Schedule for Project Planners/Staff:

1) What is the type of project that you are involved with?

2) Is this project international, government, NGO, cooperative, or community?

3) What is your job on the project?

4) What are the goals of the project?

5) What types of goods and services are produced on the project?

6) Which markets are pursued: local, national, or international?

7) Who funds the project?

8) How much funding do you receive?

9) How often do you receive funding?

10) What have been the outcomes of the project?

11) How do the women who work in the project view the outcomes?

12) Were these women involved in the development and planning of the project?

13) Who else was involved in the development and planning of the project?

14) How have women's jobs changed as a result of the project?

15) How have women's incomes changed as a result of the project?

16) What does the community think about the work the women do in the project?

17) What are the good things about the project?

18) What are the bad things about the project?

19) In what ways could the project improve or become better?

20) Is it possible for us to interview some of the women working in the project?

21) How many members are there?

22) Who buys the project's products?

Interview Schedule for Project Members:

1) What is the name of the project?

2) What is your age?

3) Are you married?

4) How many children do you have?

4a) What are your children's educational levels?

5) How many years were you in school?

6) What village are you from?

7) What district are you from?

8) What is your position in your home?

9) What is the class position of your home?

9a) What is your ethnic background?

10) How long have you been working in the project?

11) Why did you join the project?

12) What do you do in the project?

13) Do you work at the project, in your village, or in your home?

14) How many hours a day do you work?

15) What is your monthly income from the project?

16) How much has your income increased or decreased since your involvement with the project?

17) What do you use the money that you earn from the project for?

18) What type of training/teaching is done in the project?

19) What other jobs do you do outside the project?

20) How many hours a week do you work at these jobs?

21) What is your income from these jobs?

22) What do you use the money that you earn from these jobs for?

23) What types of jobs do other people in your family do?

24) What are their incomes?

25) Where you live, what other types of jobs are available for women?

26) What are they paid for these jobs?

27) In the last twenty years how has the economy changed?

27a) How has the economic crisis affected you and your family?

28) Is this good or bad and why?

29) In the last twenty years, how have women's jobs changed in your village?

30) Is this good or bad and why?

31) What type of job and income did your mother have?

32) What type of job and income did your grandmother have?

33) What types of things do you buy that your mother and grandmother did not?

34) What does your family think about your work with the project?

35) What do your neighbors think about your work in the project?

36) What are the good things about your work in the project?

37) What are the bad things about your work in the project?

38) In what ways could the project improve or become better?

39) What is the number of group members?

40) What is the average age of members?

41) What is the type of job you would like your daughter to have?

42) What is the educational level you would like your daughter to have?

Interview Schedule for Women Working in Chiang Mai City:

1) What is your age?

2) How many years were you in school?

3) What village are you from?

4) What district are you from?

5) What is your ethnic background?

6) What is your job?

7) What is your monthly income?

8) How many hours a day do you work?

9) How many days a week do you work?

10) What other jobs have you had?

11) What was your income from these jobs?

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