Thai Migrant Sex Workers

From Modernization to Globalization

Kaoru Aoyama

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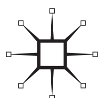

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Kaoru Aoyama

Tokyo, September 2008

Acronyms and Key Thai and Japanese Terms

Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
EMPOWER	Education Means Protection of Women Engaged in Recreation
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JNTO	Japan National Tourist Organisation
MoI	Ministry of Interior [Thailand]
MoLSW	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare [Thailand]
NCWA	National Commission on Women's Affairs [Thailand]
NCWT	National Council for Women of Thailand
NEC	National Education Commission [Thailand]
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board [Thailand]
NIC(s)	Newly Industrialised Country/ies
NSO	National Statistical Office [Thailand]
SEPOM	Self-Empowerment Programme of Migrant women
TAT	Tourism Authority of Thailand
TDRI	Thailand Development Research Institute
UNDP	United Nations Development Plan
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WGCP	Working Group for Country Paper

Thai Terms

baa tua	bars that cater for group tourists
baan	house, home, village, home country
bun khun	reciprocal notion of indebtedness, gratitude and care
farang	foreigner [white Westerner]
feen	lover, steady boyfriend/girlfriend, partner
Isaan	the northeast region
kaerk	guest, customer
kit tung	think of, long for, miss
(mii) nam jai	(having a) generous mind
otton	endurance
Patpong	the name of streets/area, full of bars that cater mainly for international tourists in central Bangkok

sabaai (jai)	(feeling) comfortable, care-free
tam bun	accumulation of merit
than samay	in step with the time, modern, trendy
Thaniya	the name of a street full of *snacks*/clubs that caters mainly for Japanese men near Patpong
ying borigaan	service women [sex workers]

Japanese Terms

chounan	the oldest male child
danna-san	master, husband [comical connotation] [-san: polite handle to a name]
douhan	bring along [a customer when a hostess checks in her bar for the night's work]
gaijin-san	foreigner [with the polite handle to a name]
gaman	endurance
kazoku seido	family system [Japanese patriarchy]
kyukei	rest [short time contract with a customer]
Love Hotel	purpose-built hotel for renting rooms for couples having sex
mama-san	mum [female manager of a bar]
okaa-san	mother [colloquial]
okyaku-san	guest, customer
otou-san	father [colloquial]
papa-san	dad [male manager of a bar, husband of *mama-san*]
sensei	teacher
Snack/Club	Japanese style bars
Soap Land	brothel in which sex workers have a bath with customers
tomari	staying overnight [with a customer]
Tour Bar	bars that cater for group tourists
yakuza	Japanese crime syndicate, its member

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Introduction: from Personal Troubles to Public Issues

> I don't remember her name. She was a Thai woman, or rather a girl, I thought at the time; tiny and fragile. The whole time I sat in front of her through the glass wall she looked as if she was just about to say something. But she didn't say much, and I didn't say much. I was too ignorant. I didn't know what to say, what to ask, how to ask. I composed general questions: 'Are you feeling alright?'; 'Do you need anything?'; 'Do you want me to ask someone to bring something next time?' and things along those lines. I remember she said she wanted to read a Thai magazine, anything written in Thai. She was speaking in Japanese because I didn't speak Thai but also because speaking in other languages was not allowed in custody. A warden was sitting on her side of the visiting booth, not looking at us but alert to any sound or movement. What else could she say, should she say at all, anyway? She didn't know me and I didn't know her. I remember I thought she was pretty, with spots on her cheek and forehead, and her sleek black hair combed into a ponytail. She looked as though she felt cold. But it was summer in Tokyo, at the northern edge of the central 23 wards, and cannot actually have been cold in a detention centre without air conditioning. It was perhaps the reflection of the greyish shirt on her face, or perhaps the tension I felt. In fact, I don't remember her face either. It now looks like a different face each time I try to remember her. The face seems to be all different faces taking turns, Thai women I have known since then.

Migration, sexwork and trafficking: 25 years from Thailand to Japan[1]

Prostitution and Thai women (and men, although with a lower profile) have long been claiming attention from Asia-Pacific and Euro-Asian

academic, civic, governmental and popular discourses as an inseparable pairing of social 'problems'.[2] In Japan, it was in the 1980s that feminist activists, journalists and social critics began to protest against Japanese male customers involved in the rampant sex industry as tourists as well as *chuzai-in* (company employees – presumed male – stationed in a foreign country: Japanese) in Thailand.[3,4] The flow of potential male customers from Japan to Thailand increased particularly after the Plaza Accord of 1985, and then again after the Visit Thailand Year of 1987 campaign organised by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). 1987 marked the 100th anniversary of the first agreement of friendship, commerce and navigation between Thai and Japanese nation states. The appreciation in the value of the yen in the international monetary and commodity markets conspired together with Thai economic policy to increase the flow of yen into Thailand, while concurrently dramatically increasing a reverse flow: Thai women going to Japan as sexworkers.

However, until now these women have seldom been seen as 'migrant workers' in the Japanese context. They have been situated as either 'victims' of human trafficking or 'criminals' of concrete offences in the areas of public discourse, legal justice and policy administration. This is due in large part to the logic, shared by jurisdiction and the majority of feminists, which denies that 'prostitution' is legitimate work. I will take up this critical point of argument for further examination in Chapter 1. For now, I note that there is no route through which migrant women in the sex industry are received officially and legally insofar as sexual intercourse and associated acts for commercial purposes are illegal in Japan and offering sexual services is not recognised as a form of employment permitted to foreign nationals to qualify for their stay.[5] Thai women's migration, while being involved in 'prostitution', is necessarily conducted within the undocumented sector. Also, if we look at the Thai socio-economic condition, as well as its Japanese counterpart, in which more women work in the undocumented sector than men, women's migration tends to be undocumented regardless of job specification (see Pataya 2002: 2–3).

From 1991 to 1993, Thai nationals were recorded by the Japanese police as the largest population of 'illegal overstayers' (see Chapter 4). During the same period, the police also reported that the overwhelming majority of arrested 'foreign women who are involved in criminal cases related to entertainment and amusement (*fuuzoku kannkei jihan*: J)'[6] (1,285 out of 2,139 in 1991 to 1,849 out of 2,405 in 1993) and arrested 'foreign brokers' (20 out of 30 in 1992 and 20 out of 45 in 1993) were Thai nationals (Keisatsu-chou 1994: 98–105). Although the police treated the women in these cases as 'illegal' stayers, implying that their existence in

Japan under the circumstances itself constituted a crime, the report also pointed out that

> [s]ome of these [foreign women] are recognised to be in illegal work under bad conditions including: being indentured with huge debts and forced to do prostitution, to work without compensation, or to have their wages raked off (ibid.: 104).[7]

Without legal status to protect them from human rights violations under Japanese jurisdiction, these women were in a vulnerable social position. Although there is evidence that some of the women went to Japan voluntarily and without any guidance from official or underground mediators, I would say that the majority were involved in organised trafficking. This trafficking, however, did not always comply with the commonly held assumption of women deceived: many had agreed to work in the sex industry. Parents, siblings, relatives, friends and neighbours who had been close to the women at one end or the other were often involved in their entrance into trafficking. In such cases, it was not rare to see that there was a reciprocal sense of 'helping' between the migrants and the people involved, showing that the former would be seeking good guidance to a well-paid job and the latter would be asking a return in advance for offering the promise of a huge income. Then again, there was absolutely no guarantee in trafficking that the women would not be trapped in situations of slavery (defined in Chapter 1) as opposed to working for a fair wage, as they expected. In some Japanese towns, typically on the outskirts of larger regional capitals, the first half of the 1990s saw consecutive media reports of serious criminal offences, either committed by Thai undocumented migrants or involving them as victims. In some extreme cases, people were driven to free themselves by killing the owners of the premises where they had been enslaved (see Chapter 5).

For several years after 1994, the numbers of Thai women entering Japan decreased while the numbers of those staying on a permanent basis, as well as the numbers of tourists going to Thailand from Japan, increased. At the same time, women returning from Japan to Thailand became an outstanding trend. Since then, there has been much discussion on migration, sexwork and trafficking in women, including reputable qualitative analyses linking trafficking and prostitution causally to patriarchal capitalist inequalities of globalisation as well as to certain cultural values of both countries. These years have also seen the development of governmental and NGO support networks in Thai as

well as Japanese society, gradually presenting a more complex picture of trajectories within the trade.[8]

Into the 2000s, there has been a significant increase in empirical research and NGO activity on trafficking in both English and Japanese speaking contexts.[9] Behind this is an important change in the international legal arena: the adoption of the protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, a supplement to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime adopted in 2000. In Japan, the government issued the Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in 2004 in preparation for ratification of the above protocol, declaring that it would work toward protection of and support for the victims of trafficking. The government amended relevant laws such as the Penal Code, the Entertainment and Amusement Trades Law, the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law and the Passport Law. The Penal Code was revised to create the Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Articles, in which selling, buying and trading persons for trafficking within and to Japan was criminalised for the first time in Japan's legal history, although trafficking from Japan to other countries was illegal already. Revisions to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law meant that overstayers with no legal status might be granted permission (retrospectively) to land in Japan, to remain in Japan, to receive assistance for return migration and support for rehabilitation in their countries of origin if found to be victims of trafficking.

However, the National Police Agency identified only 117 persons as victims of trafficking during the fiscal year of 2005, the year of the amendments, and 58 during the fiscal year 2006. In comparison, the estimated total numbers of overstayers in the same years were 207,299 and 193,745, respectively, according to the Migration Control Bureau (2006: 43). The large gaps in the numbers between the former and the latter invite two possible interpretations: either victimisation by criminal trafficking is not so widespread among undocumented migrants in Japan; or the purported official protection for victimised migrants has, for whatever reasons, achieved very little so far. The fact remains in any case that the vast majority of overstayers are likely not to be recognised as victims and have no legal access to the right to work.[10]

Personal involvement

My own connection to this issue began in Tokyo in 1994 with volunteer work in a non-governmental non-profit women's organisation

called Asia-Japan Women's Resource Centre. Introduced by a feminist supporter, I visited a Thai woman on remand – the young woman described in the opening. She had been driven to commit homicide in order to escape from enslavement after being trafficked into Japan's sex industry. I was at the time also an MA student, researching the apparent gap between feminist discourses on prostitution in both English and Japanese secondary material and the perceived realities of sexwork in a Thai–Japan context. Can there still be a clear-cut line between 'chosen' and 'forced' prostitution, I was asking in my dissertation. Should one regard prostitution as a whole as an embodiment of the universal patriarchal subordination of women because, as in these Thai women's cases in Japan, what seems to be a 'choice' to be involved in the sex industry can easily entrap the women into the situation of slavery. Alternatively, should one still regard prostitution as work separated from slavery when the women's 'choice' is involved, out of respect for their subjectivity. My conclusion at the time was that one could and should separate the notion of prostitution into two categories: voluntary sexwork in which women do 'choose' to make their living by this means as a realistic option, and sexual slavery into which women are forced. Further, as women's vulnerability to being trapped into situations of slavery increases due to their current 'illegal' status, I advocated decriminalising voluntary sexwork while at the same time maintaining a vigilant awareness that even women who become involved voluntarily can find themselves in situations in which they are deprived of their freedom.

Looking back after further work on the subject, I still agree with these conclusions in principle. However, the involvement of the individual women who 'chose' or 'were tricked' into the global sex trade still seemed to be hidden within a larger picture of structural causes at that time. Not much attention was paid to different phases of their lives, particularly the phase after quitting sexwork and, most significantly, there was a dearth of stories about the migrant sexworkers who presumably existed in large numbers but were not recognised either subjectively or objectively as victims.[11] Published accounts of women in the global sex trade were almost bound to be tragic stories of victimhood aimed at enlightening the general public as to the need for rescue, protection and rehabilitation, for punishing the perpetrators and preventing future trafficking.[12] It was hard to address the issue of whether the trafficked women were *enslaved* or not, or to look at the conditions of individual women's 'choices' to enter the trade if they would not fit into the victim image. The sense persisted that I did not know anything about the woman I had visited on remand. Although supporting the movement to advocate the human

rights of trafficking victims at large, I eventually became convinced that focusing on victimhood alone would not provide a rounded hermeneutic understanding of the migrant women's experience. And I regretted for a long time that I had not known what to ask, how to ask, that I'd perhaps wasted her precious visiting hour of the day, and that I'd not tried to contact her again.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the missed encounter with her had an altering impact on my later life course. Instead of the one I had missed, I decided to search for stories of other women involved in migration, sexwork, and/or trafficking. To listen to not one but various stories in detail also seemed a positive as well as necessary step toward finding something that had fallen through the gap in the dichotomy of 'choice or force' or 'victim or criminal'.

In this book, therefore, I present some of what has still been largely unexplored: the grey zone between the agents' choices and the structural causes in which multiple factors work to materialise the global sex trade. Any system of culture, politics or economy functions only in relation to each relevant person, situation, interest, perception and the social relations that connect all or some of these. I will introduce and examine diverse accounts of migrant women in the sex industry to show the interplays between people's 'choices' and external forces, between a sexual relationship and its commodification, between different natures and degrees of the exercise of power, and between those who talk about the sex trade and those who have been in it.

Learning troubles to know, troubles of representation and troubles of reflexivity

Here we are faced with the trouble that life historians and ethnographers have repeatedly found: that a story necessarily exists as a *creation* resulting from the shifting and sorting of what really happened through a storyteller's experience and her memory of it, and through the interpretation of a listener and the record of this.[13] I aim as a researcher to recognise the agent's perceptions changing in interaction with her social conditions. However, a researcher is only able in reality to see the conditions and actions surrounding the agent, not the agent's perceptions *per se*. I cannot go into my interviewee's mind (or brain or heart) and see what is going on there. I cannot *really* know what she is thinking and feeling. Moreover, even if I could see it or really know it by some miracle, I would still face the problem of representation; I would not be able to present the exact content of her thoughts and feelings unless it were a

physical substance that I could take in my hand and pass on to you.

For an interviewee, there is the possibility of having forgotten something, or of framing a story to meet the perceived desires of the interviewer, hiding information inconvenient to herself or lying directly, depending on necessity. Just as the young Thai woman on remand did not have any obligation to tell me anything, no one has any obligation to speak to a researcher, either truly or falsely. Laura M. Agustin, a researcher-cum-activist dealing with transnational migrant sexwork in Europe, seems to share the same concern:

> [t]alking about sexual risks with people who think it is wrong to ever take *any* risks may cause them to treat you as irresponsible. Admitting the desire to stay in sexwork after getting out of the clutches of abusers can render you ineligible for victim-protection programmes. The best policy may be to omit certain information from responses or to put on the expected front (2004: 6, original emphasis).

Also, the capacity to protect one's own secrets may well save you from rendering control over yourself to others, which makes it a particularly important skill for those situated far from the governing power of the state and public discourse (ibid.). There is no easy way for a researcher to get information that is close and directly relevant to the real situation of an interviewee as one might hope for.

That said, it seems to me that there should also be a crack somewhere in the axiomatic pessimism of this inability to know and represent the real for the sake of, indeed, reality. Taking a critical stance against the kind of positivism which unproblematically claims that a social researcher should know, should aim to know and can know the real in people's lives and in society does not contradict a belief in paying serious attention to reality. The fact that an observer cannot directly represent, or fully master, the real does not mean there is no such a thing as the real. On the contrary, the more she accepts the limitations of her capabilities to know and makes others understand this, the more she can also be open to the possibility of plural perspectives about the real; such openness equips her to value the real as something more far-reaching in depth, in width, in texture, in nature, in extent, in variety and the like than her or even the greatest thinker's single perspective can encompass. As Rob Stones suggests, avoiding making reductionist claims about society and agents' experiences in it and being open to plurality appear to be a redeeming crack, a way out of pessimism for a sociological researcher (1996: 163–4).[14]

What I refer to as the agent's perceptions *really* are possibilities and probabilities, or what she *might have* felt and thought. I take this provisionality of the knowledge claim as a positive element of my methodological approach. At the same time, I recognise that the written 'agent's perceptions' perceived through the researcher's observation of interaction between the agent and her social conditions can *include* the interaction between the agent and the researcher. To state the possibilities and probabilities of the agent's perceptions as 'the agent's perceptions', I will have been involved in interpretation of a kind, which Giddens calls the 'double hermeneutic' (1984/2001: xxxv, 284).

This is to say that my social and personal life inevitably biases the epistemology of research, the ontology congruent to this epistemology, the research analysis, and thus the outcome. I thus note here the aspects of myself considerably influential to this study, on top of the background mentioned already. I had a middle-class upbringing in the capital city of an Asian country amidst hyper economic growth and growing consumerism in the latter half of the 20th century, much like the middle-class counterparts of my respondents in this study. I have Japanese nationality, and experienced the personal effects of the sudden rise in value of that nation's currency in the international economy which so affected the Thai economy: in the late 1980s, when some of my respondents migrated to Japan for higher income, I was able to quit my first job, go to Britain with my family and become a student again. Later when I was writing the PhD thesis that formed the basis of this book, I was an East Asian temporarily living in a southeast English town, an ethnic minority but very much protected against institutional discrimination by my graduate-student status and nationality (visa conditions for Japanese students were more relaxed than those of other non-EEA students and migrants in general, for instance). I was also a mother away from my own children for years at around this period but somehow able to afford air travel twice a year to see them, again in stark contrast to my respondents. I was in transition not only within my career but in my life course around this period as a bisexual woman separating from a male long-term partner. However, my sexuality was never an issue as far as I was out but remained within the circle of liberal university education, unlike my respondents whose sexuality was always the target of stigmatisation because of their career.

Considering such a background in relation to the question of the researcher's viewpoint, I principally follow feminist theories and methodologies that develop the reflexivity and the critical exposure of power relations involved in the representation of the Other. In Ken

Plummer's summary, echoing the tenor of Giddens' 'double hermeneutics', fruitful reflexivity is a necessary condition in social research and 'part of a wider growth in pluralism' in the course of researching life stories, shedding light on the question of who constructs the knowledge and 'how such constructions are subsequently used in the social world' (1984/2001: 206). The line between fruitful reflexivity and 'the projections of the researcher's own unconscious needs' for personal confession is fine. But the personal reflexivity of the analyst needs to engage with the fact that this reflexivity is facilitated by its very involvement in the process of analysis of a particular piece of research surrounded by the nexus of its own social conditions.[15]

Provided that the researcher has reflexivity of this kind, participatory observation that affords access to the interviewee's daily life and attitudes outside the interview itself, the method also adopted by Agustin above (2004: 7), is useful. Further, if the researcher has a chance to tackle the very social problem faced by the researched/interviewee, as in the participatory *action* research described below, the merits are manifold. Not only can the researcher see the problem from a viewpoint closer to that of the researched, but she may also prove useful to the researched outside of material or welfare-related reward.[16]

Involving oneself in various roles within the action of research affords a better chance to understand multiple viewpoints in fieldwork. The possibility of looking at the reality as a complex of multiple phenomena can be realised, rather than a continuation of the pursuit of a one and only truth which no one can judge as such. Returning to Agustin's point regarding being lied to by interviewees, the recognition of such prevarication can prove to be of immense benefit to the research (see my example in Chapter 3). The researcher then consciously observes one dimension of the complex in which the interviewee felt the need to lie and is encouraged to make efforts to see the same complex from a different viewpoint. Only through such an accumulation of diverse voices of agents in migration, sexwork and trafficking, voluntarily or otherwise, including them in the discussion over interpretation, may we reach a more complete understanding of the complex as a whole.

To construct what I observed, heard, sensed and interpreted in and from the field, I will adopt three viewpoints: the distant observer's, the close observer's and the acting observer's. The distant observer's perspective enables the researcher to focus more on events over a broad temporal and geographical span which might exert themselves on the agent's actions independently of the agent's awareness of them. The researcher is looking at the agent's actions through the macro temporal

and spatial scales, gaining the wider landscape at the expense of the details – particularly (the reading) of the agent's subjective perceptions. Distance disallows the researcher from making any detailed commentary on the agent's actions and situation.

In order to see more detail and offer more detailed interpretation, other observers must also take turns presenting perspectives. First, the close observer's viewpoint is meant to be closer to the agent in time and space than, in the context of this study, is possible through the macro-scope of the modernity of Thailand or of the operation of the sex trade between Thailand and Japan. This close observer's scope shifts time and again to look at each woman's life course and/or associational relationships, and at her 'deviant' career development and/or micro-intimate relationships. But the close observer's point of view is still intentionally objective, the researcher observing what an agent does on her way through career stages on the basis of that agent's life course along with the visible, externalised, purpose of her actions. Such conditions understood through observable expressions are not necessarily remote from the subjective conditions of the agent's actions, but they can very well 'look' and 'feel' different, as the perspectives from which they are being examined necessarily differ from the agent's subjective perspective. To see further requires the acting observer, who steps into the scene and 'turns the direction of the view around', so to speak. The acting observer also stands close to the agent but, unlike the close observer, she would be standing beside, not opposite, looking outwards in the same direction and from (as close as possible an approximation of) the agent's perspective. Through this acting viewpoint, I/observer/researcher would see more or less the same circumstances that the agent sees; I may see with whom she is involved, what is required or expected by them of her, if she is reciprocated, violated in any sense, fulfilled, betrayed and so on. I would then perceive the detailed context in which the agent acts and how and why she deals with her situation, doing and not doing in relation to her personal and subjective conditions at this time and in this place.[17]

The fieldwork, the respondents and the researcher's relationships to them

Based in such methodology, the fieldwork for this study consisted of participatory action research, in-depth life-story interviews with (former) sexworkers, informational interviews with people related to them and gathering of secondary materials. It was undertaken in Bangkok and in Chiangrai, the northernmost prefecture of Thailand and birthplace of

many young women who went to Japan, from the end of April 2002 to the end of February 2003, and in areas outside and within Tokyo from March through April and again in September 2003.

Participatory action research is a method born out of feminist research methodology. I am especially influenced by Maggie O'Neill, a sociologist who has been practising this method with sexworkers and other members of their geographical community in the British midlands. According to O'Neill, by this method the researcher participates in the field where a particular group of people (hitherto the target of research) take action over the social issue in focus, develops and implements multiple methods for conducting the research and presents the results in cooperation with the group members themselves. Then, by putting forward a new interpretation of the issue by ethnography, art or 'ethno-mimesis', as O'Neill terms it, the process and results which would have remained unclear through literary study alone are shared among researcher, researched and reader (2001: 73).[18]

In the case of this study, however, the nature of the issue at hand – providing a record of not only the voices of 'trafficking victims' but of the diverse experiences of Thai women in the transborder sex trade as a whole – made it necessary to go beyond the field of the victim support movement and beyond the Japanese national border to Thailand. Through the support network as well as another Tokyo-based social-activist and academic network called People's Plan Study Group where I worked as a co-ordinator after finishing my MA, I eventually gained access to two such fields: the Bangkok-based NGO EMPOWER, which supports sexworkers in the area, and the Chiangrai PO (People's Organisation) SEPOM, which supports returnee migrants from Japan's sex industry.

Those whom I asked to be my respondents were (self-acknowledged) Thai women who had dealt with (self-acknowledged) Japanese male customers on a long-term (weekly, monthly to yearly) or a short-term (hourly to daily) basis. I became acquainted with respondents through the two organisations mentioned above or via other connections within the areas of their activities. I verbally stated as the purposes of my research that I wanted to understand the reasons behind the major sex trade between Japanese customers and *ying borigaan* (sexworkers, literally, service women: T][19] and the many Thai women travelling to Japan as part of it, and that I wanted to pass their stories to the wider society and especially to those who had been in similar circumstances. I also verbally identified myself as a postgraduate student researcher aiming to gain the academic qualification of doctorate by writing a thesis based on

the interviews, stated that my intended procedure was to ask them to tell their life stories with triggers of prepared questions, and described my research ethics based on *The Statement of Ethical Practice* of the British Sociological Association.[20]

Few currently active or former sexworkers introduced friends or colleagues from their organisations or workplaces for interviews: thus the so-called 'snowball effect' for gathering interviewees did not apply in this case. The main reason for this seemed to be either scepticism or a firm hold on privacy among (former) sexworkers *vis-à-vis* either Japanese people or others in general, including their own colleagues. Some women spoke of my project to their friends, intending to arrange introductions but were rejected, typically with the explanation that 'I don't trust anyone who is Japanese'. Several expressed concern that workplace colleagues would learn what they do and think in private. As a result, I resorted to asking anyone qualified in my direct contact to be my respondents, was rejected by about half and eventually found 22 who were willing. Nineteen of these allowed me to tape-record the interviews and three others permitted me to take notes on the spot. I did not take photographs or video recordings. Those who chose to be respondents typically articulated reasons such as 'I want to be of use to others', 'I want to let the world know my experience', 'I think a study like yours is a good one', or in a more personal tone as a friend that 'I want you to do a good job'. I should also note a suspicion that it had become difficult for some to reject my request as I became more involved with their group activities.

The languages used were English, Thai and Japanese. For the first six interviewees, I arranged for either Thai–Japanese or Thai–English interpreters, and my Thai language comprehension was sufficient to notice and reword a question immediately if a misunderstanding with the translator occurred. In using a translator, the most sensitive issue is to protect the interviewee's privacy. This was not a worry when a Japanese coordinator at SEPOM offered to translate for participants there; the trust that had already been nurtured between her and the interviewees ensured an atmosphere in which we could converse more in-depth than I could have achieved alone. In cases in which I employed the services of two other professional translators (a Japanese and a Thai-Australian, both living in Thailand), however, there was sometimes tension for the interviewees, scepticism especially about my promise to maintain their privacy, regardless of the high skill level of both translators and my trust in them. Thus, as my stay in Thailand continued and my ability to conduct face-to-face conversations in Thai increased, I conducted the

interviews alone, relying on my basic Thai and the respondents' Thai and Japanese or English, sometimes fluent, sometimes not. When meaning was not clear to me, I checked it with acquaintances working for other NGOs, extracting the particular words or sentences in question to avoid betraying the interviewees' identities.

EMPOWER in Bangkok and the streets of Bangkok

The metropolis of Bangkok is home to six million of the 60 million population of the Kingdom of Thailand. It is the most populated, highest income earning (37 per cent of the Gross Regional Product at current market prices in 1998) and the most industrialised city of the nation state (for example, holding 79 per cent of commercial bank loans in 2001, and 37 per cent of electricity consumption in 2000) (Alpha Research 2002: 18–20). In Bangkok, I worked as an unpaid volunteer teaching Japanese via English for a total of roughly eight months between May 2002 and February 2003 at a non-governmental non-profit organisation called EMPOWER. EMPOWER is an acronym for Education Means Protection of Women Engaged in Recreation. It is an 'action-oriented' organisation, established in 1986 influenced by the worldwide feminist movement (Darunee and Pandey 1991: 31) and organising three activity centres within Thailand.[21] EMPOWER provides practical support specifically to sexworkers, including negotiations with bar owners and related governmental offices, various advocacy campaigns, domestic and international networking, free seminars on health and legal issues, and English, Thai and Japanese language lessons. In order to provide information and reach out to sexworkers, it publishes booklets, brochures and a bimonthly newsletter called *Bad Girls*. The slogan under the title, both in Thai and in English, reads 'Good Girls Go to Heaven, Bad Girls Go Everywhere!'[22] The support and encouragement intended by the group seems to exceed the practical, extending into psychological and emotional realms and possibly touching upon deep-rooted issues in the participants' self-perceptions. EMPOWER's written objectives are 'to empower women working in the sex industry in Thailand, to provide a place where *people treat each other with mutual respect, to encourage self worth and self pride*' (EMPOWER English brochure, my emphasis).

I contacted EMPOWER through a Thai friend I had known via the NGO network of my former job. I introduced myself as a graduate student doing fieldwork for my thesis about Thai female sexworkers who dealt with Japanese customers, and explicitly stated that my purpose in volunteering was to look for women with these experiences who were

willing to take part in interviews. I had been notified that this organisation did not support individual academic research, and was conscious from past involvement with civil activities that it would be practically impossible and politically problematic for a small, financially unstable independent organisation dealing with sensitive issues to accommodate every stranger's unfamiliar research request. I was prepared to be rejected (see Odzer 1994: 17–21 on her brave confession of trial and error in this matter).

And yet I was somehow accepted. The staff member I came across welcomed me as a volunteer teacher and as a friend of the woman who had introduced me to EMPOWER. That said, after I'd mentioned my research a few times to people at the office, no one seemed to want to talk about it again. Exceptions included one attendee offering to 'make friends, if you want to', and another occasion much later when a staff member offered to do a background interview with me. One point emphasised clearly from the start was that all staff members, paid or volunteer, were expected to work for the students, as they called the attendees, and work in earnest. I understood in this a tacit agreement that I was responsible for teaching and cooperating with the organisation and the students, and that, as long as I did not disturb their activities toward the achievement of their goals with my research, I would be granted 'seen but unnoticed' status (Garfinkel 1967/2002: 36–8) with which to forge connections through personal arrangements.

I am fully aware now, however, that this 'tacit agreement' could have been heavily coloured by my own hopeful understanding; I might have ignored a 'tacit disagreement' in prioritising my purpose: to conduct my project. This, at the time, made me vaguely uncomfortable that 'friendship' or 'personal arrangement' can be the very source of (informational) exploitation, in that the very nature of friendship dictates that there is no guarantee or even verbal contractual agreement with anyone to do anything.[23] Asking respondents to sign a written consent form before participating in the interview may have allayed this 'uncomfortable' feeling somewhat, but to do so would have been a breach of the interviewees' anonymity, as Coomber argues (2002). Further, the signing of a consent form incurs a responsibility for being in the interview on the side of the participant, despite the fact that such a contract is prepared according to the terms and for the convenience of the researcher, albeit in many cases with the purpose of assuring the fair and just treatment of the participant.[24] On the other hand, the 'problem' of ambiguous relationships of trust-building between the researcher and the researched in social research was not going away with or without

friendship. Relationships with no guarantee, no contract and no set agreement are after all common in our daily life. If we live our lives more or less on such trust, as seen in the interaction order in Symbolic Interactionism, social researchers can hardly expect to escape it in the 'double hermeneutics' inherent to their research.[25]

Through EMPOWER, I met ten respondents and conducted nine recorded and one unrecorded interview. Three of the nine full interviewees had already left sexwork at the time. I taught regular language classes twice a week, sometimes with only one student attending and sometimes ten, and each time in different combinations with some new faces as attendance was not mandatory. Most of the students were female sexworkers in their 20s to 30s working at bars in the area, in Patpong or Thaniya (see chapters 3 and 4). Having as points of reference some past experience in Japanese teaching, translating and general coordinating in various multicultural/lingual settings, I noted that EMPOWER sexworkers were typically very good learners for several observable reasons: they were in need of the language skills for the communication with customers that was directly or indirectly related to the amount of their income as well as to their physical safety; they were used to anticipating what the other person expected them to do even before instructions were uttered; they were used to coming across as open to foreigners, foreign words and concepts; and they were outgoing. They were as a whole a group of good communicators.

Apart from EMPOWER, I went to high-class bars, so-called rip-off bars, sex-show establishments, 'Japanese karaoke clubs', 'Irish pubs', hotel lounges and discos in Patpong, Thaniya and other entertainment areas in Bangkok. I chose them sometimes because they were the places my EMPOWER students were working and sometimes precisely for their difference from my students' workplaces. In these rounds I met two of my respondents, sexworkers who agreed to recorded interviews. Generally, the bars in Thaniya catering mainly to Japanese customers were far more costly and usually closed to customers who did not fit their profile as well as to women, tourists and researchers. On the other hand, they tended to offer the sexworkers exceptionally higher salaries and better working conditions, including regular holidays. Eight of my respondents, including students and returnees, had worked in such specialised bars in Thaniya at some point. All eight gave a very positive overall evaluation of work in Thaniya, including happy memories and/or good relationships with colleagues, managers and/or with customers. Such accounts were in striking contrast to those from different kinds of bars, including,

of course, the situations of slavery in which some of trafficked migrants to Japan had found themselves (see Chapter 3 and the next section).

Nevertheless, there were also some bars in Patpong, more open to tourists and to any sort of customer, which apparently offered relatively good conditions and earned good reputations among my respondents. Their conditions were rated better by some mainly because of relative freedoms such as looser regulations enabling relaxed relationships with co-workers, managers and customers. In particular, those bars with a physical set-up of openness – doors literally open to the street full of tourists from all over the world – welcomed diverse custom and had open and easy-going management systems which reinforced the relaxed conditions. On the whole, sexworkers with whom I had contact in the Patpong and Thaniya areas had relatively rich 'layers of socially available resources' with which to adapt to their 'deviant' career (Becker 1968: 279; 1963/1991: 28–30). Furthermore, the 'deviancy' itself sometimes diminished in the perceptions of those who were working in certain bars in this area because of the networks of a community in which they could establish senses of trust, security and belonging. They were also conscious of being a 'privileged' few among possibly hundreds of thousands of sexworkers in Thailand (see Chapter 3; Odzer 1994: 302–3).[26]

I should note, however, that I had no personal contact with sexworkers currently working in worse conditions, such as the so-called 'ghosts' (*pii*: T) working on the streets, or in some of the bars or in brothels that were more restrictive of freedom. I was only able to infer from the past experiences related by some respondents and from rumours circulated among Patpong and Thaniya workers as to the range of exact conditions, in stark contrast to the 'privileged' ones, existing somewhere hidden from the view of research, in which sexwork was carried out independently of organisational authority and protection.

SEPOM in Chiangrai

Chiangrai is one of the northernmost prefectures in Thailand, bordering Laos to its east and Burma to its north. With a population of 1.3 million, Chiangrai is known to be the foremost area of birth after the environs of Bangkok for Thai women having lived and living in Japan. After more than five months in Bangkok, I temporarily moved about 800km north of the metropolis to Chiangrai City, the capital of this largely farming prefecture, to work at SEPOM as an unpaid live-in volunteer for six weeks from October to November 2002. SEPOM is the acronym for Self-Empowerment Programme Of Migrant Women.[27] It is a self-help organisation aiming to support women who migrated, worked in the

sex industry in Japan and came back to Thailand, 'in order for them to solve problems by their own initiative'. They provide psychological care, consultation on legal and administrative matters, funding for those who live with HIV/AIDS, activities and follow-up for Thai-Japanese children, and research on problems surrounding returnee women (SEPOM English brochure). SEPOM was set up in 2000 as a result of previous 'participatory action research' involving returnee women themselves as facilitators that had been conducted by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). One of the interviewers at that time, a Japanese woman, and several of the Thai women interviewed became SEPOM's founders (Saito 2003: 2–3).[28]

I was introduced to SEPOM by a group of Japanese women who had been working since the early 1990s to support Thai women in Japan involved in trafficking. I was accommodated in its office room and attended all activities of the organisation during my six-week stay, with hospitable offers of translation on many occasions by the Japanese coordinator when the Thai language went beyond my level of comprehension. In turn, I undertook verbal and textual translations between Japanese and English to foster communication between Japanese supporters and other international connections, taught Japanese to participating children and did other miscellaneous housekeeping jobs.

Seven of my respondents came from the SEPOM circle. Five among them agreed to recorded interviews and two to unrecorded ones. This group shared very different characteristics from those I had met through EMPOWER or other (former) sexworkers of my acquaintance in Bangkok and Japan. The distinction, of course, stemmed from the fact that all seven were returnees from Japan. Those who had been through the harshest working conditions, as well as conditions that I regard as the 'situations of slavery' as opposed to 'working', were concentrated in this group, as I will refer to through this study.

However, the experience of returnee women varied as enormously as that of non-returnee (former) sexworkers. Their career as migrant sexworkers ended sometimes when it turned into slavery, or sometimes by their own decisions to stop sexwork and/or return to their communities of origin for reasons such as age, health, comprehensive exhaustion and worry of being irretrievably deracinated from their home country and/or mainstream society. Overall, what I heard of in their interviews and from their activities around SEPOM was their shift of perception from 'working' to something else.

Even after leaving sexwork, or for some after escaping situations of slavery, and years after coming back from their long journeys in the

sex industry, the returnee women bore the stigma of a 'deviant' identity. Still, they clearly voiced how badly they had yearned for 'home' while in Japan, trapped or otherwise. It thus seemed reasonable that, whilst confronted by their communities' assignment of the broad label of 'deviancy' from the mainstream despite such varied migration experiences, they still demonstrated a sense of belonging to different degrees. Their shared yearning to belong again was always frustrated because of this treatment, and many of them actually articulated that it was unfair. Unfair indeed, as their experiences were based in social factors particular to the rapid changes in modern Thailand, many of which were shared by every other 'ordinary' member of the society.

The SEPOM respondents also demonstrated that they had acquired different key statuses after returning to their communities of origin. Some re/gained key statuses in their communities of intimate relationships (Communities of Intimacy), others in their communities of social functions (Communities of Association), and yet others in both, such as the status of mother. Some succeeded in acquiring the sense of 're-belonging' through the achievement of respectable status even though they felt continued discomfort with the remaining status of 'ex-sexworkers'. The shared significance of status in the making of respondents' senses of 're-belonging' was clear. As soon as they arrived home – to the reality of life in the real communities of their origin – they acknowledged, or remembered, a necessity to gain a new social status with which to replace the degradation which came of their involvement in a 'deviant' career. This was a challenge, however, because the new status was intended to accommodate, or to negotiate with, their habitus,[29] which had been purchased through the development of the very 'deviant' career in question.[30] As they had to struggle with this challenge day by day and for an extended period, it was not surprising that respondents here tended to feel more connected to the past career than other former sexworkers interviewed in terms of methods for attaining that sense of belonging.

Strangers in Tokyo

The final stretch of my fieldwork was conducted in Tokyo, capital of Japan and home to 12 million of the nation's 120 million population. In Tokyo and the surrounding area, I visited two Thai restaurants, two bars, one Thai Theravada Buddhist temple and another gathering of believers, and one grocery store where migrant Thai people work or assemble sporadically. This part of the research was carried out for 12 weeks between March and April and in September 2003.

In this area, my involvement with my respondents was not as committed as in Bangkok and Chiangrai as I had no nexus from which to build relationships and spend time together outside formal interviews. I did, however, have more general background knowledge about the place, because I was brought up and had family living in Tokyo and the language of the respondents' environment – Japanese – was my native language. I also had direct contact with a group of women who had been supporting Thai undocumented migrants as well as other nationals and non-sexworker 'battered' women throughout Japan.[31] For these reasons, I had assumed easier access to the lives of Thai women working in the sex industry within Japan, but this was not the case. I was much less of an acting researcher than in the other locations. Contradicting my assumption, the short six-week stay at SEPOM without proficiency in a common language had furnished me much more with the role of participatory action researcher. In the fieldwork in the Tokyo area, I could not stand beside my respondents to make much of the senses they attached to their 'deviant' career in their particular contexts.

However, I managed to meet three Thai women who were willing to talk about their experiences in sexwork. One of them was currently working as a sexworker. The second, an ex-sexworker married to a Japanese man, had lived in Japan for many years and was now running two Thai restaurants in Tokyo with her husband. The third woman had quit any sort of bar work 15 or so years previously. All three of them apparently wanted to keep me at bay, requesting to see me in neutral spaces such as cafés not too near to their houses or workplaces and rejecting my requests to come to their houses or bars. The restaurant owner wanted to meet me at her workplace – one of her restaurants – but always as a customer. They were more eager than the former/sexworkers I met in Bangkok and in Chiangrai to separate other spheres of their lives from discussion of their 'deviant' career. In effect, I felt that *I* was more of an outsider in Japan in this particular context, as I was, not surprisingly, treated by the former/sexworkers from Thailand as a complete stranger to their intimate as well as associational communities. Alternative methods used to interpret their perceptions, thoughts and feelings will be developed in chapters 3 and 4, but I did not have enough duration and quality of time to acquaint myself with *their* culture as a whole within Japan.

Again multiple social conditions, subjective and objective, for myself and these respondents, prepared me for this distance. What I regarded as perhaps most significant among them was the respondents' distance from what I saw in the career of sexworkers in Thailand. It was a distance between Thailand and Japan, between the times when they were

sexworkers and the present; or for one of them, between what she had experienced as a sexworker in Thailand in the past and what she was experiencing in Japan in the present. This served to distance them, in effect, from the 'deviancy' of the career, which was attached to their Thai 'home', and thus from the interviewer in Japan seeking to connect them to it. 'Home' I use here as their imagined communities of intimacy and association in Thailand. Each of the Tokyo respondents had been physically distant from actual human relationships in Thailand for quite a long time, and each considered their current situations somehow better than what they had been in Thailand: thus, they did not want to go back.

I do not mean to suggest here that Thai sexworkers would experience better working conditions and/or less stigma in Japan than in Thailand overall. For many of the returnee women in Chiangrai, the evidence is to the contrary, suggesting that they would be more vulnerable, trapped in a situation of slavery, due both to the likelihood of being cut off from any meaningful network of relations and to the loss of legal protection typical under Japanese domestic laws. The fact that each of the respondents living in Japan shared the perception that their current situations were better than they could expect in Thailand also reflects a methodological bias similar to that I dealt with in Bangkok: I could not access those who were in degrading conditions as undocumented migrant sexworkers and in situations of slavery in immediate and ongoing contexts.

The three respondents in Japan did not want to go back to the places they associated with the preconditions of them becoming sexworkers and the start of their career, and were actually more or less succeeding in separating this past from what they had become. They were straightforward in representing their changes of habitus and of career stages, in contrast to the returnee women. Both groups experienced unusually dramatic changes in their social environments; thus their habitus developed dramatically with their geographical moves. So too did the more immediate skills required to face the new environment in terms of culture, climate, undocumented foreigner status and the networks of relations in the host society. However, unlike the returnees, those in this study who stayed in Japan did not have as their imagined communities someplace they longed for, a 'paradise lost' in Zygmunt Bauman's words (2001/2003: 1–4). And unlike the returnees, they did not need to 're-belong' to somewhere they had expected to be warm, cosy and safe, only to be disappointed. At the time of our interviews, they had not as yet had to face the hard trial of regaining new status in communities that knew their past but would not accommodate any changes.

Nevertheless, they too demonstrated the technique of 'neutralisation' of their 'deviancy' as migrant workers and settlers, using layers of socially available resources. The technique is also inevitably tied to various macro social structures: international politics and economy; demographic trends; certain institutional gaps between Thai and Japanese life; legal possibilities and constraints; and other status changes that the women experience.[32] Their career development as migrants shows features that would be familiar to all sexworkers dealing with the 'deviancy' within the global sex trade and industry.

Structure and outline of chapters

Drawing from the background as above, this study aims to understand the heterosexual, genderised, commercial and global transactions of the transnational sex industry, paying special attention to the agency (ability to act: Giddens 1984/2001: 2) of the women involved, that is, my respondents.

As their experiences in each place, tinged with the societal label of 'deviancy', unfold as parts of their biographies in relation to their society, this book also aims to envisage the former/sexworkers' personal accounts in constant interplay with structural forces. It tries to depict the reciprocal nature of the actions and perceptions of sexworkers, as social agents creating, preserving or dismantling social conditions, and the ways in which these same conditions enable or constrain them in turn (see Giddens 1984/2001: 89).

The term 'agency' proves useful here when it is situated within the agent's concrete circumstances in order to show that 'agency' or 'ability to act' is *not* brought out solely from the subjectivity of the agent in focus for her to act through free will. Even though the women in focus 'chose' sexwork, or 'consented to' migration via trafficking, these actions are not conducted solely as results of their subjective decisions. Needless to say, the concept of agency does not reduce the agent's 'choice' or 'consent' to false consciousness, suggesting for instance that 'she was deceived into believing that she chose' or 'she was induced into consent', without acknowledging her subjectivity and judging her actions only by their objective and retrospective appearances. Instead, the concept of agency emphasises the social condition that one's 'choice' or 'consent' can exist only within the power relations between her (the agent) and the structures, and that what she can 'choose' or 'give consent to' largely depends on her social position (see Stones 2005: 66–7 and Chapter 3, this volume). This concept of agency, then, denies rendering to the agent

total responsibility for 'choosing' sexwork or 'consenting' to migration, as in these cases, which could at worst result in a blaming-the-victim theory. In other words, this book as an empirical study acknowledges the women's actions and perceptions as being constructed inevitably by forces that include their social positions, their career and its conditions at particular times in particular places within concrete social relationships, as well as more abstract sets of societal mores. At the same time, it acknowledges that the agents are not only passive to but inevitably have the capability to respond to, and in some ways change, their social conditions, due to the fact that they interact with the conditions through their actions and perceptions, which are always in transition through this very interaction. The 22 respondents' experiences in the sex industry presented here are only glimpses of their whole lives, and only via my interpretation. As much as I value each of them as a unique and irreplaceable individual I now personally know, I should not overlook that each is also a unique individual as a social being, or a 'universal singular' in whom the history and culture of a society are summed up in a unique way (Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Volume II*, quoted in Plummer 2001: 165). Investing in C. Wright Mills' classic 'sociological imagination', these women's accounts enable us to grasp that 'every individual lives, from one generation to the next, in some society; that he [sic] lives out a biography, and that he [sic] lives it out within some historical sequence' (1959/2000: 6). Listening to their life stories and following their life courses affords an outsider a perspective on what happened to the women under what historical opportunities and limitations. Through the respondents' expressions of feeling, emotion, interpretation, judgement, and seemingly internal development and change, we can see the effects of the meanings, power and norms of their society, and also that they change as well.

The structuration analysis linking my respondents as agents in constant interplay and interdetermination with the structure of the global sex trade has its significance for a researcher, then, in depicting the personal troubles related as public issues. Structuration in this usage, working hand-in-hand with the sociological imagination, should enable us to work toward the improvement of the lives of troubled individuals with regard to what becomes the public issue in focus. '[T]he sociological imagination has its chance to make a difference in the quality of human life in our time,' Mills says. But this is only when we pay adequate attention to the concrete and intricate relationships between personal troubles and public issues through which 'the life of the individual and the making of societies occur' (1959/2000: 226).

The first chapter of this work, *Modernisation, Gender and Globalisation: Situating the Migrations of Thai Sexworkers*, engages some of the key epistemological and ontological problems related to any consideration of the global sex trade in the contemporary world. In the first half, it unpacks, from a feminist standpoint, the question of whether prostitution is sexual slavery or sexwork, and in the second half, highlights specific issues related to Thai female sexworkers in intra- and international migration. It serves as a map to familiarise the reader with both the particularity and the universality of the subject.

I first introduce the ongoing debate on female prostitution that has, roughly speaking, been dividing feminists into two camps for decades. This overview references a few major works in English as well as Japanese, touching also upon the similar divide in the argument over the trade between Japan and Thailand specifically. Voices have also begun to emerge searching for some middle ground between these two camps. The suggestion that what prostitution is and how it should be recognised depends on context, and that it cannot be understood through an either-or debate, is persuasive. I will participate in this debate by supporting the argument for the middle ground but adding some concrete examples of prostitution-related contingencies based on my respondents' stories.

These stories are taken from the local and situated knowledge of particular individuals involved in a particular segment of the sex industry at a certain time. And yet, these women's stories, with their variegated experiences central to drastic changes occurring between 'ordinary' individuals and society, press significantly in number and nature upon the fields of inquiry surrounding the contemporary sex trade. I draw attention in the remainder of the first chapter to four substantive and immediate issues for Thai female sexworkers. These are: 1) the impact of modernisation on individual lives under national social engineering; 2) the gendered senses of social expectancy, obligation and responsibility congruent with the assigned meanings of women's sexuality; 3) the globalisation of culture and economy; and 4) the globalisation of migration. With a focus on these issues, an examination of the current global sex trade and industry reveals a systematic gap between the haves and the have-nots in terms of the nation states, genders, sexes, classes and racialised individuals involved. At the same time, this section sets the locus for each individual woman's struggles, pains, creative negotiations, transformations and hopes to be returned to in more detail later in the study.

The three following chapters deal with the global sex trade from an empirical perspective and are divided according to respondents' career stages: *Before Becoming Sexworkers*; *Becoming and Being Sexworkers*; and

Becoming Ex-Sexworkers. This organisation stems from temporal scales of life-course and career development incorporating the conceptions of 'deviant' career development espoused by Erving Goffman and Howard Becker. Using these temporal scales, particularly stressed in Chapter 3, I focus on some of the individual former/sexworkers' journeys from childhood to their entrance into the sex industry, through their experiences as sexworkers, and sometimes migrants, and into their later lives. To do so is to emphasise the continuous interaction between agent and structure as a means of coping with or overcoming the social stigma of a 'deviant' career, and also as a tangible presentation of the co-relation between changes in individuals and society.

Chapter 4, *Becoming Ex-Sexworkers*, makes a case about the importance of shedding as much light as possible on the experiences of women after leaving sexwork as the majority of the existing literature does on the sexwork itself. In a life course stretching long after the career's end, a focus on former sexworkers presents two major issues: how they cope with the still-extant 'deviant identity' attached to them through their 'deviant career'; and what they, strategically or out of practical consciousness, use to cope with it.

This chapter offers examples, rich in significance, of specific tools used by respondents in Thailand in transnational migration and in returning. The former sexworkers certainly demonstrate that they have come a long way, and that along that way they have changed their perceptions, dispositions and status. They might have started their careers under similar conditions, but their situations become much more varied as they develop to their very different ends. In particular, those who migrated and did not return are considered parallel to other migrant settlers who share the skills and dispositions of biculture, or both the cultures of their origin and host communities. In this connection, I again focus on respondents' intimate and associational relationships, both actual and imaginary. Through and within these, they create new communities in which to live, and toward which they experience a sense of belonging to varying degrees.

Particular attention is paid to a returnee called Kaeo. Hers feature among the accounts of each of the phases of respondents' life stages, of 'before', 'becoming and being' and 'after being' sexworkers, not only because she is an articulate interviewee with descriptions of dramatic experiences throughout but also because the epiphanies in her life story, remarkable as they are, serve as a common thread running through the lives of all of the Thai former/sexworkers in the study. This thread illustrates the sex trade's existence as an organic global operation in the four

decades of Thailand's social engineering as well as a dominant factor in Kaeo's and the other women's lives. Her experiences are not totally unfamiliar to many other women of her class living in Thailand during this era; one woman's experience cannot be the same as any other's, but neither can it be wholly erratic when explained within the fuller social conditions; hence, 'universal singular'. Kaeo's case can be typified through sociologically imagining the existence of others who should understand what it was like, who went through a similar situation under some similar conditions, or who missed a particular situation because some conditions changed. This imagining process, it is hoped, can improve our ability to anticipate and reduce those factors which would contribute to unacceptable conditions for others.

Conclusion

Transborder trafficking in persons has been called 'contemporary slavery' since the establishment of the relevant United Nations policies in the 1990s. In relation to the Japanese state, the memory is still fresh of the US Department of State pressurising it to participate in the international effort to abolish the new form of slavery by ranking it in the Watch List of Tier II countries in its *Trafficking in Persons' Report 2004* (US Department of State 2004). This was an effective threat to the Japanese government as it meant that if the nation did not take more action to prevent trafficking and to rescue the victims it would fall into Tier III, becoming eligible thereby for US sanctions.[33] In its report, the International Labour Organization, which recognises trafficking as a form of forced labour, starts with the premise that Japan's sex industry is a major pulling force for trafficked persons. It also points out how serious the damage of trafficking combined with sexual exploitation is and how little the Japanese government has done to protect the victims (2006: especially i–ii).

As observed above, UN organisations are in a poor position to judge if the sex trade itself should be illegal as its judgement depends on the independent policy of each member state. Within the UN itself, different offices have different attitudes toward sexwork. Indeed, some organisations of the UN and their officials do on occasion suggest recognition and support for self-help advocacy, autonomy and the rights of workers in the sex industry to improve their working conditions by themselves.[34]

What, then, if workers voluntarily choose to work in the sex industry abroad? They have no nexus at present but to live underground and in the informal economy, an illegal existence in cases such as Japan's where prostitution is a crime and any work in the sex industry is not open

to migrants as so-called unskilled labour.[35] If they came to be involved in the sex industry through false, misleading or partial information for whatever reason, the effect is the same. To tell how far under these limited circumstances 'choosing' is from 'being forced' is not an easy task. The definition of human trafficking in the trafficking protocol is so far-reaching and flexible as to accommodate any interpretation, depending on the context.[36] The key to assuring safety and protecting the rights of migrants in the sex industry under the state's jurisdiction, if that is our aim, would be to decriminalise their existence, not to inflict more stringent policing upon them.

It is no mystery that a huge number of people aim to immigrate to nation states with higher-value currencies, and with more opportunities to work, earn and increase life chances within a globalised economy and culture that continues to produce unbearable poverty. From within the same macro structure, and having personally been advantaged on the materially privileged side of the economic gap in the structure, I have no reason to criticise them: were I on the other side in this divided world, I would have aimed for the same. There remains, however, overwhelmingly little chance for migration to bring one work which ensures a higher status; it is difficult to counter-balance the disadvantage of being situated near the bottom of the globalisation hierarchy.

Moreover, in a world also rife with unequal gender relations, women without social and economic capital may be highly likely both to aim toward economic goals within the sex industry and to be subjected to exploitation and/or violence to an exceptional degree. This is what the respondents introduced in this book have already experienced. How much more meaningful it is, then, for the economically advantaged from their side to solicit decriminalisation of prostitution and of work within the sex industry in general, protecting the rights of workers and advancing a little towards fairness.

The current obstacles to progress in this direction are not always easily identified or overcome. The conclusion of this book takes up a discussion of the potential for pursuing change, drawing from respondents' own reflections and the records of their experiences, from actions undergone in their social movements and activities, and through cooperation with people in different positions with various perspectives on the obstacles themselves. In this way, while certainly focusing on one specific aspect of the phenomena, this book also attempts to deal with the sex industry and human trafficking as already globalised social phenomena, concurrent in different geographical contexts.

1

Modernisation, Gender and Globalisation: Situating the Migrations of Thai Sexworkers

This chapter aims to familiarise the reader with both the particularity and the universality of the subject of migrant Thai sexworkers. In the first half, I will introduce the debate on prostitution that has been dividing feminists into two camps, with recent developments in English-language, Thai and Japanese contexts.

One side argues that female prostitution should be treated as a form of slavery, or 'sexual slavery': that women become involved as a result of the double binds of patriarchal subordination and capitalistic exploitation which deprive them of other income-earning options. The other side argues that prostitution should be treated as a form of legitimate work, 'sexwork', because it is often a rational, practical or otherwise positive choice for those lacking other means to financially support themselves or for those who find prostitution a meaningful occupation in itself.

In addition to these two camps, there have been increasing arguments for a 'middle ground', so to speak. These arguments emphasise the contingent nature of prostitution: what it is and how it should be recognised depends on contexts such as time and place, motivations and intentions of the parties involved, acknowledged and unacknowledged conditions surrounding them, intended and unintended outcomes of their involvement, and so on.[1] As no thorough consideration of the interactions of all these complexes can ever be achieved through an 'either-or' debate, I support the argument for the middle ground and offer through this study a precise view into the contingency based on my respondents' experiences and their circumstances. As mentioned earlier, their working conditions and degrees of access to social resources, especially to their personal as well as social networks of relationships, are the most important factors for my respondents in defining how 'prostitution' is thought, felt and termed. These details also factor into how they are seen by others in terms

of the occupation of sexwork. Moreover, the respondents' contexts are never fixed; they change along with changes in time and place. Thus, although experiences of being relatively happy and comfortable as sexworkers and of being suffering victims of sexual slavery tend in the past to have been divided into two discourses poles apart, they are often not mutually exclusive in real life. These experiences can exist alternately depending on the beholder's ever-changing situations through her life course on the geographical move.

The respondents' stories related here are accumulations of knowledge situated within specific segments of the sex industry in their local Thai–Japanese contexts. However, embracing a diversity of experiences in the midst of rapid and drastic changes involving 'ordinary' individuals and their contemporary societies, they are close to the heart of the contemporary global sex industry. With this in mind, I will pay attention in the second half of this chapter to four substantive and more direct issues critically transforming the lives of Thai sexworkers as a group. These are: 1) the impact of modernisation on individual lives under national social engineering; 2) the gendered senses of social expectancy, obligation and responsibility congruent with the assigned meanings of women's sexuality; 3) the globalisation of culture and economy; and 4) the globalisation of migration. Enfolded within the global sex trade and industry are the systemic disparities between the nation states, genders, sexes, classes, generations and racialised individuals involved. This section, therefore, presents the historical, cultural and economic background for my respondents' feelings, emotions and thoughts as they deal with their personal troubles. Such a presentation suggests that these women act most of the time in compliance with their social conditions, which routinely situate them in subordinate social positions, and that their entrance into sexwork seems quite reasonable. Labelling the career 'deviant' is consequently called into question, as it may well function to keep these women down in their original social position with or without anybody's intention to make this so.

Centralising lived experiences: finding middle ground in the feminist divide on 'prostitution'

The feminist divide over prostitution is relevant to, and has roots in, the Thai–Japan context on the theoretical as well as the empirical level; the theories, economics and politics of the sex trade are already as globalised as the trade itself. The anti-prostitution camp argues that it is the ultimate sexual subordination of women under patriarchy, some members

combining this with an equal or greater focus on economic exploitation under capitalism. Prostitution by women's 'free choice' does not exist for this group; such 'choice' is always already determined by the conditions of these dominant systems which subordinate and exploit women as a whole. This is to say that women 'choose' prostitution only because life offers no other choices for them to support themselves under male economic and sexual domination. Hence, women's prostitution to men is always structurally forced and should thus be treated as a form of 'sexual slavery'.[2] Underlining and essential to this logic is a value judgement that to offer sexual acts to someone else for monetary compensation is nothing but the subjugation of oneself to the other party. To do so for money under this value system is necessarily to demean oneself; the sexual act is so closely connected to human dignity and money, in contrast, is so far from it.

The second camp argues that prostitution can be a survival skill or even a means to empowerment, particularly for those who do not have other means of earning a living other than selling sexual labour. Thus the 'choice' of women to be engaged in prostitution should be regarded as a rational and practical decision, not as false consciousness, even when there are no other choices apparent. Indeed, it could be a 'good choice' of occupation for women who find prostitution suitable to their lifestyles, for example, and/or as meaningful as any other care work or emotional labour which fulfils other people's needs.[3] Hence, prostitution in these situations should be treated as a form of work, as 'sexwork', different from sexual slavery in which women are deprived of any ability to act upon their own will.[4]

The prostitution debate bloomed in Japan during the 1990s. The publication in Japanese in 1993 of *Sexwork*, edited by Delacoste and Alexander (1987), is said to be one of the defining points of the epoch. The dilemma among Japanese feminists is shown in the expository text by Yukiko Tsunoda, a feminist barrister prominent in defending women indicted under the Prostitution Prevention Law. She writes that, although she stands clearly on the side of sexworkers in asserting that their human rights must be secured in full, to acknowledge the act of prostitution as work is another matter, and one she feels strongly resistant against (in Delacoste and Alexander 1993: 423).

At around the same time, Daizaburo Hashizume, a sociologist of contemporary religion and education, sparked controversy by stating that the discussants against prostitution were criticising exploitation and the subordination of women within it but had not succeeded in constructing any logic to reject prostitution *per se*. His argument appeared as a

chapter entitled 'What's Wrong with Prostitution?' within an anthology of feminist contestations regarding the commercialisation of sex (Ehara 1992), and has been quoted heavily to this day, much like Christine Overall's 'What's Wrong With Prostitution?' (1992).[5] After other writings by non-sexworkers had fostered a full discussion in Japan in terms of the sociology, ethics, morality, economy, legality and culture of prostitution,[6] Momoko Momokawa[7] came onto the scene, a sexworker herself with a clear affirmation of the right to sexwork as the right to work (1997). This created a nexus for the publication of sexworkers' critical responses to abolitionist arguments by non-sexworkers, with the anthology *I DECIDE to Sell or Not* (2000) edited by Goichi Matsuzawa, a freelance writer on the sex industry, as a watershed work. In this volume, various authors in the industry and their supporters presented specific, highly critical, analyses of contemporary arguments by non-sexworkers, suggesting that these had developed solely through third-party value judgement with the political and moral goal of abolishing prostitution as a presupposition. After this book, the huge gap became evident between perceptions of workers and non-workers about sexwork in Japan, and the onus was placed on any new thesis to justify any attempt to persuade readers without a basis in empirical evidence (Shibuya 2007: 30). Also, it was significant that *Research on Perceptions of Women Working in Erotic Entertainment* (2005), a vivid social research documentary of sexworkers, by Yukiko Kaname and Nozomi Mizushima, was published in an accessible way through a pop-culture publisher.

It is through such trends that the prostitution debate among feminists, both in English and Japanese, developed into two extremes as well as toward a compromise between the anti-prostitution and pro-sexwork camps. Notably, the argument for 'sexwork' called for the decriminalisation of prostitution, distinct from the criminal status it bears in many states' jurisdictions or the legalisation that renders prostitution and prostitutes state-controlled. Decriminalisation of prostitution and recognising it as work is particularly important for those who are vulnerable to exploitation because it provides a ground for their human rights' protection in economic and legal practices.[8]

Both camps would benefit from the greater analytical clarity provided by the following distinction: between the exercise of power by the external forces of social and economic systems over which the agents involved have no control, and the internal capability of agents to act *within and against* these systems.

In the feminist debate above, I consequently look for a middle ground in which we can recognise both external forces and the internal

capabilities of the women as agents involved in prostitution. There are already persuasive arguments stating that what prostitution is and how it should be recognised depends on context or on the nuanced accounts of each transaction, such that it is simplistic to subject it to an either-or debate.[9] I will add evidence to strengthen this acknowledgment of the contingency of prostitution, mapping out what constitutes these 'contexts' using situated knowledge gained from my respondents' accounts of their lived experiences. I will theorise my argument for the 'middle ground' in a way that contrasts with the arguments of Julia O'Connell Davidson, also one of the proponents of the 'middle ground' researching British domestic and global sex trades.

Deciding factors of 'sexwork' and 'sexual slavery'

For the Thai women I met during my fieldwork, prostitution was *both* 'forced' and 'chosen' in an almost constant interplay of external forces and their internal capabilities. However, degrees of influence, capacity or opportunity for both forces made the contexts of my respondents differ. The most significant factors were their working conditions and access to social resources, especially their networks of human relations.

Based on their accounts, some of the typical perceptions, feelings and emotions of an 'ideal type' of Thai female sexworker are shown, not statistically but hermeneutically, in Figure 1 below. Despite the fact that society's designation of her as 'deviant' or a 'bad' woman more or less follows her during and after her time as a sexworker under any conditions (and that she more or less adapts to it), each woman's perceptions about her occupation differ considerably according to her working conditions and access to social resources. They also vary depending on her feelings and recollections regarding the orientation of power mentioned earlier – whether she felt that external forces defined her actions or that she had the opportunity to act toward, or against, external systems or people. At the same time, despite the fact that she would almost always describe her occupation as 'work', she articulates her situations in the gradation from satisfactorily and even happily working to being desperately trapped in a situation akin to slavery. The better the working conditions, the more she would perceive herself as a worker. But even in cases where she was deprived of her capability to act upon her own will in many aspects, she would not necessarily acknowledge or present herself as being in a situation of slavery. One such person who knows that sometimes or in some part she can feel, or hope to some day go back to feeling, proud of the fact that she is working and self-sufficient, would not call herself

a 'slave'. If she felt she had lost touch, however, with her network of relations outside the occupational situation of managers, colleagues or customers, she may feel differently. On top of material deprivations of money, sufficient food, shelter, sleep and medical treatment, it was the physical violence and verbal abuse and the threats thereof, a lack of information and emotional support, and the feeling of insecurity which made her feel enslaved. These are all her subjective perceptions, but they are also firmly linked to her actual working conditions and accessibility to social resources: objective conditions for the most part.

Each woman's contexts also looked and felt different depending on her viewpoint at the time of the articulation of particular experiences. Generally, the harsher the experience, the more detail a respondent recalled, and the longer the temporal distance to the experience, the more the respondent articulated the experience as something akin to slavery. Behind such stories there may well have been many with similar traumatic experiences who did not survive to speak out. However, there are others, both involved in sexwork at the time of our interviews and those no longer involved, who talk happily about the bright side of their occupation. The experiences of being a happy sexworker and a suffering victim of sexual slavery were very different things but not mutually exclusive, in the sense that they often existed not only within women who found themselves in different situations but also within the same woman at different points of time. This was because the viewpoint within an individual woman changed alongside her objective and subjective conditions; her situation changed alongside her career development or physical movement from one workplace to another, sometimes including intra- and international migration. Thus, there were sometimes periods of working as well as periods of being enslaved within any one woman's life course, career stage, or possibly even single day, depending on her working conditions and the support available.

The problem of the notion of 'Social Death'

The possibilities of categorising prostitution as a sort of 'slavery' and as subjective work are not mutually exclusive but can be analytically separated; I will show this by examining the theoretical definition of slavery as 'Social Death'.

According to Figure 1, the sexworker's capability to have control over her situation would diminish, her subjective perception about the 'work' gradually become negative, and the burden of negative emotions upon others as well as herself become heavier as we move from left to right

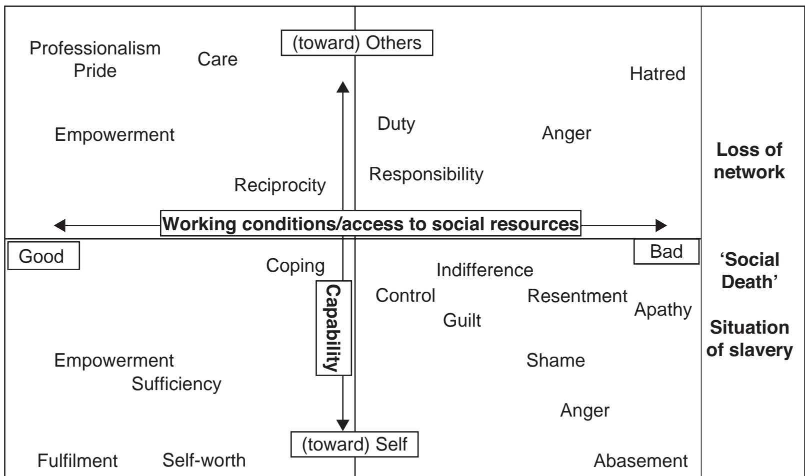


Figure 1 Gradation of a sexworker's perceptions, feelings and emotions regarding occupation

Sources: O'Connell Davidson's dimensions of diversity (1998: 10), the concept of 'Social Death' (ibid.: 124–36, see the text below on usage and critique), and notions of power in Thai female factory workers in Atiporn (2001: 23–6) based on J. Rowland's pioneering model of women's empowerment (1998).

along the axis of 'working conditions and access to social resources' toward the lowest levels. At the negative end of the continuum, there is the 'loss of network' which, as mentioned above, increases the threat to life and makes the agent feel that she cannot escape from exploitation and violence and thus is in a slavery situation. When the 'loss of network' occurs as an objective condition, the woman's subjective life will have been typically reduced to one of 'Social Death' in both her perceptions of self and her (non-) relations with others. This 'Social Death', at the negative end of the spectrum with the worst conditions and deprivation, is illustrated as lying beyond the agent's perception of the boundaries of 'work'; it is synonymous to slavery and therefore separated from sexwork as an occupation.

Social Death is one of the key concepts used in Julia O'Connell Davidson's *Prostitution, Power and Freedom* (1998), in which she examines the meanings and practices of domination in prostitution covering wide areas of politics, culture, morality, economy and jurisdiction based on her observation of a number of varieties of the globalised transaction. The text draws attention to a 'social consciousness' that bears the tension within prostitution – between victimisation and

rational choice, between rape and contract, or between 'sexual slavery' and 'sexwork' – in which prostitutes as social actors and the political activities around them make history (O'Connell Davidson 1998: 115).

O'Connell Davidson is seeking the middle ground in the feminist debate in theorising prostitution as well as in aiming to make political changes for prostitutes' benefit. She argues that prostitution is better conceptualised as a contract than as an exchange of money for sexual services in which the client takes over the control of the prostitute's body. On the other hand, she constructively criticises Pateman's notion in *The Sexual Contract* of prostitution as one of the sexual contracts that constitute the subordination of women. For Pateman, these sexual contracts are embedded in the 'original pact' of a Western civil society established on gender discrimination (1988: 122–5). The problem O'Connell Davidson finds in Pateman's argument here is that prostitution is thought to be identical to the other sex acts, from marriage to rape, which enable men to 'exercise their patriarchal right' and 'power and mastery' over women (ibid.: 5–6, 114, 198–9). O'Connell Davidson distinguishes prostitution as a unique institution organised through a different complex of power relations. She is adequately sensitive to 'the details of men and women's interactions within this complex and the meanings that are attached to these details' (1998: 121). By the same token, she disagrees with other radical feminists, notably Susan Brownmiller, Catherine MacKinnon, Andrea Dworkin and Kathleen Barry, who passionately argue that any and all forms of heterosexual prostitution through which men gain sexual access to women's bodies represent male domination over women and thus are akin to the master-slave relationship. Such arguments dismiss the complicated nature and conditions of transactions in prostitution that produce the variegated subjective experiences of prostitutes, and possibly clients, at the level of practice, in prioritising a theory of universal patriarchy (ibid.: 118–27). My agreement with O'Connell Davidson stops here and the trouble starts hereafter, specifically when she theoretically places prostitutes within the scope of the contract of prostitution.

O'Connell Davidson points to two distinctive aspects of the prostitution contract as controls over prostitutes: it allows a commercial contract for the sexual use of bodies with a false notion of reciprocity and; it is not conferred by any particular sex act but by the fact that the customers gain the power of command within the transaction (ibid.: 124). Hence, prostitution really allows very few choices on the prostitute's part, as she surrenders control of herself at least for the length of the transaction. While I would agree that these distinctive natures may

objectively explain one possible aspect of the power relations of prostitution, it immediately raises the question of how the subjective sides of the experience, which O'Connell Davidson herself sees as important in the empirical first half of the text, work in this relation.

It is not atypical for prostitutes, for instance, to feel burdened with the distinctive social meaning – 'deviancy' – attached to the commercial contract that is also a sexual contract, and this meaning may well compel them to mould their attitudes accordingly. As I will describe in more detail in later chapters, whether for the sake of money, caretaking responsibilities, sex or love, the sense of duty in my respondents was often the inverse to the sense of guilt.[10] Duty is perhaps by definition double edged as it incurs guilty feelings in the agent when it is not fulfilled. In addition, sexworkers specifically tended to be vulnerable to a sense of not being good enough to fulfil their duty. Even when they were emphasising that it was their choice, that no one else was to blame for them having become sexworkers and being able to support their families, they often sounded as if they were not quite able to achieve the sense of fulfilment expected by those around them or indeed by themselves. Even though they verbally asserted that the means by which money had been earned should not matter, the assertion was often a defence against social pressure suggesting the opposite. This might well be connected to moral judgements about being prostitutes, reflecting the social values attached to sexwork.[11] For the sexworkers, it is highly likely that the personal emotional turmoil would increase due to intimate interactions requiring heavy emotional labour, a factor distinguishing sexworkers from other physical labourers as well.[12]

Reflecting on these subjective senses in which my respondents conjoin with their social conditions, it seems to me that O'Connell Davidson gives away too much of the women's agency, subjective thought and feelings when she pronounces an objective theorisation of the prostitute's position in the contract as follows:

> [T]he prostitute is constructed as an object, not a subject, within the exchange. No matter how much control the prostitute exercises over the details of each exchange, the essence of the transaction is that the client pays the prostitute *to be a person who is not a person*. Clients thus get to have sex with a real live, flesh and blood human being, and yet to evade all of the obligations, dependencies and responsibilities which are implied by sexual 'fusion' in non-commercial contexts. They get to have sex with *a person who is physically alive but socially dead* (1998: 134, my emphasis).

Here, then, is the problem of Social Death. The label 'socially dead person' comes originally from Orlando Patterson's criteria of a slave, in which she is defined as 'a person without power, natality or honour' (Patterson 1982: 26–7). And, for O'Connell Davidson, a prostitute is without power because she is 'not entitled to make reciprocal claims over or demands of the client'. She is 'without natality in the sense that her real identity and personal history are invariably concealed from the client'. Finally, 'she is without honour in the sense that the degraded status of the "whore" dissolves any entitlement to the protection and respect accorded to non-prostitutes'. Her situation, therefore, 'in this symbolic sense, at least …resembles that of the slave' (O'Connell Davidson 1998: 134). In these statements, O'Connell Davidson has returned to a generalisation of prostitution as a condition of slavery after detaching prostitutes from the condition of women in patriarchy in general.

The problem of the victimisation thesis regarding prostitutes lies in O'Connell Davidson's application of Social Death, as a general theory, to all the forms of prostitution she studied. Even the one prostitute,[13] a committed case study, who is seen as having power over her customers is also defined elsewhere as 'socially dead' for the duration of each transaction' (O'Connell Davidson 1996: 191). I would counter, on the basis of my respondents' various contexts, that Social Death as depriving a person of power, natality or honour is synonymous only with the extreme situation of slavery; although it can occur to any woman involved in the sex industry, it tends to occur only in limited circumstances within which she loses contact with other social relations outside the transaction. If the question then becomes one of whether this loss occurs at least in a symbolic sense for the duration of each transaction of all prostitutes, the answer for me is still no.

A woman involved in the sex trade, like any other human being, has many contact points with different communities. She is usually not entirely cut off from the network of her communities even for the duration of the transaction with a customer. Take, for instance, one of my respondents who speaks of having sex with a customer while mumbling 'this is for money, this is for money… like a mantra'. Her intention is to build a house with this money, and there are countless communities with temporal, geographical and relational bandwidths in her mind. These include her mother and father, her two children, the meaning of upward mobility attached to possessing her own house, 'getting a face' in her neighbourhood, clearing her name, pursuing the gender role in her society, and so on. Thus, she is not without her natality *especially* in a symbolic sense; her real identity and personal history usually do not

leave her. A sexworker would use the network of human relations with her family, friends, partners, colleagues, managers or even with customers, or other social resources such as communication skills that are attained from the network, to sustain her 'normality' precisely in times and places where she is labelled as 'deviant'. She seeks and keeps as much emotional and moral support as possible from her communities, indeed, to avoid Social Death within her 'deviant' career: thus she is not without honour. And even when she is physically isolated from the outside world for the duration of the transaction, she usually has perceptions that stretch beyond the isolation. A sexworker in a hotel room with a customer somehow maintains the idea that she is able to escape and seek help if her total control over her person is jeopardised. In this symbolic sense, it is a survival skill for her not to imagine that she is Socially Dead in order to have some power to act against danger; she would not let go of this power unless she actually lost all of her control.

I thus separate Social Death from the work which constitutes the usual conditions and perceptions among my respondents, while acknowledging that Social Death occurs in the gradation of worsening conditions and deprivation of social resources. It is when this occurs that a sexworker steps into a situation of slavery. For the sake of recognising and avoiding being trapped in such a situation, it is important for her not to lose contact with her network of relations. Researchers, supporters and sexworkers themselves should be able to pinpoint what kinds of conditions are most likely to lead to a situation of slavery. In my respondents' cases, the most vulnerable were those trafficked to Japan, followed by those who were working at specialised bars for groups of male sex tourists from Japan. The former were vulnerable to losing contact with their networks of relations, on top of other material deprivations, largely because of the loss of their legal status, and thus protection from the state's jurisdiction, as 'illegal' 'overstayers' with expired visas. The loss of utility of their original cultural resources such as language, geographical orientation and knowledge of the rules of society equally contributed to their vulnerability (see Chapter 2). The latter suffered largely because the contractual power of the customers over them was overwhelming because the 'sex tour' business was under the strict control of workplace management, depriving them of the capacity to deal on their own terms. This condition coincided with sexworkers' sense of degradation (see O'Connell Davidson 1998: 10).

To make these conditions that gradually lead to situations of slavery more readily visible, it is crucial indeed to restrict the usage of the concept of Social Death to situations and perceptions separable from

a more general concept of working existing in the women's subjective perspectives.

Diverse experiences of sexwork

'There is no one consistent experience of sexwork,' observed Wendy Chapkis (2000: 181), an opinion not unique among writers who, are sexworkers or, like Chapkis, work closely with them.[14] In relation to migration, too, Agustin objects to the tendency in anti-trafficking discourse to paint all migrants' experiences as victimhood as soon as involvement in sexwork becomes a factor. She argues that 'a diversity of projects and experiences granted to other migrants must be granted to these [women who sell sex] as well [. . .] as active agents participating in globalisation' (2006a: 44).

If I return to the feminist debate over prostitution, bearing this argument for diversity in mind, I will have one foot in the 'subjectivist' camp's position categorised by Maggie O'Neill which 'places the experiences and needs of the women concerned in centre stage'. But it remains one foot only, as this position also views prostitution 'as a legitimate form of labour freely chosen by thousands of women'. While I do not agree with the other representative position which indiscriminately 'views prostitutes as victims of male sexuality', neither would I readily use the concept of 'freely chosen' labour (O'Neill 2001: 17–18). 'Free choice' suggests the ability to take different decisions and/or different actions and such abilities will vary radically depending on social conditions. Later in the same piece, O'Neill asserts her own standpoint, suggesting that the situation is much more complex than the two camps would suggest. In order to understand the multiple realities of lived experiences of women in a disadvantaged social position with stigma attached, she values inclusion of feminist prostitutes themselves in the debates, research, analyses and collective action 'for social change with women' (ibid.: 27).

> The narrative accounts from women who 'chose' to work in the sex industry do provide us with complex pictures of sexuality, identities and the lived experiences of women traversing the spaces between good girls and bad girls, between gender conformity and sexual identity, in a consumer society pivoting on the power of the penis and the rights, needs and aspirations of the individual (ibid.: 21).

It should then be noted that what constitutes a 'legitimate form of labour' is also very much contingent upon what conditions the woman

is in and from which perspective and with what perception she is reflecting upon prostitution, and whether this is her own perspective at all. If prostitution's 'legitimacy' is declared by those who are not prostitutes themselves, it may well support these parties' interest with or without benefiting the women for whom the declaration has been made. Or even if the declaration is made by a sexworker herself, the voice that shares 'real' life experiences can be 'cherry picked' by others around her to serve their theoretical, moral or political interests. As O'Connell Davidson observes, we need also to be cautious against 'uncritical use of accounts of prostitution written by prostitutes and former prostitutes and/or oral history projects involving prostitute women' (1998: 113–14).

Too many feminists in Thai–Japanese contexts are likely to have failed to focus on, or to have had an inadequate methodology to address, the actual social conditions that more or less limit, and more or less widen, the possible choices of women who should have been centre stage in their enquiries. Some demand more stringent policing of the sex industry as a whole while sympathising with the pain of those who have been victimised in slavery situations, with the unwitting result of driving those who want to work safely in the same industry into a real quagmire. Others place an emphasis on sexworkers being subjective workers, which can result in ignoring the possibility of a composite discrimination against them through deprivation of citizenship, which is undoubtedly increased by migration.

In order to avoid this failure, as a feminist who talks about prostitution and has not been a prostitute, I will go further into the details of my respondents' social conditions in the following chapters while at the same time retrieving some key concepts used in the feminist debate on prostitution at a theoretical level from the empirical field and re-clarifying them within locally situated hermeneutics. Accordingly, I will look at prostitution and migration in particular places in Thailand and in Japan in a particular era and with particular lived experiences of women in particular cultures. In doing so, I argue that the 'freedom' in 'freely chosen' and the 'legitimacy' of 'legitimate labour', among many others, prove to be variegated concepts depending heavily on specific social conditions.

Theoretically, I find it problematic to refer to what and to whom I am studying: 'prostitution and prostitutes', 'sexual slavery and sexual slaves' or 'sexwork and sexworkers'. But I choose 'sexwork and sexworkers' most of the time throughout this book based on two judgements: situational and futuristic. The situational one is to respect my respondents' perception of prostitution as 'work' first and foremost; all of them

referred to it as 'work' the majority of the time, including when some of them were looking back at situations of slavery. The futuristic is related to a hope that many will cease to participate in separating those who are in sexwork from those who are not, by changing their perceptions to say that providing sexual services or acts as one's labour and trading them for money do not affect the agents' dignity. While the moral judgement that trading sexual services for money necessarily renders one's dignity violated remains widespread in society, this morality is the very cause for sexworkers to be vulnerable to lowered self-esteem as a social value extant within themselves. Also, being labelled socially 'deviant' or as someone always more likely to be deprived of her dignity than others makes it easy for a sexworker's job to be illegalised, and thus become more exploitative and controlled in the underground economy than any other work. This has been a claim since *Sexwork* was published in 1987. To counter such labelling, I use the term sexwork in agreement with the affirmation that sexworkers can stand up and improve their own situations if their work and their right to do it are recognised as legitimate in society.

Four substantive issues

However carefully I try to represent sexworkers' situations, there are numerous problems, already raised with regard to an outsider situated in a more powerful social stratum, in terms of economy and politics of discourse, representing others within a study of this kind. Putting aside these problems for now, nevertheless, I would like to suggest that there is also strength in the viewpoints the researcher as outsider can take. The structural configuration of the women's immediate conditions in their society, for example, can be investigated precisely because I am standing outside. When our subject matter includes the situations of people involved in officially undocumented transnational migration from an industrialising to an industrialised nation,[15] and there is an apparent disparity causing this migration, it is particularly important to widen our view to the macro context. Then, in connecting the macro and micro pictures, I draw attention to four substantive and more immediate issues for Thai female sexworkers in this unequal contemporary world. These are: 1) the impact of industrialisation under national social engineering on individual lives; 2) the gendered senses of social expectancy, obligation and responsibility congruent with the meanings of women's sexuality; 3) the globalisation of culture and economy; and 4) the globalisation of migration.

In terms of presentation, the macro account will be followed in the latter empirical part of this study with a review of the women's career stages. The advantage of doing so is to relate both their objective and subjective changes to actual geographical and temporal moves, but the four substantive issues will not appear either thematically distinguished or in chronological order as introduced here. Instead, they will be woven into sub-sections in the following chapters for further discussion and illumination from different directions in relation to respondents' experiences and networks. In the meantime, I will explain the broad historical meanings and impact of the four issues within the social environment surrounding my respondents.

1 The impact of industrialisation under national social engineering on individual lives

Investigating the impact of national social engineering on individual lives, I draw on the National Economic and Social Development (NESD) plans of Thailand first implemented in 1961 and designed as consecutive five-year plans. The concerns, goals and paths of each five-year plan shifted according to the analysed and anticipated needs of the Thai nation state and its society in each period. But especially until the Asian Economic Crisis of 1997, the plans' overall aim was to transform the industrial structure of the nation from one of agriculture to a combination of manufacturing for export combined with earning foreign currency to sustain an import orientation (see Chapter 2). This transformation, however, which succeeded in its intent to dramatically increase per capita GNP during these three and a half decades, also brought about a widening in the gap between the moneyed and those living in poverty.

For the rural agricultural poor, including most of my respondents' families, the industrial transformation resulted in deprivation of social resources attached to agricultural production, most notably to the female-centred system of communal relationships and inheritance of property in the north and the northeast. The political and economic practices of Thailand's development policy were inseparably linked to pressure from various external bodies: the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, European nations, the United States and Japan. Pressure came at the same time from within, that is, channelled from the upper strata of society to the lower inside the Thai nation state, in the form of social engineering. An integral part of this pressure was well-intended: aspiring toward access to social and material wealth, including not only goods and money but also education, health and cultural exchange, for the nation as a whole. Nevertheless, there was a gap

between what planners perceived for the betterment of the nation and what was needed for those who were deprived by conditions brought about by the economic development itself. This gap was in major part a class gap.

Poverty, to take a prominent problem, was targeted for reduction for both individuals and the nation's social engineering. Forty-five years on, it still is. Indeed, since as early as the late 1960s poverty has constantly been reported as worse in a certain section of Thai society due to the imbalanced distribution of economic growth. It seems, however, that the planners have not adequately addressed the real-life problems of their target group, the people living in poverty. The development plans could not incorporate needs gleaned from the experiences, thoughts and feelings of these people until, at the earliest, the Eighth Development Plan for 1997 to 2001 (NCWA 1999: 7, 37–9). Girls and young women originally from rural farming families, situated in lower social positions, paid a higher price to survive this gap, a point to which I will return time and again throughout this book. Social engineering from above had a great impact, especially on the lives of my respondents' generations, born between the early 1960s and the early 1980s.

2 Gendered senses of social expectancy, obligations and responsibility congruent with the meanings of women's sexuality

The second issue, of gendered social expectancy, obligations and responsibility, is congruent with the meanings of women's sexuality. Starting with gender, I focus on women's central and practical role in economic activities in Thailand. Women's powerful presence in Thai society has been much documented and evaluated as a sign of gender equality in the nation state by outside bodies such as in UNIFEM's labour participation index and the UN Gender Development Index. I agree that Thai women evidently constitute a formidable workforce in the nation's formal and informal economies, and as a result they do have strong presence, influence and actual power in everyday life as well as in professional and administrative occupations (see Chapter 2). But my evaluation for overall gender equality in Thai society is contrary to that of the United Nations up to the 1990s; the socio-economic structures of this nation are entwined with unequal complementary forms of cultural gender differentiation rather than egalitarianism, and this has helped to maintain some of women's specific capabilities within the culture. I would attribute the gender differentiation largely to certain Buddhist beliefs and to the 'female-centred' system of lineage. These beliefs and the traditional norms of female lineage, particularly rooted in the rural farming

culture, are gendered and link Thai conceptions of gender to those of sexuality through the roles of mothers, parents and children, and sons and daughters. They are passed through generations as well as carried through individuals' life courses.

Recognition of women's public roles was promoted by the social engineering in contemporary Thai society, paradoxically contributing to the division between 'bad' women and 'good' women. Urbanisation, industrialisation and national economic growth also called for modern democracy and the women's social movement within it (Amara Pongsapich 1997: 16). The mainstream of the women's movement consisted of women of the aristocracy, middle-class and professional and governmental associations until the grassroots approach to women's issues in rural areas matured in the 1990s. The movement's activity more or less coincided with the United Nations' declaration of International Women's Year in 1975 and the ensuing Women in Development protocol (ibid.: 22–31). The National Commission on Women's Affairs (NCWA) was appointed by the NESD Board in 1978 and drew up the first Long Term Women's Development Plan for 1982 to 2001, aiming to incorporate women in the development of the economy, decision-making and knowledge acquisition as well as to improve the quality of women's own and their families' lives (NCWA 1981: 35). Significantly, however, the first women's plan had a severe bias against the class of rural poor women most likely to be involved in prostitution. What the plan promoted was a moral image of women to uphold Thai national cultural sovereignty against gradually growing visible foreign influence as the nation's economic foreign exchange increased. As Leslie Ann Jeffrey has shown, the image of rural women within the national moral culture was firmly attached to concerns of loss of tradition for the government and aristocracy as well as the newly growing middle class. Hence, women who were enticed into prostitution were condemned as lacking moral and sexual discipline and having been lured into the life of consumerism through 'easy money' (2002: 57, 65–9; see also van Esterik 2000: 99–107).

The ideal image of woman, allegedly embedded in Thai traditional culture, appeared nevertheless to have worked well to fuel my respondents' perception of woman as the provider for the family, corresponding to the female gender roles most apparent in the rural north and northeast. Contrary to judgements of their 'moral decline', my respondents, including those from labouring families in Bangkok or the central region, were clearly upholding the guidelines of responsibility, duty and obligation to family expected within their communities.

Most (19 out of 22) of my respondents were the main income earner for their extended family households, remitting a sizable part of their incomes to parents, siblings, grandparents and/or children when they were in sexwork, either in Thailand or Japan. The act of supporting their families by working in this ostracised job was often regarded as demonstrating a female tendency to sacrifice oneself to societal expectations. Some sexworkers actually worded this as 'self-sacrifice'. But there was also some reciprocal and positive expectancy from the women toward their society; that by 'sacrificing' themselves they were expressing the cultural association for women to take central and practical roles in day-to-day economic activities within Thai society.

The woman's role of central economic provider is maintained via two main routes: belief in Thai Theravada Buddhism, and the 'female-centred' system of lineage in agrarian society whose roots might date back before Buddhism's permeation of mainland Southeast Asia (see Siraporn 2000: 81–4, 99–102). In Thailand, Theravada Buddhism is practised daily in society at large, backing up the official statistic that 95 percent of the total population are followers (NEC 2000: 114). One of its beliefs that has a strong hold on daily life is that of a gendered karma which defines women as 'this-worldly' while men are 'other-worldly' or spiritually higher. A dominant interpretation is that women are thus more capable of, and responsible for, providing economic and practical means in everyday life than are men.[16] This belief seems to contribute to gendered socialisation of children as well as parents. Connected to this, there is a social norm derived from *bunkhun,* under which children are expected to repay a debt to their parents – especially to mothers, whose suffering in childbirth, nurturing and protection made it possible for them to exist in this world as a human being, an individual agent who 'is privy to the Buddhist teachings and can advance toward Nirvana' (Lyttleton 2000: 126). According to the Akin Rabibhadana study commonly used in anthropology and sociology of kinship in various regions in Thailand,[17] *bunkhun* is 'favor or benefit, which has been bestowed on one, and for which one is obligated to do something in return' (Akin 1983: 2–3). A person who commits a serious breach of this obligation is socially condemned as ungrateful, or sometimes even inhumane, according to some of my respondents. In order to repay *bunkhun* to one's parents, however, gender differentiation matters. The best way to do so is to be ordained as a monk as this brings the highest religious merit to the parents. But this best way is open only to sons, because it is maintained in mainstream Thai Buddhism that the female line of ordination was lost before the religion reached Thailand. What daughters can do

instead, it is thought, is to provide material and emotional care for their parents.[18]

At the same time, as in my respondents' accounts in the following chapters, the strong association of daughters with mothers is also documented via their gender role revolving around what Sulamith Heins Potter calls a 'female-centered' system of lineage.[19] Especially in rural farming areas in the north and the northeast, women are regarded as of structural importance in binding ancestors and guardians, relationships and properties of family members through mother-to-daughter inheritance (see also Whittaker 2000: 13–14). In practice, these values, together with other pragmatic factors such as financial necessity, were interwoven into the reasons behind the women's significance in economic as well as familial responsibilities until today. My respondents confirmed that they were no exceptions, being socialised as women in the rural north of Thailand from their early childhood, and demonstrating strong ties to their mothers, their family houses and lands, or to the idea of having their own houses, and to the importance of becoming mothers themselves. Implicit in their gendered practical consciousness would be the notion that being provider and nurturer for their families would return merit to themselves in the reciprocal relationships of *bunkhun*, and that it would pass from their mothers to themselves and then to their daughters.

Now we can see that the social status of women is tied to women as sexual beings through motherhood, in contrast to sexworkers. Being a mother gives a woman socially recognised status and power, symbolic as well as actual, in her relationships, as a reliable and respected member of society. Significantly, most of my respondents speak of the importance of becoming a mother for women as an implicit but positive expression of their sexuality and of being 'good'. At the same time, they imply that this positive evaluation of women's sexuality in general contradicts their actual involvement in trading sexual services. It is quite clearly contrasted in their accounts, like a negative print of the picture of motherhood, that being a sexworker leads to a debauched exploitation of Thai women's sexuality.

Situating the 'debauched' sexuality of sexworkers in this gender context of Thai culture allows us to make sense of Judith Butler's rather abstract notion of sexuality as a construction of power relations in a very concrete way. As she states:

> [i]f sexuality is culturally constructed within existing power relations, then the postulation of a normative sexuality that is 'before',

> 'outside', or 'beyond' power is a cultural impossibility and a politically impracticable dream, one that postpones the concrete and contemporary task of rethinking subversive possibilities for sexuality and identity within the terms of power itself (1990: 30).

It follows that when trying to understand the experiences of Thai women selling sexual services to foreigners, we have to look at their gender relationships in Thai contexts, at their daily dealings with, differences from, and disparity from Thai men in their gendered roles as husbands, lovers, fathers, brothers and sons. Butler's invitation is for us to connect the act of sexwork not only to the workers' sexualities but also to gender relations that would lead us to the material economic global nexus of the trade.[20]

3 Globalisation of culture and economy

The question of sexuality as a construction of power relations leads to the unspoken expressions of women's sexuality and the sex industry in Thai public discourse that have long attracted the attention of outside observers.[21] I would argue that the 'unspeakability' of women's sexuality that outside researchers have found is a conspicuous factor in the clash between culturally specific expressions and commercialised globalised culture within modern Thai society (see Bishop and Robinson 1998: 195–217). This argument linking sexuality to power relations relates the seemingly personal issue of sexuality to Thai national economic conditions during the period of intense growth from bilateral trade exchange with Japan between the late 1980s and the early 1990s. It then provides the background to some of my respondents' emigrations to Japan, leading to further differences in their experiences depending on timing, working conditions and the availability of social resources.

'Decent girls don't flirt,' a journalist on male gay sex tourism for English language readers once commented (Allyn 1991 in Jackson 1995: 47).[22] What is noteworthy about this comment is the social expectation in it. Observed a decade and a half ago by an outsider, this sentiment seems to be shared on many occasions by many of my respondents who are sexworkers and former sexworkers. They have lived with their 'deviancy' assigned by the same society that expected the 'decency' from girls mentioned. But in Patpong and the Thaniya area, the central largest entertainment district in Bangkok that caters mainly for foreign customers, sexworkers did not flirt when they were 'off duty', that is, when not with their (potential) customers, if flirting is something only noticeable when a woman 'zoomed in on the man, touching him and

hitting him playfully' (Odzer 1994: 280). The sexworkers did not readily speak about sex, sexual relationships or sexuality directly either, confirming the social expectancy of not verbalising 'it'. Many of my respondents did not name their occupation, speaking rather of 'working/doing things like this', or using *borigaan* (service: T) to describe what they did for a living. They appeared to be more or less compliant with the expectation of 'decency' during their off hours.

This, however, does not necessarily mean that the respondents did not flirt at all. Extroverted expression of sexual desire, of being sexually desirable and available, can well be hidden from the cultural outsider's observation in Thai daily life, especially in rural areas. In other words, flirtation can be one of the expressions foreign researchers in another culture are prone to miss, not because the expression is non-existent but because it can be profoundly culturally specific.[23] In contrast, the expression of 'zooming in on the man' type of flirtation is likely to *be observed* when it is done by sexworkers who, in business with certain clientele, know the rules of the game and switch their behaviour, intentionally or habitually, to meet what their customers are supposed to read as flirtation. It *is to be observed* by the observer's eyes because she or he can also read the flirtation that is supposed to meet foreign customers' expectation of what the act looks like.

Now that I have included myself in the category of 'foreign researchers' and implicitly included Japanese customers in that of 'foreign customers', I have to stop and think why I should be able to read something not specific to Thai culture but instead this other expression of flirtation that Odzer, a female American PhD student in anthropology, spotted 15 years previously when she was doing her fieldwork in the same area. Why should I, a female Japanese sociology PhD student trained in Britain, know the rules of the game? Is this other way not specific but 'universal', thus meaning that Thai female sexworkers and Japanese male customers and researchers, as well as Korean customers, Taiwanese customers, English customers, Italian customers, French customers, Australian customers, American customers and researchers can read basically the same message in it?

Perhaps the 'game' is fairly 'universal' for certain groups of people inside and outside of the sex industry who are more receptive to it for a good period of time. The game is heavily tinged with 'Westernisation' and, as I will point out soon, it goes hand-in-hand with modernity. The more receptive groups would include youth, sexworkers and people who have had more contact with other cultures and more changes to their environments in the climate of modernity.

This game of role-playing within sexwork plays out in Thailand and in Japan, with a particular method of flirtation, among many other expressions, as regular rules. On the other hand, I also observed that the sexworkers used slightly different versions of flirtation with Japanese customers *in particular*. But these other culturally 'specific' rules are also ready-made communicative expressions for Japanese male customers of the sex industry *in general*. This appears not too far away from McDonald's restaurants having spicy chicken nuggets in Thailand and teriyaki burgers in Japan, or Starbucks Coffee's launch of a '*Maccha* [powdered green tea: J] *Frappuccino*' in Japan. Following Ritzer, we can take these as culturally specific commodities but within the range of tastes offered by an industry with a sweeping bureaucratic modern criterion materialising: efficiency, calculability, predictability and control (1996: 145). Likewise, Hochschild sees 'emotional expressions as a medium of exchange' through which the contemporary human communication experience reflects that '[t]he more bureaucratised our society, the more standardised, commodified, and depersonalised are public displays of feeling' (2003: 83). The name of the game in which a rule of a 'zooming in on the man' type of flirtation is applied among sexworkers in Thailand is perhaps not sexual communication itself but sexual expression within the commercialisation department of modernity. So, as part of the job, Thai sexworkers 'switch' their behaviour, though sometimes ambiguously, when they enter the commercial trade in this department and start playing in the game. Luckily enough, this is in part why I too can know (some of) the rules along with other groups of people brought up in times and places with intense modernisation occurring alongside equally intense commercialisation; all can be judged integral parts of 'Westernisation' in Thai and Japanese contexts.

This question of 'Westernisation' runs parallel to my encounter with Thai former/sexworkers. 'Westernisation' is often intermingled with modernisation in Thailand and in Japan, in popular, journalistic and academic discourses. But how far, how quickly, how much, for how long or in what way and at which point in history this concept is combined with other concepts, human relations or tangible materials indigenous to the recipient culture, as well as why some groups of people in the culture are susceptible to it while some are not, may be the defining factors of a cultural-historical specificity. I would thus argue for *both* the significance of the concept of 'Westernisation' as a reflection of some concrete occurrences in the Thai–Japanese context *and* the necessity for social research to apply caution in the usage of the whole notion of 'Westernisation'. To speak of 'Westernised' sexworkers in Thailand, for instance, does not

suggest that they have become like Westerners. The influence they have had from 'Westernisation', to know and apply the rules of some useful expressions, is a mixture of many factors, and the cultural specificity behind their social and biographical upbringing is always included in these factors. Besides, 'Westernisation' can contain as many different meanings as modernisation, that intermingled concept, depending on the contexts, as much as the term 'West' itself is an 'empty signifier' (see Rabinow 1986: 241).

It is still true that the culturally specific 'unspeakability' of sex is not immune to changes, as some of the modern Westernised youths among my respondents articulated in their attitudes towards sex in private as well as in work-related relationships a connection to the individualisation of searching for happiness (see Chapter 3). As sexual expression is influenced by the commercialisation of human communication with its material conditions, so are seemingly 'essential' and historically embedded values: of Buddhist belief; karma, *bunkhun*; and of female lineage in the rural north and northeast.

The growing scarcity of land to pass to the next generation combined with the demand for a new labour force and for consumer goods transformed the means of social networking with these values behind them (see Buapun 1999: 8; Mills 1997: 139). Whittaker makes it clear that this shift was a challenge to small-scale landholders in the rural northeast. With the advent of wage labour, labour such as housework, hitherto enmeshed with farming, became 'unpaid work' that was less valued in the market economy. The older generation became more dependent on the youths' wage labour. Formal land ownership under men's names, introduced through modernisation of legal registration in the development plans, made the culturally recognised pattern of land inheritance through women's lineage unrecognisable. As a consequence, young people were moving out of the villages to seek paid jobs and education that would give them a chance to secure better-paid jobs (Whittaker 2000: 34). Parents, especially mothers, were losing the material means to nurture their children to reciprocate the children's repayment of *bunkhun*.

Since the end of the military regime in 1992, Thai social and economic policies – the transition to parliamentary democracy combined with the strongly emphasised free-market economy – focused on financial deregulation, trade deregulation and transformation of the taxation structure.[24] International monetary flow into the country via foreign investment was encouraged and the industrial structure of the country developed further import dependency during the Seventh Economic and Social Development Plan of 1992 to 1997.[25]

Although there is no statistical record to demonstrate the growth of the informal sector of the economy, the global sex trade was almost certainly booming in this period, with increased chances of trading inside Thailand as well as possibilities for sexworkers to go abroad. For example, extensive direct investment from Japan – accounting for 44.5 per cent of total foreign direct investment in Thailand at the end of the 1980s – was evaluated to be one of the main 'pull factors' of emigration to Japan from Thailand.[26] Simultaneously, the sharp increase in Japanese company workers stationed in Bangkok would have increased the number of potential customers (Kusaka 2000: 36, 43). As mentioned earlier, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) was making a conscious attempt to promote tourism as the foremost earner of foreign currency at around the same time. After the Plaza Accord of 1985, by which the value of the yen rose steadily from the last quarter of 1985 until 1995, and Visit Thailand Year in 1987, the overall trend of increasing international tourist arrivals in Thailand was boosted, particularly in 1987 and 1988. Earnings from tourism reached 50,000 million baht (approximately US$150 million) in 1988, exceeding income from any other export commodities including rice, hitherto the largest earner (TAT 1991: 6, 16; 1987: 23). The number of Japanese tourists jumped by 33.7 per cent from the year before to just under 350,000 persons in 1987. In that year, the Japanese Ministry of Transport met TAT's activities by launching the Overseas Travellers Doubling Plan in order to trim the nation's trade surplus (JNTO 2003: 54). The number of Japanese tourists in Thailand reached 650,000 in 1990, or 12.3 percent of the total (TAT 1991: 15–17; 1987: 30). The male:female ratio of tourists to Thailand as a whole went from 7:3 to 6:4 from 1976 to 1997 (Kusaka 2000: 60).[27]

Some respondents' families were directly affected by the policy focused on foreign-currency earning within this climate. The government provided loans to encourage rice growers to transfer to multi-crop farming to adapt to such agro-industries as food processing for export.[28] But some could not repay the loans and became debt-bound, resulting in their daughters ending their education to go to work.

At the same time, the migrant daughters of these families were able to make a living and to a degree were enjoying relative independence in economic, physical and psychological terms. By leaving their homes and communities, they gained access to contemporary materials and cultural wealth, to fashion, films, live music and sports, as well as other consumer goods. Here, they sometimes had access to the bright side of the globalisation of culture and economy. This material wealth and finery was either foreign, sometimes directly given by the customers, or

born out of the fusion of cultures created by the rapidly growing demand and supply of consumerism. These were the basic things some of my respondents were originally picturing as tangible images, along with other negative images, of Bangkok or of Japan. The atmosphere of freedom attached to the hypothetical consumption of this wealth, and these goods often had a considerable impact on their decisions to work in cities and in the sex industry. Sexwork was considered to be, and often actually was, the only available means to gain access to the consumer world for women without the economic or educational capital with which to gain other high-income occupations. Then, ironically, the moral condemnation and ostracism of sexwork might well have worked to highlight its attractions. Sexwork, for some, became associated with an atmosphere of freedom, in contrast with the material, economic and moral conditions of their original communities (see Chapter 2).

4 Globalisation of migration

Young women's migration, particularly from rural areas in the north and northeast of Thailand, did not always stop at Bangkok. In the early 1980s, migration from Thailand to Japan started to increase, at first as 'legal' migration, as Thailand's Migration Act 1979 and the Employment and Recruitment Act 1983 initiated controlled recruitment overseas (Amemiya et al. 2002: 6). The Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan for 1977 to 1981 emphasised the development of infrastructure for resource allocation and to promote economic structural adjustment. But at the level of bilateral economic as well as political relations, Thailand's trade deficit to Japan, growing since the beginning of the country started national development planning, was already amounting to an unbearable 71.5 per cent of the nation's total trade deficit in 1977. An official meeting between Thailand and Japan was held amidst this economic imbalance, and the Thai delegates requested that Japan cooperate in marketing and export promotion, particularly with small and medium-sized industries in Thailand. It was in this year, 1979, that Japan-based multinational corporations began training their Thai employees in Japan.[29]

The 'illegal' recruitment of Thai labour, including women for prostitution, seems to have become systematised and enlarged gradually with a time lag of only a couple of years after the beginning of this official trend (Nyota and Aoyama 2007: 68). Some of my respondents were among the 'illegal' job seekers in this period who migrated via reportedly an organised trafficking route from Thailand. Nevertheless, it was not until 1989 that the number of Thai migrants, especially women, in Japan saw a

phenomenal increase (Ito and Phannee 2001: 15, 21). The global economic climate changed at the end of 1985 after the Plaza Accord, as mentioned earlier. Meanwhile, the Thai government embarked upon another structural adjustment in 1981 for the Fifth and Sixth National Economic and Social Development Plans supported by the World Bank. The government tightened Thailand's public expenditure and devalued the currency, aiming to improve the terms of foreign trade. The high value of the yen together with this devaluation of the baht led to extensive direct investment from Japan into Thailand.

The early 1980s also marked the beginning of the 'feminisation of the transnational workforce' in East and Southeast Asia (Supang and Risser 1996: 10). The feminisation of migration came to academic attention in the 1980s in the Asian context for two apparent reasons: the gradual increase of the actual movement of female workers going abroad as in the case of Thai people to Japan, hence, increased visibility; and the increased critical gender analysis of the existing scholarship of international migration.[30] To borrow Hochschild's terminology, the exportation of the kind of work done largely by women was becoming the 'new gold' transferred from the Third World to the First World in the Thai–Japan context in the 1980s (2003a: 26).

After this, Thai women migrated to Japan on a large scale until 1994. Some returned to Thailand and others settled down in Japan. Turning our attention to the studies on a broad range of migrant settlers since the 1970s, I would argue that there is a noteworthy common trait among those migrating under different cultural, political and economic conditions, including Thai female former/sexworkers in Japan.[31] The emblematic concept is 'biculture' or, situating this within Howard Becker's notion of adaptation to a 'deviant career' 'using layers of socially available resources', I would call this the migrants' 'dual use of cultural resources' (see Chapter 3).

What I mean by the synonymous 'biculture' or 'dual use of cultural resources' is as follows: migrants are apt to need new skills and to develop them by quick and intense changes to their social environment, including languages, power relations and norms, due to their actual global spatial movement. Although they can physically only be in one place at one time, they can and usually do tap into both their original culture at homes and their host cultures in order to adapt to the new environment; this capacity is their strength as well as a demonstration of alienation or some sense of non-belonging to either culture. Practically speaking, the migrants' skills are also inevitably tied to macro social structures: international politics and economy, demographic trends, certain

institutional gaps between Thai life and Japanese life, legal possibilities and constraints and other status changes that the women go through, and changes to the categories of social hierarchies. These macro conditions are felt and considered by the migrants as they develop the skills to survive in the new communities.[32]

I will apply this concept of having 'biculture' in Chapters 3 and 4 to three respondents who migrated to Japan, including some specific elements they develop within 'biculture' as former/sexworkers. The respondents displayed their adaptation to, as well as alienation from, Japanese culture very well, but most notably, they showed evidence of a perhaps unacknowledged balancing act between their experiences in the past and in the present. In these cases, the past was well behind their current situations in temporal as well as geographical distance. Those who had settled down in Japan, including one currently involved in sexwork and living in Japan for a relatively short period of four years, seemed to have separated themselves into the past self and the current self more or less successfully and kept the former deeper inside; they kept their pasts attached to the former self so as not to disturb the self existing in the new network of relations. It did not mean that they would forget the self from the past; they just created ways to deal with it on their own rather than enhancing it by keeping in touch with past relations.

This could be a unique skill for those who have been through a 'deviant' career or other socially discredited or painful experiences. Among these, my respondents' cases were not exceptions but variations of creative strategies born out of their accumulated experiences. From the near bottom of all social hierarchies, these women survived the harsher parts of their lives, complied with and adapted to the societies' rules and expectations when necessary, and also created their own ways of coping with or overcoming their experiences and assigned identities. I would argue that each of them was, in effect (and mostly without consciously intending to do so), creating change as social agents, however little at a time.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have mapped out my key epistemological and ontological approach regarding the global sex trade in the contemporary Thai–Japanese context. The first part engaged with a broader question of whether prostitution should be regarded as sexual slavery or sexwork from a feminist standpoint. This 'either-or' debate on prostitution among feminists in both English-speaking and Thai-Japanese contexts should

not be the last word on the question because, from my perspective, the subject of prostitution itself cannot be understood with 'either-or' reasoning. There have already been reputable arguments that founded a middle ground between the dualistic extremes of the debate, asserting that prostitution, sexwork and sexual slavery are highly value-ridden concepts for those who theorise as well as for those who live them. Prostitution, sexwork and sexual slavery cannot be called by one name because the experiences of agents involved vary enormously depending on types, working conditions, other social conditions, places, times, cultures and so on.

What I have tried to contribute to here is a greater sensitivity to the character and variability of these factors as we look at the agents' involvement in prostitution, sexwork or slavery over the time span of their career development or life courses. As they move from one place to another with the passage of time, the conditions change just as their viewpoints do. Thus, prostitution, sexwork or sexual slavery can all be experienced even within one person's long-term experiences. I have tried to develop, and will continue to add, some grounded reasoning as to the relationship between these factors and the different ways that prostitution looked and felt to the women involved. In terms of my respondents' experiences, the most notable factors were their working conditions and accessibility to social resources, especially the network of human relations outside occupational relationships. Although I appreciate that sexwork as working and as a situation of slavery exist in a continuum, I would disagree with the fusion of the two situations precisely in order to recognise the dangerous conditions – the deprivation of usual working conditions and materials as well as emotional support from other social resources – that are likely to characterise situations of slavery. O'Connell Davidson's application of the notion of Social Death to all prostitution, only if symbolically, for the duration of the contract is to me problematic. Social Death, or the deprivation of natality, honour and power, cannot occur unless a prostitute is isolated from her network of relations.

Instead, I use Social Death in the limited occasions of situations of slavery, reflecting some of my respondents' experiences of trafficking to Japan. I then take up my position of referring to prostitution as 'sexwork', in accordance with respondents' almost unilateral perceptions of involvement in the trade as 'working'. As such, I present an important means of understanding the global sex trade as an outsider: valuing the situated knowledge following on from some feminist insights on the epistemology and ontology of prostitution stemming from the accounts of lived experiences of prostitute women themselves.

To provide a situating background context for this situated knowledge, I have introduced the four broader substantive social issues significantly impacting on Thai female migrant sexworkers. They will be interwoven into the latter part of this book as loci of my respondents' lives and experiences of sexwork and migration sometimes coupled with situations of slavery. These personal experiences are inevitably linked to macro happenings in their society. Since we are looking at respondents who have been involved in the sex trade between Thailand and Japan, it is especially important to expand our views toward economic, political and cultural exchanges on a global scale. But this scale needs to be always in relation to individual experiences. All four issues are organised around what happened to my respondents at what age, what career stage, what life stage, and around the various effects inflicted on them by social factors. In this way they form a grounded hermeneutic understanding of the study's results.

2
Before Becoming Sexworkers

This chapter introduces the 'pre-sexworker' phase of my respondents' experiences against the backdrop of relevant socio-economic conditions in Thailand. The research perspectives alternate between the respondents' personal experiences within intimate and associational relationships and the macro-structural conditions of particular times and places. This way of looking at the phenomena of the global sex trade is used in the later chapters as well, but it is used here to emphasise respondents' everyday relationships with husbands and lovers, mothers and fathers, children, brothers and sisters, relatives and neighbours which carry the heavy weight of duty and obligation, sufficiency and fulfilment in emotional as well as economic terms. All of these factors shaped young women's decisions to go into the sex industry, and sometimes as far away as Japan. Quite often incorporated into this web of relations are women's own aspirations toward autonomy and freedom, for different lives in cities distant from poverty-stricken home communities. Such aspirations are driven by and drive in turn the modernisation of Thai society, a modernisation increasingly susceptible to the globalised culture and economy conveyed on a mass-scale by the actual flow of people, goods and information. At the same time, however, blatant violence and coercion are sometimes aspects of the intimate relationships especially of those women forced into the sex industry during childhood at least in part through family ties.

Despite the differences, respondents' experiences are all connected to one career assigned the label of 'deviancy'. Through the frame of this career, we can see how each woman adapted to the societally defined version of herself and developed her corresponding 'deviant' identity. Yet these women also learned to utilise the social resources around them, many of which were made available by that very same career, to retain

their 'normality' at the same time. Through this personal development, we can also see the different degrees and natures of social resources available and effective in the different places, times and life stages of each individual. The relative availability of social resources was defined for my respondents by their social positions to a considerable degree even prior to the beginning of their careers in the sex industry.

At the outset, we find some notable common preconditions which seem to have led many respondents into the sex industry. Among these preconditions were: poverty and hard work, often combined with an early end to schooling; a strong sense of responsibility toward family; and troubled relationships with men including male partners, fathers, other family members or acquaintances, sometimes combined with violence or sexual assault. These conditions, expressed in a variety of ways, are not uncommon for young women from rural and urban poor areas in Thailand, as shown below. An examination of these preconditions, then, illustrates *not* the idiosyncrasy of women involved in sexwork but their 'ordinariness', in the sense that their perceptions, decisions and actions are deeply embedded in the society in which they live.

Absolute poverty in industrialisation: Kaeo[1]

Poverty is a good starting point for consideration. Poverty, either throughout childhood or at the time of becoming a sexworker, was a prominent precondition; voiced by 18 out of the 22 respondents. Those who had experienced migration to Japan, especially, tended to articulate it in detail. Kaeo, from an agricultural village in Chiangrai prefecture, was among these. As well as other details of hardship in her life, she recalled vividly her family's situation being 'very poor'. This recollection was associated with having worked for her mother for as long as she could remember and with the brevity of her schooling. After divorcing from Kaeo's father, her mother tried single-handedly to make ends meet for her four young children, her father and her younger brother. After a while she remarried, but Kaeo still had to give up completing compulsory education and attending secondary school. She remembers regret:

> At school I was doing very well. Teachers and the head teacher were more or less encouraging, and friends were not bad. I had no serious problem. I wanted to go to school but mother gave birth to another baby with the new father and wanted me and my younger sister to look after it. So I and my sister took turns going to school. I hated it when I could not go to school. Teachers didn't say anything because

> they knew what kind of family it was and there were other children from similar kinds of families. I wanted to go to secondary school in town but didn't have the chance. I was very jealous of the children from rich families who were going to secondary school – nowadays there is a scholarship. It wasn't there then.

I asked if anyone in her family said anything about quitting school. She continued:

> Mother didn't say anything about the school. We were living a life without enough food and were going to school without shoes. In that circumstance, there was no way to go for further schooling. Friends who were from less poor families could play after school together but we had to look for fresh-water snails in the rice paddy or go and pick wild vegetables to help Mother: we couldn't play or do anything. Mother worked as a day labourer. If there was a job for the day, she would do that, but if there wasn't, she would go to the river, the paddy or the mountain to seek something to eat and sell. It was only Mother who was making money. Even after she remarried, the situation didn't get better because we had only a little land and were only producing things like bamboo shoots. The new father would go and work like Mother, but the children were increasing too. It didn't become easier.

Kaeo said this was when she was in grades 3 to 4 of primary school (nine to ten years old) from 1973 to 1974. Since 1963, compulsory education in Thailand had consisted of seven years of primary schooling. This was shortened to six years in 1978, and extended again to nine years in 1994 (NCWA 1999: 5, Amara S. 1992a: 56). As Kaeo states above, however, there was no question in her family of sending her to the upper grades or on to secondary school. Compulsory education was state-funded – free for all – but the family needed all hands to feed themselves and expected girls to quit school to help. I will return to this point later in this chapter. At the age of ten, Kaeo was expected to be a full-time helper to the household, both doing housework and earning some cash income, as many 'other children from similar kind of families' would also be doing. She decided to do 'things like washing dishes in the village', and did this in food stalls for a year. Then, she decided 'to go to Hat Yai'.

Hat Yai is as far as one can travel within Thailand from Chiangrai. It is the commercial capital of southern Thailand, near the border with Malaysia and about 1800km away from Kaeo's home near the Burmese

border. The trip currently takes more than 24 hours by long-distance express bus, not counting the connecting time at Bangkok. With the exception that both are familiar with migrants from across the borders, Hat Yai is a completely different place from Chiangrai. In the middle of the mountainous area of mainland Southeast Asia, Chiangrai has an autumn season with cool and crisp air in the mornings and evenings. In Hat Yai, rain falls 40 more days a year as tropical breezes bring the humidity from the Gulf of Thailand half an hour's drive away. The language of each place sounds foreign to the other. Southerners' speed of speech is often almost frightening to northerners, whereas southerners often remark that Northerners are 'too slow'. A Malaysian influence in Hat Yai is apparent, with Malaysian cars and shoppers in the city centre. The massive massage parlours are reminiscent of Tokyo's Kabuki-cho, the largest entertainment area in Japan, where Kaeo and others would travel later. This border commercial capital of the South was also one of the strategic points where Japanese military 'comfort stations' were situated during the Asia-Pacific war.[2]

Kaeo, at 11, did not have any concrete ideas about this destination or her prospective life there, but simply decided to go because 'somebody from a nearby town invited me and paid money to Mother when the landlord wanted to evacuate us. We wanted the land and our own house. And I wanted to help my family'.

She added, however, that she and children in the village generally 'knew, beforehand, what we would do though we were kids – what kind of job it was when people like that come and pay money for us'.

Numerous academic researchers, as well as social engineers working in cooperation with Thai governmental agencies, were aware – at the very least statistically and conceptually – of the problems the rural poor were facing at around this time. Studies point to statistics and analysis already existing in the 1970s showing an economic chasm between the primary sector (including agriculture, forestry, hunting, fishing, mining and quarrying), and the non-primary sector.[3] It is clear from official figures that the vast majority of the Thai labour force gained only a small share of the outcome of total economic production. This majority was employed in the primary sector: 79 per cent of the whole labour force in 1971, 73 per cent in 1975, 71 per cent in 1980 (Suganya and Somchai 1988: 22). Indeed, more than half of the entire labour force continued to be employed in the primary sector until the late 1990s.[4] Yet the share of the primary sector's production in the country's GDP was a mere 28 per cent in 1971, and almost constantly decreasing since then (see Figure 2 below).[5]

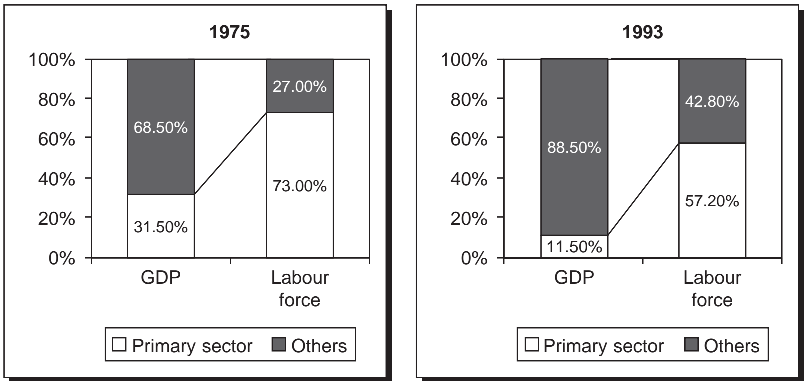


Figure 2 Role of the primary sector in Thailand, 1975 and 1993

The very fact that people in agricultural households predominantly live in rural areas suggests a substantial economic gap between urban and rural areas. A World Bank report on development in Asian countries found, for example, that '[i]n 1975 the incidence of poverty in rural areas was 51%. This was [...] five times the rate in urban areas. Because 73% of the Thai population during that time lived in rural areas, the proportion of the poor living in rural areas was even higher, 89%'. In a regional comparison, the northeast has the highest incidence of poverty, followed by the north (Ahuja et al. 1997: 34).

The incidence of poverty in Thailand is measured here by the World Bank's definition of an international '$2 a day poverty line': if someone earns less than $2 a day on average, she is below the poverty line and hence classified as 'poor'. This definition of poverty is not universally accepted, as referenced in the World Bank report, but is widely used in studies of poverty in Thailand (Chaiwoot and Grosskopf 1994: 11). Using this indicator for now, then, it follows that a typical profile of people in rural north or northeast Thailand includes farmers, agricultural labourers and their family members, and that they are poor. Chaiwoot and Grosskopf describe poverty along a number of dimensions, such as ownership of land, family size, mobility and educational attainment. They summarise that 'the poor were likely to be farmers or farm labourers who owned little or no land, whose main income was of the "in kind" or non-farm category, who had larger families, whose family heads received little formal education and were more likely to live in any one place for a long period' (1994: 32). These average characteristics of a person in rural Thailand precisely fitted Kaeo's mother as the head of the household

in the 1960s to 1970s: in addition to the other features, she too had little formal education.

It is generally agreed in such studies that the children's lack of access to education in the agricultural north or northeast is one of the most prominent problems of poverty. In 1974, when Kaeo stopped going to school, approximately 80 per cent of the labour force, amongst whom more than 70 per cent were in agriculture, had an elementary education but only roughly six per cent attained the secondary level (MoI 1987: Table 1.4). A long-term women's development plan commissioned by the Thai government and USAID (United States Agency for International Development) Thailand during the period from 1979 to 1981 states that 75 per cent of rural women and 79 percent of their male counterparts were educated only up to the 4th-grade level or less. By 1988, the percentage of people finishing school at primary level had not changed dramatically; 28 per cent of 11- to 14-year-olds, i.e., after the 4th grade, now left school and joined the labour force (NCWA 1981: 16; Bencha et al. 1992: 58).

This trend changed for the first time after nine-year education became compulsory in 1994. Higher educational attainment for larger numbers of the population was required by this time to meet the shift of the main mode of production from the primary sector (mainly agriculture) toward other industries, as shown in Figure 2 above. Until this time, the vast majority of Thai children (and smaller numbers even after the shift) were trapped in the double bind of not having enough money to keep going to school and not having enough qualifications to gain well-paid employment, having to earn money by any available means from early in life. Most of my respondents were once such children. This situation was innate to the nation's industrialisation – the shift in production mode – which required demographic mobility as well as cash income to support a new lifestyle. In this shift the majority of the population – including generations of Kaeo's family and others among a particular section of her community – was trapped in a form of collective 'social exclusion' beyond income deprivation or individual experience. Then, as one school of poverty studies has seen this exclusion as *both a cause and a consequence* of poverty (Platt 2002: 26–7), the apparent relationship between social exclusion and absolute poverty raises the question of relative deprivation discussed below.

The season of political economy: the development planners and their target

For many social planners, the trend of children in rural poor families prematurely ending schooling was problematic as they recognised its

causal relationship to both qualitative and quantitative insufficiencies in 'human resources' related to aspirations for industrialisation. It was also problematic in the sense that it seemed to be reproducing the status quo, causing poverty in the next generation, as in Kaeo's case. For others, it was problematic mainly because they saw educational attainment as a matter of human dignity, and the lack of it as a cause of moral decline among people in rural areas.[6] Surely, the gap between the development planners, or the urban educated class more generally, and the rural peasant and labouring class with less formal education was also a moral gap. What the urban educated class attributed to the moral decline of the poor was actually a consequence of the economic development they planned. But the poor, seen as one of the problems causing the moral decline, were clearly acting in harmony with the morals of society in their contexts. With reference to Amartya Sen, the moral gap here is between the ideal capability the planners imagined for the targeted group and the feasible capability of the targeted – or whether under the conditions brought about by development their capability to act was practicable or not in Giddens' sense (see Sen 1999: 75).

The mid-1970s is marked by many social critiques as *the* moment of modern Thai society. Thailand started systematic planning and budgeting for economic and social development in 1958 by drawing up the First National Economic and Social Development Plan for 1961 to 1966. This was thought necessary due to a number of factors: reduction in export surplus, budget deficit, need for basic infrastructure and thus foreign borrowing and investment, the matching increase in US industrial aid, and a World Bank and International Monetary Fund requirement to move toward an open market economy. Through this period and the more comprehensive Second Plan from 1967 to 1971, the output of agricultural production started to decrease in contrast to the increasing scale of export-oriented industries.[7] By 1969, a Country Paper for an ASEAN meeting estimated that 'the number of low-income families, particularly in the northern region, had increased from 43% in 1961 to 45%' (WGCP 1989: 15), while another study points out that '[b]y 1969 average urban incomes were two and a half times rural income levels' (Jeffrey 2002: 34).

Leslie Anne Jeffrey, in a study of political discourses defining prostitution in Thailand, identifies this beginning of bureaucratic industrialisation as a Thai version of the epoch of the rise of the middle class. It brought a demographic increase in people classified as administrative, managerial (ten times more in 1970 than in 1960), professional and technical workers (doubled in the same period), as well as in the number of university students (five times more in the same period)

(ibid.). The class related to newly developing industry is considered to have been the major beneficiary of the economy's expansion and the inflow of foreign capital. This inflow was not only export-led but also construction-oriented, the latter mainly in the form of US aid to, literally, pave the roads in the northeast. The US wanted to secure access for material and human supplies to their bases in the border areas of Thailand to fight the Vietnam War and to keep an eye on the socialist-leaning states of Cambodia and Laos. Thailand itself was long under military dictatorship, with two consecutive coups d'état by field marshals-cum-prime ministers from 1957 to 1973. These rulers adopted anti-communism as their slogan to underpin an emergency autocracy that developed into the right-wing construction of 'Thai identity'.[8]

Ironically for the military leaders, it was the new Thai middle class, made up of students and white-collar workers gaining social and economic influence, that became impatient with military dictatorship and with foreign military and economic dominance in their country. According to Jeffrey, they employed an ideal of the nation state as representing common people with a strong hold over sovereignty in terms of politics, culture and economy – a nationalist and socialist notion – to protest against the military dictatorship (2002: 35, also Darunee and Pandey 1991: 29).

To bring in a link with Japan here, the National Students Committee of Thailand, the central national political organisation of university students, called for a boycott of Japanese goods in 1972 that was said to have led to the 1973 Regulation of Foreigners' Occupation Act and other restrictions upon the activities of foreign investors.[9] After its defeat in the Asia-Pacific war, Japan had withdrawn its military from Thailand and focused on economic involvement. The proportion of direct investment from Japan into Thailand constantly increased, becoming 38 per cent of all foreign investment in 1970 while US investment was at 19 per cent. In the meantime, Thailand's trade deficit with Japan reached around $US300 million, approximately four per cent of its GNP.[10] In this economic imbalance, regulations did not prevent the famous 'revolution' in October 1973. The uprising of several hundred thousand Bangkok students and workers succeeded, via the mediation of the king, in pressurising the then prime minister and two other marshals to exile themselves from the country. This incident is looked back on by many researchers as a turning point in Thai politics toward modern democracy.

The period of democracy at this time was short-lived, ending with another military coup in 1976 and the bloodshed of thousands. On

the other hand, the women's social movement, as defined by Amara Pongsapich, was gaining in influence at around the same time. Amara, a Thai feminist scholar, sees the women's movement in Thailand in the 1970s as having two phases: the beginning of the grassroots approach to women's issues in rural areas (which did not mature until the 1990s), and the official inclusion of women in development planning (1997: 16). Thus, the mainstream consisted of the aristocracy, the middle class, and professional and governmental associations of women who worked for the betterment of women's position in society. Their activities more or less coincided with the United Nations' declaration of International Women's Year in 1975 and the following Women in Development protocol, some gaining direct influence in the National Economic and Social Development Plans. The NESD board appointed the National Commission on Women's Affairs (NCWA) in 1978 to act 'as a center coordinating the operations [to carry out women's role in development] to be implemented effectively in the same direction' (NCWA 1981: 35). The NCWA then drew up the first Long Term Women's Development Plan for 1982 to 2001, aiming to incorporate women in the development of the economy, in decision-making, knowledge acquisition, and improving their own quality of life together with the quality of family life. Two of the four objectives read as follows.

- Women must have opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills for earning their living; knowledge and ability to improve the quality of family life, with broadmindedness and a rational way of thinking; to develop their sense of responsibility; to have a constructive role in the community; and to contribute toward peace and social harmony both internally and internationally.
- Women must have a part in determining values and their own roles in their capacity as members of society. They must also have freedom to determine their own lives provided there is no conflict with the law (ibid.: 5).

Given that they had defined Thai women's problems at this time as those of poverty, lack of formal education with even less opportunity than their male counterparts and exclusion from public decision-making, yet recognising that good family life was an integral part of Thai women's sense of dignity, these objectives sound fair enough so far. But when the plan comes to identifying 'specific target groups, problems, strategies and time provisions' (ibid.: 14), their moral judgement becomes harsh

and severely biased. Especially in a clause on prostitutes' problems, the Women's Development Plan remarks:

> [w]hen faced with family problems or economic pressure, therefore [because traditional treatment of women as inferior to men affects their capabilities], some women are led to sell themselves into prostitution. Factors contributing to such a plight are: lack of discipline, declining morals, sensual temptations, and examples of excesses which are far more abundant than reminders of moral conduct and human dignity in our modern society [. . .] To complete the situation there are selfish people who seek to profit from this profession by arranging sex tours and sending Thai girls abroad for prostitution purposes. Such deplorable activities seriously tarnish the reputation and undermine the dignity of our people and country (ibid.: 24).

Another representative organisation working on women's issues at the state level is the National Council of Women of Thailand (NCWT), the first and largest women's umbrella organisation in Thailand. Although NCWT continues to claim non-governmental organisation status, it has always been associated with the government and the royals, acting in cooperation with the social engineering of the state's development (Darunee and Pandey 1991: 45, 167). The NCWT was set up in 1956 as a part of the project of postwar modern nation-building, holding its first national assembly just a few months after the first National Economic and Social Development Plan was drawn up. The national leaders as well as the United Nations desired to have a women's organisation of this kind to encourage upper-class women with enough time and education to join their male counterparts in oiling the wheels of modernisation. This network of urban women was supposed to 'teach new ideas and inculcate modern values and practices to the rural and less advantaged women' (ibid.: 44).

From the start, NCWT supported investment in rural women's skill development, endorsed by the queen, to protect Thai culture. However, from the late 1970s to the late 1980s in particular, it turned itself toward more development-orientated projects reflecting the UN Decade for Women protocol (Darunee and Pandey 1991: 50–2). This combination of international consciousness and the idealisation of rural women's skills created the distinctive national cultural sovereignty subsequently attached to rural Thai women. A senior female historian and an advocator of NCWT was quoted as lauding such promotion of cultural skills for women in rural areas as a seal against 'the bad foreign influence' of

the US military demand for prostitution and the Japanese exportation of consumerism (Jeffrey 2002: 66).

Arguments like these attribute the problem of prostitution to women's moral decline or enticement by consumerism, while promoting an idealised traditional image of young women in rural areas to protect 'the dignity of our people and country'. Until the 'empowerment approaches' toward improving the lives of impoverished women came into governmental and non-governmental plans and actions closer to the 1990s,[11] this dominant image of 'good women' actually worked against the welfare of targeted people such as Kaeo. For Kaeo and other girls and young women in poor families of the rural north and northeast in the 1970s, the effects of education reform combined with the efforts of each consecutive development plan were disastrous. These plans misconceived the starting point: they did not understand the social conditions the targeted group were trying to grapple with or their reasoning and experience of their realities, although these conditions of the impoverished were to a major degree nurtured by development itself.

Marked inequality in income distribution between the primary and non-primary sectors, between the rural and the urban, between regions and between social strata already appeared in Thailand's Second National Economic and Social Development Plan of 1967–1971. Since around this period, planners had described and analysed the poor and tried, within limits, to adjust their policies to make economic growth trickle down to them. Studies of the government's five-year plans, however, generally agree that Thailand's economic development from the 1960s, while for at least three decades lessening the incidence of poverty in the nation state as a whole, at the same time increased economic disparity between the haves and the have-nots. It seems that the gap between what the social planners saw in their target and what the targeted people were actually thinking and feeling was that between those educated to engineer society as an object and those objectified as elements of that society. The planners saw their *object* as both the cause and the consequence of its problems. Further, they did not see that they were also significant actors within the same milieu, that they themselves affected both causes and consequences. The gap was as much perceptual and moral as it was economic.

The imagined 'rural area as moral ground' of Thai culture was not providing practical help for women like Kaeo. On the contrary, it was working with and fuelling the perceptions and feelings informing Kaeo that she had no alternative but to quit school and go to work. If we look at the first Women's Development Plan again, its general objectives for

women to have 'opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills for earning their living; knowledge and ability to improve the quality of family life, with broadmindedness and a rational way of thinking; to develop their sense of responsibility; to have a constructive role in the community' and to 'have a part in determining values and their own roles in their capacity as members of society' fit very well with Kaeo's words. As she remembers it, she knew how she could earn her living, and knew her ability to improve the quality of family life. With broadmindedness and an orientation to others, as opposed to self-centredness, she rationally determined her values to involve taking responsibility and a constructive role in her community. All of this was practised within a specific context of social pressures and limited opportunities that was, as mentioned earlier, shared by many other women of Kaeo's generation in rural areas.

Kaeo would probably have agreed with the first Women's Development Plan on the point that women 'must also have freedom to determine their own lives'. In her interview, she actually voiced 'freedom' as one of the things she valued most. But her pursuit of 'freedom' would result in a very different outcome in practice from what the upper-class women expected in theory from young women in Kaeo's circumstances.

On this difference of freedoms, Amartya Sen's philosophy focusing on freedom in development is relevant, although it became available only in the 2000s (1999: 73, 318–19). Sen argues for distinguishing between general ideas of human freedom as the main object of development and individual freedom as a 'social commitment' qualified and constrained by particular social conditions, and then for empirically linking the two (ibid.: 3–5, 18–19, 72–81, and passim). Thus, in considering what the general idea of human freedom should mean in actual human life, he defines the individual 'substantive freedoms' as 'individual capabilities to choose a life one has reason to value'. For Sen, the individual 'substantive freedoms' as such should be constitutive of desirable development (ibid.: 56, 74, 87). However, 'substantive freedoms' or 'capabilities' can be feasible and function only when the social conditions surrounding the agent allow. To put it another way, the freedom an agent can practise in her daily life depends on what resources she has at hand, and their utility, in her current social environment, as well as on her perspective at the time (ibid.: 72–6). Besides, for an agent situated at a lower social position and faced with corresponding immediate conditions, and with her own, her actions are in many cases defined by structures external to herself (Stones 2005: 66–7).

When Kaeo thought she and her family could not survive otherwise, 'freedom to determine their own lives' should have meant first to choose whatever they perceived to be the best possible way to live. She had every reason to feel that she was 'choosing' the best way to help in the situation, but her freedom, or capability to choose a life she valued, had already been constructed on the relatively limited foundation of her social position.

The conditions surrounding Kaeo were connected to human relations as much as to her economic and educational standings. Kaeo's feeling that she could 'choose' seemed to have been shared by and similarly embedded within her family members and schoolteachers. It was expressed by means of their silence: 'Mother didn't say anything about school' and '[t]eachers didn't say anything because they knew what kind of family it was'. She knew all too well what kind of expectation was being placed on her by the adults around her, and to follow it was, she judged, the best possible option. She knew it tacitly: the expectation was there without verbal articulation and there was no space for any question or argument. Accordingly, it is difficult to accuse her of moral decline or to see the family problems as leading to her moral decline. The journey upon which Kaeo was to embark was clearly a moral one, following the call of her sense of responsibility for her family and duty toward her mother embedded in, rather than uprooted from, the cultural norms of her community. Further, it is likely that she still values this compliance with a framework of responsibility and duty as moral, just as she now describes to me her experience as a way of taking proper responsibility for her mother, her family, and the community that acknowledged it. She may well be describing it also to the imagined (if only vaguely) audience behind her, to the broader society.

Relative deprivation as social exclusion and drive to migration: Daaw[12]

Kaeo, like many others among my respondents, evaluated poverty as a constraint in her particular situation that she and her family could overcome through her labour, and she felt her contribution was made in agreement with the human relations around her, in accordance with the social norm. This notion of poverty as a social condition raises questions regarding the World Bank's definition of poverty, as well as to its application to Thai development planning. As in the World Bank's definition, 'absolute poverty' means in concrete terms that someone is considered to be poor, and therefore is poor, because she lacks basic necessities – food,

water, shelter, clothing and/or sanitation – for life.[13] Eight of my 22 respondents, including Kaeo, described a state of poverty in childhood in terms of a lack of basic necessities. They tended to relate the memory of being poor as children to hunger more than anything else. *At the same time*, there were many other expressions articulating poverty from these same eight women as well as from the other ten – in terms of social exclusion.

The World Bank definition, based on data gathered in the 1980s and adjusted in the 1990s, establishes a bottom line in achievement of elementary needs by one's 'purchasing power parities', calculated from each nation's current consumer price index, currency rate and household income per capita. It has been criticised for not taking account of qualities of people's needs that depend on factors such as age, gender, various handicaps, social expectations and the like, and on the accessibility of various social and economic resources to the individual (Reddy and Pogge 2003: especially 4–9). The notion of 'social exclusion' is valuable in defying the development planners' conception of poverty, showing it in conjunction with social norms, expectations and relations, and thus enabling a broader view of the implications of material lack, which can be measured by 'absolute poverty' indicators, affecting many other aspects of actual people's material and emotional lives. Thus it can show poverty in terms of 'relative deprivation' as well as connecting 'absolute' and 'relative' senses of poverty (Platt 2002: 20–1).

Economists, as stated earlier, are still largely in agreement that between the 1960s and the 1990s the incidence of poverty in Thailand in absolute terms lessened as a whole while inequality in income distribution between classes and regions increased.[14] In considering the general increase of income and the widening disparity, Chaiwoot and Grosskopf point out that 'we have to keep in mind that construction of absolute indicators of poverty involves difficult conceptual problems: how to define needs, what weight to assign to each basic need ... In defining needs, measures of poverty are inevitably determined by cultural values' (1994: 13). Meanwhile, Sagunya and Somchai demonstrate how income disparities between and within each income class shared their effects in the total income disparity of that particular income class, and how their compositions changed from 1975–6 to 1985–6. They conclude that the disparity worsened between rather than within each income class factor in those ten years – that is, the disparity was worse between regions, for example, than within a region, and this gap was wider in 1985–6 than 1975–6. The same thing happened to every income class factor: location (rural and urban), socio-economic class (upper class and lower

class), sector of production (agricultural and non-agricultural), and so on. It also demonstrated that income disparity *always* existed *within* any income class (Sagunya and Somchai 1988: 26).

Given that Thai society was going through rapid and drastic changes between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s, the values that defined the needs of its members might well have been changing just as drastically and rapidly. If so, people's consciousness of disparity – as with Kaeo who 'was very jealous of the children from rich families who were going to the secondary school' – could well have escalated as the gap between the haves and the have-nots widened. Such an escalation would leave young women in Kaeo's position increasingly compelled to contribute to income generation.

Daaw, another returnee woman living not far from Kaeo's village, talked about a daily experience of feeling this disparity when she commented on her neighbours. Some of the neighbours, she said, were comparing one returnee woman to another, presupposing that the returnees must have been in the sex industry.

> The villagers talk bad about those who returned from Japan *not* whether she was in service or not [*borigaan*: T, see Footnote 21 of Introduction] but whether she brought money back or not. They would say, 'She went to Japan and came back without money. What was she doing? She just came back with the kid. How come the daughter over there could build her family a house and she cannot?'

She added:

> there were many women who went to Bangkok or to Japan, like *every* family in my village has at least one person who has been to Japan. They are ... not like there were differences between those who send their daughters or not. The difference is if they send their daughter or sister, or how many daughters they have. Every family has someone. You can see that from the houses over there [She points out a house on the same lane as her own].

If the comment that '*every* family has someone' who had been to Japan to do sexwork seems a bit of an exaggeration, a piece of research on the transborder migrants from this area gives us an idea what kind of numbers made Daaw feel like this.

Z District, where Daaw lived, had 87 villages and approximately 32,000 households, making up a total population of 83,000 – 41,000 men and

42,000 women – in the year 2000. It was throughout this and three other neighbouring districts that SEPOM (see Introduction) completed part of their interview research project on returnees from Japan in Chiangrai prefecture (see Table 1 below).[15]

In answering SEPOM's door-to-door polling, 730 people in Z District alone said that either they themselves or one of their family members had been abroad as a migrant worker. Among these, 476 were women, of whom 237 had been to Japan. Therefore 0.56 per cent (one in 177) of the whole female population of Z experienced migration to Japan. If we suppose the ages of migrants/returnees to be between 15 and 39 (the range from the starting age for the labour force to that the oldest of my respondents, who were among the first group of women emigrants: see Chapter 4), and apply the percentage of the total national female population in this age range (44.9 per cent), it would imply about one in 80 women in this age group in Z had been to Japan (Alpha Research 2002: 35, population projection).

If we also suppose that each of the 237 female respondents who had been to Japan represents one household, it would mean that about one in 135 households in this district had experienced a female member migrating to Japan. However, a registered 'household' in the official statistics applied here does not have to be a whole family living on the same plot of land; the small average number (2.6 persons) per household in this data suggests that it could be that two or three 'households' constitute a family of two or three generations living on the same lot or next to each other, as people often do in villages in the district. This would mean in a day-to-day sense that perhaps one in 45 to 68 (135 households divided by the two or three generations that can be living together) families in district Z experienced a female member emigrating to Japan.

These might not seem strikingly large numbers by themselves. Yet, given that each of the researched districts above has distinctly varied numbers, genders and destinations of migrants/returnees, we can deduce that specific connections exist between particular communities and specific destinations and jobs available. Given also that there were lanes of houses built with remittances from Japan, as Daaw pointed out to me in her village, there might well be concentrated numbers of migrants to Japan within limited areas. Certainly, with one in 44 households (32,000 divided by 730 persons) in Z as a whole having at least one member, regardless of gender, emigrating somewhere abroad, while some others probably migrated within Thailand as well, these figures suggest the significance of emigration for a northern Thai village.

Table 1 Experience of overseas migration in four districts in Chiangrai Prefecture by June 2004

District		Z	W	X	Y
Households		**32,000**	6,600	10,000	13,000
Population: total		**83,000**	23,000	32,000	39,000
	Male	**41,000**	12,000	16,000	19,000
	Female	**42,000**	11,000	16,000	20,000
Overseas migrants: total		**730**	355	632	1,351
	Male	**254**	206	433	990
	Female	**476**	149	199	361
Destination [added figure for Z exceeds its total of migrated males and females above because some migrated to multiple destinations	Japan	**298**	85	97	210
	Taiwan	**119**	122	251	444
	Singapore	**95**	39	110	190
	Malaysia	**52**	30	25	122
	Brunei	–	24	18	61
	Korea	–	11	27	73
	Europe	**42**	8	18	24
	Germany	–	–	11	7
	Middle East	**35**	7	49	163
	Hong Kong	**17**	3	7	13
	USA	**8**	2	2	4
	Others	**121**	16	14	30
	Unknown	–	8	3	10
Women who have been to Japan		**237**	74	85	148
[added figures do not match the totals because some overlap]	Currently in Japan	**129**	32	44	71
	Missing	**9**	–	–	2
	Deceased	**14**	5	1	13
	Returned and at home	**91**	30	31	56
	Returned and migrated again	**15**	5	6	25
Women in relationships with Japanese men		**58**	34	38	37
	Married	**34**	13	39	32
	Unmarried	**26**	21	6	5
Children with Thai mothers and Japanese fathers		**63**	17	39	43

* By Mari Nyota at SEPOM: original was in Japanese and the translation is mine.
* Figures for numbers of households and total population by gender are based on NSO (2001)

The reasons why many women from Daaw's village went into the sex trade in Bangkok or Japan are also multiple. In this section, nevertheless, I want to introduce one factor related to the sense of *relative* deprivation that is significant about this geographical area. Chiangrai is a prefecture known to have sent young women to Japan from the end of the 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s. A recent study of Thai–Japan migration

shows that Chiangrai, with 2 per cent of the total population of Thailand in 2001, comes second after the Bangkok metropolitan area as a place of origin for Thai people living in Japan, with 15 per cent of the total population. In the study, women constitute nearly half of this number. More than seven in ten (73 per cent) of these women entered Japan before 1993, with more than one in ten (12 per cent) from Chiangrai prefecture.[16] Appropriately, District Z, in which Kaeo and Daaw's villages are located, is also a border district, with Laos to its east and Burma to its north, and it has an atmosphere of emigration and immigration that one can physically feel.

Sometimes, when political volatility is heightened in Burma, the checkpoint is closed. Traders and local people crossing the border from each side have to wait with backpackers at nearby inns for the gate to open. The Thai federal police intensify patrols on the traffic going out from this area when there is a tip-off related to drug dealing. The police also regularly board the local buses and check passengers' IDs, but in these cases, they are not after drugs. They are there to stop ethnic minority peoples, highlanders from the mountainous region on the border, from leaving the residential areas where the state requires them to live. These minorities have ID cards in different colours, different from Thai nationals', from other foreigners' and from each other according to the timing of registration and the degrees of mobility status determined by Thai government decree.[17] The local bus takes passengers from the border to the city of Chiangrai in two-and-a-half hours, if they have the right ID. The main road, Phaphoriyothin, stretches from this checkpoint to the town centre of the district, to Chiangrai city, and then on to the Bangkok metropolis. On the express sleepover bus, it is 12 hours to the metropolis, from where women and men both board flights abroad and arrive from around the globe.

The disparity between the haves and the have-nots is born and bred, seen and felt, here: between the capital, city, town and village, and within each of the areas in which goods, money, messages, images and rumours circulate with migrating people. The houses on the village lanes built by remittances from daughters who have gone to Japan are material evidence of the disparity. They are distinct from other houses. Like one Daaw pointed out to me, they may have wrought-iron-bar fences with leafy patterns and blue-tiled roofs or whitewashed walls with scrollwork – they look neither very Thai nor very Japanese but are supposed to be modern, or *than samay* [T]. Some of the villagers, particularly young women like Daaw 20 or so years ago, clearly compared them to their own houses and saw them as an economic incentive to a better life.

In this sense, poverty would have been experienced as the relative lack of possessions symbolised by the houses and induced by a lack of income. Daaw, as described in her account above, was aware of the villagers comparing one daughter to another according to the amount of remittance money reflected in their houses. She acutely felt that her family's situation was worse than that of others as much as she was made conscious that she was the one who could earn the income that her family was missing. Furthermore, having a family house had a special significance for women in the northern Thai agrarian culture, as I will explain in more detail in the next chapter. Hence, not having, or not contributing to gaining, a house of a respectable standard in the village created for Daaw and other women a certain degree of social exclusion (see Sen 1999: 89, for crucial factors in social exclusion). More influential still was the fact that Daaw's family, involved in rice farming but without their own land, was probably one of the poorest in the village during her childhood, as I heard her older sister remark later. This sister went to Bangkok to work in the sex industry as well.

For Daaw, who felt that she was the one who could alleviate the poverty of her family, the houses financed by the remittance from daughters working in Japan served as more than concrete evidence of the poor's relative lack. They were also evidence that someone under similar conditions from a similar social position could have the 'modern equipment' to join the *than samay* trend of modernising society, that there was a way of realising the capability required to avoid exclusion: earning enough cash income by selling sexual services. Daaw thus decided to go first to Bangkok to work in a bar when she turned 16 in 1982, and to Japan several years later to earn more. Here again it was a rational choice for a young woman to follow other women in the neighbourhood, and to improve her family's economy and their very home, according to her society's norms and the expectations held for family members at the time.

Sexual violence in communal force: Mai and Yoon[18]

Relationships with men close to them is another factor that seems to have had a strong impact on my respondents' lives before becoming sexworkers. With regard to their long-term male partners, 14 of the 22 respondents experienced at least one divorce, separation or partner's death. Nine experienced separations from their fathers during childhood. These separations included their parents' divorce, a father's migration or taking of religious orders, or premature death – one by murder.

Seven voiced traumatic and/or violent experiences related to male family members or acquaintances. Kaeo was one of these. She had been living under the constant threat of rape from her uncle from the time she was seven or eight until she decided to go to Hat Yai at 11. Another respondent was raped by an acquaintance, yet another raped by her uncle, two others aborted pregnancies to men who had families elsewhere,[19] another had been battered by her husband, and one had lost two partners, both in motorbike accidents. Some incidents overlapped with troubles in partner relationships, some were isolated. Overall, these experiences seemed to be linked to the risk-taking and/or violent behaviour of some men close to respondents that could be a manifestation of the broader male gender trend in Thailand as a whole. For reference, numbers of deaths by different principal causes in 1995 showed significant gender gaps in 'Accidents and Poisonings' (29,455 men/6,980 women) and 'Suicide, Homicide and Other Injury' (6,148/1,712).

As the picture is becoming bleak, I must quickly add that this is not to suggest that either my respondents or Thai sexworkers in general are *bound to* have experienced problems with male members of their communities. There do not have to be causal relations between such experiences and becoming sexworkers: some might be contributory causes and some might not. The issues are complex. Some of the respondents, to note an alternative narrative, have had harmonious relationships with both their parents, or sweet memories of the deceased or separated partners that keep them uplifted. Ten (two being sisters with the same parents) said they had parents amicable with each other and to themselves during their childhoods. It seems that the nice and cosy side of life does not usually come up during formal interviews about the socially marginalised career which later becomes a significant part of these women's identities. Even if there are cases in which troubled relationships with men and male sexual violence could be contributory causes, it would be overly simplistic to suggest that one single factor – male violence, for example – could be responsible for a person's later involvement in a 'deviant' career. Rather, these relationships and incidents of violence tended to be triggers, subtle and apparent, long suppressed or spontaneous, to go into a career with a social stigma that relates them to problems in sexual and intimate relationships. But more deep-rooted causes exist elsewhere. The deeper root is *what made the troubled relationships and sexual violence the triggers* for these women to go into the sex trade, and this lies, again, not in some sort of idiosyncrasy of the women, or of the men around them, but in certain meanings, power relations and norms of their society by which they were organically affected (see Giddens 1984/2001: 377;

1979: 82). To put it another way, a considerable number of my respondents experienced direct male sexual violence or indirect effects of male violent behaviour. Still, these experiences might not have had any bearing on their decisions to enter sexwork if there had not been, or if they had not felt there to be, the pressure of sexual stigma attached to them by society because of these experiences.

Let us go back to a real person's story: Mai was another returnee from Japan to Z district. Like Kaeo, she went into the sex industry very young: at the age of 11. She too was victimised sexually by a male relative. Unlike Kaeo, however, she did not mention details of her family's poverty or her schooling being terminated because of it. While she also talked about her family not having enough money, the direct trigger for Mai to enter the sex industry was her experience of sexual violence inflated by the social value, which materialised within her own intimate community, of blaming the victim. Unlike Kaeo, who was about the same age at the time of being sent to work, Mai did not make the decision herself. She describes it clearly:

> When I went into work, I did not decide it by myself. Mother decided it. A person in our neighbourhood we knew was selling girls. We called her 'Granny'. She asked my mother if I was going or not. I had been raped by someone when I was 9. I was going to court at that time because of it. After the case was closed, there was nothing. My mother asked me 'well then, will you sell your body?' Well then [*sore ja*: J], I had no other choice. I was ashamed. I didn't have any friends. Because of the rape and the aftermath. So I went. There was no money at home and I was still a child. The person who raped me got 40 years ... [uncertain]? He was the husband of my mother's younger sister. ... [in tears] I couldn't stay in the house myself... I was ashamed but I thought all kinds of things. For example, if my own father had been alive, there would've been less hardship. But I didn't have my own father. I was like a small boat in the sea, you see – when a storm comes, I might be dead or alive. I was irrelevant.

'I was irrelevant,' she said. We have to ask hard what makes a person say 'I was irrelevant', 'dead or alive', when she is talking about herself having been sold. She was a child and felt she did not have any other option. But to consider oneself nothing, of no importance to anyone whether dead or alive, or sold, this self-evaluation did not come from the rape *per se*. The problem was, as she now defined and stressed with the articulation of an adult, that she had felt she was powerless and alone. Though Mai did not

know how severe or on what grounds the crime was judged, a man who raped a nine-year-old-girl was in serious breach of legal justice at that time in this community and was treated as such. Yet, there are many other questions regarding social justice left unanswered. Why had she not had friends after the rape? What had caused her to feel that she could not stay in the house? Why had she felt that nothing developed but her own shame after the case was decided and the rapist legally sentenced? Why had the 'Granny' induced her mother to sell her daughter at this particular juncture? Why had the mother simultaneously suggested that her daughter sell her body – why 'well, then [*sore ja*]'?

One way to perhaps adequately address these questions is to understand Mai's situation through the 'whore stigma' hypothesis. Gail Pheterson unwraps the word 'whore' as having not only the meaning of 'prostitute' but also an adjectival connotation of 'unchastity'. Unchastity is in turn defined as illicit sex, impurity, defilement, indecency or autonomy in women (it is autonomous in a sense that it gives a girl or woman experience outside the boundaries of the chaste). In male-dominant heterosexism, Pheterson argues, all these definitions have bad connotations and apply only to girls or women – to female sexuality – and not to men, even if the females are coerced into 'unchastity'. The same definitions are acknowledged, however, among many girls and women as much as among men (Pheterson 1996: 65–70, 76–89).

If these were the case for Mai, and for her mother, the 'Granny' and her community, the girl who had lost her virginity – who had somehow *not been chaste enough* under whatever circumstances – was not socially blameless, even after the legal judgement. Once labelled 'unchaste' in such a way, she might well have felt that, devalued as a girl, she was nothing and had nothing more to lose, because she herself also held this conviction. If so, it might have even been better that she became a real whore for her family as it would bring money to the household: this could be the meaning of the 'well, then', uttered by her mother. Mai herself used the same 'well, then' in recalling the incident some 25 years later. By then she had perhaps been through different stages of understanding of the words' meanings, as well as of what had actually happened to her, as we will see in her later experiences in the next chapter.[20] The fact that the court case split her extended family into the victim's and the offender's sides, leading up to the offender's – her uncle's – sentencing, added extra pressure on Mai to leave the house, and possibly also on the mother to make her daughter do so. Mai thought this was exaggerated by her father's absence and/or the thought that the rape would not have happened if only her family had a father – the

male authority that would have defended her chastity (see Pheterson 1996: 77).

A 'whore stigma' that leaves women with the feeling of having nothing to lose seems applicable to some others among my 22 respondents: 15 of them (11 from the north or the northeast and four from the central region or Bangkok) stated that the fact that they had already been married or had had sexual relationships with men made the decision to enter sexwork easier. Yet, we have to refrain from this assumption a little and look into the cultural dimensions – whether of diversity or compatibility; firstly because Pheterson's theory is entirely based on contemporary Western women's experiences, and secondly because it is difficult to know whether chastity or virginity had a profound importance in Mai's community at the time. Some researchers on Thai sexual relations suggest that 'premarital sexual activity is still a sensitive issue in Thai society' (Pimonpan 2000: 15), but these findings differ according to the generation, the region and the location (urban or rural) of the research.[21]

Nevertheless, in a study of sexual attitudes and experiences of rural youth in the north and the northeast of Thailand, Pimonpan and his team give us a hint of what could have been behind Mai's isolation there and then. They found that among those with no history of marriage, about 95 per cent of both females and males aged 20–24, and about 65 per cent of males and 60 per cent of females aged 15–19 were against pre-marital sex for women. These figures differed among married respondents (72 per cent of males and 85 per cent of females aged 15 to 24) (ibid.: 41). Although this study was conducted in the year 2000, it also found a 'prevalence of traditional norms regarding premarital sexual behaviour of young people, particularly among females'. The young women's perceptions of their parents' attitudes toward daughters' premarital sex reflected that 'only 9% of never-married females thought that their parents would accept it and none of them said their parents would ignore it' (ibid. 44). This parental generation would be Mai's own age group.[22] However, the actual experiences reported in attitude surveys are sometimes quite different from the norms reported, and 19 per cent of females stated that they had had pre-marital sex. That said, they might have reported this easily if they were by then married to the partner with whom they had had sex before marriage. Of unmarried women, only 2 per cent said that they had had pre-marital sex, confirming the explicit social norm (ibid.: 47–8).

Applying Pimonpan's research above, it is likely that Mai had to take the normative pressure all at face value when she was too young to have experienced the more liberal and diverse actualities of sexual

relationships contrasted against the public norm. From the normative point of view as well, the fact that she had intercourse so young might well have exaggerated any stigma attached to her if it, as with Pheterson's 'whore stigma', involved impurity, defilement or indecency. The pressure on her and her alone, as with all girls and women bearing the 'whore stigma', added to the fear and pain of the rape itself.

Returning to the women who might have readily answered that they had had sex before marriage if they had gone on to marry their premarital sexual partners, we can find another understanding of the meaning of socially sanctioned pre-marital sex in this culture. It can be a public announcement for the woman to have a sexual relationship as a prelude to marriage or a familial relationship, rather than a liberal recognition of her own sexuality. Chai Podhisita, another Thai anthropologist, presented this point in his study on marriage in the rural northeast in 1982. He noted that there was a period of courtship for young women and men and that both families got to know each other before marriage. At the same time, there was an alternative to this norm in which such formal procedures might be avoided. The young couple

> may decide to take a 'short cut' to marriage by having a *soo* – culturally recognised as 'secretly' sleeping together at the girl's house. When this happens, parents, particularly of the girl, are forced to accept marriage to avoid losing face. *Soo* is sometimes done with knowledge of the parents to get around large expenses in a formal marriage ceremony (Chai 1982: 77).

Tacit acknowledgement of *soo* in the northeast can be a skilful negotiation of social norms which pleases all parties, including the community as a whole. Such is the case if the young couple decides to take this 'short cut' and the parents are either compelled to go along with it or gladly accept it as a prelude to the socially recognised marriage the couple had hoped for. However, one woman amongst my respondents was affected by an ill usage – from her point of view – of this acknowledgement. Yoon is from Ubonrachatani, another Laotian border region in the northeast. She completed primary school and stayed at home until 15 or 16, then went to Bangkok in 1989 as a paid babysitter to her aunt. In Bangkok, she also took part in the non-formal secondary education organised by the Thai government to highlight its role in social and economic development from the Fifth Plan.[23] As Yoon describes it:

> I married at 18. Mistake. He and I didn't want to marry but my parents forced us. We lived together for only six months. He was a philanderer.

> Awful. He was 32, a loose Thai man. My parents wanted us to marry just because he raped me. He told his parents just to make sure and they told mine. They said we should get married. That was the way. At that time I didn't want to have anything, had only friends. There was nothing but touching hands. I wanted to study. I wanted to dream for myself. He wanted me but didn't want to marry. *Very* selfish. Man's thought. But I didn't ask what he really wanted and didn't want to know. For six months it was hard, but after I got divorced, it was not sad or anything. My mother and father didn't say anything [about the divorce] but 'if you want to get a divorce, it's your life'. I felt like I was a grown-up then. Good experience.

One good thing about her experience of this marriage, from her perspective, was that it did not last long. The easy acceptance of the divorce by her parents coincides with every other respondent who experienced divorce or separation from a long-term male partner (14 out of the 22 women). After the divorce, Yoon too decided to go to Japan, but this attempt failed – she was not a returnee. She then decided to work, initially as a receptionist, in Thaniya. When her friend invited her to have sex with customers for more pay, saying 'What's the matter? It doesn't matter, does it? You've been married, haven't you? Don't have to be shy!' Yoon thought 'really hard', and decided: 'Yes, I've been married already'. So she took 'just one step more,' she laughed. As Mai probably did, Yoon could have been feeling that she had nothing more to lose after the rape, marriage and divorce, as she 'felt like [she] was grown up'.

She did not criticise her parents outright. But she was not close to her father and to a degree resented his multiple sexual relationships with women. When I asked what her parents were like, for instance, she answered matter-of-factly that:

> Father had four wives all living in the same village, and some 20 kids. Mother and the other wives don't talk to each other. Now my mother is the only and the first wife. Father is now . . . 63? I don't exactly know. Daughters don't have close relationship with fathers. Mother is 53.

Looking from this point of view at what she said about her former husband, though a rapist: '[h]e wanted me but didn't want to marry. *Very* selfish. Man's thought' also suggested that she was connecting her father's treatment of her mother to her husband's of herself. She was

perhaps recalling as she said this her mother's emotional difficulties. For Yoon, it was men who make it difficult for women, putting relational burdens on them. She had a clear idea of how Thai men behave and how Thai women behave.

Betrayal in relationships and opportunity in the rise of tourism: Banyaa[24]

Despite the fact that they were often in sexual relationships with them, both in private and at work, none of my respondents welcomed 'philandering' men, as they called them. They were certainly aware of this contradiction. Some were consciously trying to avoid customers they believed to be married. They were all uneasy to differing degrees with the promiscuity required on their part by their career, just as they could not escape from both the actual emotional pain of their own experiences of betrayal and the idea of conjugal monogamy as superior to commercial promiscuity. A strong normative concept was at work when they showed resistance against their own sexuality, assigned as 'bad' by society through their career. To explain this, I will introduce Banyaa, who was trying hard 'not to fall lower', as she put it, by taking philanderers as clients after facing her own husband's 'infidelity' and their subsequent divorce. Despite a high-school education, she too had to do sexwork to be economically self-sufficient. Becoming the breadwinner for her family demanded that she earn a substantial income. In this situation, what became necessary due to her personal troubles was only achievable within the limited opportunities offered by the social and economic structure of the time. Banyaa's experience, then, was not atypical among my respondents. Banyaa was from central Bangkok, a daughter of a retired office clerk. She thought marriage was a must and got married at 18. But it did not work because her 'husband had an *aijin* [lover: J]', she said, and left the house after six years of marriage and running a family business together with his parents. She had known him since childhood, a neighbour also from Bangkok. He was from a Chinese family that owned a pharmacy.

For Banyaa, unlike Yoon, it was hard because her father was not like her husband as far as she knew and she had known a generally happy family life in her childhood. It was only after her husband's death, within two years of separation, that Banyaa left his family's pharmacy and went back to her parents' house. She wanted to go back to study as she had not been to upper-secondary school (equivalent to high-school) but her

parents did not have the financial means to support the increased family members. She said:

> I wanted to go back to study very much. I am good at studying. I am a good thinker. But I thought 'never mind' as working was more important. *Okaa-san* was 60 years old. *Otou-san* was 60-plus. Whenever there are children, it is difficult. We had nothing, nothing to eat, and ate anything very little. We would think working would be better. Isn't it right? If we earn enough money then we can learn, can't we? But, if we don't have anything to eat, good clothes to wear, we have to eat first. We want our father and mother to be happy and we thought we just didn't have enough.

Banyaa started to work as a telephone operator at a restaurant in the business district – next to the entertainment area – in Bangkok around 1996. When she finished primary education, compulsory education had still only been up to primary school. Now she began a course for an upper-secondary qualification in a non-formal education scheme during weekends. She is one of only two respondents (out of 22) who completed the upper secondary level of education before sexwork. This was where she learnt English. She now speaks enough Japanese for basic daily conversation and better English. Banyaa did have a job opportunity other than sexwork: this alternative gave her a salary of 4,000 to 5,000 baht (approximately US$100–125) a month at the time. This was slightly more than the average income of women in the urban service sector in 1994 (NSO 1997: 77). For comparison, the total national average of personal outlay per capita for the year 1996 was 3,560 baht a month (NESDB 2002: 49). However, her father had already retired and her mother was working as a housemaid earning 3,000 baht a month. It would be reasonable to agree with Banyaa that her salary as the breadwinner was not enough for her parents, her two daughters and herself to live on. She had a friend – who later became her employer – already working as a bar girl in Thaniya. Eventually, she decided to work in Thaniya on the strength of this friend's assurance that she could secure enough income there for a decent standard of living for all her family.

To go back along the timescale a little, and a long way up the geographic scale, back to the rural north, Mai left home for 'work' with the 'granny' from her village in 1981, at age 11. They headed to Phangngaa, a southern prefecture on the western coast about two hours drive from Hat Yai, where Keio first went to 'work'. In Phangngaa is Phuket, now a well-advertised island resort, 'the paradise of the south'. By that time,

the problems women were facing, including 'social attitudes reflecting beliefs that men are more productive than women' and the necessity of 'the promotion of basic, formal and non-formal education' (WGCP 1989: 21), were specifically on the national development agenda for the first time alongside the problems of economic disparity (NESDB 1981: 253–7). At around the same time, the trade deficit and government budget deficit, particularly after the second oil shock in 1978, were increasing and development planners were putting more emphasis on foreign currency earnings.[25]

In the Fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan for 1982 to 1986, the Thai government implemented the Rural Alleviation Programme for specific areas and groups in order to tackle the economic disparity, intending to include people in the targeted areas within the development plan, alongside the first Long Term Women's Development Plan. The non-formal education scheme, which started back in 1938, became an important item in both plans. Simultaneously, the government started to create policies designed to change the orientation of the country's industrial structure from manufacture and construction to one that was more tourism-centred.[26] In 1982, Thailand's foreign currency earnings from tourism exceeded those from rice exports for the first time, as stated earlier. According to Kitisak and Tivaporn, one of the Thai government's guidelines for the development plan of this period was to:

> increase foreign-exchange earnings and employment opportunities for the educated urban population. This can be done by diversifying tourism services, and increasing the marketing of Thailand in foreign countries, conserving and developing tourist attractions, developing facilities for tourists and improving the design of local handicrafts and souvenirs at tourist sites (1989: 228).

This set of guidelines shows us at least two important linkages, or rather mis-linkages, between Thailand's development plans and women situated in the lower social positions, in which tourism plays a crucial part. One involves the policy of preserving traditional culture, highlighted by the activity of the National Council of Women of Thailand in the 1970s and 1980s. As discussed above, NCWT was one of the main bodies of the upper class promoting the nation's cultural sovereignty projected on to the ideal image of rural women. We can see now that its moral and ideological foundations accommodated the national economic policy in promoting tourism. The first Women's Development Plan, drawn up in

1978, also influenced the Fifth Plan, which carried out 21 programmes and commissioned 699 projects under eight governmental organisations, spending 484 million baht. Among these were the Cottage Industry and Industrial Service Divisions of the Department of Industrial Promotion, conducting handicraft training courses in order to help the promotion of tourism-related skills and products in rural areas (Darunee and Pandey 1991: 36–7).

Darunee and Pandey point out, however, that by 1986 and 1987 these programmes were coming under fierce domestic criticism. They were not economically feasible – 'generating debts faster than income' – and were practically useless for local women's needs, with imposed activities such as teaching paper-flower making that increased the women's workload; the cost of materials were also charged to the targeted women themselves (ibid.: 35–8, 57). If we look back at Kaeo's situation, girls and young women from peasant or labouring families would have had no chance to gain skills from such programmes even if they could have helped their immediate economic situations. For Daaw, too, learning such skills, even if she had some time to spare, would not have narrowed the disparity between the haves and have-nots. Neither would it have stopped Mai's mother agreeing with the 'granny' to sell her daughter. In addition, the following Sixth Economic and Social Development Plan for 1987–91 did not include any issues of women's development and 'focused on maximum exploitation of all useful resources' (ibid.: 36). It was becoming an increasingly realistic and quick remedy for girls, young women and their families in poverty to enter into or, in effect, to sell their daughters into, the sex trade, which was itself an integral part of the promoted, and certainly income-generating, tourist industry (Bell 1997: 67–9; see also Chapter 4 below).

The other link between the official development plans and women in lower social positions in terms of tourism concerns the educational attainments achieved by around 1990. These did not easily lead to job opportunities that would provide sufficient economic returns for women with family responsibilities, even for those in the capital. Banyaa finished primary school in 1985, during the period of the Fifth plan. She was only three years younger than Mai, but unlike Mai, Banyaa succeeded in continuing to lower secondary school and completed this in 1988. In 1990, those who finished upper secondary education were still in the precious few: 11.5 per cent of girls and 16.1 per cent of boys. As mentioned, Banyaa finally finished this level via non-formal education, free of charge, around 1998. By this time, because of the education reform in 1994 that made education compulsory up to the lower secondary level,

upper secondary school leavers (general and vocational) reached 49 per cent of the generation (NSO 1997: 47–8).

Some of these high-school leavers might have benefited from the employment opportunities coming up for the educated urban population in the new service sector around tourism. But when Banyaa finished high school, it was after the Asian Economic Crisis of 1997, which led to massive job losses, especially in urban Thailand. Further, there was a gender disparity in job opportunities. In the urban service sector in 1994, men were earning approximately 8,200 baht a month, more than double the figure women earned on average (approximately 4,000 baht – a figure equal to Banyaa's income as a restaurant telephone operator) (NSO 1997: 77). We have already seen that the income of 4,000 baht a month was not at all enough for a family of five, and the alternative for Banyaa was bar work. As I will describe in the details of bar work in the next chapter, a good salary for a high-class bar worker typically started from 8,000 baht in the mid-1990s, roughly equal to the average man's in the service sector. It does make perfect sense, from an economic perspective, that Banyaa 'chose' to do sexwork.

Material girls and spiritual boys – gender disparity in familial responsibility: Nok[27]

Having heard Kaeo, Daaw, Mai, Yoon and Banyaa's accounts of juggling hard work, moral pressure and senses of economic and emotional responsibility, which are not unlike other respondents' experiences of the 'pre-sex-worker' phase, one might begin to wonder what boys and young men in similar social environments were doing. In order to gain insight into this issue, I will look at my respondents' relationships with their brothers here. Among the 22 women, 17 had at least one brother. As to who helped them to support their families by any means, only three answered that their brother/s, older or younger, had offered either labour or care for the family's welfare since their childhood. In comparison, their sisters more often shouldered some of this responsibility, including financial support. There seemed to be key gender socialisation in their communities underlying this difference.

Around the 1980s to 1990s, the status of women in Thailand seemed to have earned relatively high scores where the women were visible in the public arena. There was much evidence for this in labour participation: the highest overall (across all industries) participation rates for females among ASEAN countries, at 73 per cent of the post-15-year-old female

population in 1986 (20 per cent higher than Japan). The UN Gender Development Index, using women's shares of waged employment, life expectancy and literacy compared to men, rated Thailand 33rd of 120 countries in 1992 (Darunee and Pandey 1997: 97–8). More recently, in 2002, UNIFEM's indexes for waged labour shares by gender outside of the agricultural sector showed that Thai women made up 42 per cent of labourers to men's 58 per cent, while in Japan the figure for women was 37 per cent (UNIFEM 2002: 36–7). Thailand was considered by the United Nations to have 'succeeded in building the basic human capabilities of women and men, without substantial gender disparity' at the time (Bell 1997: 61). These figures matched my impression of Bangkok and Chiangrai, in 2002–3, where urban labour, apart from *tuk-tuk* (motor-tricycle taxi), motorcycle, cab and bus drivers, appeared to be almost dominated by women. Thai women evidently constituted a formidable workforce both in the formal sector, including national and municipal council offices, schools, universities, department stores, hotels and restaurants, and the informal sector, represented by small businesses such as food stalls, roadside shops, cottage industries and, above all, bars, clubs and other entertainment establishments. This said, I would still argue contrary to the UN evaluation above.[28] It is not egalitarianism which has resulted in maintaining the range of women's capabilities in Thailand, but socio-economic structures entwined with unequal as well as complementary forms of gender disparity.

The socio-economic capabilities of women in Thailand – represented by images both strong and aesthetically pleasing as well as by their everyday presence – have been built very much upon their cultural association with the material world, documented for all five regions of Thailand in studies in anthropology, ethnography, history and the sociology of gender relations.[29] In such studies, two theories predominate regarding the origins of women's central and practical role in economic and social activities in communities: 1) the Buddhist belief that defines women's karma as being 'this-worldly' compared with men's being 'detached from corporeal desire';[30] 2) social expectations especially significant in rural areas of the north and the northeast revolving around the 'female-centred' system of lineage in which women are regarded as of structural importance in binding the spiritual guardians, relationships and property of family members in the material world through mother-to-daughter inheritance (Potter 1977/1979: 20, 99). Through these two routes comes an ideological usage of the representation of women as mentioned in the previous chapter. In daily practice, these values, together with other pragmatic factors such as economic necessity,

are interwoven into the reasons behind women's visibility in public to this day.

Public visibility and general acknowledgment of their capabilities, however, has not gained women equal access to socio-economic resources. Women have been economically and socially divided from their male counterparts as well as among themselves. Taking labour participation in the mid-1990s – after the dramatic economic growth of 1987 to 1989 and before the economic crisis – as a standard example, near equal participation had not given women equal income to men, as we saw in Banyaa's case in the service sector. Indeed, urban as well as rural women earned half the wage of men on average in all areas, except professional and administrative occupations, categorised by the National Statistical Office of Thailand. Women's low income can be understood firstly due to a larger percentage of women being unpaid family workers (20 per cent of the whole female labour force compared to 9 per cent of the male labour force), and secondly due to the far larger percentages of women occupying lower-wage jobs in the sales and services sectors where average wages are far lower than in the professional and administrative sectors.

In agriculture, which still accounted for half of the labour population in the mid-1990s (NSO 1997: 69), the participation rate of women was roughly equal to men's but most (nine in ten) of the women and men earned meagre wages of less than 3,000 baht per capita per month. The earnings in cash would have relatively minor significance in this sector as other means of exchange for labour such as communal rice harvest are still prevalent. Yet, if payment occurred, men earned more than three times more cash income than women (ibid.: 76–83). At the same time, the same document showed that once women entered into administrative or professional-sector work, the majority were able to gain as much, if not more, income in comparison to their male counterparts (ibid.: 1, 77–8, 81, 83) (see Tables 2 and 3 below). Then again, there was an obstacle to entering these sectors for some women and men: the class ceiling. The high-income posts within the administrative sector, for instance, went to government officials, and there was a long-lasting and strong trend for government officials-to-be to come from the minority aristocratic and middle-class backgrounds (see Tanaka 1975/1998: 28, 35–9). The fact that some women in these classes had equal incomes and equal occupational status to their male counterparts was thus quite distant from the reality for most women and men in the peasant and labouring classes.

The modernisation and industrialisation of Thailand under national social engineering consistently devalued agriculture. The land available to cultivate and inherit was diminishing, and women's centrality in

Table 2 Average monthly per capita income of women and men by major occupational groups and residence in 1994 (in baht)

Occupation	**Whole kingdom**		**Urban**		**Rural**	
	Women	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**
Total (mean)	2,155	4,226	5,669	8,995	1,494	3,238
Professional	9,818	11,986	10,662	13,881	9,148	10,754
Administrative	**22,087**	**21,006**	**24,399**	**32,313**	**15,509**	**10,021**
Clerical	6,769	8,870	7,740	9,545	5,431	7,804
Sales	3,781	8,845	4,708	10,313	3,241	7,613
Service	3,494	6,909	3,935	8,191	2,904	5,948
Agricultural	627	2,229	1,050	3,381	623	2,215
Production	2,527	4,405	3,585	6,229	2,194	3,652

* 4.45 baht = US$1
* *Source*: NSO Household Socio-Economic Survey (1994: 77)

Table 3 Percentage distribution of employed women and men by income group and occupation in August 1996

Income/Month Occupation	Total (baht)	≦3,000	3,001–6,000	6,001–9,000	9,001–20,000	20,001+
Total (per cent)	W 100	66.1	22.3	4.9	5.8	0.9
	M 100	54.9	27.7	7.4	8.1	1.9
Professional	W 100	4.6	**13.8**	**24.6**	**52.0**	5.0
	M 100	2.4	**13.2**	**16.2**	**55.9**	12.4
Administrative	**W 100**	**6.1**	**11.7**	**10.9**	**49.2**	**22.4**
	M 100	**13.5**	**14.0**	**9.3**	**39.6**	**23.6**
Clerical	W 100	7.5	55.1	22.2	13.2	2.0
	M 100	4.6	37.8	30.1	24.7	2.8
Sales	W 100	53.4	30.3	7.6	7.4	1.3
	M 100	46.8	31.0	9.2	10.8	2.2
Farmers	W 100	91.5	6.9	0.8	0.6	0.2
	M 100	88.4	9.1	1.2	1.1	0.2
Transport	W 100	22.9	57.5	9.8	9.5	0.3
	M 100	21.2	48.5	18.8	10.4	1.1
Craftsmen	W 100	43.6	51.7	3.5	1.0	0.2
	M 100	23.3	62.1	8.9	5.3	0.4
Service	W 100	52.7	38.7	5.7	2.5	0.4
	M 100	18.4	42.1	25.8	12.6	1.1

Source: NSO Labour Force Survey (1996: 83)

their communities organised around family relations, particularly in the agricultural north and northeast, had been diluted. The tension between women's structural importance and male formal authority in rural households came to the surface here. For example, the Land Laws of

1954 established that land was owned by the head of the household and both women and men with Thai nationality had equal rights in owning land. However, the legal, that is formal, heads of the household were predominantly men as recently as 1990 (NSO 1997: 19). In the majority of these cases another regulation stated that the wife could not hold land in her own name as long as her husband was alive as the head of the household (Amara P. 1998: 9, 34–5). Thus these laws in practice worked against the hitherto female lineage of inheritance, unwritten and hence informal, of property in agricultural families. All these factors combined with the result that more young women left rural areas than young men. They needed cash income as much as they wanted to leave the villages where they had lost their traditional status and influence from generation to generation while retaining their family responsibilities.

In any case, income earning for women was still encouraged by the belief in female karma and by the tradition of *bunkhun*. At the same time, ordination was limited to men, disallowing women from pursuing higher spiritual status; the same tradition excluded girls from being educated in the temple, the only public place for conceptual learning, including reading and writing, for the majority of people until 1921.[31] This set of beliefs and practices resulted in varying roles and expectations for girls and boys in the familial networks of Thai society, although the standards vary again along lines class and rural-urban lines.[32]

Boys were expected to provide physical labour to their local communities whereas girls were expected to be financial as well as emotional caregivers for their families. Boys were to take part in activities and politics outside of their households, from the village to the national level, whereas girls were to be responsible for the organisation of their households, including extended family matters. Boys were to 'marry out', become the formal heads of households and then provide labour to their wives' families, at the same time forming ties between their natal and marital families. Girls were at best to 'marry up' the social strata, bringing husbands into the natal households to attain good ties with economic sufficiency which was often provided by female members of the husbands' natal families, and/or political influence for the security of parents in old age, at the same time as taking care of the parents themselves.[33]

For girls and boys of the urban labouring and rural landless families, then, there were different paths to gaining status in preparation for marriage and to filling reciprocal expectations: education and ordination for boys, and gaining household and practical job skills for girls.[34] Possibly reflecting these norms, girls' school enrolment was still lower than

boys' at both the primary and lower secondary levels after compulsory education was extended to nine years in 1994.[35]

Nok articulated these different social expectations and gender roles very well. She was one of the three women, including Kaeo, born in the north in the 1960s, who clearly stated that there was gender discrimination in the decision, either their parents' or their own, that they had to stop schooling. She was also a returnee who lived in Maesai. She looked back at her family life before she went to Japan to work at a bar.

> Father said to me, 'Women don't need to go to school'. I wanted to go more but it was like that at that time [around 1980, when she was 12]. My [three] older sisters didn't go, either. So, I helped the house, rice farming, first. But because my family needed money to do the farming, Father borrowed money from *shinyou kumiai* [credit cooperatives: J] or *noukyou* [agricultural cooperatives: J]. But he couldn't even return the interest because the rice farming was always in the red. So, the oldest sister went to Japan first and I went next by the same trafficker that the sister used. I hadn't worked in the bar before then but my sister paid back her debt [of 3.5 million yen] to the trafficker quickly and the money she started sending home was so big. We wouldn't be able to have that kind of money without going to [upper] school, would we? So, I decided to go too.

Another sister stayed at home to take care of their parents. Her younger brother, through the two sisters' remittances, managed to attend upper secondary school. She explained the difference as 'he is a man, and was born later'. This remark corresponded with other respondents who helped younger siblings through education, as well as the findings of some previous studies. Marjorie A. Muecke, for one, based on her five-year anthropological work in the north of Thailand in the 1970s, states:

> Many prostitutes pay for younger siblings' education – often to prevent a sister from having to resort to prostitution – others, for parents' medical bills, and some, for a brother's ordination as a monk through which the mother and family can make Buddhist merit and gain in social status (1992: 897).

The women's act of repaying the debt to their parents through economic, emotional and labour investment into the parents' and other family members' merit was, however, not necessarily an act of self-sacrifice. It was also an act for their own gain: investment into their social and

spiritual merit. Even supporting their brothers' education would also return to the girls as merit in several ways: the brothers would support the sisters once they succeeded in attaining formal social positions; to take care of others was itself a Buddhist merit; education was associated with social and political position and the monkhood, thus the girls would become indirectly associated with the monkhood, the greatest merit of the boys; their sons becoming monks was the mothers' greatest possible merit since they could not be monks themselves, and thus the girls would repay their debt to their mothers by contributing to this (Akin 1983: 21–3).[36] More generally, the young women, before becoming sexworkers, would have foreseen their merits accumulating, and hopefully returning in future either in this life or the next, in response to their acts embedded in and endorsed by their network of relations.

To complement these social expectations, the brothers would be ordained at some point in their lives, to pay back some of their *bunkhun* to their parents and, indirectly, to the sisters who supported them through education and more.[37] But contrary to the ideal situation, again, this was not at all the case for my respondents; none of the 17 respondents who had brothers had (yet) seen a brother ordained, and they were not exceptions to the social trend. The majority of Thai men never enter the monkhood in practice. Notably, however, despite the fact that men do not become monks, the concept still underpins their ideal gender status 'detached from corporeal desire'.

Ordination has long been considered a rite of passage to adulthood for men in Thailand.[38] It is observed as a phenomenal determinant on men's life courses as well as a sort of 'buffer zone' in the socio-economic organisation of the nation going through rapid development and modernisation. Chris Lyttleton, an Australian social anthropologist researching sexualities in Southeast Asia, remarked after his fieldwork in the early 1990s: 'While numbers are dropping, a large percent [sic] of Thai men still spend a temporary period of their life in the monkhood, and thereby create "fields-of-merit" for the laity they serve' (2000: 128). Yoneo Ishii, a Japanese specialist in Thai area studies and Theravada Buddhism, also comments:

> Buddhism in Thailand embraces as much as 1.7% of the nation's male population [as monks at one point of the year around 1988]. It certainly appears to be a strange scene for the visitor that the bulk of educated boys and young men in their peak of work capacities are forming such an introverted group, not being involved in any production activities nor contributing their talents to society (1991/2002: 162).[39]

Ordination, however, can seem to be *only* practised by a minority of men, depending on the perspective of the observer/analyst. Empirical research conducted and analysed by Thai researchers or teams including Thai researchers tends to find the practice being less widespread than expected. 'It is quite surprising,' the 1994 General Family Survey report notes, for instance, 'to find out that 89% of male respondents [among 1,046 single or ever-married heads of households or their spouses across the nation] never become novices,[40] and 60% of them never entered the monkhood' (Bhassorn et al. 1995: 33). Apichat Chamratrithirong found that of 1,670 ever-married interviewees in the central region and Bangkok in 1978 and 1979 ordination before marriage, as the rite of becoming an adult, was considered the norm by the vast majority, regardless of gender and with only slight differences between urban and rural areas (about eight in ten versus nine to ten in ten respondents, respectively). But about 5 to 6 in 10 urban men and 2 in 10 men in rural areas in this study were reported not to have been ordained yet (1983: 238, 243–244). Anthony, Havanon and Knodel emphasised a regional distinction in the north. They found that ordination was not regarded as 'a necessary or desirable prerequisite of marriage for men' in the northern villages in their nation-wide group discussions and interviews with ever-married women and men in 1981 (1983: 182–4, 188, 196).

There was no statistical material available to my knowledge as of March 2002 nor did I systematically ask my respondents about details as to the cost of ordination. But it would clearly be an expensive affair to engage in the ceremony of ordination itself and the necessary subsequent banquet for the whole community. Although there is a route for boys, regardless of their economic/class background, to become novices at temples and be educated, then enter the monkhood at the age of 20 (Aoki 1979/1991: 105), the majority of men, who never become novices, would need to obtain a sponsor for the initial cost.[41] If so, the lack of the initial financial means, despite their sisters' remittances, might be a reason for my respondents' brothers not entering the monkhood.

Nevertheless, the gap between the expectation and the norm *vis-à-vis* the practice of male ordination confirms some of my respondents' comments on their brothers' being 'irresponsible' or 'childish', leading also to the overall gender status of men. The ideal male status attached to ordination, the access to monkhood – and the rite of adulthood, to fulfil the higher spiritual status of being born male, and to be a responsible member of society by repaying *bunkhun* – was generalised and widely shared among my respondents and their family members. This status further became independent from the condition that men 'should' be

ordained to fulfil this ideal. Whilst women were required to be responsible for their households from their early childhood and to grow up quickly in practical terms, men could stay in pre-adulthood for as long as they wished, by merit of their potential capability by virtue of being born male, to grow up to reach a higher position. The potential and the higher position attainable were 'other-worldly', irrelevant to this practical material world. Thus it would not damage their gender status whether they became ordained or not, just as it would not matter much whether they could do anything practical.

Vanlandingham and Grandjean illustrate this gender role protocol by referring to folklore suggesting that a '"a typical Thai man" is ultimately incapable of handling the responsibility that goes along with the power to make important decisions' while 'Thai women are expected to be reliable and reasonable, responsible for the smooth functioning of the household' (1997: 132).[42] Then again, this practical power reversal between the genders does not undermine men's status because being out of touch with social constraints and responsibility is implicitly valued highly in the Theravada Buddhist ideal of 'other-worldliness'. Thus my respondents' brothers and other male family members were in some sense exempt from providing support to their families without ever losing face, whereas the women were pressurised and compelled to do so without their social position in this world rising up at all.

Conclusion

There were many reasons behind the decisions and actions leading up to my respondents' involvement in sexwork. Their perceptions reflecting their own needs, hopes, beliefs and expectations were balanced with life conditions they saw as real and immediate. Based on these perceptions and their subsequent judgements, they decided what they must do or should do and how to do it. Both their perceptions and foreseeable conditions corresponded with the economic, political, historical, cultural and/or relational conditions of the communities around them. If we take account of these subjective and objective conditions in understanding the respondents' decisions and actions, the latter appear to be very much rational choices, or the inevitable 'choices' that Howard Becker called results of 'socially structured sources of "strain"' (1963/1991: 26). Given social structure, Becker points out, people stepping into activities termed 'deviant' by society do not have to be innately different from others. On the contrary, he argues, most of them would define themselves rather conventionally. We can trace this by listening to their

'techniques of neutralization' or 'justification' of their activities (ibid.: 28). This is a convincing concept in examining what was unfolding in the common conditions of the 'pre-sex-worker phase' for my respondents. They looked back on their lives before becoming sexworkers, in which they acted as daughters, wives, mothers and sisters, in their understanding of the responsibilities which were reflections of the society's expectations of them; they acted in accordance with their roles as women. The fact that they were willing to explain these preconditions to me, someone trying to record their experiences, demonstrates their belief in what they talked about as justifiable; they presented their actions as existing within the acceptable domain of society according to the socio-economic and cultural conditions of their experiences.

However, I should clarify that in most cases my respondents did *not* wish their narratives to be understood as decisions and actions to intentionally 'become sexworkers'. There were women, such as Daaw and Banyaa, who were over the age of consent for sexual intercourse (16 in the Thai Penal Code), consciously prepared to do sexwork and willing to do so. There were women, such as Kaeo and Mai, who were children when they decided by themselves or were sold into the sex trade. Putting aside the question of degrees and qualities of each woman's consent, they all eventually decided, as a consequence of social pressure, to '*do* sexwork'. What they did was not precisely to decide or act to '*become* sexworkers'; even with their own will to 'do sexwork': they did not consciously plan or aim to 'be sexworkers'. Before they actually went into the career, what they would become had not been anticipated in concrete terms, and becoming sexworkers was only possible after experiencing the career and the social assignment of 'deviancy' to it. This is not to say that women's consent should be treated as false consciousness, or that what they really became was sexual slaves. Their understanding and perceptions did not, of course, include their future thoughts and feelings, or their circumstances which would change along with the development of this particular career. Thus, whether they would become sexworkers or trapped in situations of slavery is still at this point an open question; whether this stage of their life course is the 'pre-sexworker phase' or the 'pre-sexual-slave phase' depends not on their consent to being involved in sexwork but on their experiences in the following stages.

That said, there is an exceptional point at which the agents' consent, or non-consent, should be in question from the first stage. For those who were children, such as Kaeo, when they *decided* to go into the career, we would have to question if their rights to education and protection from abuse and exploitation of their labour should have overridden their own

consent to work at all, not to mention to work in the sex industry. For those who had been deceived into or had clearly stated that it was not their decision to go into the industry, such as Mai, we would have to hold the perpetrators responsible for violation of basic human rights regardless of the victims' ages. Although I do not have space in this study to deal with an examination into issues of human rights *per se*, including how old the age of consent should be, I need to note that cases involving children (meaning, provisionally, people under the legal age of consent) and outright deception have to be treated as not being the agents' actions toward sexwork as opposed to sexual slavery *at this stage*. If the loss of social resources, especially networks of relations, is the nexus of being trapped in a situation of slavery, as argued in Chapter 1, these agents' would be moving more toward sexual slavery than sexwork, because the loss of contact with the social networks in their communities of origin would be almost inevitable for girls more than for adult women, thus obstructing their capacity to act against the situation.

In contrast, even without the agents' consent or even if they were children at the time of these decisions and actions, and even if they were becoming trapped in situations of slavery, this stage would be the 'pre-sexworker' phase if they became sexworkers later in their life course. I also argue that, even with those who were children and/or effectively sold into the sex industry, we need to first take their rational reflexive explanations of the inevitable compliance to the situation into account as we would do with those who consented and were willing. Then, we can avoid denying them their agency, and focus on potential changes in subjective and objective conditions in bringing about the possibility of them reclaiming the ability to act at any time.

There is one different type of trigger I did not mention in this chapter: the decision to become a sexworker resulting from wanting to have a more enjoyable life somewhere else. I will look at this in the next chapter, giving special attention to the implications of the *pre*conditions to 'becoming sexworkers' being more entangled with the conditions of 'becoming and being sexworkers', in some cases involving this particular trigger. I will also look further into the sense of duty and obligation among sexworkers toward their mothers, situated in a continuum with this chapter's phase of 'before becoming sexworkers'. As the next phase 'becoming and being sexworkers' involves many similarities in 'techniques of neutralization' or 'justification', this sense of duty and obligation serves as a bridging concept.

3
Becoming Sexworkers, Being Sexworkers

For women involved in sexwork, accepting to a certain extent the societal assumption of 'deviancy' attached to this status may facilitate the process of making oneself 'at home' and taking advantage of whatever social supports and resources are available. This chapter focuses thematically on current working conditions and the workplace relationships and other support networks respondents can use to bridge the gap between 'deviant' career and the normative, complying side of their identities as members of society. Their working conditions range from the unsustainably degrading to agreeable or even enjoyable positions considered within the industry to be 'privileged'. Workplace relationships include friendships with colleagues, the patronship of managers, and sexual relationships with customers, each encompassing a range of complex feelings including affection, businesslike emotional alienation and hatred. Their experiences of other available support networks and resources are as firmly linked as their experiences of the career are to respondents' emotional, practical and spiritual capacities. I will also consider the significance of female lineage in agricultural communities in the north and northeast of Thailand, reflected still today in relationships with mothers and in the significance of motherhood in their culture. Buddhist practice also features as a vital factor for respondents in nurturing the ability to find and use resources for survival. Every support network within each cultural context sustains the women living within the very society that weighs them down with labels of 'bad' or 'deviant'.

As illustrated in Chapter 1, sexwork as a career is unique for two reasons: 1) the social meanings attached to the career are incurred by the specific type of sexual transaction – commercial and non-monogamous – involved; and 2) these social meanings undermine the worker's self-esteem and social status through stigma, exposing her to the

risk of economic, sexual and emotional exploitation. Under this burden, sexworkers nevertheless develop skills for retaining self-esteem and alleviating the risk of exploitation, at the very least in their subjective perceptions. They create skills through practical dealings with the difficulties of their daily work and personal lives, using social resources still available from the wider society as well as those that emerge through their work.

Some women, like the central figure Kaeo in this study, become gradually entrenched within the dire situations of slavery that can grow out of organised trafficking and transborder migration to Japan. While it is not my conviction that such extreme situations are the most prevalent in either migrant work or the sex industry, I give much space to describing and analysing these respondents' experiences here and in the following chapter. After all, such extreme cases illuminate the fundamental issues of exploitation, inequality and violence against women and minorities in both Thai and Japanese societies, as well as in the operation of the globalised sex trade itself. Further, focusing specifically on those who have experienced the situation of slavery highlights for us the shifting perceptions of sexworkers about their own situations of work or slavery, along the continuum between 'I have no control over my situation' and 'I have ample space to manoeuvre of my own will'.

Given that my respondents decided and acted *not* on the decision to '*become* sexworkers' but rather to '*do* sexwork' (however much or little they knew about the nature of the work in the 'pre-sexworker phase'), they 'became sexworkers' only after having certain experiences recognisable to themselves as characteristic of the title. That recognition, however, was not a discovery of their inherent sexworker identities; there is no essential characteristic that defines a sexworker type. Rather, it is a reflexive recognition of having experienced something associated with sexworkers within their society. Hence, this subjective perception cannot exist without objective occurrences or other parties' direct or indirect contribution to its making within the social environment. The women's identification as sexworkers in this environment, rather than their consent to 'do sexwork', occurs gradually after the career's commencement, cementing after they have been in the career for quite some time. This more or less discursive shift from 'becoming' to 'being' sexworkers will be illustrated here.

Step one – trap, betrayal and embitterment: Mai and Kaeo

Mai experienced betrayal and sheer mortification – shame, remorse and anger – at the beginning of her career. Invited by her mother to leave her

community and 'sell her body' in the sex trade, Mai 'knew' in an abstract sense what she would have to do upon reaching the destination. She was taken by the 'granny' to the first brothel, which was near a tourist attraction. There, because she was physically too small for sexual intercourse, she was made to work as a housemaid at first. Her acknowledgement of what 'selling her body' actually meant came with her first encounter with a customer. At least in retrospect, this experience made her 'knowing' concrete, as she recalled it with specific details including date and price. She said:

> The first time was 27th December, 2525 [1982].[1] I remember it as I was sold for the first time. The man was an old Thai, [the price he paid] was 3,000 baht [approximately US$300 at the 1980 exchange rate]. But the bar took it. 1,000 baht for a month was the fixed salary. *Kyukei* [short session, literally. rest: J] was 100 baht. The second time was 2,000 baht. Then 1,000 baht, [and] after 3 months, it was 500 baht, then 100 baht ... *Tomari* [overnight: J] was 1,000 baht.

After a deep breath she continued: 'Mortifying. But there was no choice. More study could have been better.'[2]

Kaeo also 'knew' what kind of work she would be doing when somebody came to pay money and take her away. Some neighbours, who had already been away and come back to build houses, had told her about the job. In her case, it was a 'voluntary' decision to take the offer. But being a child, her first experience was very similar to Mai's. Kaeo remembered:

> Mother went to Hat Yai with me and she went back home with the money. The [condition of the] indenture was that they would pay all the money [to her mother] in advance. But I couldn't start working immediately as I was too small-built. For two or three months, I worked as a maid for the shop [brothel].

Kaeo's story of being trafficked, becoming a sexworker, migrating to Japan and coming back has been published in Japanese by her supporters. In that account, she looks back at her first encounter with a customer in detail. It was a rich Chinese Thai man to whom she ended up 'selling my virginity to' at 13. She had scarce knowledge about sexual intercourse and was just 'dead scared and running round and round around the bed, crying, trying to run away'. Ultimately, though, she had to accept him because she needed the money – which the trafficker had already given

to her mother – to buy land and save her family from eviction (Kamarad 1998: 33).

Like Mai's, Kaeo's memory of this experience is tied to a concrete monetary value, as she too remembers that the first time, 'selling my virginity, earned 3,000 baht' in 1976. Mai could not reject and Kaeo 'consented' to the idea of selling their bodies or their virginity because their mothers had agreed to prepaid sums from the traffickers, but their first realisations of what the work entailed came through rape rather than work. The subjective sense of betrayal made their experience more traumatic than that of other interviewees, with the exception of Sand, whose entrance into the sex trade detailed later in this chapter was marked by outright deception. For Mai and Kaeo, it seemed that a deeper trust had been shattered as their mothers were involved in the sale of them, even if not so actively, as they, as children, had been close to their mothers.

What Mai and Kaeo faced was clearly illegal. For a man to have sexual intercourse with a woman under 15 years of age, even with her consent, constitutes rape under Thai Penal Code Section 276 and 277, and did at the time of Mai's and Kaeo's plights (Amara and Wimolsiri 1998: 8, 32).

In 1972, employment of children under the age of 13 without securing their right to compulsory education was made illegal (ibid.: 7, 31). The Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Women and Children Act prohibiting the trafficking of women and children for other's indecent acts, exploitation and exposure including illegal labour, had been in effect since 1928 (ibid.: 9, 33), but no action was taken against anyone as far as Kaeo and Mai knew. Having temporarily lost contact with their human relations networks outside the sex trade, the girls could not run away. Their situation at this point was thus, as pointed out in Chapter 1, one of slavery rather than employment, to which they were as children at high risk. Laws in place to prevent such occurrences were ineffective, despite the involvement of many capable adults in higher social positions.

The lack of action to end their enslavement was due in part to such objective conditions as Thai jurisdiction issues, the girls' poverty and lack of education, and the structural transformation of the economy and polity within the context of the international marketplace. As already shown, however, the traffickers' plans could not be enacted without the will and actions of the agents involved informed by their various subjective perceptions of these conditions.

Did the girls and the adults around them all contribute to the situation as social agents equally, then? The answer for me is 'no', because each agent practised to a different degree her/his capability to act for

or against. The social position in which each agent was situated, at that particular time in that particular place, and from which they acted accordingly, is the basis of this difference. These positions in society were not, however, defined by one category of hierarchical order, but by concomitant hierarchies of gender, class, region, age and familial role. And Mai and Kaeo, along with many others beginning their career in the Thai sex industry, were situated at the bottom of each of these hierarchies. Accordingly, they had the least chance of acting against the situation: they had scarcely any power over the other agents involved in the trade.

It is in one sense respectful of an analyst to argue that the agent in focus does not lose her/his agency – the capability to act – under any disempowering circumstances (see Giddens 1984/2001: 9). But in some cases, this is cruelly simpler for an analyst to suggest than for the actual person in the situation to embody. From the girls' point of view above, they lost the capability to act against the situation, at least temporally. This was due to a context that deprived them of any sense that they might have other choices. The external structure acted as an intractable iron cage for Mai and Kaeo (see Stones 2005: 66–7). It was only later in their career development that they gradually enabled themselves by surviving and eventually finding a way out of their situations. A long-term process of changes within both themselves and their social environments was required for the agents here to regain their capability to 'do otherwise'.

Step two – becoming sexworkers

Mai 'worked', in her word, in Phangngaa for several years. She paid back the 'debt' to the brothel for the advance that her mother had received. Then she decided to go to Bangkok to earn more, this time for herself as well as for her family. In Bangkok, she worked for about three years before going to Japan in 1991. The Thai woman who introduced Mai to the Japanese route was the 'boss' at the Bangkok bar where she was working at that time. After emigrating, she worked in bars and restaurants, with or without sexual services, and sometimes in other businesses such as garment factories, for more than five years. Her subjective sense of what she was doing was always that it was 'work', with the single exception of that first encounter.

Kaeo was more precise about her transition from a situation of slavery into one of becoming a sexworker. She talked about what happened after her initial experience, stating that 'after paying off the indenture, we could go anywhere. When changing shops, there would be friends telling me where I would be able to earn more, and so on'. Her words

implied that her feeling of entrapment had eased a great deal compared to the first experience of 'running round and round around the bed, crying, trying to run away' in vain. She also talked about her 'career' development, beginning in the first brothel.

> The first shop was a Soap Land.[3] I learned how to massage there. There is a *hinadan* [literally, tiered stand for dolls: J] and we wore numbers and customers chose us by them. I worked from morning to late in the night – it depended, but usually from 8 or 9 to noon for lunch and to 4, when we had a break, and had dinner and a shower, then till midnight. They checked the time we worked. If there was a customer, we worked till he finished, but if there was no one, we didn't have to do anything, it was *sabaay* [relaxing: T]. We could write letters. Going out was OK too if we wrote down the reasons to the owner.

Later in the same interview I asked what she was thinking when she was having sex with a customer during that time. She said:

> I was a child and scared. When I would have to sleep with a man, I wasn't thinking anything. I was scared but there wasn't AIDS at that time yet. I wanted to earn money by myself. I had already decided to do that. Sometimes I had to cry but there was no point thinking anything. Of course, [when you are] sleeping with a different man every day, each day, sometimes there will be a man who's so slow to finish. I had to cry but endured by thinking, 'It's for money, it's for money . . .'

In both accounts, we can see Becker's 'technique of neutralization' (see Introduction). In the first quotation, Kaeo explained her life in the brothel as a daily routine, sounding not particularly different from any other job, apart from the *hinadan*. Even the long working hours (15 to 16 hours a day) might have informed Kaeo's sense of being 'normal', 'neutralizing' her participation in the sex industry.

For reference, a study of 426 workers in the informal sector in Bangkok in 1996 shows that they had an *average* working day of 12 to 16 hours. Their working hours depended on occupation but the one with the longest working hours (16 hours) in this study was that of 'workers in sub-contract sewing manufacture'. For this group, the pattern of having breaks twice a day at mealtimes was the same as Kaeo's in the sex industry. This occupation employed more women (65.6 per cent) than men, more than a third of them teenagers. It is also phenomenal that *all* 80

workers in the study, both women and men, employed in this kind of manufacture work were immigrants from other regions of Thailand (Fujimaki 2001: 108, 111, 116). In terms of this dimension of occupational conditions, and her peer social group sharing them, Kaeo's occupation is comparable.[4]

Kaeo also acquired necessary skills through on-the-job training. Acknowledging, explaining, then reflexively understanding what she was doing as a job was making her a worker rather than a slave. This process must have been important to Kaeo in feeling that she was 'normal'. Unlike a slave, she may have thought, she was fed and had free time to eat, shower and do as she chose. It was sometimes even relaxing. Here, she used *'sabaay'*, a highly valued and frequently used concept in Thai daily life that connotes a state of no suffering (Tomita 1987/1997: 1443). She could communicate with the outside world by writing letters or going out, albeit with the owner's permission. The difference between her experience during this time and the situation of slavery categorised as Social Death, detailed in Chapter 1, is apparent.

In the second quotation, Kaeo mentioned being as scared as a powerless child again, but this time she 'normalised' or 'neutralised' her feeling by lightening it in comparison with the fear of AIDS. She also neutralised the feeling by replacing it with the will to earn money prevalent since she decided to go to Hat Yai for her family. She was still crying sometimes, but a part of her at least succeeded in alienating herself from the fear by denying it, thinking rationally that 'there was no point thinking anything' and by replacing any worries with the reminder that 'it's for money, it's for money...'

This transition, though painful, is not unlike other respondents' career development in becoming sexworkers. The 'technique of neutralization' is a common theme also in the experiences of those who entered the sex industry after working in a different industry, as with Banyaa in the previous chapter, and those who were neither exposed to deception and trafficking nor had been sold into the sex industry.

Mother, money, daughter and duty: Kaeo and Mai

My respondents' relationships with their mothers seemed to be a key issue around which their notions of family responsibility revolved. The importance of mothers was firmly embedded in the two major cultural factors defining women's central role in practical and economic activities within the family and the community: gendered karma and the 'female-centred system' of lineage. These factors determined *bunkhun* reciprocity between mothers and children and were determined by it, as seen in

Chapter 2. A strong sense of responsibility toward the family was one of the most common preconditions for my respondents for entering into the sex industry, and a sense of duty and obligation toward the mother has remained with most of them throughout their careers. Indeed, their perceptions about this relationship serve as a bridging condition between career stages.

Mother and money are linked for my respondents as important issues. Sixteen of the 22 voiced a strong sense of duty and obligation toward their mothers, stating that they wanted their mothers to be happy and that their mothers' well-being depended on their economic contributions. This devotion coexists with difficulty, tension or contradiction in some of their accounts of their mother-daughter relationships.

When Kaeo began to talk about the journey with her mother to Hat Yai, where her 'career' would commence first in a situation of slavery and then as a sexworker, she started by summarising what she had gained.

> For the first time, I earned by myself and really helped my mother. We bought the land with this money and I have kept the land to this day. It's worth more than 100,000 baht [approx. US$3,000] now! This is the first thing I ever earned for something that was really difficult: I would *NOT* sell it.

Although her mother did not act to prevent Kaeo's suffering, Kaeo was protective about her mother and other members of her family. In the abovementioned correspondence with her Japanese supporters, Kaeo stressed that they had never forced or enticed her to do prostitution, that it was her own decision 'to sacrifice all of myself'. Her mother was giving her all, Kaeo stated, and bearing oppressive hardships, for the family to survive without giving her little sister up for adoption. She thought that she could not put more of a burden on her mother (Kamarad 1998: 119).

Kaeo's decision to act in order to save her mother and the house of her family was rewarded in her achievement of this aim. She was well aware, at the time of our interview, of the cost that came with her choice of career and the hardship she had been through by staying within it. Nevertheless, she was proud of having maintained the material realisation of that first aim – the land, the proof of her sacrifice – that was well valued by societal and market standards. This proof was still in her possession, signifying that she had not lost touch with the society and the community she had left. The land was the material symbol of her 'normality' within the society, and in this she found support. Her becoming and being a sexworker was, at least by this criterion, 'justified'.

In her account, Mai did not seem to share Kaeo's sense of having been rewarded. She talked about her relationship with her mother at length, both before and after breaking off her account of the rape that triggered the adults around her to sell her. It had been a difficult relationship and she made no effort to hide this. As mentioned earlier, in a life course that complicates Goffman's and Becker's step-by-step career development (see Introduction), Mai would work not only in the sex industry but also in hairdressing, manufacturing and the food industry in Bangkok, Japan and elsewhere after leaving home for Phangngaa at 11. She twice attempted to go back home and try to live with her mother, failed, and resorted to the sex industry, thus repeating the process of becoming a sexworker on two more occasions. She reflected upon her feelings about her mother and sending money home to her family all through these years:

> When I was sending money, I was thinking ... that I myself having a hard time was all right but others having a hard time was pitiful. My mother was getting old. When I was small, we had no clothes, no shoes, so if there is something she wants to have now, I will give it to her. I think differently from my mother. When they [the mother's household] needed rice fields, I bought them. When they needed dry fields, I bought them. When they wanted cows, I bought them. But mother didn't say anything to me when they [later] sold them. My younger [step] sister wanted a motorbike, and I bought it. Though it was under my name, they didn't allow me to ride it. They would be nagging a lot and wouldn't allow my child [the only son] to ride on it either. I got angry and said, 'It was my money and under my name, so it was a debt for you! Return it please!' I said, 'It was the money that I got by sleeping with men. Do you know how many men *YOU*'d have to sleep with to make a bike?' Then, Mother too got really mad ...

Yet Mai, like many other respondents who had been to numerous places and taken on a range of work in various situations, still regarded the tie to her mother as inevitable and unbreakable. Toward the end of the interview, when I asked what she would like to be doing in the near future, she referred to her mother again.

> I don't get on well with my mother but there is no choice: I help her because she is my mother. Mother is not learning though. I don't either but I have seen things and Mother only knows [the area] around her own house in the countryside. She doesn't think well. But I cannot give in and she cannot give in either ... Everything is about Mother,

> bad things are about Mother too. I love her. There is no other way. For example, if I didn't have Mother when I was a child, I can't be sure what'd have happened to me, you see.

Despite their distance in both physical and emotional senses, Mai spoke as though her mother had been with her throughout her life. Further, from Mai's point of view her mother had remained unchanged, still physically 'around her own house in the countryside' where Mai could no longer go back and live, with 'everything', including 'love' as well as 'bad things' connected to her. This tie to her mother existed and would continue to exist regardless of what may actually happen between them or Mai's feelings about these happenings; unlike Kaeo, Mai's contribution toward her mother's well-being – emotional investment realised in rice fields, dry fields, cows and a motorbike – seems as if it was never reciprocated.

The tension arising here appears to stem from the conflict between the individuals' real situation and a set of social norms prominent in Thailand at large surrounding the ideal mother-daughter relationship, derived again from *bunkhun*. Even though there are social-economic-historical changes to contest against *bunkhun* as a norm, it is still alive in the sense that a child is indebted to her/his mother from birth, such that s/he cannot repay the debt no matter what s/he does in her/his lifetime; thus, his/her obligation to repay the debt continues regardless of what the mother does or fails to do (Akin 1983: 3–5). As mentioned in Chapter 1, both Buapun and Mills agree that the growing scarcity of land with the demand for a new labour force transformed the nature of *bunkhun* reciprocity during the 30 years of industrialisation. Parents no longer have land to spare for the children, nor do they have the material means to sustain increasing pressure to buy consumer goods. Labour recruitment has begun to occur in rural areas, and the cultural ideas of rights, obligations and responsibilities have been recreated to enable parents' households to utilise their children's paid labour to secure the parents' livelihoods (Buapun 1999: 8, Mills 1997: 139).

Andrea Whittaker adds a gendered dimension here. Especially for the small agricultural landholders, three major factors affected women's relationships with the former generation and with the next: labour hitherto enmeshed with farming, such as housework, became 'unpaid work' by definition valued less in the market governed by monetary exchange; the legal registration of land ownership under men's names during the development planning, combined with other urban middle-class industrial values that disregard women's labour in agriculture, has rendered the

culturally relevant pattern of land inheritance through women's lineage unrecognisable; and the decreasing size of children's land inheritance shares made inheritance through male heirs increasingly desirable, given that they may well marry women whose lands would be too small to support new agricultural households (2000: 33–4).

These factors pushed young people out of the villages, and of those who migrated before marriage in Whittaker's study, females outnumbered males by 17 per cent. These women migrated predominantly to Bangkok, although neither they nor the other villagers explicitly state whether they had entered the sex industry. The village respondents did acknowledge, however, that daughters were far more reliable in sending money back to their parents and family (ibid.: 36–8). Amara Pongsapich agrees that 'female migrants send money home more regularly and in larger amounts than male migrants' in Thailand as a whole (1997: 35). The decreasing value of women's rural village labour, along with the rise of the monetary exchange value in the market, seemed to have rendered mothers in need of more financial support than before. It also led daughters to feel a stronger obligation to support their mothers than their fathers.

Let us compare some of the expectations and realities of women's lineage in Figure 3 below. The expectation that a woman's duty is primarily directed toward her parents, when combined with the increasing economic vulnerability of older women in the village, must have informed the women surveyed, whether consciously or not, of the need to prepare for their own old age. As daughters, they were expected and were themselves expecting to fulfil their duty toward their mothers.

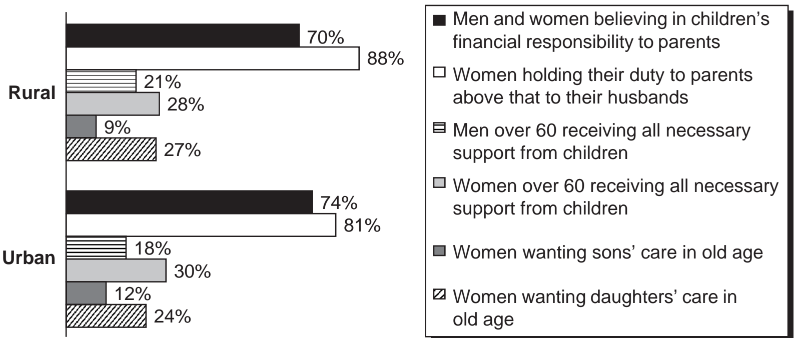


Figure 3 Gendered attitudes towards duty and obligation
Source: General Family Survey, 1994 (Bhassorn et al. 1995: 52–3, 61–3, 94–7).[5]

Simultaneously, as mothers they were expecting their daughters to fulfil a duty toward them. Were this lineage of women's duty to work as it was supposed to have done, it *was* a reciprocal act. Women in a rural area undergoing industrialisation were somehow knitting their own safety net against the position of gendered disadvantage in which they were situated through the increasing denial of their lineage of material means.

Through the lineage of duty, the 'essence' of the *bunkhun* relationship in Akin's notion survives after its transformation: it is the mother that matters and reciprocity that underlies the relationship, because in the end *bunkhun* should come back to the dutiful giver through her own daughters.

The house and the material girl: Yoon

The 'female-centred system' of lineage with regard to family land and dwellings has enhanced women's material capability in the material world. But it has also been integral to the spiritual well-being of family members. Female lineage in this sense stretches beyond living people, bonding them with their ancestors (Potter 1977/1979: 20, 99). And it still seemed to have value among my respondents even when living in Bangkok or Japan. The traditional ties in the agricultural orthodoxy have been cut, difficult if not impossible to connect in the same manner again. Because of this, however, women who migrated to the cities often kept their female lineage by creating new ways of tying themselves to family back in their communities of origin. They created new ties both imagined and material, for both their spiritual and material well-being.

In this context, building a house seemed to have a special significance. For a woman, the house, the material centre of the female lineage, is an entity by which she acknowledged herself to be connected to and to have been recognised by her community. A house was quite evidently a material entity. But for a Thai sexworker there seemed to be something more than a description of concrete material, or the acquisition of a property, in building a house. It was physical but also symbolic. It was symbolic but not necessarily incorporated entirely into the symbolism of exchange value in the market to show that the builder had earned a lot of money: it had other significance as well. The Thai word *baan* for 'home' or 'house' has a far-reaching feel and multiple meanings stretching from one's house or home to one's village, prefecture and country (see Tomita 1987/1997: 824–6), an apt signifier for the 'community of imagination', a broad area to which my respondents felt or wished they belonged, especially while abroad. They aimed to build actual houses in part to create in reality this 'area' that was the object of their longing and want.

In 'community of imagination', a concept borrowed and expanded from Benedict Anderson, 'Thailand' itself as a nation state or polity, as an entity that contains 'Thai culture', 'Thai society', 'Thai people', a history, a way of life or a sentiment, *does not exist* as a physical construction (see Anderson 1991/2003: 5–6, 154). But it undoubtedly existed in my respondents' daily life thoughts and feelings as one of the governing elements that controlled their practical situations via numerous factors: economic status; education; contact with the police, the municipal offices or the embassy; their (or their children's) national identity cards, passports and visas and so on. Here, it was perceived as an aloof entity, far above their reach and offering little support to them psychologically, emotionally or even practically in legal and administrative areas.

At the same time, however, 'Thailand' existed as their *baan*, representing the whole notion of a place that they *kit tung* [think of, long for: T], or felt or wished they belonged to, especially for those who had been abroad. 'Thailand' as 'home' as such existed in between 'real' people, whom they knew personally and individually – mother and father, sisters and brothers, children, friends, husbands, lovers, bosses – and 'real' places – their houses, land, rice fields, bars, brothels, apartments, streets, the ports they departed from either smuggled or as 'tourists'. In my respondents' imaginations, in contrast to their practical thoughts, 'Thailand' was often helping them, a psychological, emotional and spiritual support, as memories, trusted beliefs and imaginary nourishment. 'Thailand' in this sense was, as all but one of my respondents were practising followers of Thai Buddhism, close to their religion and their moral being. It encompassed their 'badness' – deviancy – as sexworkers as well as their 'goodness' as sensible members of society who recognise the rules dividing 'good' from 'bad'.

It should be remembered that these people and places, this 'Thailand' of their *baan* or community of imagination, were not physically present in the women's current daily lives. Indeed, the 'community of intimacy', the space shared with intimate relations such as sexual and life-sharing partners, family members, kinship members and possibly close friends, would sometimes need to be sustained through the agent's imagination. So too would aspect of the 'community of association', a wider-spanning space encompassing people in socially functional groups with the agent: family and kinship members again, schoolmates and teachers, associates at the workplace, neighbours, the congregation of a temple, acquaintances from commercial activities or legal contracts and administration, members of other various institutions, and friends from any of these groups. Hence, despite the frequent overlapping of the three

communities within the agent's thoughts, there is at the same time an inevitable irreconcilable gap between the currently lived communities and the imagined.

Daaw in the previous chapter saw houses built with young women's remittances as an incentive to venture to Bangkok and then on to Japan. Kaeo took great pride in having saved her family from eviction. Later on, she contributed to the building of her brother's house and built her own. Mai had built houses for her mother and for herself by the time she came back to Chiangrai from her long journey of becoming and being a sex-worker. Three other returnees also built multiple houses in their villages for themselves and their families, rendering six out of seven returnees successful on this account.[6] Two out of three women currently living in Japan also reported having built houses for their parents. Among 12 women who had not worked in Japan, building houses for their families was also a goal of their work. However, without the substantial difference in the value of the currencies, only Yoon had built houses for her parents in her village and for herself in Bangkok with Thai earnings alone. This held a particularly strong significance for her, very much one of mother-daughter lineage adapted to a modern setting.

Divorcing her husband, Yoon contemplated what she should do with her life.

> I wanted to study but was already 20 years old and my father and mother were getting old. I couldn't stay there [in her aunt's house] doing nothing and I had my own life to deal with. I had my dream: I wanted to have a house.

She described an unsuccessful attempt to go to Japan, and continued:

> I then asked myself what I could do. Just as I was thinking, a friend working in Thaniya said – lied – to me that she was a cashier. At that time, I was still like a kid. I asked, 'How much is the salary?' 'About 8,000'. 'Colossal!!' I had never received a wage at that time and thought 8,000 was huge. 'If I had 8,000, I could save little by little and send it to my father and mother and I could build a house, I could do it!' I thought.

But her beginning wage as a bar receptionist was 6,500 baht a month, 'not enough to build a house and not enough to buy food and pay rent'. This was when she 'thought very hard' and decided to 'sell myself'. The decision was made not only because she was already sexually experienced

nor was it only because she was already considered to have entered into a 'deviant' career, as stated in the previous chapter. When Yoon reflected on her motivation, she recognised that it was elsewhere:

> I asked myself again 'what are you here for?' and answered 'I want a house of my own, for a better life for tomorrow.' And, 'Yes, that's true.' 'Well then, there is no other choice.'

Even earning 8,000 baht [approximately $US200] or more per month 'doing it 100 per cent', she still did not have enough to build the house of her dreams. In 1994, at around the time Yoon started working in the bar, the average household expenditure in her native area of the north-east was 5,632 baht for four persons per month (NSO 1997: 378–9). Her parents' household had just four members: the parents, Yoon's younger brother and an older stepbrother. However, she said that her family's income, including the father's salary of 5,000 baht a month as a minor public official, the mother's wage of 3,000 baht a month as a housemaid, and additional income from rice farming, that was often in deficit, was not enough even for keeping up with daily necessities. This was, she thought, related to a capital investment the father had made in order to breed pigs for sale at around this time. But recalling Yoon's explanation that 'Father had four wives all living in the same village, and had some 20 kids', no one, except perhaps the father himself, knew how much went to cover their maintenance.

Throughout a two-hour interview and other conversations, Yoon seldom mentioned her father except to share factual details. As I will describe below, she also demonstrated that her struggle to earn enough money to build houses for her mother and herself involved no emotional connection with the father, and Yoon's principle of *bunkhun* did not include the father.

Yoon eventually decided to top up her earnings with an extra 4,500 baht per month working at a video shop in the daytime, as well as by cutting down on her spending. She was paying only 1,900 baht in rent for a flat on the outskirts of Bangkok at a time when the average housing expenditure per household per month in the vicinity was 3,253 baht (NSO 1997: 378–9). It took her three to four hours by bus to commute everyday. But she finally built a house. She said:

> When I built a house for my mother, it was the first time for a long while to have seen Mother's tears. I was really glad. Mother always asked me if I was all right. My face looked knackered as I didn't have

> time to sleep. I would be back home at around 2am, drink a hot drink and go to bed, would get up at 9am, go to the video shop. This was for three years. Then I was only halfway through. I was paying the mortgage for my mother at first and then found some peace of mind. Then I started to pay for myself ... It took about six years all together. It was *SO* hard ...

In her description, the hard work of saving to build the houses was for herself and her mother only: the father was not in the dream house she imagined.

Although angered by the men's prerogative exercised by her father as well as by her former husband, Yoon 'felt grown up' after her divorce. Then, she acknowledged, 'I had my own life to deal with'. The path toward having a house, the goal she set as a dream-come-true, resonated for her with being fully grown up. To be an involved and responsible member of society, however, would need to include the repayment of *bunkhun*. Yoon could fulfil these goals as a woman without relating to men. The ideal of the male gender was not one of practical help anyway, as discussed in Chapter 2, just as the men in her own family were of no help at all. Paradoxically, however, while securing the material means to 'grow up' and 'deal with her own life' away from the males in the intimate community of her origin, Yoon did so by dealing sexually with her male customers in her new associational community. The well-being of a sexworker is also inevitably about her sexuality. Because Yoon's earnings came from sexwork in the city, away from home, she needed to create a 'new' tie of female lineage that could 'normalise' or 'neutralise' her sexuality by maintaining some of the principal attachments to the 'old' female role in the original community.

Andrea Whittaker helps us here to perceive the meaning of the House to women in Thai agriculture in the northeast, where Yoon is from. Introducing prevalent metaphors from Isaan (the northeast part of Thailand) transmitted in folk sayings which equate women with houses and rice fields, Whittaker writes:

> Traditionally the custom of post-marital residence with the wife's parents ensured that women were surrounded by their matrilineal kin who provided protection and support, especially at times of marital or economic crises. Women are also intimately linked to houses through the continuation of matrilineal spirit cults which strongly associate women with domestic space, and are nurtured by the female matrilineal kin who reside in the house. They govern female sexuality and the

> well-being of the house, causing sickness when wronged or neglected (2000: 28).

This background information helps to clarify why Yoon 'got peace of mind' from making such efforts to build a house for her mother, making her act seem more than sheer sacrifice under the spell of obligation to her mother or the subordination of women under patriarchy. Building a house for her mother was linked at least partially to Yoon's own search for 'protection and support at times of marital or economic crises'. By actively engaging with and investing emotionally as well as economically in the 'traditional' meaning of the House, Yoon was 'neutralising' her own sexuality, the image of which was otherwise susceptible to perversion by her everyday life as a sexworker.

Even so, the same conflict that we saw in Mai's case still applies between the social norm – the 'traditional' significance for women of the House, linked for Yoon to the mother-daughter relationship – and her real situation. Her mother's caring words and tears might have rewarded Yoon and 'justified' her decision to continue to be a sexworker, just as Kaeo's pride in saving her mother and the family house might have rewarded her. But Yoon was still a sexworker who had moved away from a 'traditional' way of life that, in Whittaker's sense, had already been receding when she left the village. The meaning of the House was sustained within her convention of 'neutralisation', but the reality that made her dream house possible was her own independence and distancing from the 'traditional' way of life. She would not go back to the house in the rural village no matter how important the idea of the House was to her peace of mind and well-being. Going back to reattach herself to a house of her parents' in reality would ironically jeopardise her capability to materialise the dream. It would also open up all the conflicts between the idea of the House spiritually protecting her within the female gender role, and the reality of her current life, of gaining autonomy from the rural domestic sphere and the relationships within it. What caused her to marry the rapist may well have been pressure from the 'traditional' way of life in which she never wanted to participate and felt good to have grown away from.

Yoon stayed on at the job instead of returning to her village, pursuing more dreams and enhancing her new capability to bring them to fruition. She started working even harder and becoming more professional about sexwork. After building the house for her mother, she became more committed to working at 'A' – the most popular and expensive members' club in Thaniya, an establishment 'where getting in as well as quitting was

hard', with the most strict working regulations. As she stated, she now had her own life to deal with. While maintaining 'peace of mind' and some protection for her symbolic sexual well-being by the new tie to the 'old' principle of the House in her home community, she also wanted to build her own house in Bangkok. Her own house in the city, surrounded by a new day-to-day network, would not signify in the same way. The city network was probably more indifferent toward an individual without roots there, and her house in the city would thus not spiritually protect her as the idea of the House in her home village would. But neither would it remind her of the actual past. This new house, the base for Yoon's new life, had an attic with a Western-style bathroom with a skylight, unusual for a Thai house. She loved having a long hot bath there after work, not a Thai custom. As if she had created a new spiritual support, she called it 'the heaven for myself'.

Step three – adapting to being sexworkers

I could see my respondents 'using layers of socially available resources' (Becker 1963/1969: 28–30; 1968: 279) to adapt gradually to the new experience of being sexworkers. Especially for those, like Yoon, who worked in Thaniya, adaptation to their work and to being sexworkers, settling down into the new social environment and the job itself, with all its 'deviancy', was a relatively smooth process. I would argue that this was because they were relatively in control. For their part, they were knowledgeable about their situations, including their own needs and motivations for becoming sexworkers and their expectations and aims in the long run, as well as more short-term expectations such as those related to working conditions and the availability of human relations networks. They could reflexively acknowledge their own feelings and perceptions about being sexworkers and could 'justify' it, as well as be on guard against becoming too emotionally disturbed by the negative meanings attached to the career. With these expectations they were able to form new relationships with co-workers, employers and customers more or less amicably.

Having a good deal of time to devote to 'settling down' into the career mattered a great deal. Working conditions and relations allowed these respondents the mental and emotional space to go back and forth subjectively within the 'becoming a sexworker' and 'being a sexworker' phases. Another possible factor of a smooth transition, particularly for Thaniya workers, was pride. Their pride could well stem from their relatively good working conditions and higher wages. But what mattered

more was the social discriminatory assumption *in favour of* Thaniya workers. With a degree of insider knowledge leading to a different value system from Thai society as a whole, though perhaps not drastically so, those who worked in the industry tended to regard Thaniya workers as 'better'. Accordingly, it would be reasonable to say that 'being Thaniya workers' had some specific significance that would lighten the stigma of 'being sexworkers'.

In discussions of the 'settling down' stage, both in retrospect and as current status, striking differences arose between the descriptions of those who had gone through situations of slavery, like Mai and Kaeo, and those who had made a relatively smooth transition voluntarily. There were also notable differences between Thaniya workers who had not been in sexwork elsewhere and those who had been in other places after working in Thaniya. I will sketch the general conditions in Thaniya bars here, and bring in more of Banyaa's account as distinctive of Thaniya workers' perceptions in contrast to those to follow.

Happy Thaniya days: Banyaa

For the sexworkers who had worked in Thaniya (eight out of my 22 respondents), the stage of adaptation often took place as the preparatory period before actually having personal sexual contact with customers. 'Personal sexual contact' generally means to have sexual intercourse with customers outside the bar, although it is not restricted to intercourse. Sexual services offered range from 'smiling' to 'holding hands', to 'going out for dinner', to 'going out to have fun' [*pai tiaw*: literally to go to play: T] and to 'having sex' – meaning another wide range of acts – and then often to 'looking after the customer' by doing his chores.

Such 'service', however, was sometimes offered even without an exchange of money, suggesting that the range of Thaniya workers' services was then not clearly itemised to be priced and sold piecemeal. It was not separated from their communication with the customer; the sexual services were all inclusive within their emotional work as a whole. This seemingly wholesome commitment of the sexworkers was in stark contrast with the independent prostitute in England of O'Connell Davidson's study and a source of confusion for Western customers, as seen in the work of Odzer (1994) or Cohen (1996). But it was still work and separate from their personal relationships, unless their plans included marriage to a particular customer (see Chapter 4). The contrast with O'Connell Davidson's study stems from the fact that the Thaniya workers did not 'defuse' their personal feelings on the job (1998: 10), but rather attached a different kind of significance to each sexual act. The notion

of separating sexual acts into a corresponding hierarchy of intimacy (forbidding or charging more for the 'added intimacy' of kissing on the lips, for instance) reputed to be common in Western prostitution and in its Japanese counterpart to a certain extent (Kaname and Mizushima 2005: 38–9), was not the norm for the Thai former/sexworkers I met.

Before all this, however, Thaniya respondents often began in situations which did not require going out with customers. They would typically work in the bar serving customers as hostesses, wearing micro-mini-skirts, blending whisky and water, chatting (preferably in Japanese), singing karaoke, and sometimes caressing or kissing cheeks, but nothing more. They would finish at 1am or 2am and return home, still earning a considerably better wage than in other jobs they felt were available to them at the time.

The monthly salary of those who worked *without* going out with customers in Thaniya ranged from 5,000 to 6,000 baht (approx. US$125 to US$150) during 1996 to 20,000 baht (US$500) at the time of the 2002 interviews, both excluding tips. The average monthly wage of private-sector employees in Thailand in 1996 was 8,761 baht in the Bangkok metropolis. A monthly income of 5,000 to 6,000 baht in Bangkok in 1996 was not particularly high in comparison. We should note, however, that higher-wage industries such as electricity, gas and water, wholesale and financing, insurance and real estate are concentrated in Bangkok, raising the average wage in the metropolis (MoLSW 1998: 195–6). Jobs in these industries were not available to my respondents. Some specifically remarked that 'daytime jobs', or office work in the formal sector, were not available to the 'women working at night' – meaning working in or around the sex industry.

Still, 5,000 to 6,000 baht per month was a slightly higher wage than that of the private sector employees in the north or the northeast (4,638 baht and 4,152 baht, respectively) where the majority of my respondents came from. It was similar to the average wage of piecework employees, which covers informal sector workers,[7] in Bangkok as a whole (4,747 baht) (ibid:. 201). Of course, if we consider the gender gap in wages mentioned in Chapter 2 (see Table 2), the starting wage in Thaniya was indeed a high wage for a young woman with little formal education.

The average wage in Bangkok was still 5,953 baht in 1999 (after the Asian Economic Crisis), and assuming no dramatic change in the wage market to follow it, 20,000 baht per month in 2002 was a very high wage. According to the National Statistical Office of Thailand, only 0.25 per cent of all employed persons in the service sector earned over 20,000 baht per month – the highest category in income statistics produced by

the Office – in the year 2000 (NSO 2000: 52–3). These women earning 20,000 baht a month excluding tips thus fell into the 'privileged few' wage-wise (see also Table 3).

On top of receiving relatively good wages, if they did not want to and did not have to go out with customers, they were also among the privileged in terms of working conditions. These conditions and the corresponding general assumptions that Thaniya workers were 'better', combined with the preparatory period before entering sexwork, contributed to a comforting sense that Thaniya workers could remain 'neutral' or well in touch with their 'pre-sexworker phase'. Some of my respondents stayed in the preparatory period for quite a long time: four voiced that they did not regularly go out with customers for the first one or two years. Maintaining this sense of a 'neutral' self seemed important to them as a strategy for adapting to this new career, just as others presented themselves as conventional enough to act in accordance with societal expectations for 'ordinary' women in the 'pre-sexworker phase'.

The good girl at work: Banyaa

Following Japanese custom, many Thaniya bars are called 'Snack' or 'Club'. The interior is organised around a bar counter. On the counter, there would be a vase of flowers – fresh or artificial – and a tank of tropical fish – real or digital. There would be stools for customers lined up at the counter, and a long, wide, glass-faced shelf of beer, wine, brandy goblets and whisky bottles on the wall inside the counter. Between the shelf and the counter, bartenders directly serve the customers. A little way from the bar there is a carpeted main floor dotted with sofas and coffee tables, with karaoke screens hanging on the walls and mock-chandeliers on the ceiling. Sometimes there is a smaller room or two separated from the main floor by doors to create a more private space. Hostesses serving the customers go back and forth between the counter and the floor or the private rooms. There is no window in sight in any of the rooms. No noise, no heat, no smell of food sold on the sidewalks comes in from Bangkok's busiest streets. The light is dimmed down at the opening hour. Chatting and karaoke change the room into a sound box. When you enter the main door and shut it behind you (or more likely someone else shuts it for you), you are effectively cut off from the outside.

Banyaa worked in one of these clubs. I first met her there during my fieldwork.

Compared to the Patpong bars only two streets away, in and about which much NGO work and critical research has been done in English, Thaniya clubs seem to have been carefully kept only for heterosexual,

male and predominantly Japanese customers visiting or stationed in Bangkok and those who make a living there. Thaniya clubs and the street of Thaniya are spatially organised in a different way from those of Patpong. The ground-floor clubs in Patpong open directly toward the street, which is full of makeshift souvenir shops constructed collectively every evening around 4pm with artistic speed and dismantled after the night's business with the same speed, and the clubs thus offer passers-by from across the world a glimpse of the semi-naked dancers on stage.

Patpong bar pricing is usually transparent and far lower compared to other bars. A customer buys a bottle for himself and a soft drink for each woman who happens to chat or sit beside him for a while. Whether to tip the women or the dancers on the stage or not is his choice. Some of the first-floor bars are notorious rip-offs, but they still welcome any tourist, or anyone, who can pay, regardless of age, nationality, sexual orientation or gender. Even such 'rip-off' prices, though, are often not more expensive than those of the clubs in Thaniya. A visit to the Thaniya clubs where I met Banyaa for the first time cost me and the two Japanese male companions who had shown me to the place 7,810 baht (about US$120 at the time).[8] For reference, my rent at that time, sharing a one-bedroom flat with a Thai friend in a working-class area of central Bangkok, was 2,500 baht per month (see Kusaka 2000: 95 for a similar budget).

Some of my respondents stated that the high-priced and old-fashioned Japanese specialist clubs were closing down after the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis. Yoko Kusaka, a Japanese sociologist who studied Thaniya, argues that the recent shift in the sex industry in Thaniya is due not only to the recession but also to some changes to the 'Japanese company culture' that had created and maintained the style of management and services provided in Thaniya clubs and snacks. An owner of a Thaniya club was quoted as having experienced a 10 per cent drop in customers around this time (ibid.: 176–7).[9] With a different style of tourism emerging, the connection between sexual services and ethnic boundaries is now beginning to blur, but at the time of my fieldwork the high status of Thaniya workers in relation to others in the Bangkok sex industry seemed to be still intact.

From the Thaniya workers' perspective, as mentioned earlier, this hierarchy might well have been a source of pride that could sustain them while they 'settled down' into the career. In other words, 'Other-ing' – the differentiation of other sexworkers supposedly in worse conditions and worse social positions – was used by Thaniya workers as one of the 'socially available resources' for their 'adaptation' (Becker

1963/1991: 28–30 and 1968: 279). Banyaa, for instance, once remarked in casual conversation that 'Patpong is scary' when talking about attending Japanese lessons held in EMPOWER, where I was teaching as a volunteer (see Introduction). She was a Thaniya worker and her perception of Patpong was not far from the image of the Other that was created by outsiders as well as insiders of the sex industry, particularly in Asia: mysterious, dangerous and unknowable (see van Esterik 2000: 168). By uttering 'Patpong is scary' she was demonstrating, intentionally or not, her status: a woman like her should stay away from such places.

Then again, Banyaa's fear of Patpong coincided with other respondents' ways of differentiating themselves. It seemed important for any sexworker to think that she was better off than the image of 'prostitutes as the Other' (O'Connell Davidson 1998: 127–9). As many as 18 respondents described themselves as 'not going with customers' usually or often, meaning not necessarily having sex with the customers even though they were working for the sex industry, by way of differentiating themselves from other bar girls. Further, it was equally important for many to maintain that they did not go with customers unless they needed to or wanted to. The sense of overt choice under various conditions often voiced in my respondents' accounts could be read as affirmation, corresponding to self-acknowledgement, of their subjective authority. Thus 'voicing choice' was *both* a source of adapting themselves to their 'career' *and* a source of pride directed toward themselves as well as toward the listener. The fact that they could affirm their subjectivity – that they could choose – as perhaps others could not, permeated their dispositions gradually and helped them enormously in settling down to the career. Feeling pride in an integral part of their job, they could face others even more assertively the next time, though it might well be, in the Thai way, a tacit sort of assertiveness.

At Banyaa's club, we were initially introduced to two groups of hostesses: those 'for taking out' and 'not for taking out'. Banyaa came to accompany us from among the latter. She said that a woman could choose if she would like to be taken out or not in her club. If someone wanted the extra income, the customer would pay the take-out fee to the club and, once out of the club, it was the woman who would negotiate with the customer over how much she would receive from him and for what services. One of the objective conditions providing her with agency to negotiate with the customer here was that the club wanted to avoid explicit engagement with prostitution. The current anti-prostitution law in Thailand forbids soliciting, inducement and introduction of oneself or another person for 'sexual intercourse, or the acceptance of any other

act', 'in return for earning or any other benefit', 'openly and shamelessly' or causing 'nuisance to the public'.[10] The sexworker's subjective feeling would be that this enabled her to control what 'she *could* get', rather than being told what to do and how much to charge. Better still, because of the high fixed salary and the regular customers, tips and occasional tour guiding which could amount to as much as 50,000 baht per month in total, Banyaa did not have to go with customers (see 'Estimates of Sex-workers' Incomes in Different Premises in the Whole of Thailand in 1996' in Pasuk et al. 1998/2002: 202).

After she told me about her earnings, I asked Banyaa, knowing that she trusted the *mama* at her club a great deal, whether she would go with a customer if the *mama* recommended him, expecting a positive answer. But her answer was 'No, I cannot go'. She added:

> I go eating only. Sitting with a customer for a long time, eating slowly is enjoyable. If I know someone long enough already, maybe it's OK. But [if] I know *okyaku-san* only a little, 1 or 2 days, I don't go with him. If he can know me [at all], it takes a long time. I have one person here. He lives in Fukuoka [the capital of the southern region of Japan]. Each time when he comes to Thailand, he phones me up. He says he is *yakuza* [Japanese gang syndicate: J]! [laughs]

She had known this self-described *yakuza* customer for about two years and had a special arrangement.

> He may stay about five days and gives me money [10,000 baht each time] for my children. He knows that we work hard. He knows that I have children, so it must be hard. I don't lie to him. He said, 'No matter where we have to be, we must not lie to each other. Having the back and the front makes things difficult'. We do not have a secret from each other.

'But,' she said, 'I still don't go with this one.' I inadvertently uttered 'well done' and she confirmed my admiration: 'Well done, isn't it? He says, "If you do not go, it's OK". But he comes to the bar every single day.' The two issues here: not going with customers unlike 'others' do, and the initiation being the matter of her choice, went hand-in-hand in Banyaa's accounts. The implication that this man was still attracted to her emphasised her pride. But she did not directly ascribe, or perceive, what she did and did not do to her pride, as far as her words betrayed. She said that the reason she 'cannot go' with customers was because she

had children. After a while, when I asked what she would think if he asked her to be *feen* [lover, stable partner: T], she answered:

> I will say 'I have two children, AND a mother, a lot of people. OK, is it?' If it's 'OK', it's all right. But, I think anyone is to be very bored [talking about children in a relationship]. Isn't it right? But, if he loves, not 'likes' but 'loves' me, he has to love my daughters too. I think we would like to have *feen* for ourselves only. But if they really love us, they have to love our family too. Thai people are like this. Thai people love to be among the family and think like this. If our children do not have happiness, our mothers do not have happiness, we cannot have happiness. People think this first, don't they, people who are good-natured?

Banyaa was clearly presenting herself as well in touch with the presumed goodness of Thai society that was maintained by 'people who are good-natured'. In this statement, she could situate herself on the good people's side because she did what she did for her family and her children. Such was the morality of virtuous Thai people, which included not going with customers out of consideration for the children. She could be sure of her choice due to her perception that it was endorsed by the goodness of the Thai people as a whole: because she considered the happiness of the family as a unit rather than pursuing her personal love life. We can now see the mother-child relationship from the mother's perspective and how important it is for a mother to be a full, mature and good member of society. Compare Banyaa's statement with the notion of *bunkhun* already discussed, and with the following from Whittaker.

> Through childbearing and maternity, a woman marks her status within the moral order. Nurturing children is a source of much Buddhist merit for women. To have sons who ordain as monks ensures her spiritual salvation. Young women are expected to have children as soon as possible after they are married, and it is through enduring the suffering of pregnancy, the pains of childbirth and the post-partum that her status as a full adult is confirmed. With the birth of the first child, she becomes a *mae* (mother), a term of address that encapsulates this transition from a young girl to that of a fully responsible adult (2000: 70–1).

Although Whittaker's finding above is based on her experience in the rural northeast, nurturing children as a Buddhist form of making merit

is also part of Banyaa's idea of the morality of good Thai people. Furthermore, instead of having sons to ordain, she seemed to have adjusted this responsibility-cum-salvation into modern education for her two daughters. Once, in a taxi stuck in a Bangkok traffic jam, Banyaa pointed to schoolgirls in uniform on the street. She said, 'That's the uniform of one of the best private secondary schools in Bangkok, not far from my house. I want to put my *musume futari* [two daughters: J] in that school'. She articulated her pride through her children, adding 'I'm proud [*puum jai*: T] of my children. They are doing very well at school'.[11]

Matters can be still more complex than her presentation of herself as a good person, a good daughter and, above all, a good mother within the presumed goodness of Thai society. The presentation can well contradict the reality of Banyaa as an individual 28-year-old divorced woman working in the sex industry. Outside the interview, she mentioned that she did go with a customer. On this occasion, there was no way for me to know if different conditions had arisen for her to do an irregular task, or if it was a matter of the principle not necessarily agreeing with the practice. We should also note that she might well have been led by my biased admiration, that 'well done' in the interview, when she reassured me that she did not go with customers. The point to understand in Banyaa's stance is, however, that Banyaa was doing her best to adapt herself to being a sexworker within the permissible notions of the society, using, again, her own and others' presumptions about the goodness of Thai society as 'socially available resources'.

There is yet another point left for us to consider: what about the 'Others'? How do the 'bad' ones, as opposed to 'people who are (supposed to be) good-natured', 'adapt' or 'settle down' to being sexworkers? A sexworker who goes with customers even if she has children, who has to go with customers for her children's sake or one who has no children at all? Even Banyaa, a good person, a good daughter, a good mother, might not be able to avoid, at times, acknowledging herself as one of these 'bad' ones if the principle of not going with customers does not always agree with the practice. To look at how 'bad' ones reconcile their existence as sexworkers with the supposed goodness of Thai society and Thai women, we will have to meet them and listen to their experiences of surviving as sexworkers.

Step four – surviving being sexworkers

However long they took before 'going with' and having sex with customers, all eight Thaniya workers eventually decided to do so. Sometimes

it was to fulfil a specific purpose or a need to make more money fairly quickly, like Yoon. At other times, they felt pressured to do in order to stay in the clubs with good working conditions as they grew older. Thaniya workers also took another step toward seeing themselves as sex-workers, as did those who worked in places other than Thaniya, as is illustrated below.

The bad girl thinks deeply: Liap

Liap was also working when we met. She worked in a different type of bar, distinct from the clubs or 'snacks' in Thaniya or the go-go bars and open standing bars in Patpong. It was called a 'Tour Bar' [*baa tua*: T]. The particular bar where she worked was just a little way off Thaniya Street. A Thai-owned company operated the business exclusively for Japanese male group tours. There seemed to be long-term, regular contracts between Thai companies who own tour bars such as Liap's and certain Japanese tour operators. In this operation, the customers were all Japanese tourists visiting Bangkok on package tours. They come in groups with visits to tour bars (and, implicitly, sexual services) included in the package: in effect, the notorious 'sex tour' (see Kusaka 2000: 113–14). At the bar entrance, the customers pre-pay a fixed amount for drinks, snacks, karaoke, hostesses, table charge and 'take-out' to the tour guide, who happens to be a pimp and may be one of the bar's owners. After drinking, each customer takes out a hostess, usually to a hotel where he stays during his entire time in Bangkok. The woman does *tomari* [overnight: J] with the customer: there is no *kyukei* [literally: rest, short-term session: J]. The customer does what he wants to do overnight, signs a coupon the woman produces the next morning, and sends her off. She takes the coupon back to the bar and gets her share, which is usually minute. In Liap's case, she was paid 700 baht (approximately US$18) as her share for one night. This may appear to be not too bad a rate, 14,000 baht per month if she took 20 customers. But the accounting looked different after someone else working at Liap's bar told me that the bar and the pimp were receiving 15,000 baht per customer *per visit*.

Despite vigorous movements of Thai and Japanese feminist groups since 1981 to stop Japanese sex tours,[12] the phenomenon still persists and has a serious impact on women working in tour bars today. For Liap, her working conditions and with them her sense of self-worth were deteriorating.

In the interview, she explained that staying in her job was very difficult if *okyaku-san* were not good. I asked what kind of *okyaku-san* she

disliked most. She said 'what to say ... ' after a long pause. 'Whatever you can,' I responded. After another long pause, she asked me to switch off the tape recorder. Describing what she did not like as her eyes gradually filled with tears, she repeated that she still had to make a living through the job. I asked if she could change bars, maybe to Thaniya where workers' situations and working conditions sounded much better in most of my respondents' stories. She answered that she had worked in Thaniya once but had quit the job, trying to make ends meet by running a food stall. She was the main contributor to her family of two younger brothers, a sister-in-law and her niece, her best friend and herself. But the food stall was not a success. She went back to sexwork but could not go back to Thaniya because she was considered too old by then. At this point, I asked her if I could turn the recorder on again. She said she did not mind.[13] At the Thaniya bar she worked at, she continued, she

> didn't have [to go with] *okyaku-san* or *douhan* [bringing in a regular customer of her own with her when checking into work: J]. [Knowledge of] the language was not important either. When we are young, it's OK like that but when we are old we have to go to a *baa tua*.

I suggested she lie about her age. She said she could not as 'we have pimps, they know us all'. She was 38 at the time of the interview, slim and tall for a Thai woman, probably about 160 centimetres, neat in a crisp white cotton shirt with a thin silver necklace and matching ring on her right ring finger. Her boyish look with cropped hair did not give away her age or her exhaustion. Relating it to age, she talked about how bad her current situation was:

> When we get very old, we stop working, cannot work, and we can do what we like at home. We can live in a province and just buy small things. We can live like that. We can live with friends. I think of our future like this, not working hard my whole life. I don't like the job at all, *AT ALL*, *sensei* [teacher: J].[14] It's very hard. Of course, some people can do that and are good at it. But I don't like it at all already. It's too hard. Do you understand that we don't like someone using us?

She later explained, in awkward euphemisms, this sense of 'someone using us'.

> [long pause] ... It's difficult to say, *sensei* ... A person who has a good nature demonstrates his goodness and doesn't complain. He

> understands what we say and it's OK. If he doesn't understand what we say, we have to be quick to decide what to do, don't we? He thinks he is important. He has to speak like God. He thinks he can do anything with us. He isn't interested in our feelings. We then have to have an idea how he would feel.

Bar 'C'

Thank you very much for coming to our bar.
Please, help us by filling in and signing the form below:

What time did the hostess go back?
[8 in the morning]

How was her service?
[A: Good, B: Normal, C: Not Good]

Be sure to check your belongings before she leaves.
Thank you very much.

[Signature]

Liap felt that she had very little control over her situation with customers. The fact that she had to 'be quick to decide' and 'have an idea', to be perceptive and quick-witted, should have required a series of active decisions in her mind. Yet she did not see herself as the agent of the action: she 'had to' decide and 'had to' have an idea because the immediate condition – the customer – in effect commanded her to do so. It was not dissatisfaction with herself that distressed her, but that 'someone was using' her, behaving 'like God' and that she had to endure it no matter how much she did not like that.

Her perception here was directly related to her working conditions. Above all, she could not say 'No' to any customer. She was not allowed to go back to the bar until the next morning. Referring to these ground rules, she showed me a coupon already signed by a customer. She would bring it to the bar to exchange it for her earnings. It was the currency that controlled each night and all the hours of her work, valuing any amount of effort and any kind of transaction as equal to the same amount of money: 700 baht. In return it controlled her attitude, usage of time and quality of services by surveillance, through the customer's power to sign or not. It was a piece of paper the size of a palm which read in Japanese as shown above, in translation.

Liap found her relationship with customers mechanical because it was governed by strict rules and control, and also because her part demanded so little subjectivity. She did not allow any possibility of intimacy in the

transaction. She said 'at *baa tua*, they don't really have customers like *feen* [lover, stable partner: T]', and added:

> It's not like Thaniya that gives them [the women] salary. *Baa tua* is much worse. If he comes, he'll pay but if he doesn't he doesn't care. He wouldn't live in Thailand. He doesn't know what it is like, does he?

The extra earnings for which Banyaa would negotiate with customers herself were not available to Liap, as her customers expected to pay the bar only. The fact that the customer only paid the bar and did not intend to learn what percentage the woman would receive links the operation of the tour bars to an innate lack of interest on the customer's part. In the background, the customer 'wilfully ignored' the operation that disempowered the woman.[15] He could do this by standing totally outside the context of her life: he just came, stayed in a hotel room, and went, through the tour. For Liap this is linked conceptually to the difference between operations that did not pay a fixed salary and others that did. A fixed salary encouraged more care in Liap's mind. She gives us the lived sense of emotional alienation which exists alongside the dimension of alienation arising from a lack of material means, including poor working conditions.

Just as she regretted that she had quit Thaniya and could not go back, and while she resented her current job in a tour bar, Liap acknowledged her situation insightfully and critically. She sometimes 'keep[s] it inside, inside, and inside, a lot . . .' but she 'cannot survive like this'. Then she said 'we have to have friends who we can survive with'. The relationship with her friends provided the emotional support that contrasted with the mechanical relationship with customers. But the friends should also be related somehow to her job. When I asked who the best listener for her was and if this friend was a childhood friend, she answered that it was not a childhood friend because, even if a childhood friend was very close, 'she has other things as the most important things in her life'. So 'it is better for us to find someone else at the night job' because 'if she works at night, we don't have to hide things because it will be revealed eventually'.

The emotional support from friends at work was necessary to sustain her feelings of 'normality' or 'neutrality'. But it was also inevitable that she obtained understanding and support from friends in her work circle only. It was necessary and inevitable as a result of the society's assignment of her in her work (Becker 1963/1991: 37; 1968: 280). She was experiencing the solidarity among, as well as segregation of, a particular group of

people with society's label of a 'deviant' identity. As stated above, Liap was aware that her discomfort about having to hide things and having to deal with two separate spheres of friendship had causes external to herself. It was discomfort about norms imposed by external structures. She continued:

> . . . It's not something about us, really, is it? We don't have to . . . we don't have to *uso* [lie: J], do we? We don't have to *uso* at all. But sometimes, with those who work daytime, *uso* is there, she [a friend] would say good things only, saying, 'it's fine, I don't have any problem', like this. But, she may be grinning at us at the back. You understand, don't you?

I then asked why she thought like this. The depth and articulacy of her reflection upon her situation, upon the determining power of society over those who are situated against the norm, through her alternation of objective and subjective viewpoints, makes one wonder who the sociologist is here. She explained:

> Our society is like that. Our society agrees with that kind of speech while Thai culture doesn't accept us. [Q: Is it Thai culture?] This Thai culture is . . . a woman working daytime is a good person and would find a good husband too. A woman working at night: they, a company for instance, don't want her around. She has a bad job and she must be a bad person. They are not impressed by those who do a bad job. There is a society of night and a society of daytime. So, if we are going to the other society, it has to be like we are born again, starting from zero, again. If someone working in the daytime should look for a job in the night, she would also have to be born again. It might be better to repeat the same kind of job in either way.

Her struggle to be 'accepting, and surviving with, the society's version of their destructive self' (Goffman 1961/1991: 151–2) is apparent here. 'A woman working daytime is a good person' in her society which is split into 'a society of night and a society of daytime'. The culture, by her definition, that upholds the dichotomy does not accept her and assigns her bad-person status because of her career, which now is a significant part of her identity.

Liap's assigned identity is, however, not only work-orientated: it is aligned with her sexuality. Although it is difficult to detect this sexual aspect, there are some hints that she relates 'badness' to the meaning of

women's sexuality in this culture, as in 'a woman working daytime is a good person and would find a good husband too'. The matter of sexuality was not explicit generally in most of my respondents' accounts, but expressed either in relation to motherhood or 'infidelity' and/or violence by men – including long-term partners, relatives, and customers – against them (see Tannenbaum 1999: 248–51). For Liap, the fact that she did not want to record what customers did might have been telling us without words the difficulty for her to be explicit about the matter of sexuality in this society, especially when it was demeaning – as against being a married woman and a mother.

Hope and the spiritual girl: Liap and Kay[16]

Even acknowledging that she was assigned to an identity in opposition to the 'goodness' of the mainstream society, Liap did not think that she had 'gone crazy'. She, like many others, sustained hope and lifted her spirits by connecting to support networks around her (and hence neither was she a slave by my definition: see Chapter 1). Like many other interviewees, she did not usually see herself as a total outcast. Self-perception swings. Respondents go back to Step Two and Three, 'neutralizing or justifying' (Becker 1963/1991: 23, 28–30; 1968: 279) or 'settling down to' the deviancy (Goffman 1961/1991: 137). Or to step one: the 'social beginning of the deviant career with the experience of embitterment' (Goffman 1961/1991: 125) or re-encountering the 'unusual subjective experiences' (Becker 1968: 277–8) of becoming sexworkers. And then again they come to step four, 'accepting, and surviving with, the society's version of their destructive self' (Goffman 1961/1991: 151–2). Unlike Goffman's asylum inmates, my respondents were constantly in touch with mainstream society in their daily lives. Their perceptions were always produced and reproduced from transactions with the people around them, particularly because these transactions were embedded in the nature of their occupation. Kay, also a Thaniya worker, divorcee and mother of two like Banyaa, said (in justification) that 'we are doing this kind of job but we are not hurting anyone'. She also said (denoting acceptance and survival) that 'there is something special about the relationship with customers because of the nature of our job'. Then again, she also said (suggesting embitterment), 'I hate to do this'.

Respondents would not 'go crazy' because they had a community that shared the culture specific to their contexts, ensuring that what they do can be sustained as 'neutral' from their own perspective (Becker 1968: 280–2); this included Liap's friends from work who offered emotional support. Owners, *mama*s, pimps, colleagues, customers, lovers

and friends each played an important role. When the women had good relationships with their employers, unlike Liap, they were likely to have relatively good material working conditions, including fixed working hours, regular holidays, a relatively good and fixed salary, and sometimes medical checkups provided by the employer. In the sense that Banyaa trusted the *mama*, such material conditions made up part of a virtuous circle of forging good, emotionally sustained relationships. Such workers voiced that the managers were 'understanding', 'generous', 'good-natured', or 'like friends' or 'like a big sister/brother'. In these circumstances, they also tended to acknowledge relationships with other people, sometimes including customers and even pimps, as good. It is important to see this positive evaluation of the social environment, because such positive relationships maintained the women's sense of security, from which grew the willingness to stay and work in a particular place. Banyaa talked about mutual support at her club:

> I help everyone to have a talk . . . the bar has been open two years and I have been working long enough, ain't I. Then, I know *mama-san* long enough. And everyone trusts me. We are lucky. Everyone who has problems speaks to each other. Otherwise, it would be difficult . . . I believe that we work to earn money, working with *papa-san* [literally dad, with a polite handle, the owner: J] and *mama-san* to have much money, then we will be carefree [*sabaai jai*: T].

Other important 'socially available resources' of support came from social organisations and religious orientation. Support NGOs' practical activities, such as providing job-specific or context-specific information and networking, and public acts, such as lobbying for legal amendments in relevant areas *within the mainstream society* were recognised by some sexworkers as a part of the cultural community that provided positive perspectives of and for them.[17] Meanwhile, Buddhist temples and practices were also vital aspects of daily life, signifying peace of mind, for nearly all of the former/sexworkers I met. All but one of my respondents – including three who lived in Japan and excluding one whose father was a Muslim – remarked in one way or another that they would go to temple or pray to Buddha or their ancestors or make donations. This was particularly true when they were feeling down, had had a bad working night, or felt negatively about someone else or themselves. Buddhist orientation in this sense seemed to uphold their spiritual well-being by offering physical and mental space for these practices. It was, as noted above, probably important that this part of their lives was shared by

mainstream Thai society. If so, this could be the reason that Banyaa invited me to visit a temple with her during our first meeting. Liap also said she believed in Buddhism. She added, with her usual philosophical contemplation:

> [b]ut not the sons of Buddha, not *Sangaa* [Thailand's national assembly of Buddhist monks: T], but anything to do with Buddha that I can do well and can believe to believe. I need faith to *gaman* [endure: J]. I think like that. It's not that things can help us, though it depends. But if we do good things to seek ourselves – I'd translate it like 'things of the heart' – I think that good things we do will come back to ourselves.

To 'believe to believe' that doing good things in seeking her inner self would reward her, as in the *bunkhun* relationship, is another source of support for Liap in her difficult situation.

Evaluating Buddhism in relation to women's position in general and female sexworkers' situation in particular in Thai society is not an easy task. While declaring Buddhism 'a key component of Thai [gender] identity' (2000: 65), van Esterik summarises the contested discourses about Thai Buddhism on gender by saying that 'Thai feminists are clearly faced with some exceptionally challenging analytical problems when they try to link material conditions with moral status based on Buddhist ideology' (ibid.: 67).

Many scholars and journalists have claimed that Buddhist ideology is one of the causes of women's subordination to men in Thailand.[18] Some of the main problems, they say, appear in relation to Buddhist texts' subordination of women. For example, women's identity is defined only in relation to men, women do not have an independent identity but are born to deal with the material world (I also agreed that this point strongly influenced my respondents in Chapter 2), and being born a woman can in some interpretations be seen as the result of wrongdoing in a previous life. In addition, the practices of mainstream Thai Buddhist organisations from *Sangaa* to popular beliefs in rural villages are said to work to socially situate women below men.

For *Sangaa*, women cannot be ordained because of their 'spiritual inadequacy' and because the line of female ordination in Theravada Buddhism has never reached Thailand, making women's ordination practically impossible. Popular Buddhist texts known to villagers provide role models of dutiful and self-sacrificing wives as well as the mothers with eternal and unconditional love who do not expect any credit for

their actions. Women are also symbolised as polluting agents to men through their sexuality. Accordingly, they are 'untouchable' to monks and not allowed to enter some temples, particularly in the north. In private space, 'good' women are supposed to be asexual or to repress their sexual feelings and confine sexual activities to a conjugal relationship – in contrast to prostitutes.[19]

However, as van Esterik warns us, the argument that Theravada Buddhism *inherently* positions women spiritually and socially lower than men becomes questionable when the evidence is based only on canonical textual interpretation (2000: 21–2). Tannenbaum points to a possibility of biased Western analysis relying only on elite Bangkok-centred textual interpretations of Buddhism of the ideal women of their class, and/or the analysts' own Orientalist bias toward Thai genders and sexualities enigmatically embedded in the religion (1999: 249–53).

I follow van Esterik and Tannenbaum's stance. Not because I deny that Buddhism has elements that are interpreted as subordinating women, but because I saw positive meanings of Buddhism in actual use among most of my respondents. After listening to Liap and many others talking about how they feel supported by their belief, the studies implying that all women are always oppressed by Buddhism in Thailand seem to lack both nuance and empirical grounding.[29] As we can see in Liap's account above, my respondents interpreted Buddhist beliefs, appropriating them into their ways of life in a newly developing industry.

Kay's description of temple-going and merit-making, or *tam bun* [T] – another important Buddhist notion and practice in Thai people's everyday life – is a good example.

> When I have time – sometimes when I can get up early, at around 6 or 7, I offer food to monks. When I go back to my home county, I often go to the temple nearby and meditate there. It's tranquil – I like it a lot. When I am tired of the noise of Bangkok, I really want this. Or else, I go to places like Phataya [a seaside resort near Bangkok] and look for somewhere remote and quiet. I like admiring nature. I also like fun, so I go to places like discos once a month or so. I also give money if there is someone pitiful at the roadside or somewhere. I might give them some clothes that I no longer wear. I do these in my daily life.

Kay was a follower of the spirit of King Chulalongkorn, one of the new popular religious movements which flourished after the Asian Economic Crisis (Sanitsuda 2001: 7–11, Jackson 1999: 2). When I asked what the

pendant she was wearing was, she said that it was the Saint-King and explained its meaning to her.

> I told my mother not about going with customers but about working at a Japanese karaoke bar. Then she said, because I work at night, 'Good luck and may the King Rama V protect you from various troubles'. I looked for this [the pendant] and have been wearing it since, though not while I am working. It's not that I deeply believe in this kind of thing but [light laugh] there is a fortune teller who said 'the King Rama V brings you good luck' – the same thing. So I am wearing this. I cannot always get up early in the morning but, when I can, I do offering to monks. And I go to temple near Hualamphong [the central Bangkok station] where there is a monastery and do offerings there too. I don't think our job like this is a good job. Still, out of what I earn, I spare some for the offerings.

The popular religious movements are characterised by an emphasis on wealth acquisition as much or even more than salvation, and are criticised by the doctrinaire and the educated middle class as 'commercialised Buddhism' (Jackson 1999: 1). But they do perhaps offer more practical spiritual support, that is, without letting the believer feel morally downgraded by the drive for economic gains stemming from their lower social status. Jackson, who named them the 'prosperity movements', impeccably summarises this point:

> [T]he prosperity movements should not only be seen as a commodification of Thai religion but also as an expansion of traditional religious symbolisms to include the market. The prosperity religions integrated Thailand's new marketised [sic] social formation within established religious symbolisms and provided an overarching frame within which both the rural past and the urban industrial present could be understood ... [T]he prosperity religions provided an important source of social and cultural cohesion during the boom years, acting as symbolic reference points for a highly mobile and increasingly uprooted populace (1999: 2).

Buddhism in the 'new marketised social formation' indeed provided Kay with 'an overarching frame within which both the rural past and the urban industrial present could be understood' (ibid.). She was balancing her admiration of nature and tranquillity and city life – fun or discos – connected with what she earned from sexwork – 'not a good job'. The

mediators were: the temple as a space and the offering as an act 'within established religious symbolisms'. Her mother had given her support, presumably knowing what Kay actually did since 'working at a Japanese karaoke bar' implies sexwork (see Kusaka 2000: 89, Whittaker 2000: 37–8), and had also acted as a mediator between the rural village and the new religion that would protect and bring luck to the daughter working in the city. Maintaining the actual as well as spiritual link between 'the rural past and the urban industrial present' must have been particularly important for Kay as she, unlike Banyaa, had left her children with her parents in their village on the border between the northern and central regions. The belief worked for her as a way to change tensions into cohesion: between 'deviant' career and religious moral values, between the noisy busy city life and the tranquil 'community of imagination', between income earning governed by the market – the sex industry – and nurturing her children in the village, and ultimately between the 'bad' sexuality of a sexworker and the 'good' sexuality of a mother.

Step five – changing self in being sexworkers

Kay's expression to her mother above is the best perceptible verbal sign for the listener that she is 'out' as a sexworker; many of my respondents simply did not talk about either their working lives or love lives with their older family members (see Whittaker 2000: 38). At the same time, these daughters made their own living and enjoyed relative independence. As mentioned in Chapter 1, they had access to contemporary material and cultural wealth as well as to consumer goods – the bright side of globalisation via contact with the fusion of cultures created in the cities' swirl of demand and supply. The goods and experiences available to them, and the atmosphere of freedom attached to the hypothetical consumption, had been the enticement for some respondents, the positive tangible images that pulled them to leave their villages.

I will introduce Sand and Suung[21] to conclude this chapter, focusing on their shared yearning for the city with its images of freedom leading to very different outcomes. This yearning was not at all unique to former/sexworkers. Mary Beth Mills captures it in young women migrating from rural to urban areas with a significant sense of *than samay* [in step with the times: T] that predominated in Thai society during the era of modernisation (Mills 2002: 127–8, 163–70 and passim; 1997: 141–51). Incorporating this local notion as 'modernity' in Zygmunt Bauman and

Peter Wagner's senses (Bauman 1991/1993: 4–11; Wagner 1994: 4–18), I will be looking at Sand's and Suung's experiences as representative of the ambivalence of modernity that could have touched anyone in Thailand at the time. To do so is also not to escape from, but to name and examine, the political power and complex of influence transmitted – albeit never in strictly a one-way process – from European modernity to social phenomena in Thailand and/or Japan (see Mohanty 1991: 54–63).[22]

Modernity in this sense is found and felt erratically, not as a single pathway to follow but as processes of transformation differing according to place and culture in any continent, nation state, country, city, village or household, perhaps at different speeds, in different areas of our knowledge and with different apparatuses and appearances. Simultaneously, modernity can be a very individual experience in which agents involved are affected on very personal terrain.

For Sand, the outcome of her pursuit of freedom as the positive side of modernity was particularly negative, even devastating. Yet it propelled her into pursuit of something missing. Sand's accounts give the clear sense of a continuing pursuit throughout her life course so far, 'before', 'during' and 'after' being a sexworker.

Changes and the modern girl: Sand

Sand was deceived into the sex industry at the age of 16. After finishing compulsory education at 12, she initially stayed at home, helping her mother to grow rice not far from Chiangrai city. She then decided to take a job in a restaurant in the city, had a Thai *feen* [lover, stable partner: T], and was 'hanging around with friends' from her village. One day, she met a Thai man in a disco. He showed her and her friends a fashion catalogue, saying, 'Don't you want to get *sabaai*? Don't you want to have money? Don't you want to wear beautiful clothes like this? You can get them if you work in Bangkok'. Three of the girls set off to Bangkok, including Sand, unwary because her long-time disco mate who had introduced the guy to them also accompanied them. On the bus, she was

> a little bit frightened and a little bit excited because, you know, I was going to Bangkok with friends for the first time. I didn't really know what kind of work it would be but thought it would be like modelling for the catalogue thing. There was no talk about what kind of work but he was saying we can earn a lot of money and have a good life. I didn't know anything about anything. But a part of it was I wanted to go and see Bangkok.

The man turned out to be a trafficker from Bangkok. There were about ten girls, all from the north, in the apartment where he brought Sand and her friends to stay. Sand continued to relate one dramatic incident after another in the same breath, as if to re-project what had happened to her 12 or so years before with the same fast pace. The next thing she knew, the man was taking Sand to have plastic surgery on her nose without any explanation. The cost of the surgery was added to her 'debt', together with the cost of clothing, make-up and other daily expenses. The bus fare and housing and the fee for 'the training session' in which, she said, 'the trainer "taught" us how to please men' – 1,500 baht – all became part of the 'debt'. She was forced to work in a bar and forbidden to go out on her own or to contact her family. There are moral, legal and humanitarian questions regarding the actions of those who forced Sand into this situation just as in Kaeo and Mai's cases. In this particular section, however, I will focus on Sand's first decision to go to Bangkok.

Even without consenting to sexwork, Sand could have easily been accused of deciding to go to Bangkok out of a 'lack of discipline, declining morals, sensual temptations, and examples of excesses which are far more abundant than reminders of moral conduct and human dignity in our modern society' (NCWA 1981: 24), even though her desire was nothing more immoral than to see the capital city and aspire to 'earn a lot of money and have a good life'. As we saw in the previous chapter, this discourse was officially used against the women and girls involved in prostitution until the start of the 1990s, though it was expressed in terms of pity or protection. But Sand's version of the story, to me as well as to the other girls and young women in the focus group, is, I believe, a more convincing portrayal of 'our modern society'.

In 1990 Sand went to Bangkok for the first time. As mentioned earlier, major economic think-tanks and English-language newspapers in Thailand constantly featured the newly industrialised, Westernised, modernised socio-economic structure, culture and commercial yield in their economy reports.[23] They were cautious enough to take note of the slowing economic growth after the 1987–9 boom, the shadows cast by international conditions such as the long-term effect of the GATT Uruguay Round favouring the US and EU agricultural tariffs and the 1991 Gulf War. The drawbacks to rapid growth, including the endangered environment, traffic congestion and an ever-growing economic disparity, became apparent. The US- and Japanese-led recession of the early 1990s was already in the air. Still, the country as a whole was considered to be embracing the rampant affluence of the young-urban-middle-class

culture and economy of the centre – the Bangkok metropolis. One report described 'the most influential trend setters', the 'Thuppies'. The representatives of 'the modern world of consumer conscientiousness', they were

> in search of an identity in this newly affluent society. Lavishing on themselves a wealth of exclusive imported goods, skipping off overseas on exotic holidays, buying spacious homes crammed with modern gadgets and leading expensive and leisurely lifestyles are the rewards the burgeoning nouveaux riches in Thailand give themselves to display their affluent status (*The Nation* 1991: 75).

They typically earned 10,000 to 100,000 baht (approximately US$250 to US$2,500) and beyond per month, were aged between 21 and 35, drove certain brands of cars and wore prestigious brands of watches and fashionable brand-name clothes, travelled abroad, and enjoyed freedom from the financial burdens of shelter, food and electricity because their families would provide them. They were at the same time under constant pressure to consume fashionably, 'in servitude to a conformity that allows their individuality to be dictated to' (ibid.: 75–6). If Stuart Hall's argument of late modern consumer society in which 'production is dependent on consumption' rather than its analytical and conceptual antecedent is applicable in this context, we see these 'trendsetters' were, at least in part, the influential agents who enticed the new areas of industry (Hall 1996: 35).

There were more fashion shows by both domestic and overseas designers in 1990 than there had ever been before (*The Nation* 1991: 73). The promotion budgets of CD companies had skyrocketed as the new internationalised Thai music scene was turning into a mass-scale industry (Suchada 1988: 21–7). The domestic car market recorded 30 to 45 per cent increases in production from 1987 to 1989 (93.9 per cent of the sales were by Japanese manufacturers) (*The Nation* 1990: 27–8). Contribution from tourism to the country's GDP doubled in the 1980s (*Bangkok Post* 1991: 47). Thailand's total GDP growth averaged 10.5 per cent a year during the Sixth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1987–91) (ibid.: 11, 31). During this same growth spurt, top Thai and international advertising agencies, including Japan-based Dentsu and Hakuhoudou, enjoyed a 30 to 60 per cent increase in annual billing in 1989 (ibid.: 1990: July 20). When it comes to advertising, as we would expect, 'the influential agents who enticed the new areas of industry' were themselves influenced by the industry: so the cycle continues.

Television was advertising's dominant medium. In 1990, the televised mass communication industry spent 1.5 times as much as it had the year before to advertise the hardware by which it was broadcast, releasing more than 1.5 times as many ads as the year before via that very hardware (*The Nation* 1990: 76). Although it is difficult to know whether television succeeded in domestically selling hardware effectively because of this investment, these figures do help us to appreciate how people may have been exposed more and more to televised information during the boom years. Besides, television had largely saturated the urban areas already and was spreading into the rural areas of Thailand by this time; it was found that the annual growth rate of numbers of television sets in Thai households was much greater in areas outside the municipalities (28.9 per cent) than within municipal areas (8.8 per cent) between 1980 and 1985 (TDRI 1987a: 18). And, 'TV viewing is the most popular among the mass media' among farmers, regardless of gender (TDRI 1987b: 65–8).

These figures suggest that the semiotics of the new lifestyle, promoting the new identity of affluent 'Thuppies', could well have reached anyone, including anyone like Sand in the poorer rural north, via the mass media, music, fashion, trade of goods, drivers on the road, and tourism-travel itself. The affluent middle class did not have to be the majority of the population for its world to become the world to which the many would aspire. Everyone, then, assuming certain social conditions were met, could become, or imagine themselves to be what Bauman might call flamboyantly insecure under the luminous pressure of consumption. The 'glittering' prize of this 'is the freedom not to think of responsibility – not to be burdened by the worry about the consequences . . . which the market offers' (1995: 114–15).

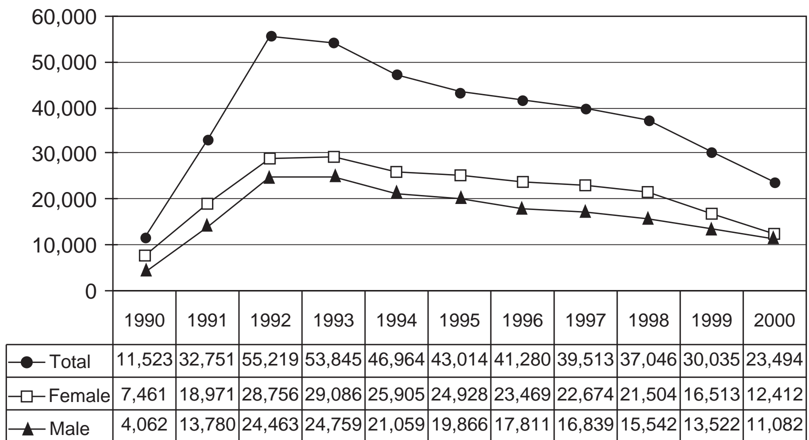
Elsewhere in the interview, Sand said that she had wanted to get out of her village. She wanted to opt out of the responsibility required by the existing social norm of her rural village in the north, probably without acknowledging specifically what – be it the social norm or a particular relationship – she wanted not to think about at that time. The invitation to Bangkok and to a different life with the glittering possibility of consumption must have appeared to her a good opportunity.

Mills' anthropology of the young and the old in a northeastern village may contextualise this attraction. Her fieldwork was conducted in the same period during which Sand went to Bangkok. At that time, Mills found that '[t]eachers at the local elementary school estimated that 50 per cent of those who graduated in 1990, after six years of primary school, would be on their way to Bangkok' (1997: 137). The prospective

and actual remittances from the city served to substitute for other forms of economic, spiritual and material support or the *bunkhun* responsibility and obligation hitherto observed within the village. The opportunity for the youth to get jobs and thus economic and physical independence in Bangkok also meant for the parents' generation that they lost their authority, particularly over their daughters' labour and sexuality. Further, it was not only money that was important. The very act of catching up with the *than samay* atmosphere in society was what young migrants considered valuable, and Bangkok offered the 'commodity symbols of status and success that pervade rural as well as urban society' (ibid.: 138–41). The youth were beginning to see village life as 'boring' by comparison to the 'powerful images of urban society familiar to villagers', especially from television. Live concerts from an amusement park in Bangkok especially appealed. They saw their counterparts in the metropolis enjoying pop music performances which they already regarded as 'in step with the times' (ibid.: 144–7).[24]

Nevertheless, the migration of the young generation to Bangkok from the village in Mills' study was typically temporary. Most of them would return home within a few years at the longest. Sand, in contrast, was trapped in a situation of slavery like Kaeo's and Mai's.

Since then, as I will discuss in the next chapter, Sand seemed to have been constantly trying to escape from one situation to another, never able to find contentment within a community, however much the circumstances seemed to change from an objective point of view. When we met she was back home in Chiangrai and no longer a sexworker but she still seemed to want to get out of her social environment and seek a situation more satisfactory for her.[25] The continuous and implicit feeling of insecurity behind her constant escapes, however, had existed from the time when she was becoming a sexworker. This was her personal feeling, but simultaneously it was a social condition of those who were susceptible to modernity's call. As Bauman illustrates, modernity is 'an obsessive march forward' 'because it never gets enough'. 'The march must go on because any place of arrival is but a temporary station' (1991/1993: 10–11). The speed of changes contributed to Sand's constant insecurity, too, as she did not have the preparatory period to 'adapt' to her 'deviant' identity each time in immensely different social environments, unlike Banyaa, Yoon and other Thaniya workers. With Sand's experience of the drastic changes of time and space in mind, I would now like to bring in the issue of migration to Japan with a contrasting example from Suung.



	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Total	11,523	32,751	55,219	53,845	46,964	43,014	41,280	39,513	37,046	30,035	23,494
Female	7,461	18,971	28,756	29,086	25,905	24,928	23,469	22,674	21,504	16,513	12,412
Male	4,062	13,780	24,463	24,759	21,059	19,866	17,811	16,839	15,542	13,522	11,082

Figure 4 Estimations of undocumented Thai overstayers in Japan 1990–2000
Source: Japanese Ministry of Justice, www.moj.go.jp (adapted from Ito and Phannee 2001: 16)

Japan and the lucky girl: Suung

The number of overstayers or undocumented migrants in Japan was estimated by the Japanese Immigration Control Bureau to be between 297,000 and 298,000 in the peak year of 1993. Among these, between 54,000 and 55,000 were Thai nationals, outnumbering people of any other nationality at that time. Women outnumbered men by 5,000. The estimated number of Thai undocumented migrants then gradually dropped, to 23,500 in the year 2000, again with slightly more women than men (see Figure 4 above).[26] Amemiya and his research team at Japan's Ibaragi University suggested that the decline was related to the amendment of the Immigration Control Law in 1991 that limited incoming nationalities (2002: 21). On the other hand, Pataya Ruenkaew, a Thai scholar specialising in Thai migrant communities abroad, estimates undocumented Thai migrants in Japan at 100,000 for the year 2000.[27] She suggests that at least 60,000 Thai women and 40,000 Thai men were in Japan without legal status (2002: 5–6). It is impossible to know exactly how many migrants were staying without documentation or where or who they were because of the nature of their status. But the implications are significant. Many of them were likely to be in the informal-sector economy, the women in particular potentially in sexwork, with scarce protection from the Japanese domestic jurisdiction.

Having said this, I should reiterate that the experiences of Thai women working in the sex industry in Japan vary enormously. At one end

of the spectrum are women such as Sand who became entrapped in situations of slavery. At the other end, women such as Suung work voluntarily, earning much more than even their Thaniya counterparts in Thailand, enjoying the fulfilment of their responsibility for the family economies back home as well as their lives in Japan, and maintaining their autonomy.

Suung was working in Tokyo, the capital of Japan with a population of 12 million. I first met her in a small bar in Shin-okubo with only a counter, several seats facing it, and an adjunct room accommodating another several customers.[28] But she was not working at this particular bar, as far as I could see. She was a regular diner there where they served drinks and northeastern Thai dishes. The background music was northeastern Thai folk songs. An altar and artificial flower wreaths gave the bar a Thai visual atmosphere. Customers were predominantly lone Japanese males but they just perched at the counter quietly drinking *Mekon* – Thai whisky – or *Chaan* – Thai beer. Some friendly half-Thai, half-Japanese conversations would spark up between the customers and the *mama* from Ubonrachathani who was behind the counter, both cooking and serving. A part-time barmaid, the only employee from Bangkok, an overseas student in a university nearby, would join in if she was not too busy bringing dishes to the room facing the street. Suung would not join in the conversation as she would not stay long: she would order a couple of dishes, chat with the *mama* while watching the food being cooked and packed in plastic containers, pay the barmaid, and take the food home. This was, she said, part of her routine before she went to work. When I asked if I could come to her bar one day, she said 'No, because my bar is a serious member's club and non-members cannot come in'. She usually checked in at 8pm at the club, served regular customers, and then, if a customer was expecting her and she was willing, went to one of the love hotels around the area in a private capacity.

Shin-okubo houses many love hotels that provide (mostly heterosexual) couples privacy in the midst of this commercial area of one of the most densely populated cities in the world. Rates range typically from 5,000–6,000 yen (approx. US$40–50) or more for two hours, or 10,000–12,000 yen (US$80–100) or more per night per room. The temporary space they provide is private but might not be defined as personal: allowing for a few differences in (usually chintzy) décor, it was much the same as any other couple's in any other similar purpose-built hotel. To borrow Chizuko Ueno's[29] terminology, this hyper-urban space can be explained as conceptually duplicated compartments letting each individual live

the same compulsory 'system of the body' [*shintai no seido*: J] in it for a fixed period of time. The individual would not exactly watch and mime what the other individuals would be doing behind the wall or above the ceiling – hence privacy – but would discursively act up to expected sexual exchanges as if with the reflexive surveillance of the effect of Foucault's symbolic extension of Bentham's Panopticon (Ueno 1998: 208).

Suung was 28, the same age as Sand, and from Nong Khai, another northeastern border district with Laos to its north. She had come to Japan in 1998, seven years after Sand. Before this, she worked in a go-go bar in Patpong for about two years, dancing on the stage in scanty bikinis and going mainly with Euro-American customers. One day, a Japanese man came to the bar and said in good Thai, 'You should go to Japan to earn much more than here. You will be popular in Japan because you have light skin. Japanese men like that'. She did not take his words too seriously but it was true that she wanted to earn more. Her wage at the time was 5,000 baht (approximately 15,000 yen or US$130) a month. She also had income from private tips from the customers with whom she went, and from bar tips shared among all the women and bartenders at the end of shift. But her earnings were never enough to have everything her colleagues could buy. One reason was that she was selective in her customers for sexual encounters and did not go with them as often as others. Another was that she was paying off the mortgage for a house back in her village because her father had died during its construction. She was taking responsibility for the whole family economy, as were most of my respondents. The man came and invited her again, and she agreed and went to the Japanese Consulate with him the next day. She was not expecting that she could get a visa to Japan as her co-workers at the Patpong bar were saying that the Japanese would not give Thai women visas anymore.[30] But the Consulate gave her a tourist visa. The passport was her own, acquired previously for a trip to Singapore.

The Japanese man took the flight with her from Don Muang International Airport in Bangkok to Singapore first and then on to Narita, Japan. Suung was worried about passing through immigration by herself but had no problem. The man brought her to a *snack* in Shinjuku, where he said his best friend was the owner. She was then told that the cost of coming to Japan was 3.5 million yen (approximately US$30,000)[31] and that she had to work there until she paid it back. She worked from the next day. But the *mama* was nice, and because she was Taiwanese Suung could talk to her a little using the English that she had learned in Patpong. She did not speak Japanese, was only able to say 'hello', 'sorry'

and 'thank you' at first, but learnt it well within three or four months. Customers liked her, she said, because she was clever and had light skin. She then talked about having sex with customers, saying:

> In Japan, people ask why I'm doing this, even the *okyaku-san* [customers] themselves! Isn't that funny? I answer them, 'Why are you working, dear? Or don't you work?' Everyone has to work in one way or another. And I work hard. And everyone has to have sex in one way or another, isn't that right [laughs]? [. . .] I paid that debt off in less than half a year – it was really quick – and after that, nobody forced me to work or not, not even the *mama-san* [female manager of a bar] and *papa-san* [male manager]. Naturally, if an *okyaku-san* makes a fuss, not paying enough in the end or whatever, I really go mad. I don't understand why they don't understand that this is a business, that I serve and you pay.

I asked if she did not care about what people would think about her work. She answered immediately:

> No. People say things about someone else all the time but the only thing that matters is what's in our hearts. And human beings can decide what to do and what not by themselves.

When asked how she felt about her current work, she said:

> I am content because I'm now earning so much. Did I tell you? [Q: No, how much?] I earn sometimes about 600,000 yen [approx. 200,000 baht or US$5,400], sometimes even 750,000 yen a month. My salary is 400,000 yen. After the salary, it depends how many times I go with *okyaku-san* and how much they give me in tips [. . .] I can send about 30,000 to 100,000 yen [approximately 10,000 to 33,000 baht or US$270 to US$900] a month home, though it depends. I told my mother to open a bank account. [. . .] With this money, they have already paid the mortgage, bought a patch of a rice field and a piece of land to grow *lamyai*. My younger sister is going to college next year – she stays at home with my mother. I will help my older sister – she is already married but lives near our home – to open a hairdresser's. I can go on trips sometimes with Thai friends. I can go to a host club[32] in Kabukicho [a red-light district] when I feel exhausted from working too much. I don't spend it all though, like some women in this business do. It'd be a total waste if I paid my earnings back to men!

She was 'content' because her wage in Tokyo was incomparably higher than it would have been in Thailand. Considering that the average salary of women in the urban service sector in Thailand in 1994 (before the Asian Economic Crisis of 1997) was approximately 4,000 baht a month (12,000 yen or US$120), hers was 33 times higher in fixed base salary alone. A rough comparison: her income actually compared well with the average wage of the Japanese male large-scale company workers with university degrees in their early 50s – 671,000 yen (approximately 220,000 baht or US$ 6,100) (before tax) per month in 2002 – who could be her customers (Nihon Toukei Kyoukai 2004: 189).[33] Unlike the average Japanese businessman, however, most of her salary was disposable income after her 'debt' was repaid, aside from the remittance that occupied only up to one fourth of her salary. She was probably not paying any tax as an undocumented migrant, although I could not determine how her members' club operated with regard to this matter. She enjoyed reverse economic power over Japanese male company workers and university graduates, and further exercised it by going to host clubs and releasing the stress of the intense working life. On top of this, she fulfilled her responsibility to her family by financially supporting them all.

In parallel, to a question on her personal life plan, Suung answered:

> I want to live in Japan by marrying a Japanese man. But there is no one who suits me – they may be a bit scared of me. There were men who were scared, who lied, who couldn't make a living together. There were men I liked, who I wanted to live with: they were married. Oh, I don't get involved with *okyaku-san*. It's different. I don't want them then [laughs].

Suung was the nearest figure I came across to the feminist heroines portrayed as economically, emotionally and sexually independent and in control, or at least as challenging male power over them, in previous researchers' and sexworkers' writings.[34] She sounded professional – her usage of the Japanese word '*bijinesu*' is an indicator, as it is a direct adaptation from the English 'business', hence more contemporary, and bears the connotation of a more systematised means of commercial activity than 'work' or 'job'. Her intense working life was indeed a city life that enabled her to separate her personal involvement from her business, and to become autonomous (see Simmel 1903/1971: 30–1; see also Chapter 4 this volume). Suung emphasised that she was economically and emotionally independent, especially from men. She knew that 'they may be a bit scared of me' and said '[i]t'd be a total waste if I paid my

earnings back to men!' and did not apologise for it. She sounded in control and confident, as when she said that 'human beings can decide what to do and what not by themselves'. She said this in such a manner as to convince listeners that what she said was an objective fact and that she was an equal and 'normal' human being, using 'human beings', rather than the subjective 'I' or 'we', as the subject. She sounded strong.

The feminist heroine, however, could be (mis)represented regardless of what she was or how she appeared in her daily context for all sorts of reasons. Firstly, through the nature of the relationship between interviewer and the interviewee: it is likely that, because I did not know her well enough to be trusted, she was careful not to show her vulnerabilities or complexities. Secondly, she might not show her vulnerabilities to many people anyway in order to emotionally protect herself in a foreign land that gave little legal or social security. Thirdly, on reflection, she herself might well be satisfied enough with the strength of this character to feel good about herself. And again, this character might be representing herself well thanks to the strength gained from her current situation: good working conditions, exceptionally high income, no problematic relationship with her employer, customers, or men in general, and a known community of people around her such as the *mama* and the barmaid in the counter bar in Shin-okubo and other Thai friends with whom she could enjoy private time.

Looking back to the profile of 'Thuppies', their estimated range of income (10,000 to 100,000 baht per month), age (21 to 35) and taste in brand-name apparel fits quite well with Suung. I met her four times, and each time she was dressed in designer clothes or wearing designer shoes. Her accessories, bags, wallets or watches – though I did not ask if they were imitations or real ones – were also noticeable designer brands. Her desire to own a car and other goods, to listen to American or Japanese pop music and to travel abroad also reflected the 'Thuppie' ideal. The only thing that appeared to be an exception was that Suung did not sound as if she wanted to be 'freed from financial burdens' even though her mother would not have pressed her to be responsible for the family. Being responsible for their household economies and parents' well-being – in Suung's case, that of her mother and sisters – was, as I have explained, an integral part of my interviewees' 'justification of' and 'adaptation to' being sexworkers. Nonetheless, Suung would not have been able to gain this new lifestyle while she was in Patpong, and it would have been even less likely after the economic crisis of 1997. She did not have any intention to go back to Thailand.

Trap again: Sand

For Sand, the pursuit of a Thuppie existence worked against her.

After working several months in Bangkok, she ran away from the bar and moved to Hat Yai with her friends. When she returned to Chiangrai, her father was back from Saudi Arabia where he had been working in construction.[35] He came back because of illness and was left with the debt, and still wanted to emigrate again to earn more money. Sand recalled that her father particularly wanted to have a pick-up truck and to be alone.[36] So she decided to go to Japan instead of her father because he had not helped her mother at all. She said 'I decided to go there [also] because I wanted to go to Japan, and I didn't want to stay in Bangkok either. It was too scary'.

For Sand the process of migration was more complicated than it was for Suung as she was given a fake passport, and went together with six other Thai women and a Malaysian 'attendant' – the year was 1991, when the organised trafficking of women from Thailand to Japan is said to have been more vigorous than either before or since. She passed through Thai immigration at Don Muang Airport with no problem because there was an officer helping them bypass the process. He stamped all the women's passports himself and gave them to the 'attendant'. At the Japanese end, Sand lost sight of the women she had been travelling with at the immigration point. But she passed through with no problem there either.

At first, in Shinjuku, Sand worked in a *snack* with a Thai *mama* and her Japanese husband. She

> liked . . . the fact that I could get a lot of money if I worked that I could send home, and I could get free soon [from her 'debt': 3.4 million yen or US$28,000]. At that time, I was working a lot. The most I made was about 1 million yen in one month. I paid off all the debts [including her father's]. Things like clothes for work were added to the debt, but not the food. They let us eat free.

But she never liked the job: going with customers, the rules and regulations of the *snack*. Even her co-workers did not help as Sand sensed there was a quiet competition going on among them. She still worked hard however, not only because she needed money but also because working was a way to prevent herself from feeling lonely. Her age probably factored in here: she was 17.

> I didn't like the work! And I missed home a lot. I missed home too much and was crying like a kid every day. When I came back from

> a customer, I would feel very lonely. But especially when I didn't have any customers, I felt lonely because I would be sitting there and thinking in the apartment [where the *mama* and the *papa* and her co-workers lived]. If other girls found customers, I would go back home by myself [from the *snack*]. When there were no customers, I would also have to think about when I would finish paying off the debt and I had to have more customers. And among the three girls there was a sort of competition. They would show off sometimes like 'Oh, I had so many customers these past months . . .' So I felt pressure in a number of ways.

Eventually, she met a Japanese customer who was good to her. She said:

> I met someone I felt in love with. I thought he could protect me. People said he would take care of me, understand me . . . He came often, and would take me to fun things, to go bowling or play sports . . . walking around gardens . . . He didn't want only sex. He let me sleep and all that. Then he bought me out. He paid 600,000 yen [approximately US$5,000]. He took me to stay with him in his house.

But this was a trap. After living with this man for a while, she was brought to 'a shabby apartment' in Isawa, a centre of a holiday resort district two hours' drive away in central Japan, famous for its fruit, wine, mountains, hot spas and tourism. The sex industry was also a part of the town. Sand was made to serve customers during the night in appointments arranged by telephone and to work in a garment factory nearby during the day. This time, she was not allowed to go out of the apartment on her own. There was a van to pick up all the women staying in the same apartment to commute to the factory. She never knew how much she earned because she never saw the money. 'Most of the girls in this place were addicted to drugs,' she said, though she 'only used a sort of cough syrup' to have sex with customers, to 'get excited'.[37] Seven or eight months passed. Sand

> couldn't take it anymore. My body couldn't take any more customers or any more drugs. I got beaten up by them [the first man and others involved] because I couldn't take many customers. I got beaten up almost every day. When I went to the factory, I was covered with bruises. But my friends there were used to it. I was beaten up because I often had trouble with the customers. I was often falling asleep. I was tired.

Sand was 'lucky', however, as a woman she thought was the wife of the factory owner helped her escape. The wife gave her a lift to the station, handing her 100,000 yen and giving her directions to Tokyo. Sand then went:

> back to the apartment in Shin-okubo [the same area as Suung's workplace]. I sat there waiting in front of the apartment, the old place I used to stay. 'Ping-pong, ping-pong . . . is there anyone at all?' [laugh]. I thought they would feel sorry for me and help me. I only had a plastic bag with a white shirt in it. I thought . . . I didn't have anywhere else to go. I knew this place already. So I just went there.

The *mama* was surprised but reassured Sand, saying 'if he comes again looking for you, I will fight him off. Don't worry'. She went back to 'work by myself' at the first bar, earning again.

To me, Sand's story really hit home when she showed me photographs taken in those Japanese days. They depicted some good memories of those times, day trips with people from the first bar, for instance. They also carried the image of a younger Sand, plumper, smiling, sad but just a girl compared to the grown-up woman I was talking to in the Western-style house that she had built for herself with the money she earned in Japan. I imagined almost physically for the first time how terrified she had been in Isawa, how lonely in Shinjuku, and felt how the loneliness caused her to be attracted to the man setting the trap.

Conclusion

As stated in the previous chapter, many of my respondents shared a sense of unquestionable attachment to their families, particularly to their mothers. There was a strong sense of responsibility among them toward their families' economic situations. There was also a sense of loss in their relationships with close family members. They seemed to be trying to fill the gap between the loss and the responsibility by earning and establishing their own usefulness. At the same time, we would miss their subjective and active motivations in filling this gap if we adopted only an objective viewpoint in focusing on how they articulated these things.

It is unjustifiable to blame sexworkers as morally loose and/or victims of their situations with not enough will to effect change. The labels of 'moral decay' and 'lack of will power' were produced only by distant observers who had little grasp of the complex relations between broader social and economic conditions and sexwork. At this level of understanding, we could counter-argue by looking at the socio-economic conditions

of the times and places of the sexworkers' experiences in relation to the macro picture of the society. Thailand witnessed four decades of drastic changes to many aspects of the social structure, including the economy, concrete infrastructure and education: the modernisation period guided by the state, and by the interstate and commercial injection of development. Human relationships changed along with the structural changes, often via actual movement in the short-term and long-term migration of people. My respondents were among these 'ordinary' people, even often the more conventional ones, as they exemplified the necessity for any people to maintain ties between the present and the past and between the places they were staying in and the places they had left.

In pursuing a level of understanding beyond the changes of external structure, an analysis of macroeconomic factors and the state, interstate or official discourse is not enough to reconstruct what was occurring in respondents' social environments. Statistical evidence, documents and respondents' stories intermingled, clearly showing a complexity to these women's experiences. To go beyond the macro into these 'messy' human relationships, we need a microscope with which to see the former/sexworkers' perceptions, feelings and thoughts. I hope I have contributed in some part to this understanding through my own interpretations of relevant aspects of the culture surrounding my respondents. The culture either sustained their subjective notions to uplift them or it let them down, as did the economy and their social and personal relationships. Because of the nature of the work – with sex involved – social norms, love, responsibility, and spiritual and material well-being are as much a part of the focus as financial sufficiency, and they go hand in hand with institutional factors such as family, law and religion.

The next stage of my respondents' career development is 'Becoming Ex-Sexworkers'. We will see some of my respondents returning 'home', wherever their 'home' is. Some of them will still be sexworkers in actuality or will still be going back and forth, to and from being sexworkers, in some psychological dimension. Some of them will never go back to the places where they used to be as they themselves changed along with changes of the times and the changes in the bases of their lives. I will organise the next chapter around their experiences in terms of these changes of place. Into the spatial changes I will also interweave important issues for my respondents that *either* worked again as triggers, but this time as triggers to stop being sexworkers, *or* were necessary to sustain their lives after being sexworkers. These issues centre around experiences that affected the respondents personally and that will again bring us to the wider socio-cultural and economic contexts of these women's lives.

4
Becoming Ex-Sexworkers

Many respondents entered sexwork under similar financial and relational conditions, but their actual experiences and their views of themselves as sexworkers varied significantly. And, their experiences after leaving sexwork were more diverse still. The different processes of each woman's development within her 'deviant' career meant that ultimately each stood in a different social position, equipped with a different personal disposition, afterwards. Various conditions encountered after leaving sexwork often proved divisive also.

Of the 22 respondents, 12 were already in the 'ex-sexworker phase' when we met. These women tended to head in one of three directions: returning to their communities of origin; staying where they were at the end of their career; or going to a new place. This choice of destination reflected each respondent's estimation of herself. Further, their perceptions in turn affected how each dealt with her circumstances at the time of our meetings, as well as reflections about the past and the future. In this chapter, the stories of four women (with brief reference to a fifth, for comparison) illustrate what triggered them to leave the job and the major effects they faced as former sexworkers. A focal point here will be the sense of belonging. Each woman's sense of belonging is underpinned by modern socio-economic trends spanning geographical space, and finds expression in all intimate relationships, especially in feelings for significant others. Here we can see their conditions varying from one extreme situation, slavery, to another, future plans filled with hope and romantic love. This range of conditions are scattered among the lives of different respondents or dispersed throughout one person's life, and particularly in the latter cases affects the degree to which each woman is able to adapt to a new situation, and also her sense of self-worth. Each woman's physical circumstances are linked to the values, identity and

sense of security she gains through the human relations she nurtures by balancing changing hierarchies of powers and cultural norms as well as the expectations of belief, behaviour, the skills required and also skills made redundant.

Back to Chiangrai

Of the 12 respondents in the 'ex-sexworker phase', seven had returned to their communities of origin. Six had left Japan to return to villages in the Chiangrai prefecture, including Kaeo, Daaw, Nok, Mai and Sand, all of whom I met through SEPOM during my fieldwork (see Introduction). SEPOM assists women who have been to Japan, worked in the sex industry there and then returned to Thailand, which differentiates my encounters facilitated through the group from those which might have been gained by a random sampling. Nevertheless, the stories of the women related here offer one of the first ethnographic glimpses into international migration via research focusing on sexwork within the broader scope of women's life courses, including life after leaving behind the 'deviant' career and returning home.[1] Their accounts give us insight into two important phenomena: continuity of career development, wherein another 'deviant' career sometimes materialises after sexwork, and changes in the agent's perceptions of the career in retrospect and alongside changes in their social conditions.[2] These issues provide a deep basis for an analysis of shifting – of when, how and under what conditions sexwork can change into a situation of slavery. They also interlock with the overall theme of this chapter.

To start, I will focus on Kaeo and Sand, both of whom left sexwork in Japan and returned to their communities of origin, and illustrate distinctive experiences of returnees. One example is the observation that 'coming home' is not necessarily a positive experience. Four of the seven returnees, including Kaeo and Sand, had returned home more than once and expressed how difficult it was to live in one's community of origin after being a sexworker. This difficulty stemmed in some cases from unsolved financial hardship as well as the social stigma attached to the 'deviant' identity of former sexworker,[3] but it was further related to the perception that 'home' was in the end not quite the place where they felt they belonged.

Sand's aspiration to attain a *than samay* (trendy) life drove her to run away from her social conditions as a teenager and resulted in her entering sexwork. After being a sexworker and after coming back 'home', she still seemed to want to run away from her situation. Compared to

Kaeo, who returned to her community of origin and then gave priority to her life in the village, Sand's 'homecoming' was, I would argue, not complete. Among the interviewees, the returnee women appeared to be more troubled than those who had not gone back to their original communities. This evidences that 'belonging', 'neutralising' and 'settling down' once again in the communities that they had left behind could prove harder owing to dramatic personal change over the course of their 'deviant' career development. Being back home was difficult even though they had wanted to go back. The longing for 'home' while away created within these respondents a 'community of imagination' which proved inconsistent with the actual communities and their social stigmas and challenging expectations. The women often felt that their imagined security in the 'home' community was betrayed when they needed to be accepted, protected and healed, particularly those who had been through dehumanising experiences.

Nested boxes of 'deviant career': Kaeo

As briefly mentioned above, two of the women I interviewed had been driven to kill the *mama*s of their last bars to escape from situations of slavery. One of these was Kaeo. She first became involved in the sex industry in Hat Yai, lived there for several years and moved to Bangkok before quitting the job to marry a Thai man back in her village. She later left her husband when she found he was philandering and went to Japan to consensually serve customers for sexual services. During her first stay, from around 1984 to 1987, she was able to earn enough money to send from 200,000 to 500,000 yen (approximately US$1,700 to US$4,200 or 7,000 to 17,000 baht at the 1987 rate) per month to her mother, brother and sisters at home. She made it clear to them that the remittances were for building houses and investing in other capital such as farmland in order to fundamentally improve the financial situation of the family. Compared to the amount that Suung in Chapter 3 had been able to send – about 30,000 to 100,000 yen (10,000 to 33,000 baht) a month, which was already well into the highest income range in Thailand in 2002, Kaeo's remittances a decade and a half before that were clearly a large amount. This was exceptional and only made possible because she became 'the woman' of a central figure in the *yakuza* group trafficking women in Shinjuku, Tokyo, at around this time, as Kaeo explained.

She was treated well, but decided to go back to Chiangrai when she thought the work had become too stressful and hazardous to her health. She found herself addicted to 'a kind of drug weaker than heroin smuggled from Thailand, taken by most of the women in the *snack* to get

"drunk"'.[4] Back in her village, she found her family's quality of life not much improved. The house had not been built, nor the property expanded. Everyone in the family had been prodigal, spending all Kaeo's earnings on consumable goods, drinking or other social extravagances. At this point, she recalled, 'I didn't want to stay in that house. I was fed up with life'. And so she decided to return to Japan, to go anywhere far away, a second time. She left home again for Japan via the mediation of another trafficker.

Her second stay from around 1989, however, led to more shattering developments for Kaeo. She found herself trapped by her new *mama* and the owner, who bought her for 1,650,000 yen ($US14,000) but told her that her 'debt' was 3,500,000 yen ($US30,000), a typical sum forced on women in seemingly organised trafficking (see Chapter 3, Footnote 31). They deprived her of her entitled wages, her freedom of movement, and basic needs like sufficient food, sleep, medicine and access to information. Hence, it could be objectively argued that her career as a sexworker thereby ended and a situation of slavery began. But, Kaeo's own perception was that she was 'working', even under such conditions. Like Mai, Kaeo regarded herself, apart from the experience of rape by the first customer, to be 'working' from the time she was sold to a brothel as a child until the very end of her involvement in the sex industry. She always regarded herself as a capable worker, particularly because she was able to earn money to support her family, as mentioned in the previous chapters, and because the earnings amounted to such huge sums under relatively good working relations towards the end of her first stay in Japan. It was inconceivable until considerably later to identify herself as a 'slave' or in any way deprived of the social resources which had been hitherto available.

'Becoming a slave' required as much career development as becoming a sexworker had, with reflexive acknowledgement of society's version of her 'deviant' self growing within her perception through contact with the world around her. Sexwork and slavery, however, were both intricately intertwined with migration for Kaeo over the course of her career development, and the transition from one career to the next was uneven and, at least initially, psychologically blurred. The conceptual gap between her two careers occurred to her for the first time when she was given the chance to objectively look at and name each situation. To label this process *either* sexwork *or* slavery, therefore, requires us to clarify which viewpoint we are taking in relation to what is occurring to Kaeo herself at a particular moment. In that case, I would summarise Kaeo's mixed view of herself in question as 'being a sexworker under the conditions

of slavery'. This particular view was necessary (albeit she herself was not acknowledging it at the time) in order to 'neutralise' and rescue herself, at least in her mind, from becoming an even more deviant persona than a sexworker – a slave.

But the neutralisation worked only to a certain extent. When conditions under the *mama*'s surveillance stretched to an extreme state of deprivation, her perception of 'working' was overwhelmed by the reality of slavery. Kaeo recognised objectively that she was now becoming a slave as she was more and more heavily burdened by her inability to maintain contact with the outside world in order to remain 'normal'. She needed to act against the physical and psychological forces confining her in order to keep from losing her mind, if not her life. It seemed to her that the only way to do this was to 'make the *mama* disappear' in order to flee. Along with three other women in the house who were in the same situation, she stabbed the *mama* one night and fled.

She was eventually caught by Japanese immigration control, initially as an overstayer. At this point, for Kaeo, her career as a sexworker was over. She was subsequently arrested by the police while waiting to be deported, found guilty of murder (with mitigating circumstances) by a criminal court and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. After completing this sentence, she left Japan. The beginning of Kaeo's time in prison marked a shift from her first 'deviant' career as a sexworker to that of a prison inmate. The career stages she underwent during this time are well documented in her accounts, recorded and published in 1998 by Japanese supporters, and introduced in Chapter 3. The 'unusual subjective experience' or anxiety about 'going crazy', in Becker's terms (1968: 277–8), is particularly well demonstrated in this remark:

> At the O police station, the interrogation started after breakfast every day. After the lunch break, it started again, and it went on after dinner till 10 o'clock at night, all through 20 days.[5] Asked how I held the knife and stabbed, [the blade] facing inside or out, again and again, and again, I was nearly going mad [...] It was still in the hot season but there was no air-conditioner or electric fan in the police custody. I was soaked with sweat but we couldn't take a bath but once a week. Especially for women, it's really hard if we cannot take a bath. The room was matted with *tatami* [Japanese rush mat]. I could not sleep after the interrogation though lying down on the floor. It was really like going mad. Though the inspector didn't use [physical] violence, one day, I became screechy, shouted, cried and howled. Then, the

> inspector got furious, stood up, and gestured to stab my eyes with his ball-point pen to threaten me. I behaved like I don't care about anything anymore (Kamarado 1998: 14–15).[6]

In Kaeo's career development as a prison inmate, the next step of 'neutralisation' or 'justification' seemed to have occurred after she was found guilty and sentenced to six years' imprisonment with her detention period deducted. In Kaeo's account in the same published script, life in prison was documented in a more distant manner than life in the detention centre. She related to the interviewer dispassionate detailed descriptions of daily routines, rules and regulations. Even troubles with other inmates, apparently involving complex emotions such as pride and jealousy, were stated without agitation. When talking about her work at the sewing factory, one of the compulsory activities in the prison offering both a meagre wage and training for job opportunities, she described her aptitude for the work:[7]

> No one could sew quicker than I [...] Many companies brought orders in. We sometimes made dresses too. We were divided into two groups, ones sewing the outer dresses and ones sewing the lining. There were nasty women among the Japanese [inmates], who forced the parts they couldn't manage on me. That upset me sometimes and I would nearly start a fight, but I got over it by mumbling 'I want to go back home. I am going to go back home' like a mantra. When things were more than I could bear otherwise, I mumbled 'Endure, endure ...' like that. There were times that I cried. The prison officer would come and ask me, 'What's the matter?' but I didn't rat on the nasty ones to the officer (ibid.: 112).

The technique she uses to cope here is very similar to what she had done when becoming a sexworker. In the 'settling down' stage of her career as a sexworker, Kaeo coped with her job by acting as if it were just like any other job – stressing daily routine and looking to skills that were attainable, including the skill of suppressing emotions through reason. To recall, in the last chapter she said, '[When you were] sleeping with a different man every day, each day, [...] I had to cry but endured by thinking, "It's for money, it's for money ..."' On this occasion, too, she described how she endured the hard times, how she was diligent and industrious in various aspects of the job, and how well she adapted herself 'gradually to the new experience by using layers of socially available resources' (Becker 1968: 279; 1963/1991: 28–30).

If knowing the rules, being diligent and overcoming emotion through reason were ways of using one layer of socially available resources to adapt herself to her situation, there was another layer of socially available resources she used in a different way – opposition to the environment. This layer of opposition in effect worked to sustain the first layer of adaptation. One element was her supporters, including the official defence attorneys, a feminist group called Hand-in-Hand Chiba and their translators. They contacted Kaeo when she was on remand and feeling 'really like going mad'. She did not have anyone she could trust and could not believe that these supporters were really there for her. After the commencement of her trial, it took some time to establish trust with Kaeo, during which they continued to visit, encourage and comfort her while passing along information 'as if they were my parents or relatives', as she later put it. Then,

> I started feeling courage welling, being positive about the trial, and feeling that I would be out [of prison] someday. And then I started writing letters home. I spent time writing, reading a book of Buddha [given by the supporters], having calmed down, and being encouraged by people from Hand-in-Hand Chiba . . . Fighting spirit welled up like this and I thought I'd no longer have to die.[8]

The resources provided through human contact from the outside world seemed to create within Kaeo an emerging self capable of opposing (Goffman 1961/1991: 280). And, this 'internal revolt' kept her 'spiritual health' (Ketman, quoted in ibid.) to sustain her in a difficult immediate situation.

An agent would usually act in compliance with the rules of society, or in correspondence with social expectations, in as far as her habitus,[9] as more general memory traces and dispositional values, and her necessary dealing with the demands of a particular context are not drastically in conflict. But the rebellious face would emerge in response to certain immediate conditions as reasons to rebel would also have been accumulated in habitus. Habitus within agents in this way is in part a reservoir of a 'negative' sort, filled by repeated betrayal, coercion, disappointment, devastation, humiliation, pain, failure, shame and disempowerment that might prepare the ground for actions against the immediate situation at some point – practically, against people around the agent with whom she is interacting. Resistance as in Kaeo's case can be applied to the immediate situation even if it is at odds with aspects of her taken-for-granted worldview, such as a humanitarian value of not harming others;

this happens when there are more acute problems pressing, such as being trapped and needing to flee to survive.

Within Kaeo in prison, however, the two layers of socially available resources – within the immediate situation and in her habitus – were used in a more subtle way, one layer facing the rules and relationships inside the prison as an immediate situation forming the self adapting to it, the other facing support from outside as more general human solidarity forming the self that opposes unfair treatment. Kaeo's spiritual health lay neither in total adaptation nor in total opposition but in using the opposition to sustain the adaptation that saved her from 'going mad', allowed her to survive emotionally, and brought her to understand her current situation and what led her to it.[10]

When the prosecution called for a sentence of ten years' imprisonment, Kaeo became depressed again, recovering once more upon hearing that the final verdict was six years. Her explanation of her reasoning illustrates how the understanding of one's circumstances is connected to one's spiritual health.

> I already knew at that time that the other three people involved in the incident each got a ten-year demand and a six-year verdict, an actual sentence of five years with deduction of 300 days' custody on remand. So I fully understood my sentence [...] The attorneys came and visited me twice after the verdict asking me if I wanted to appeal. I did not appeal as I heard the others had not. If the penalty had been ten years, I wouldn't have thought the verdict was fair and I would have appealed, though.[11]

Kaeo thus also found a balance between wholly identifying as a 'deviant' and murderer, as defined by the Japanese criminal justice system, and completely taking up the role of victim, thereby brushing aside her guilt over killing another human being. After she had gained an objective perspective through sufficient information and support from the outside, the career stages of becoming and being a sexworker unfolded perceptibly before her, and this was consolidated during her ex-sexworker phase. She understood when her career as a sexworker was over – although of course she did not use the word 'career' – that it was a precondition for her next career as a prison inmate. She also understood once her career as a prison inmate started that the new career could be retrospectively applied to many of her past situations. If she was to interpret herself as a 'prisoner', she understood that she had already been a prisoner when enslaved, even though at that time she perceived herself as a sexworker.

She understood that a 'prisoner' was a criminal. But she understood further that a 'prisoner' in her case was also a victim of extreme abuse and exploitation.

In the last bar she worked at in Japan, Kaeo recalled that she and her co-workers had been treated like 'things, not human beings' or 'things less than slaves, less than livestock' (Kamarado 1998: 94–5). 'Ever since I started prostitution [at the age of 12]', she stated, 'I had never met as awful customers as those men in *mama*'s shop' (ibid.: 89). In Thailand and at previous bars in Japan, Kaeo had always been strict about customers wearing condoms, for instance, but at the last bar, none of the customers wanted to wear condoms. They did everything from 'screwing a lighter into a [colleague's] vagina' to 'shoving his penis into my mouth without having a shower first' (ibid.: 95). The customers could treat the women so badly, Kaeo thought, because most had been the *mama*'s regulars for years, preventing 'ordinary' new customers – outsiders – from coming in. *Mama* told her customers that they could do anything they wanted to until 10 o'clock the next morning (ibid.: 91–2).

The *mama* was not only controlling Kaeo and other women's working lives but 'was trying to be the dictator of our life,' Kaeo stated. 'We felt that our life was in *mama*'s hands and, if she wished, it would be squeezed at once' as she had also been telling the women that she would kill their parents if they escaped (ibid.: 87). Her power was maintained through a combination of constant physical violence and verbal abuse, and the threat thereof, doled out by the *mama*, the *papa* and the customers. Another element that disempowered Kaeo so much was the meaningless drudgery. The first order from the *mama* was, Kaeo described,

> to dig the soil with Lin [a colleague] in the field that belonged to *mama*'s house as soon as we are up in the morning. The digging was forced on us from that day on, whether it was scorching or raining outside, without a single day off [. . .] If it was work on a rice field, then there would be an end no matter how hard. But the field of *mama*'s house, though just a patch, never had any end – working every single day for I did not know how many months. Dig and bury, and dig again on the next day, and repeat again (ibid.: 72–3).

The women would then go straight to the bar. The *mama* effectively constructed a prison for the women in which they were made to believe, with very real evidence, that there was no social or psychological support available from the outside world. Nor was there a life outside of the bar, as the women had no physical freedom to break away from the

control of the owners. There was no concept available *here* with which to distinguish their work or working conditions from a situation of slavery (see Figure 1 for the continuum from sexwork to slavery in Chapter 1).

Kaeo understood retrospectively that she had at times become a slave, or less than one, in this situational combination of numerous conditions outside of her control. She understood, however, that her anguished experience was not merely an isolated case of personal trouble – it was one manifestation of a social problem, and she was not alone in going through its extremes. After she agreed to the idea presented by her supporters of publishing a book based on her life story, Kaeo added to her original interview an account about the *mama* she had been driven to kill.

> *Mama* seemed not to be sleeping at night. As I wrote before, she came and checked if all of us were there every night at around 3 or 4 am, sneaking like a ghost. She still couldn't find peace of mind and decided to install a surveillance camera upstairs [as well as on the ground floor] (ibid.: 100).

Kaeo repeated that the *mama*'s attitude left the women in the bar with no recourse but to believe that they had to kill her for their own survival. Nevertheless, she also implied that retrospectively she supposed that the *mama* must have been driven to behave toward others as she did because of conditions out of her control.

> The *mama* – whether out of anger, to show off her power, or to gain money – had been imposing every possible cruelty upon us. Even so, I feel sorry for her to have lost her life, to have lost chances to use that money. Because she came to Japan [from Thailand with a Singaporean passport] to work and was working for decades like us [...] If it were possible, I would want her life back. If it were possible to exchange [her life] with something else, I would gladly ask to exchange it with my life. But that's impossible. The one thing I can do is to accept all the responsibility for my sin. I would like you to understand that it was never my intention to have done that to the *mama*. I do not know how to explain my feelings at that time (ibid.: 101).

The woman she killed became closer to herself, in Kaeo's understanding, as someone who possibly had been through similar realities and degrees of abuse, violence and exploitation. But there was one thing that ultimately divided the two women – one could not survive in the end.

Having completed her sentence, Kaeo returned to Thailand, shaved her head and stayed in a temple for purgation. In the temple, she went through a similar process of reflection before eventually returning home to her village to start a new life. She remarried the husband from whom she had separated before going to Japan: upon hearing of what had happened to her in Japan, he had gone to the temple and persuaded her to start over with him. She started to live with him and his son from a second marriage during the time when Kaeo was in Japan. Kaeo wanted to start her own family, and gave birth to a daughter with him. Kaeo assessed her husband: '[a] good thing about him is that he never says anything about my past, accuses me or anything – even when we are having troubles. I sort of trust him that way.'[12]

Kaeo did succeed in belonging once more at home by finding her place in her 'community of intimacy'. Two significant elements that contributed to her success here were her husband's acceptance of all that had happened (albeit this may stem from his feeling of responsibility for it as his philandering had arguably driven her away in the first place) and the significance for her of having a family and becoming a mother. Recall here how Liap connected being a 'bad woman' with her sexuality and not being a mother, while in Banyaa's case, becoming a mother meant possessing presumed goodness in the eyes of Thai society. It was similarly important for Kaeo to become a mother in order to belong to intimate relationships again, particularly after going through numerous layers of 'deviant' identities, including those that demeaned her sexuality.

Simultaneously, she needed to establish a sense of belonging once again to her 'community of association'. Once she acknowledged that her problem had not been a personal one, she was eager to persuade people outside her community of intimacy to also accept and reflect on what she had experienced. At the time of our meetings she was engaging in this through her contribution to SEPOM's activities (see Introduction and Chapter 2). She told her story at public gatherings or to other returnees in districts in Chiangrai during research interviews conducted by SEPOM. By doing so she was reflecting on her past repeatedly and mentally replaying the stages of becoming and being a sexworker, a prison inmate, a prisoner, a criminal, a killer and a victim again and again. Kaeo's experiences were then used in turn to help others to understand what it might mean to be a sexworker in extreme situations, and what it might mean for a rural Thai woman to have that experience. She found a way to articulate the link between her personal ordeal and social problems. Her experiences were then reclaimed with a social meaning, in the sense that they could be a medium by which she and the

people around her could learn about themselves, their similarities and differences (see Plummer 2001: 242–53; 1995: 148–51).

Home, for longing, not belonging: Sand

As with Kaeo, the other two women who lived through situations of slavery also entered the 'ex-sexworker phase' when working conditions deprived them of pay and social resources including, among other things, contact with the outside world. However, transition into this phase is neither clearly distinguishable nor is it a one-way process, as seen in Mai's and Kaeo's cases. These women were alternately in and out of sexwork, taking on other careers and finding themselves trapped in situations of slavery. After living through slavery, they were more prone to finding themselves again in other even more harrowing situations. Their self-perceived identities swayed and were most often defined – and articulated – only in retrospect. Sand had been in a vicious cycle of enslavement, escape and entering sexwork time and time again. The last time that she escaped from a situation of slavery, she realised that she had no recourse but to enter sexwork again and 'was glad', in her words, to earn money on her own and for herself once more. The work, however, lasted only four months this time; she was caught as an 'illegal' migrant worker when Japanese immigration control raided the Thai restaurant where she and her Thai friends were dining. Her career as a sexworker ended right there in 1994. She was sent to a detention centre and waited for deportation, just as Kaeo had done about two years before.

Between Kaeo's and Sand's arrests, trafficking in women for the international sex trade finally caused a public uproar, resulting in concrete policy-making to tackle it. The UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women released its 'Violence Against Women: General Recommendation', a document that specifically pointed to the responsibility of nation states in failing to act to prevent, investigate, punish and compensate for violence against women (UN CEDAW 1992). 1994 was the year in which Radhika Coomaraswamy was appointed as Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women: she would later release recommendations for the elimination of trafficking and forced prostitution of women and children (UNCHR 1997/2000). In Japan, there were 21 reported homicide cases from 1991 to 1994 in which 18 Thai women were victimised and 23 Thai women and four Thai men were indicted for the killings (Kyoto YWCA APT 2001: 125–7). The Shimodate case, nearly identical to Kaeo's, attracted extensive media coverage and public attention. Voluntary groups formed to support the convicted Thai women and

petitions for their absolution were signed by the general public; 4,000 signatures in 1993, and 5,000 in 1995 for the appeal court trial (Simodate Jiken 1995: 218–19).[13]

In this social climate, Sand remembered being interviewed at the detention centre by Thai embassy staff asking her how she had come there and what she had been doing. She explained her situation. The embassy, she said, eventually 'found my real passport. It entered Japan but coming from Hong Kong. It came after me! [laughs]' Having met with her real passport for the first time, Sand flew back to Thailand. On the plane,

> I was thinking ... I didn't have money – just a little ... I wanted to work but just worked for them and I didn't get anything. But ... I felt *SO* good to see Thailand! I felt so happy when I put my foot on Thai soil ... I was really happy to be back again, not scared of the police or anything anymore. *FREE* [in English]!

When Sand had decided to go to Japan after returning from the first situation of slavery in Bangkok, she already felt ostracised from her community because of the first experience, but going back to Bangkok again was not an option as she was frightened of that city. It was then, upon hearing another trafficker's promise of more money than it was possible to make in Bangkok, that she had decided to go to Japan. This was supported by her own understanding that 'in the village, women had already gone to Japan and were sending money back home, so I could see that I could get the money back'. The incentive to go to Japan was visible, as it had been for Daaw in Chapter 2. Sand wanted a second chance at living the affluent life she had dreamed of, since her first chance had turned out to be a fraud. Only after she realised that she had been trapped into a situation of slavery again did she understand that Japan was an even worse place than Bangkok for her. Her enslavement and other experiences had made her long for a 'home' where she could feel free of deceit, violence, entrapment, exploitation and fear. And up to her return home, she had built up in her mind that Thailand was her imagined safe community.

But the community of imagination that Sand had held dear was in reality a paradise lost, the more desperately hoped for the more its possibility recedes. The gap between her imagined and real communities fits with the one illustrated by Zygmunt Bauman. The word 'community', Bauman starts off, always feels good. It is warm, cosy and comfortable; we are relaxed, safe and not lonely there. But it *always* feels good because

it is 'another name for paradise lost – but one to which we dearly hope to return, and so we feverishly seek the roads that may bring us there'. It is not the place we physically inhabit, where we face the harsh reality of life. This is what makes 'the imagined community even more alluring' (2001/2003: 1–4). For the former/sexworkers in this study, the word *baan* [house or home: T], or Thailand as *baan*, represents this feeling, and the harsher their reality, the more their subjectivity expresses the allure as a need whose imagined satisfaction allows them to survive the present. However, as they move from one geographical place to another, for instance from their villages to the metropolis of Bangkok and then on to Japan in some cases, their relationships to the concrete lived communities and to the members of these communities change. Their moving also involves the passage of time; the women move along the time scales of their career stages, their life courses within the global social and cultural condition of modernity, and some aspects of their habitus begin to age and fall into disuse in newer conditions. The gap between the lived communities of intimacy and association and the now imagined communities they left thus widens with the geographic and temporal distance. This is why returning is difficult.

Sand in reality returned to a space where she could not feel at home or free from conflict with others. Her neighbours, her family, and others she met daily were pressurising Sand to perform according to their expectations. They would not understand her, Sand thought. Their expectations were in conflict with what Sand had wanted from a community. She stated:

> After coming back, I spent all the money I brought back with me, buying clothes and things. Then people in the village would say, 'Oh, you came back from Japan to buy things like that'. But they wouldn't have understood what I had gone through. They knew what I was doing in Japan basically. But they were more interested in talking about the money I brought back, like, 'Oh, you have so much money now. What will you do with it?' When I first came back, I planned to invite them to come over to our house, have a meal and drink, and they could have a good time, almost every day!

I asked why she would treat the villagers to food and drink. Sand answered, 'Because my mother told me to. Usually these are the type of things to get you face'. She then explained what exactly 'get face' meant: 'The villagers knew what I did in Japan. Mother wanted to show

I actually came back with loads of money so that I would gain a status in the village again and so would my parents.'

Sand's story here echoes that of Daaw in Chapter 2, in which she was criticised for not being able to bring back as much money from Japan as other young women in the village. To put it baldly, these episodes can be seen as evidence of how young women are used by the adults around them to satisfy their greed: the villagers skimming from the returnee women's money and labour, and the parents putting up a good front with the same resources. The expectations of families and communities and how they respond to getting it, however, might not be quite as simple as they first appear.

Though it is often directly related to the amount of money one spends, 'getting face' is not simply about finances. In the cases of Sand and Daaw, it is related to establishing one's generosity at heart. Being generous [*mii nam jai*: T] is a personal quality rated highly among many of my respondents. Those who were working unsurprisingly paid much attention to whether or not their customers had *nam jai*, that is tipping them a lot. But, they also showed a good deal of concern about themselves being seen as *mii nam jai*. Sand and her mother, too, were both trying to regain social status by trying to be seen as *mii nam jai* and buying goods that would visually evidence it – by treating the villagers they would be fulfilling a role leading to that status. The role that they were pursuing was an important role for women in their rural agrarian society: influencing the community and taking care of those around them by feeding them, a form of nurturing.

Ethnographers and mythologists give reasons for gendered methods and meanings behind generosity. Thamora V. Fishel's examination of the patron-client relationship during the 1995 local election campaigns in one central province maintains the importance of being seen as generous in Thai political culture. For women, it is connected to fulfilling the nurturing role of mother in order to retain their status, or to 'get face' (1997: 446). Some mothers have actively participated in local politics despite the fact that women are, on the whole, under-represented in Thailand among officials and in elected offices. The mother of a candidate may work as a vote canvasser, going door-to-door asking people to vote for her candidate – her child. Such women were adept at using community networks and knowledge established over the years, providing logistical and material support for managing the election campaign, buying votes, making deals with other candidates, and treating people in the community by inviting them, especially women voters, to lunch feasts (*ngan liang*: T) or other social gatherings (ibid.: 447–56).[14] Mothers

would be the real patrons, looking after voters as their clients and using their children as nominal patrons. Fishel remarks that

> [i]n contrast to American politicians who might worry about presenting an image of child-like dependence, Thai candidates willingly stress their bonds to mothers or other patrons. The relationship of indebtedness between mother and child *is seen as a positive way that people are linked into the network of social relations* (ibid.: 451, my emphasis).

The *bunkhun* relationship is alive here. The mother would ultimately be the foremost beneficiary if her child is elected because in the *bunkhun* relationship the child's success is defined as a merit to the mother.

Recall from the previous chapter the cultural significance to women of the House, symbolising material as well as spiritual female heritage and mutual protection: the domestic realm as a woman's sphere. In Whittaker's study, women's responsibility for the domestic realm originates from the role of the female spirit *Mae Phosop* [mother rice: T] in Isaan cosmology, personifying stable food and female fertility. *Mae Phosop* thus evokes the importance of women becoming mothers and being responsible for nurturing children (2000: 28–32). According to the Thai anthropologist Suvanna Kriengkraipetch, *Mae Phosop* is treated with respect and gratitude as the stable food provider and '[p]eople call themselves *luk* (child) when talking to *Mae Phosop* in ceremonial songs'. Respect and gratitude thus become the model attitudes toward mothers as well, as nurturers and providers for their communities, a fact which has been reflected in patron-client relationships (Suvanna 1989/2000: 147, 150–1).

One thing worth noting here is that *Mae Phosop* exists across Thailand; that is, in Whittaker's northeast, in Suvanna's west and in the north where many of my respondents come from. The agricultural and spiritual mythology is considered to have spread even further across mainland Southeast Asia before the emergence of national borders, and possibly before Buddhism spread in the same area (Siraporn N. 2000: 81–4, 99–112). The myth of women's ascribed role as nurturer might well be alive in current Thai villages and among migrants in the cities, although the material conditions for nurturing are disappearing as modernisation progresses – as seen where female lineage determines land inheritance.[15] If this is the case, it makes sense that women, and especially mothers, still aspire in some areas to provide grand feasts and gatherings to demonstrate that they are capable of feeding their communities (and earning respect at the same time).

Sand, however, was known to have opted out of manifesting the ascribed goodness of Thai women. Liap's belief, expressed in the previous chapter, that Thai culture embodies a dichotomy in that 'a woman working during the daytime is a good person and would find a good husband' and 'a woman working at night [has] a bad job and would be a bad person' was shared by Sand: 'I want to get a regular job during the day that people would respect me for. But it's hard if they know my background. They wouldn't respect me for that.'

Sand's mother then wanted to treat the villagers to food in order that her daughter could 'get face'. To regain her status in the village as a woman, Sand had to show that she was capable of providing for the community by generously feeding its members. She had to demonstrate her own appropriate power in the domestic realm as a symbolic patron to the public by organising consecutive and large communal cooking events. Behind the daughter stood a mother also wanting to show her ability to nurture the community as the true patron, much like the mothers behind political candidates in Fishel's study discussed above.

However, 'nurturing' in actual life, unlike in mythology, takes money – just as running an election campaign would. A conflict emerges, then, between the fact that Sand's mother needed and actually used money to gain status for both her daughter and herself, and the fact that the value of money was not the prime object that Sand wanted people to see. Sand's purposes and her mother's inevitably crossed each other at this point. As she articulated, Sand felt people around her, including her mother, were after her money and would not understand her. Sand had also known before she went to Japan that houses built and goods purchased raised the status of daughters and their parents in her village. She too imagined her yearning for freedom would be fulfilled by a materially wealthy life in another country. Yet as her career developed something in her perception changed; her enslavement in Japan twisted her original fantasy into a longing for 'home' – a safer and freer place. The reality of this imagined home community was, however, bound to disappoint her, as people there had not changed over the same period of time and could not reciprocate the new needs born from her experiences elsewhere.

Once back home, Sand could not help but attach memories of all the abuse and violence she had endured to the migration that had also earned the money. For the community to see and symbolise what she had been through only in terms of the amount of money gained was to her a gross insult. Then again, it was also difficult for Sand to separate the value of money from what she wanted to regain at home, because there seemed to be no other way to compensate for what she had lost. She had lost

status – that is, the ascribed goodness of a woman – in her village. She and her mother wanted to regain that status but, as it was not an achievable status but an ascribed one, all that she could do was to show her reliability and capability for womanly nurturing by her newly acquired means – money (see Merton 1968: 423–37). This allowed her a tangible means of gaining status within her community, yet the money did not transmit to the villagers what Sand had experienced. However, one possession that Sand acquired carried another symbolic meaning. She was eager to demonstrate and keep this meaning within her new status while at the same time using it to compensate for the one she had presumably lost. It was the experience and atmosphere of the *than samay* life, or a life 'in step with the times', which she had been pursuing ever since she had left her community, and which, by definition, prevented Sand from ever meeting the community's old expectations.

Sand was willing to use her English name, which is unusual for a Thai person, and wanted to be a success, to go on to higher education; she liked computer work and internet cafes and other contemporary facilities. She lived in a two-bedroom house of her own that she had planned and designed herself. The house had a Western-style bath, hot shower and toilet, and was filled with 'mod-cons' such as a microwave oven and a CD player with good stereo speakers, not common in rural Chiangrai. There were two larger-than-life pinup posters of Japanese female pop stars of Sand's generation on a living room wall next to the entrance. She wore jeans and socks even on the hottest days, unlike other women in the area, because she did not want mosquito bites to leave spots on her legs and feet (see a case study in Mills 1997: 148).

Sand's ample *than samay* possessions were evidence of how she presented herself, and of her new status. They demonstrated her outward capability, symbolised by the money that she spent, yet they did not make her feel that people around her understood her any better. The 'continuous and implicit message of [Sand's] insecurity behind her constant escapes' (see previous chapter) was still apparent after she had been home for a while. Although she valued SEPOM's work, stating even that '[t]he most important thing to me at the moment is ... encouragement to keep working [at SEPOM]', she did not forget to add:

> [w]hen other people don't give a damn about us, it's difficult ... I feel they think we [the returnee women] don't have any problems anymore, that we can say anything we like. But there are many things [that I feel discouraged by] in both the people I would be talking with about the issue and in outsiders. For example, my mother expects me

> to give to her. If I try to argue back, she thinks I am trying to be difficult. Other people may think that I am trying to talk *DOWN* to them or something, as if I'm finding fault with them. Men think, 'Why are you doing this? Do you think you are better than us?' or something.[16]

In this message, we can see that discrepancies exist for Sand in both the community of intimacy and the community of association. It appeared as though Sand was still alone, although she was involved with SEPOM and had a new Japanese boyfriend (whom she valued as understanding but assumed 'might go somewhere else at any time'). She saw herself as standing in solitude against others around her – she was individualised. Compared to Kaeo, who not only embarked on a physical journey back to the community of origin but also returned to its social expectations of women as mothers and belonging to the family, Sand was not willing to settle down into these communal roles. On the contrary, she insisted that she be able to not only present but also retain her urban self and to assert her individuality, all while pursuing her own personal success. Neither SEPOM, as part of her community of association, nor her Japanese boyfriend, as part of her community of intimacy, could help to bridge the discrepancy between Sand and her community of origin since neither of them would or could entice her into fulfilling the community's expectations. She had changed and, as such, was in search of a new set of relationships that would sustain both her autonomy from the community and a sense of belonging. But the home she went back to was still constructed within the relationships of her past, as represented by her mother expecting Sand to continue to give – antithetical to her sense of autonomy. Sand's sense of belonging at home would thus remain partial. She might well go somewhere else again to try to secure her senses of both belonging and autonomy, but she could not know where and whether such a place existed.[17]

In Bangkok, in Japan, and off to Australia

Of the 12 respondents in the 'ex-sexworker phase', two were still in Bangkok, one had stayed in Bangkok but was about to go to Australia, and two were living in Japan. These five women had not returned to their communities of origin, and tended not to talk about the negative aspects of sexwork in detail. They tended to condense that part of their lives into shorter and vaguer statements such as, 'It was awful but is over now' or, 'I learnt many things, though it was hard sometimes'. Their

answers to questions about bad experiences, for instance, what they disliked most, and what kind of customers they had avoided, often lacked specificity or concrete examples. This might relate to a tendency of this group to focus more on their present and/or the future than on the past. Although these women did not share any categorical common feature in terms of their current material conditions, such as stability in income and housing, they voiced constructive possibilities and concrete plans for their futures during interviews. Moreover, some defined their prospects in exclusively personal, individualistic terms, in contrast to the majority of interviewees who tended to identify their own future prospects in terms of the plans of their families.

Thematically, I will focus on marriage[18] in this section, as it was the trigger that motivated all five women to stop doing sexwork and to not return to their original communities. The reasons for their (prospective) marriages differed one from another, sometimes quite drastically and sometimes with overlapping elements. This range of differences, located along a continuum spanning from strong desire to a pragmatic necessity to settle down, within the particular horizon of acknowledged conditions, can be summarised in relation to four primary areas of interest:[19] 1) moral security, that is, conformity to the social norm of heterosexual conjugal relationships; 2) financial security after retiring from sexwork; 3) legal security for the realisation of a legalised existence, as opposed to one as an 'illegal' immigrant abroad; and 4) love embodied in sexual and emotional affection and care.

To explore these areas of interest in marriage, and how they relate to the decision to not return to a community of origin, I will introduce two women, Paap and Ruang. After being a sexworker, Paap stayed in Bangkok while planning to migrate to Australia whereas Ruang remained in Japan. They were facing different conditions, in different places and cultures, but both were immersed in different social and relational conditions from the time they entered into sexwork; they now lived in new communities.

Because these were new communities, Paap and Ruang had to develop new sets of techniques to 'neutralise' themselves in order to settle down. In this sense, they also started new careers, but in very different ways from Kaeo and Sand. Although Paap and Ruang were largely in the same 'ex-sexworker phase', this career stage varied from Kaeo and Sand's in terms of relative proximity to their 'deviant' identity. This proximity was not only a physical proximity, that is the spatial distance between where she had been a sexworker and where she was no longer. Neither was it purely a matter of time, that is the actual length of time from when she

stopped being a sexworker to her present. Spatial and temporal distances were both factors in a sense of distance from a 'deviant' career. But from Paap and Ruang's accounts, other conditions also contributed to make them seem to believe that their 'deviant' *identity* as sexworkers had been left far in the past at the point they had left the *career* of sexworker. The forward-looking attitudes and individuality demonstrated in their thoughts about relationships and the future can be seen as stemming from the distance attained from their sexworker *identity* and *career*. Both gradually left their former career after leaving the communities in which they had lived it, regardless of whether the place of residence had actually changed. The accompanying effect on their identities was closely linked to their coming to know that they were not going back to their pre-sexwork communities of origin, where preconditions of the career attributed to them the identity of sexworker. Paap and Ruang, each in a different way, had become someone else in the face of social conditions that irreversibly changed, more so than other respondents who had also left the career (see Sanders 2007: 76).

Romantic love that money can't buy: Paap[20]

Bar girls in Bangkok have a reputation for making their customers believe they are in love with them.[21] Bishop and Robinson criticised this 'belief' on the part of the customers as 'wilful ignorance' of their inherent power over the sexworkers based in the economic disparity between their nations and social positions (1998: 58, 167–9, 200, 207). Although I agree with this point, I would not dismiss the women's active role in making the customers' belief possible. It is thus informative to look for comparison to Eric Cohen's argument about the ambivalent feelings often expressed by *farang* [Western: T] men involved in a particular kind of relationship with Thai female sexworkers, and at the seemingly similar phenomenon from my respondents' point of view.

The particular kind of relationship from the customer's standpoint is termed 'open-ended prostitution'. It takes place in a gradation between 'economic exchange' and 'authentic', monogamous 'love' or intrinsic gratification (1996: 259–61, 321). Cohen states:

> though it may start as a specific neutral service, rendered more or less indiscriminately to any customer, [it] may be extended into a more protracted, diffused, and personalized liaison, involving both emotional attachment and economic interest (ibid.: 274).

When the bar girl underplays the economic side of the transaction and emphasises only her affection for the customer, the man becomes

confused: about his status – whether he is her customer or lover; about their emotional as well as economic investment – why and for what is he paying; and about the durability of the relationship – how long and how far he should look after it.[22] From the women's point of view, I would argue, customers and lovers are fairly distinguishable, even for the Thaniya workers who voice emotional attachment to regular customers because of the intimate nature of the relationship made possible by their economic as well as emotional security, as observed in the previous chapters. What the customer in this kind of transaction conveniently forgets is that payment is *necessary* for the woman, *especially* when she is exclusively involved with a man, regardless of what she is for him or he for her. Otherwise she loses the means to financially support herself and her family altogether. Thus the nature of their relationship for the woman does not depend on his payment, though the actual relationship does. Whether he is a customer or a lover, or a stable partner, depends mainly on whether she considers the relationship to be sustainable or not.

A former Thaniya worker called Faa[23] clarified the distinction with different titles for different types of male partner. She drew a line between *feen* [lover, stable partner: T], *danna-san* [literally master: J, husband, with an affectionate connotation] and *kaerk* [guest, customer: T] and *okyaku-san* [guest, customer: J] depending on whether a man had another affair that had priority over his relationship with her, not whether he paid or not. She had been involved in consecutive long-term relationships with regular customers. There were marriage-like contracts for each by which she offered monogamous sexual and emotional labour to the man for a certain time in exchange for money. If his relationship to her was exclusive and stable, she too was personally committed to it, and thus regarded the partner as her *feen*. If he had a legally defined wife elsewhere and/or if she was one of his multiple affairs, then it was unsustainable outside of her notion of work and Faa accordingly regarded the partner as *kaerk*. Although she inevitably worked in the latter situations sometimes, she was emotionally troubled by them. She said, 'I didn't like *yaru* [fuck: J] when they were not our *danna-san*. For the amount of money, for the minutes, we worked – we had to *yaru* with *okyaku-san*'. Her ideal sexual relationship was a conjugal one. Consequently, although both *feen* and *kaerk* had to be a source of financial support for her, the meaning of the money differed; the money that a *feen* brought was a sign of sustainable commitment, whereas the money that a *kaerk* brought was compensation for her sexwork, emotional labour included. She eventually married a Japanese former customer of hers and quit sexwork. Before they married, he confirmed that he was single, came back to see her repeatedly,

made phone calls to her every night, and started paying enough monthly allowance for her to stop working, start a course in hairdressing, and still support her family. Then Faa upgraded him to *danna-san*. For Faa, the money was, though not sufficient in itself, a necessary condition for love.

In stark contrast, there were also Thai sexworkers who wanted to establish their relationships with steady boyfriends without prioritising financial prospects. They wanted to make a clear distinction between emotional and sexual love and what they did for a living. If Cohen's definition of 'authentic' love is monogamous, long-term, 'purely' emotional and sexually driven and not dependent on material necessity (Cohen 1996: 321), then their relationships qualified. But these women earned money by trading sexual services which included activities often ambiguously connected to emotional exchanges, that is emotional labour, such as sleeping overnight and/or going for a trip with a customer, holding hands, kissing and doing chores such as washing his clothes. As mentioned in the previous chapter, European and American sexworkers' accounts tend to itemise and prohibit these activities for reasons of personal emotion and safety, or to limit them by adding extra service charges. In a Japanese context, some sexworkers noted the same sorts of guidelines (Kaname and Mizushima 2005: 38–9, 131, 165, 183). In contrast, sexworkers in Thaniya and Patpong dealt with customers generally without distinguishing sexual acts from emotional acts in the way their Euro-American counterparts did. Precisely because of this, however, they had to make a conscious effort to set apart their private emotional and sexual pleasure from what they did for work. This effort anyhow resulted in a distinction between love, which was private, and work, which was strictly about money. In this sense, these women were more aware and more eager to be in control of their emotions and sexuality than their peers like Faa, or Cohen's *farang* customers. Like Suung in the previous chapter, who spoke of being emotionally independent from her customers and from men in general, they came to perceive that their emotions, sexuality and financial needs could be detached from one another. This in turn could make the women not only financially independent but also, however paradoxical this may sound, emotionally autonomous from their lovers as well.

Paap was one such woman, and perhaps the most determined that her love for her boyfriend should be separate from material needs, distinct from what 'people would expect a Thai girl to have', as she put it. She was also the youngest among my respondents, going on 21 at the time of our meetings. She had been introduced to the job by her aunt, who had told her of a friend who 'got a good husband [. . .] helping with everything'.

Under pressure to help her family economy, Paap decided to start work in a go-go Bar in Patpong, not only to fulfil immediate needs, but to also look for long-term financial support. But Paap's case demonstrates one specific element of our times that influences some women to conceive of and practise love as a separate entity from economic dependence. As we have repeatedly seen, cultural values and human relationships in Thai society, such as *bunkhun* or female lineage, have undergone rapid changes with modernisation. In the face of these changing values, young migrants from rural areas see the 'freedom to determine their own lives', discussed in relation to the freedom from poverty in Chapter 2, in a whole other dimension (see NCWA 1981: 5); freedom to seek individual happiness for oneself.

Paap was working in a textile factory near her home village in the northeast when her family's finances hit trouble around 1997. She explained that her parents had become trapped in debt by a government loan to farmers:

> [t]hey didn't make the business that the government wanted them to. All they could do was just farm, you know. The money was for them to start anything [business] for the family, just to make money enough. But they didn't know . . . didn't do anything with that money and just spent it, and couldn't give it back. So, the family changed. It's not that they were lazy or anything but they just didn't know anything other than farming and what to do with the money.

Since July 1997, Thailand had fallen into a serious financial and currency crisis that would spread to neighbouring countries and grow into the Asian Economic Crisis within a year. Between the end of the previous military regime in 1992 and 1997, Thai economic policies had focused on financial deregulation, trade deregulation and the transformation of the taxation structure as the government transformed the economic basis of its nascent parliamentary democracy with emphasis on a free-market economy (Suehiro 2000/2002: 87, Lauridsen 1999: 14). International monetary flows into the country via foreign investment were encouraged and the industrial structure of the country developed further import dependency. The Board of Investment of Thailand gave priority to multinational parts producers, especially Japanese small and medium-sized enterprises, to invest in industries encouraging material imports and serving both domestic consumption and export of final products.

Meanwhile, as stated in the previous chapter, the Thai government had implemented policies since 1994 to encourage rice growers to diversify

their farming methods to include multi-culture agriculture for cash crops. This coincided with the Seventh Economic and Social Development Plan of 1992 to 1997, in which agro-industry such as food processing was counted as one of the six 'targeted industries' with particularly noted growth potential.[24] These policies, on the one hand aimed at national income generation through exports, and on the other aimed at distributing income and development to rural areas. As one summary of the Seventh Plan states, 'The authority to administer development projects will be decentralized to the provinces and rural areas by earmarking budgetary funds for use by the provinces according to the needs of the localities for raising income, well-being and the quality of life of the rural poor' (Viraphong 1991: 428). Unfortunately, export earnings in the early 1990s were far exceeded by import spending, which left Thailand's current account deficit at a high level – up to more than 8 per cent of GDP before the economic crisis. This attracted both private and public foreign loans, an inflow of capital which created temporary affluence in the financial market and a domestic 'lending boom'.[25] However, this was actually part of a burgeoning economic imbalance in Thailand – especially with relation to Japan – starting in the late 1970s and worsening after the Plaza Accord of 1985. I will refer to this point further later in this chapter *vis-à-vis* the migratory trend of Thai people heading to Japan.

Paap did not know the exact nature of her family's loan, nor did she know that the policy of lending to farmers, as explained above, had a dimension of good intention. Clearly, however, an understanding of the economic climate, especially as it affects farming families, shows how an individual life, such as Paap's, can be directly and drastically influenced by its national and international workings. This influence of the economy should be seen also as an extension of the hyper-growth years which led to the affluent and influential young 'Thuppie' lifestyle toward the start of the 1990s. Recall Sand's yearning to go to Bangkok for the 'glittering prize' of consumption that promised a break from existing social responsibilities and a poverty-stricken rural life, 'not to be burdened by worry about the consequences' (Bauman 1995: 115). It is clear that Paap's parents were not 'lazy or anything but they just didn't know anything other than farming and what to do with the money'. They 'just spent' the money, not thinking of the consequences because that – consumption itself – was the precise effect of income generation: the prize of the era.

However, unlike Kaeo and Sand, Paap's career development diverted from its initial motivation. She did not stay in the job long enough to complete repaying her parents' debt. After less than two years, she

thought 'I will find some way to help them, but OK, I will stand by myself first'. She did, however, succeed in putting her youngest sister through compulsory education. Although she had not faced any violent or abusive situations during her work, she was alert to the physical and health hazards – by this time the risk of HIV infection was well known by sexworkers in the area.[26] Just when she was thinking of leaving sex-work, she met her current boyfriend, an Australian. He was anxious over whether her love was 'authentic' or not, just like Cohen's *farang* man. In contrast, Paap herself reflected on the meaning of material attraction, the fact that he was from a 'rich country' with increased opportunities. She weighed this against her emotional attachment within the relationship, and decisively remarked that 'with him, it's about love'.

> He just says, 'After you get what you want, you may easily just say goodbye to me'. I say, 'Oh, oh . . .' I don't know . . . he can think what he wants to think because I think that's what everyone thinks about Thai people – Thai girls. I don't blame him for what he says but from [what] I know – I know myself – I'm not *THAT* with him . . . And I don't need him, really. Because when I'm with him, you know, I can't do everything . . . I can't decide. I have to decide with him, you know, because I care about him, before I do [things] if he don't like. We make decisions. That's why I know I'm not using him here. But, just because I'm a Thai girl and from that work, he doesn't trust me sometimes.

She was determined not to ask him to give her financial support. She added:

> . . . I saw that, you know, that it's not money that makes you happy. We need money but it doesn't mean money means everything. I'm the one who doesn't think like that. That's why I can live with him. If I don't like him I . . . just . . . quit him or split with him because I don't get any money from him, yeah?

In addition to this sense of financial and emotional autonomy, Paap's consciousness of the importance of autonomy was even more apparent in relation to her sexuality. When asked about the difference between sex with customers and sex with her boyfriend, Paap measured the latter with her own sexual pleasure.

> When you are with a customer, you have no feeling. You just get, 'Oh . . . Finish this,' when he goes slow. When you are with him

> [boyfriend], you want to be there. ... Umm ... He took long time [smile]. But I never wanted to finish the sex, for the first time. When you are having the first sex with someone you want to know, you want to know what you were looking for, if you like them, if you know them ... For customers, it's just for the job, yeah? You don't feel anything for them. I think everyone is like that. I feel like that.

Paap was the only one out of my 22 respondents who verbally expressed her own sexuality in terms of pleasure in having sex itself – not related to shame or disgrace, abuse or violence, nor through implied intimacy or in relation to the pride of being a mother. She connected this sexual pleasure to the search for her inner desire, to know what she herself wanted to know as much as to know the partner. That was love for her, distinct from commercial sexual relationships and from the social assumptions about women in the sex industry in Thailand: 'that's what everyone thinks about Thai people – Thai girls. [...] I'm not *THAT* with him'.

Her expression of individual love might be related in part to the fact that she was speaking in English in the interview, or to her Australian boyfriend's influence. I should also note that Paap's ability to retain such a positive and strong link between romantic love and sex after being a sexworker was rather extraordinary among my respondents. Thus we should, for instance, also look at occupational influences and other possible reasons for her attitude. One possible factor is that Paap did not encounter violence or coercion at work. Nor was sexual abuse or violence a trigger for her entry into the sex industry. It may also be that she did not stay in the job long enough to alienate her emotions and feelings from sexual acts automatically.[27] I also feel, however, that there is significance in the fact that she belonged to the younger generation. Born in the 1980s, her generation was the first to have been brought up entirely ensconced in the dynamism of Thailand's social and economic changes – changes powered by the flourishing of goods and culture on a mass scale at the height of modernisation.

In Patpong and Thaniya, as well as in other parts of Bangkok such as universities and NGOs, Paap's generation was accused of being 'Westernised': outspoken and outgoing about matters of sex. One newspaper article entitled 'Sexual Revolution' substantiates this view in its report on the results of a survey conducted in Bangkok by the Foundation for Women, a non-governmental women's organisation, on student sexual behaviour. Around 72 per cent of male students aged 17 to 21 had had sexual relations with their girlfriends (figures for their female counterparts are not available). Most of their parents were convinced that this

was caused by the 'infiltration of Western values into Thai society' (Subhatra in *The Nation*, 21 August 1997). Paap surely sounded Westernised if Cohen's concept of 'authentic love' is a Western invention and if that same concept, as I found, overlaps with the notion of 'romantic love', supposedly a Western ideology (see below). But the 'Westernisation' of sexual behaviour in Bangkok youth here is intermingled with modernisation. This confusion takes place in Japan as well as Thailand, as it does with many other concepts assumed to be imported from Western Europe or the United States, owing to such concepts' attachment to the imported goods and lifestyles that brought about new sets of social relations. This would suggest that many aspects of what we might call 'Westernisation' in Asian contexts mirror similar developments in European and North American societies over the course of their own modernisation (see Chapter 1).

Take monogamous romantic love between a heterosexual couple, for example. There is a consensus among certain European writers (as shown below) that this phenomenon developed with the rise, spread and maturing of industrialisation, capitalism and individualism. It has been taking form since the late 17th century in England, firstly among the upper and middle classes and later passing on to the rest of the society.[28] As the most recent development in Western (and, in my view, not necessarily Western) industrialised societies, Ulrich Beck Sees the use of 'love as a symbolic word in our culture' as part of 'a hectic search for emotional satisfaction' (in Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995: 182).

The idea of romantic love between a man and a woman based on a modern interest in individual introspection and a recognition of uniqueness in the individual, on top of an open recognition of sensuality, has been making its way through centuries and across cultures. It is noteworthy that the English upper- and middle-class construction of such an individualistic sense of love is often considered to have been made possible by material and cultural wealth. Key factors include the spread of education and literacy, leading on the one hand to reading for pleasure and on the other to the large-scale publication of the novels through which ideas of romance spread. Economically based social emphasis on private possession has also resulted in the spread of physical private space and the cultivation of a sense of privacy (Stone 1977/1988: 150–6, 161, 169–70) and private time. However, the metropolis – London – was attractive for reasons quite beyond its simple accumulation of this new wealth, that is, for 'the sense of something going on, the theatres and the music halls, the brightly lighted streets and busy crowds'.[29] These were the internal and external stimuli observed by Georg Simmel, developing through the

18th century of individual freedom to the 19th-century intensification of emotional life in the city (1950: 64–5; 1903/1971: 30–1).

> To the extent that the metropolis creates these psychological conditions – with every crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life – it creates in the sensory foundations of mental life, and in the degree of awareness necessitated by our organization as creatures dependent on differences, a deep contrast with the slower, more habitual, more smoothly flowing rhythm of the sensory–mental phase of small town and rural existence (Simmel 1903/1971: 31).

'Traditional ties', once cut by a transition from community- and kin-orientated society to a modern market-orientated society, could not be tied again. The balance between fulfilling one's communal obligations and the pursuit of individual happiness has already been tilted perhaps irreversibly toward the latter. If this is indeed the case, then the 'slower, more habitual, more smoothly flowing rhythm of small town and rural existence' would begin to diminish. Especially for young women from the peasant and labouring classes, the effect was often not only migration to the cities to gain paid work, but also an 'inclination to escape the sexual restrictions of their parents and the town fathers' and the '*possibility* of doing so' (Shorter 1975/1976: 260, original emphasis). 'The wish to be free', compounded by an awareness of individuality and an individual's sensuality, was closely connected to the new values of money and sexual behaviour. "'Romantic love"', as Shorter pointed out, 'was a codeword for personal autonomy' (ibid.: 263).

This transformation in Western society from the late 17th century is in many ways similar to what has occurred in Thai society since the 1960s. In contemporary Thailand, though, what shifted slowly over centuries in the West appears to have taken place rapidly over brief decades. This speed is arguably one of the major reasons why generational as well as regional and class gaps concerning these values are so very large and also so inconsistent.[30] The modern Paap expresses her reason for staying with her boyfriend as 'about love' and love only. It is thus firmly attached to her sense of autonomy, a disposition that has itself also developed out of her experience of migrating to the city and attaining economic self-sufficiency.

A comparison of some interviewees' comments also proves noteworthy on the topic of 'romantic love'. 'Westernised' Paap's comments about love differ greatly from Kaeo's remark about her husband, Banyaa's

non-pursuit of a personal love life, and Faa's sense that economic security is necessarily attached to it. Sand's scepticism about settling down with her understanding boyfriend can be understood too as deriving from a 'Westernising' context. Like Paap, Sand had been through the 'Westernising', modernising, and individualising process with regard to certain notions, and she was just as much pursuing her own personal success and happiness. But because Sand went back to the community that still required her to define commitment based on 'traditional ties', her new relationship was at odds with the expectations held by that community. Sand could not cut her ties entirely.

In contrast, Paap would be able to decide quite autonomously if she needed to walk out of the relationship, and therefore knew 'that's why I can live with him'. Likewise, although this relationship would increase her life chances, she was able to turn down her parents' request for remittance. She began to build concrete and long-term plans: to further her education, to live a different life, and to start her own retail business in the future. She planned to emigrate to Australia the day after the interview. She was going to marry her boyfriend in Melbourne in nine months, in accordance with the Australian regulation for permanent residency (see Coughlan 1997: 52). She remarked about the marriage and its timing that 'these are the only things I didn't decide by myself. They [the Australian migrant administration] decided!' She then insisted again that she pay for her flight and would pay half of their costs in Australia, as she had paid for her expenses in Bangkok when they lived together.

Working women go east: Ruang[31]

Women in Thailand started to migrate abroad at a significant rate from around the mid-1980s, and officially documented migrants like Paap were not the only ones involved in this social mobility. The emigration of undocumented workers orchestrated by a growing number of parallel trafficking operations started in earnest during this time as well. Kaeo, Daaw, Mai and Sand, like many others, put themselves in the hands of traffickers with the hope that they could improve their family economies and increase their life chances. Ironically, however, it seems that once trafficking had already been established as a nascent underground *than samay* activity, the probability of being able to increase life chances through it diminished. Conversely, trafficked people were more likely to be trapped in situations of slavery, with devastating outcomes, as we have seen. Still, there are respondents who, looking back at their overall 'career' as sexworkers, summarise their experience of migrating to Japan as a lucky draw. One such woman was Ruang, who felt this

way particularly because she had not been involved in organised trafficking. I would now like to contrast her experience with those of Kaeo and Sand, while also focusing on the timing that differentiated each woman's migration. Then an image of each woman's experience epitomising one type of 'ex-sexworker phase' can be contrasted with Paap's decision and future plans by assessing how each adapted to her situation and built a new community.

Ruang had come to Japan in 1982 and has lived in the northern part of the Kanto region, in the vicinity of Tokyo, ever since. She was unique among respondents in her account of having travelled to Japan without any trafficker, friend or relative acting on her behalf. Together with a friend from Bangkok, she had decided to come for '*shakai benkyo*' [literally, to learn society: J, to see the world]. They had worked at a bar in Bangkok for a few years, saved money, applied for passports and visas on their own, and paid for the airfare and the first months' living expenses so that they did not at first work in Japan. At the time of our interview, she no longer remembered details of how much she had had or how much she had spent at that time, but remembered 1,000 Thai baht was worth about 10,000 yen. One baht was 10.4 yen at the 1984 exchange rate, three times stronger than the post-Plaza Accord value. She arrived in Japan much earlier than any other respondents except Kaeo.

In the early 1980s, migration from Thailand to Japan, as well as to other Asian countries, started to pick up. Pataya proposes that this was because legal labour migration from Thailand to Japan started in 1979, when Japan-based multinational corporations began training their Thai employees in Japan (2002: 2–4). According to Amemiya et al., this was the result of the Japanese Ministry of Labour initiating recruitment from overseas in response to demands from the Thai government, which enacted the Migration Act in 1979 and the Employment and Recruitment Act in 1983 to promote labour emigration (2002: 6, based on Supang 1999). There were complex socio-economic reasons behind Thailand's demands, but one point that has scarcely been mentioned in literature in English is that the workforce (15- to 64-year-olds by the ILO standard) in Thailand was experiencing an explosive increase from around 1985 to 1990 (Washio 1987/1992: 194–6).

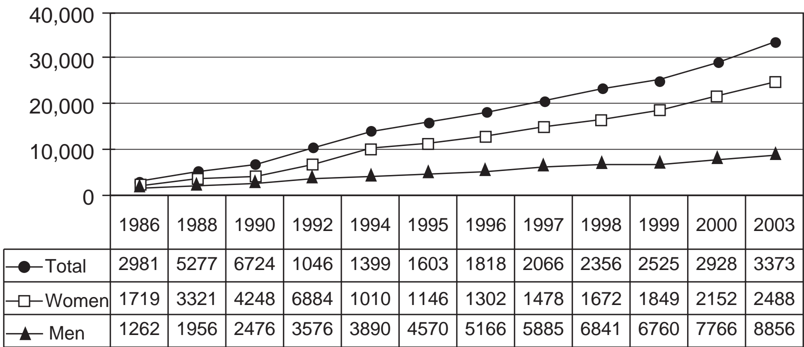
Bilateral economic and political relations were affected by Thailand's trade deficit to Japan, growing since national development planning started in the early 1960s. In 1977, the Thai government emphasised the development of infrastructure in its Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan for resource allocation and the promotion of economic structural adjustment. One reported result was the successive

requests made by Thailand for extensive loans of Japanese yen. The ratio of Thailand's income gained from exports to Japan against the expenditure on imports from Japan became 1: 2.17 and was on the rise. The tenth official meeting of the joint committee on trade between Thailand and Japan convened in 1979 amidst this economic imbalance. The Thai government requested that Japan cooperate in marketing export promotion by small and medium-sized industries in Thailand.[32] The Thaniya area, as a Japanese-specific entertainment district, developed during the 1970s, hitting its prime somewhere between the Plaza Accord, Visit Thailand Year and Thailand's hyper economic growth of 1987–9 (Kusaka 2000: 85–8).

The global economic climate changed toward the end of 1985. Because of the Plaza Accord, by which the Ministry of Finance for the Group of Five Industrial Nations agreed to appreciate other currencies against the US dollar, the value of the yen rose steadily from the last quarter of 1985 until 1995. Meanwhile, in 1981, the Thai government embarked upon structural adjustments in line with the Fifth and Sixth National Economic and Social Development Plans for 1982 to 1991, supported by Structural Adjustment Loans from the World Bank. Macroeconomic adjustments included tightening of public expenditures and two devaluations of the baht – by 8 per cent in 1981 and by 14 per cent in 1984 – so as to improve the terms of foreign trade. The high value of the yen combined with this devaluation of the baht aided the extensive direct investment from Japan, and this has been evaluated as one of the main 'pull factors' for immigration to Japan from Thailand and other Asian countries.[33]

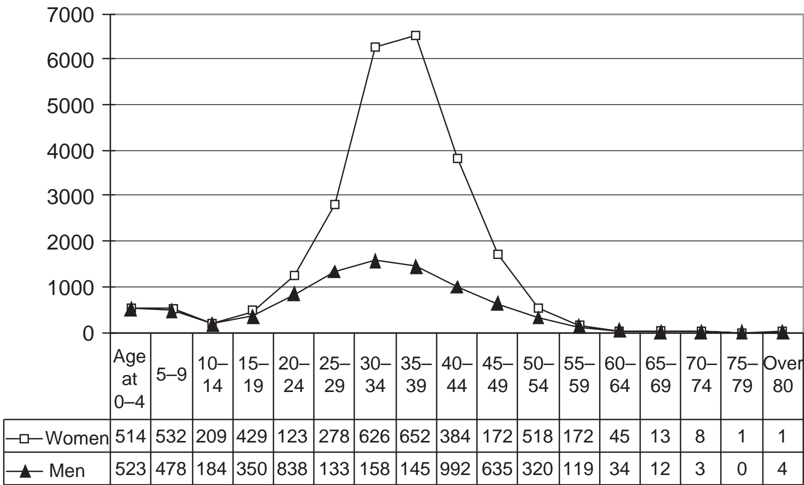
Pataya also shows that *documented temporary* migrants from Thailand were predominantly male, stating further that '[a]long with this labour migration, the illegal recruitment of Thai labour, especially that of women for prostitution, began in 1981' (2001: 2–3). Kaeo must have been one of those 'illegal' job seekers, first arriving in Japan in 1984 when she was 20 years old, via a seemingly organised trafficking route from Thailand. Amemiya et al. attribute this increase in 'irregular migrants' to the fact that Thailand's demand for jobs exceeded the supply of legal recruitment opportunities in Japan (2002: 6, based on Supang 1999). In concurrence, the estimated number of Thai *undocumented* migrants peaked in 1993 and has since been steadily dropping as the number of Thai *documented residential* migrants has, in turn, steadily increased (see Figure 4 in Chapter 3 and Figure 5 below).

By the year 2003, the proportion of women, at about 70 per cent, far exceeded that of Thai men. Women in their 30s made up 37 per cent of all



	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2003
Total	2981	5277	6724	1046	1399	1603	1818	2066	2356	2525	2928	3373
Women	1719	3321	4248	6884	1010	1146	1302	1478	1672	1849	2152	2488
Men	1262	1956	2476	3576	3890	4570	5166	5885	6841	6760	7766	8856

Figure 5 Documented Thai residents in Japan 1986–2003
Source: Statistics on Foreigners Registered in Japan, each year (adapted from Amemiya et al., 24, 97, and Japan Immigration Association 2003: 32)



	Age at 0–4	5–9	10–14	15–19	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–49	50–54	55–59	60–64	65–69	70–74	75–79	Over 80
Women	514	532	209	429	123	278	626	652	384	172	518	172	45	13	8	1	1
Men	523	478	184	350	838	133	158	145	992	635	320	119	34	12	3	0	4

Figure 6 Documented Thai residents in Japan by age and gender in 2003
Source: Statistics on Foreigners Registered in Japan, 2003 (adapted from Amemiya et al.: 25, and Japan Immigration Association 2003: 32–5)

documented Thai female migrants in Japan for the same year (see Figure 6 above for 2003). Amemiya et al. inferred that this trend was caused in part by women who had immigrated to Japan by the 1990s and became permanent residents after marrying Japanese men (2002: 21–7).

However, official statistics gathered by the Thai Department of Labour lacked gender scope, with classification by gender for outgoing transnational migrants not provided for until 1990. When gender

analysis began in the field of migration, it was 'discovered' that female emigrants made up 50.6 per cent of total migrants to Japan between 1990 and 1993 (Amara P. 1994: 11–12).[34] Yet, this figure only included migrant workers possessing official contracts with employers abroad under the scrutiny of the Department of Labour of Thailand, implying a further lack in scope in consideration of undocumented migrants in international diplomacy. Under this double lack of public recognition, female undocumented migrants were made invisible. And, within them, migrants in the sex industry have been absent from research as well as policy focus. Until very recently, that is, when it has become the fashion to treat them solely as victims of trafficking, as Agustin argues with regard to European cases (2006a: 30–4). This results in the migrant sexworkers being either swept underground or deported as illegal if, for any reason, they were judged not to be 'victims' by law enforcement. However, although it is difficult to know the number of undocumented migrants by their very nature, around 80 per cent of all 'illegal' workers in Japan are estimated to have been female in the 1970s (Sellek 1994: 171–2).[35] More recently, Siriporn Skrobanek, the founder of the Foundation of Women, which conducted the research on sexual attitudes of youth introduced above, has presented figures from the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicating that 40,000 to 50,000 undocumented Thai women were working in prostitution in Japan in 1994 (1996: 84).

In this setting, Ruang and her friend were among very few who came to Japan independently, perhaps because, arriving in 1982, they were among the first-comers, recognised neither within the official realm of national political economy nor by traffickers from within the informal economy. Considering SEPOM research suggesting that organised trafficking had started by this time (Nyota and Aoyama 2007: 68), Ruang and her friend may have averted entrapment in the trafficking system and a subsequent possible situation of slavery by sheer luck. Consequently, Ruang's portrayal of herself in Japan differed very much from Kaeo's or Sand's. She stressed that she had not experienced anything bad since arriving in Japan. Even after her initial savings ran out, forcing her to find work at a *snack*, she said:

> The wage was about 1,200 yen [approximately US$4 at the exchange rate of 1980] an hour at that time. The job was good, too. I didn't drink, so depending on how many glasses of juice I drank, I would get the kickback. If it was 500 yen, I would be given half of it. The relationships in and around the job were good too. Tips were generous. It was good in the old days, though I don't know what it's like now.

> There weren't many *gaijin-san* [foreigner, with a polite marker: J] at that time. We were among the first *gaijin* in that *snack*. It was good.

Then, she added that she felt she had been advantaged after hearing the stories of other Thai women. She did not have to re-enter sexwork in the strict sense, involving personal sexual contact including intercourse. She explained, 'There wasn't much of "such things" in those old days' and 'people were not that loose in those days'.[36]

Ruang's positive representation of her early experiences as a '*gaijin-san*' is intriguing. *Gaijin* means foreigner, with a literal meaning of 'outsider to society'. Upon her first reference to *gaijin*, she added *-san*, the polite marker, thus making it sound as if she was referring to someone other than herself or outside of her familial circle, as is the usual application of Japanese honorific expression (Minami 1987: 60, 69–70, 131). But at the second reference to *gaijin*, she included herself in this group of foreigners by dropping the polite marker and including the subject 'we': '[w]e were among the first *gaijin* in that *snack*'. After living in Japan for more than 20 years, and as a member of a Japanese family for 13 years or so, Ruang was speaking colloquial Japanese fluently with a local accent and I sensed that she was using this term with the connotations as such. The term *gaijin-san* readily translates into Thai as *khun farang* [foreigner, with a polite marker], potentially with very similar connotations. Because of this usage, Ruang's accounts above sound ironic; although connected to a positive memory, she was situating herself in the past as a third party who was an outsider to both Japanese and Thai society. She would not have included herself in *gaijin-san* if she felt, or intended to present, that she had been integrated into Japanese society at that time. Also, if there was a hint of the Thai sense of *khun farang* in her practical consciousness surrounding use of the term, she was then excluding herself from Thai people in general, since *khun farang* would not include a native Thai person in its original connotation. Besides, she had already contrasted herself to other Thai women whose stories of bad experiences had made her feel comparatively advantaged.

Her verbal acts of excluding herself from both Japanese and Thai communities, while simultaneously including herself partially in both, occurred not only with regard to the particular usage of this term but on many other occasions as well. Such acts signified her social position within her new career as a migrant settler in a foreign land, and also in the 'ex-sexworker' and 'post-temporal-migrant' phases of her career development. Ruang had been using every social resource available to her in order to adapt to this career whereby, subsequently, her disposition was presented in its acquired context.

A comparison with other contemporary studies on migrant setters can provide valuable insights into the nature of social resources available to and utilised by Ruang over the course of her new career following sex-work and migration to another society. These studies show that settlers adjust to different cultures under a diversity of circumstances in ways common to Ruang's situation. But they also reveal there is a unique dimension to Ruang's adaptation to her new career, because she had previously been a 'deviant' sexworker. Unlike migrants in other studies, she kept part of her identity – which was formed through her former career – separate from the identity that she newly developed upon entering her current career. She did this by more or less separating areas of memory she would tap to provide her social resources, perhaps because she did not want to let parts from the past seep into her current context. We can understand this again, as we did with Kaeo's case above, by conceptually dividing those more specific and limited resources an agent would draw on to use at the interface, when dealing with the current context, and the broader sum total of available resources within habitus, which have been accumulating through her life course.[37] This additional skill of 'neutralisation' is shared by the other women who were, and are, engaged in a 'deviant' career.

Living between two cultures: Ruang

Studies of migrant settlers dating from the 1970s place different emphases on accumulated economic, cultural and identity transformations.[38] What I will concentrate on here first is the possibly common trait shared by migrant women in different social, cultural, political and economic settings as determined within recent studies, which Ruang also seems to possess. The emblematic concept is 'biculture' or, situating it within Becker's notion of adapting to a 'deviant' career 'using layers of socially available resources', I would call this the migrants' 'dual use of cultural resources'.

The concept of biculture encapsulates migrant families' ambivalent perceptions of living in between their cultures of origin and those of their host countries.[39] Estmond looks into Chileans in political exile with gendered perceptions of living in social realities 'betwixt and between' two cultures (1993: 39). MacSpadden and Moussa use the concept refined and enhanced into 'critical integration', 'transcultural identity' and the 'Third Culture' for their gender-focused analysis of Eritrean refugees (1993: 4–5). Parreñas implies the same in her analysis of 'dislocation of non-belonging' among Filipina domestic migrant workers (2001: 201). Pataya would describe Thai migrants in Japan as being 'strangers in the

sense of Simmel' who come today and do not go tomorrow (2002: 18). All these works, based on empirical research, avoid premature celebration of, or easy pessimism about, migrants' experience of living in between two cultures.

Common threads run through these theorisations. Firstly, a migrant who lives between two or more cultures would have within her/himself both some sense of belonging and some sense of alienation with regard to both her/his own culture and the host culture. The two senses and the two cultures are not felt by the migrant to be poles apart. Rather, the belonging and the alienation define each other and combine to balance accordingly at a particular situation, defining her/his feeling toward both cultures. The two cultures in turn do as much to define each other, through the migrant's perspective, as they do to define the migrant's senses of belonging and alienation. Secondly, multiculture exists as a consequence within the host culture through the presence of bicultural members. Thirdly, society often includes historically constructed inequalities, as well as material inequalities, between the two cultures, usually biased against the migrant's culture. Thus, migrants tend to be more vulnerable to negative experiences within the host culture: hence their marginalisation. Fourthly, despite commonalities, the individual lived experiences of members of a biculture differ, particularly along gender and generational lines. Finally, all these fabrics are simultaneously woven among individual and group patterns – ethnic communities – comprising the host mainstream culture in which migrants live. Biculture must be practically functional and supportive as well as psychologically reliable, in order to reflect both the migrant's daily experiences and the feelings underlying them.

Ruang had been living in Japan from the age of 18 to her then-present 38, was married to a Japanese man with whom she had two children, lived with his mother and was secure with a spouse/permanent resident visa. She spoke Japanese proficiently and had a part-time but stable job that was compatible with her responsibilities as a housewife. She was in a much more secure situation legally, economically and socially than many of the other migrants researched in the studies above. However, she still expressed herself as having biculture, especially via her sense of not belonging, as though this was inextricable from her original lack of intent to live on in Japan. About marrying her husband, for instance, she said:

> ... I met my husband at the *snack*. I wasn't attracted to him at all. I didn't think I would marry him. I was sort of playing around. I don't

> know why we ended up marrying . . . but . . . maybe because I got pregnant with my son out of the blue . . . I didn't plan to have a child; I was planning to go back. But what's done is done, so, because it's not the child's fault, so, it was like 'OK . . .' or something like that. The parent on this side [the mother-in-law and only surviving parent of Ruang's husband] felt a bit shocked. Well, for parents, it's a shock, isn't it, if your child brings home an unknown person and says he's going to marry this unknown person?

Here, Ruang links her lack of intent to marry to her sense of non-belonging; her decision to go back on her original intention to return to Thailand was made due to an unintended pregnancy, and was furthermore not greeted with acceptance from her husband's family – the new intimate community she would belong to. She later paraphrased the 'shock' of her mother-in-law and the meaning of 'marry[ing] this unknown person'.

> He is the *chounan* [oldest male child: J]. The parent [his mother] wanted him to climb up the social ladder. For her, it was a shock that her son brought back the daughter of nobody she knew.

Ruang's 'use of cultural resources' in Japanese society is prominent in this remark. She is well-informed about an element of Japanese marriage embedded in the *kazoku seido* [literally, family system: J] organised around male lineage. It appeared in her choice of words, that is, '*chounan*', and her implicit agreement with her mother-in-law's disqualification of the 'daughter of nobody she knew'.

Kazoku seido in Japan has been examined extensively by feminist sociologists, historians, legal historians and anthropologists. The most commonly used English translation is 'patriarchy', though with some reservations that rightly note the differences between the Japanese and European concepts and systems congruent to each.[40] Kaku Sechiyama, in a comprehensive study of these arguments, states that so-called modern Japanese patriarchy, loosely used among feminists, is actually a specific household system (*ie seido*) under the Meiji Civil Code (enacted from 1890 to 1945) of modernising Japan. He points to its significant difference from European 'patriarchalism' (by Weber's definition) in terms of its emphasis on the tie between parents and children rather than on the marriage contract between the spouses (1996/1998: 46). Following Yasuko Ichibangase,[41] *kazoku seido* is not an ahistorical concept or system; thus, its meaning and actual social applications have gradually

shifted along with changes in modes of production, ways of disseminating information, and patterns of work participation among both men and women (1989: 85). But for now, I present Ichibangase's comprehensive definition below with my own modifications in parentheses (ibid.: 85–6).[42]

- The head of a house governs the House. (Hence, the head is responsible for the well-being of other members who belong to the House. The members constitute family.)
- The principle of (male) blood lineage (combined with seniority) determines inheritance of the position of head.
- The principle of the possession of property (including the ancestral burial site) belonging to the House, with its concentration on the head, aims at stabilising the (social) position of the House and the head, and
- Included in this, there is a consciousness and ethic or pattern of desirable behaviours (and beliefs) that are born out of the above principles.

The House within *kazoku seido* above is equivalent to a household, but a household is a component part of the House as a value that sustains the wider social structure. In this particular definition, a House does not mean a house as a physical construction/building, though each building/house could just as well symbolise the value and its variations. The members who belong to the House constitute Family but they are not necessarily related to each other by blood lineage. However, the principle of male blood lineage as the central pillar is usually kept. Marriage is the central means of keeping the House as both the value and the structure that maintains Family. Combined with seniority, the male line situates *chounan* [the oldest male child: J] in Japanese society in a value-laden position. *Kazoku seido* has at its root the social arrangement of the pre-modern upper castes of royals, landlords and warriors, as can be seen in features such as its organisation around the possession of property, with inheritance functioning not only to provide for property but also the House's value. However, 'a consciousness and ethic or pattern of desirable behaviours and beliefs' have themselves particularly spread over the general population through modernisation (Ueno 1994/2001: 129–32, Tamaki 1971: 277–86).

Legally, the Meiji Civil Code, the major law that maintained *kazoku seido*, was abolished at the end of the Second World War with the end of the Great Japanese Empire. Social changes based on peoples' lived

experiences, however, seem to have left the above consciousness of *kazoku seido* still very much alive in large part throughout Japanese society, perhaps with exceptions for families based in the most urbanised cities. Then again, it should be noted that there has been an epoch-making shift in the gender division of labour and in notions of sexuality, coupled with changes in economic conditions and demography in general, and with the 'nuclear-isation of family' in particular in Japanese society in the last 30 years or so.[43] Provided this shift is empirically plausible, we will need to consider changing Ichibangase's definition in the near future.

The fact that Ruang singled out her husband's *chounan* status to underscore his mother's lack of welcome lets us know that she has adopted the 'pattern of desirable belief' of *kazoku seido*. The implication was that the husband would not be able to 'climb up the social ladder' if he married 'a daughter of nobody'. Her mother-in-law did not want that and probably did genuinely worry about the consequences for her son, though this notion mattered only for the propertied class in practice. Ruang's understanding of the mother-in-law's concern also drew my attention as it implied her respect for the seniority of parents over their children as well as of the mother-in-law over the daughter-in-law, sustained by the consciousness of *kazoku seido*. These rules related to the House, as the binding force of both communities of intimacy and of association, must have felt quite alien to Ruang at least at first as there is a fundamental difference between these and the Thai counterparts in the rural north of her youth. The structural importance of women, and thus the importance of the House for women, in the female-centred system of lineage and the importance of being mothers in the *bunkhun* relationship discussed in the previous chapter would not be incorporated into this male-centred *kazoku seido*. Ruang thus demonstrated her ability to adapt to the Japanese family system and to 'desired behaviour' by agreeing with her mother-in-law. Compared to her first experience of being *gaijin-san*, Japanese culture as an external structure seemed to have permeated her habitus via her marriage over time.

At the same time, however, her very ability to adapt to and understand *kazoku seido* would necessarily have brought back her sense of non-belonging to Japanese culture. She was *gaijin* and thus excluded from the blood lineage. She was also a woman marginalised within the male-centred *kazoku seido*. Ruang said, 'Well, for parents, it's a shock, isn't it, if your child brings an unknown person and says he would marry this unknown person?' who is 'a daughter of nobody she knew', as if she was assuming my agreement. She was adopting the viewpoint that

marginalised herself as the 'unknown person' on the grounds of both her gender and outsider-hood. In this view a daughter only has marriageable value if she is somebody's known daughter. Conversely, a foreigner is the daughter of nobody because a foreigner, or *gaijin*, literally an 'outsider', does not exist in the conceptual Family living within the conceptual House of *kazoku seido* values.

The significance of the 'dual use of cultural resources' lay, however, in her balancing act, maintaining her persona between the two seemingly conflicting circumstances: first, Ruang marginalised herself through her own participation in the concept of *kazoku seido*, but then she did marry into, live with and eventually brought up her children within an actual family in Japanese society. Therefore, how she accepted and had survived with society's version of her 'destructive self' – in this context 'the unknown person' – is the next question. Ruang's 'use of cultural resources' in their Thai connection answers this by showing how she handles the other side of her biculture resources.

I asked if she spoke any Thai language with her husband. 'Not at all,' she answered.

> If I taught him I think he would learn, but I don't want to teach him. Speaking in the same language is ... actually ... what to say ... if it is in Japanese, I wouldn't feel as vexed or upset, would I, really? But, in Thai, using language used for arguing, I would mind. In Japanese, even if he says something like '*babababababa*!' I can say like, 'So what?' I don't care, like that. But if it was in my own language, I would get hurt, I would care a great deal. Perhaps a Japanese person would feel the same if they were on the other side and spoken to in Japanese, I should think. It slides off like *srin* [slickly: J, onomatopoeia], doesn't it, if it's not in your own language? ... Thai people are sensitive about these kinds of things. It's their feelings ... or something like that.

The children did not speak Thai either. 'But,' she said,

> when I am angry, Thai comes out of my mouth first, then the children say, 'Mum, that's bizarre, isn't it?' [laughs] But I can't actually pour out my feelings in Japanese. So, I go '*babababa* !'[in Thai] when I'm angry, and it's such a relief.

The problem that migrants face in retaining their original language as part of their cultural capital is profound, but not wanting to teach her husband her language was a significant and purposeful act for Ruang to

prevent the Thai and Japanese spheres of her life from merging.[44] By not speaking in the same language as her husband, she was protecting herself from anticipated emotional havoc as she explained, 'if it was in my own language, I would get hurt or care a great deal'. Notably, she projected this feeling by imagining the reverse situation, in which a Japanese person would have felt the same when confronted in his/her own language. In this statement, it was not clear if she was being illustrative for me, a native Japanese speaker, to understand her feelings behind not wanting to teach her husband Thai. But, with the additional statement, 'when I am angry, Thai comes out of my mouth first, then the children say, "Mum, that's bizarre, isn't it?"', it would be reasonable to understand that Ruang was expressing, intentionally or not, her concern for her children's feelings as well. Knowing that she would not, could not, pour her strong emotions out in Japanese, she knew that she would not hurt the children in their language by her anger. By implication, she tended to her husband's feelings with the same concern. At the same time, her concern for her children and husband benefited Ruang, as she also felt 'such relief' by pouring her anger out in her own language. But she did not want to let her strong emotion be understood by others in the particular way that she would expect them to understand it. She could not have benefited from 'such relief' if she knew that the others understood the meaning of her words.[45]

Ruang had limited contact with Thai cultural resources. Apart from the issue of language, she had maintained contact with her elder sister who also lived in Japan and had done so for over 15 years or so, and was married to a Japanese man. It was mainly through this sister that she had contact with her mother, another sister, her brothers and their children, all in Thailand. Her father had died many years before. She had not contacted her mother directly at all for ten years, before and after migrating to Japan, until her first child was born. Though she said she respected and had more affection for her own mother than she did for her mother-in-law, she also said her elder sister in Japan was like a 'substitute parent'. She did not send much money because the sister was doing enough. She did not cook Thai food except *yam unsen* (mixed bean noodle salad. There is a similar dish in Japan) because it was the mother-in-law's favourite. She never went to Thai-style temples and felt very distant with regard to practising Buddhism as compared to my other respondents. She stated, 'I don't care as I had thought there wouldn't be any [Thai temple in Japan] from the start. It's not like I gave up something, but this is not my country. Basically, I just think that it's all right if they are there'. She never consulted Thai acquaintances about any matters either but would 'just

say hello and how are you, that kind of thing' to them if there was an occasion to see them at all.

It is interesting to contrast Ruang's attitude here to those of other migrants with regard to preserving their cultures of origin. Some express concrete strategies for maintaining a sense of belonging to their families, suggesting, for example, that '[belonging is] strengthened by having enough money to be able to visit [my home country] frequently, to bring gifts'. Others see the home country as the 'source of their cultural identity' and many, regardless of how realistic a choice it might be, wish to go back to their home country someday (MacSpadden and Moussa 1993: 28, 38). Some acknowledge that partaking in the cultural community in the host country is 'based on their interdependence for the purpose of survival in Japan' (Pataya 2002: 16). In these testimonies, one can almost see an invisible string keeping migrants in foreign lands tied to their homes, just as with the intense longing of Kaeo or Sand for their homes when they were trapped. Ruang, however, distant from home compared to the above migrants, would be seen as an outsider to the culture of Thai migrants as well. She has no intention of going back to live in Thailand, or to go through 'becoming and being' another 'career' again.[46] Then, what makes her perception towards home different from those of so many others?

Ruang felt that she could not possibly find enough energy to start over in Thailand at her age, with her children still dependent, with her husband not speaking Thai, and with her possible duties and obligations to care for the family in Thailand, whom she visited only once briefly 12 years ago in the 20 years since her first child was born. Beyond these practical considerations, I would offer two more hypothetical answers, though she did not verbalise them. The first is an additional variation to the 'dual use of cultural resources' to the examples given above; that is, Ruang kept her Thai cultural resources, such as language, to herself in order to conserve her Thai identity rather than letting it merge with the host Japanese culture. If she had had close contact with the Thai community, like most of the respondents in Pataya's work, she would have utilised those cultural resources to enhance her Thai identity through the group, however marginalised it was by the host culture. But she could not, or did not choose to do so. Her choice was to keep her Thai identity to herself to protect it from harm. The second answer is that she did not want to let her past 'deviant career' permeate her new life and new community. In between the two cultures, Ruang's self was emerging constantly against something else (compare with Kaeo's self in the detention centre above).

Ruang did not have anyone in Japan who knew she had been a sexworker 'going with' customers, except the friend from Bangkok with whom she entered the country. She had no contact with this friend usually, but mentioned several times in the interview that she was the only person who went through 'everything' with her. Her husband, she hinted, 'sort of knows', but only vaguely. Other members of her family in Japan – her children and in-laws – would not have known. Her elder sister in Japan, she hinted again 'might well know', even though the sisters did not explicitly talk about it. That might be the reason that she felt at ease contacting only this sister among her Thai family. If this is the case, it could be symbolic that she first contacted her mother after her first child was born. After all, she would have felt proud and that she had regained status as a woman in Thai society through her first childbirth, just as Kaeo might have felt, as shown earlier in this chapter. It could have been particularly important for Ruang that the child was a boy as '[t]o have sons who ordain as monks ensures her spiritual salvation in the Buddhist order' (Whittaker 2000: 70). Even though there was no realistic chance of the boy being ordained, as Ruang was not in touch with most of the Thai Buddhist practices anymore, what would have mattered was to have a boy who had the capability to lead others to salvation, as discussed in Chapter 3. Many Thai women who went through a 'deviant' career of sexwork, with its attendant constant demeaning of their 'bad women's' sexuality, have heaved a great sigh of relief in similar situations.

To summarise, Ruang could have been preserving the Thai side of her identity by conserving her Thai cultural resources within herself and mostly on her own. It could have been an act carried out for two reasons: to avoid the recollection of being marginalised and ostracised because of her 'career', even within her community of intimacy in her community of origin; and to prevent the possibility of facing the same treatment, on top of her marginalisation as a foreigner, in her new communities of intimacy and of association in the second culture. For Ruang, 'accepting, and surviving with, society's version of [her] destructive self' required mixing at least two methods: she would have to survive with the two societies' versions of her 'destructive selves', as foreigner, and as a former sexworker. She dealt with the foreigner self by separating it from her own version of her Thai self, and she dealt with the former-sexworker self by keeping it in a distant place in the distant past in her community of imagination. Ruang's memory traces and social resources, as well as the societal rules manifested within herself prior to Japan, all developed contingently in relation to the changes she necessarily underwent over the course of everyday situations in her new career. Her Thai self she utilised

positively as the holder of resources, such as the language she still tapped into for outpourings of strong emotion in her new career as a migrant settler. This Thai self was also utilised to make a clear personal distinction between herself and the people around her, as she did with her husband and children. Meanwhile, she avoided her former-sexworker self in dealing with the present: this layer of herself was kept, but not forgotten, in a place where Ruang would not have to touch upon it in her daily life.

Conclusion

Kaeo, Sand, Paap and Ruang had some experiences in common, and some which differed. All of them came from rural farming or peasant families suffering from poverty, and all of them went to big cities in Thailand and became sexworkers. Kaeo, Sand and Ruang then migrated to Japan. Kaeo and Ruang were about the same age. Sand was ten years younger. Paap was 18 years younger. All except Sand, who was tricked, became sexworkers voluntarily. Kaeo and Sand were both trapped in situations of slavery while being sexworkers. Others did not face very bad conditions. Kaeo killed someone, not to flee from being a sexworker but to flee from being a slave, and spent time in a Japanese prison for her crime. Sand escaped. Kaeo and Sand both returned to Thailand after being sexworkers. Both did so because they were deported, although they were glad at first to be back home at the very least. Ruang stayed in Japan voluntarily, but only because of an unintentional pregnancy. Paap did not return to her home country and had made up her mind to go abroad. Kaeo and Ruang both got married and had children after being sexworkers. Sand married and divorced twice. Paap was planning to start her own household. All of them had been exposed to different cultural settings at different times in different decades. All four worked hard to, to varying degrees, belong to their current communities.

The social conditions surrounding these four women differed according to time and place, their circumstances sometimes determined by intimate relationships and sometimes by broader social relationships both direct and indirect. Despite commonalities in experience before becoming sexworkers, each had arrived at distinctly dissimilar situations by the time we met. They differed in the ways that they evaluated, remembered and used their experiences as sexworkers just as much as their social positions and personal dispositions differed in the contexts of their 'ex-sexworker phase'. Differences emerged from the accumulation of skills and habitus through the development of their careers as sexworkers. The same applies to the period after they had been sexworkers

as well, and the process of becoming someone else by adapting to or coming out of a 'deviant' career, or else returning to the same or another 'deviant' career. They were not powerful people in terms of their social positions. They had been socially marginalised, particularly in comparison to the men and women who engineer a nation states' economic and social future, impacting the lives of tens of millions at a time. Their marginalisation is all the more reason to look at these women's lived experiences, to see how each individual resists, gradually accepts and adapts to, and at the end rebels against her 'destructive' self through her career, so as to again, critically reflect upon the constitution of such self as a contributing member of the given society.

If indeed these women, constantly becoming someone else, have undergone irreversible changes; however, the societies in which they live must also be changed by their input. Each member of society influences that society, no matter how underprivileged her social position. By understanding biculture to mean that resources can be drawn from dual origins, I would like to conclude this chapter with a rather hopeful quote from Raymond Williams, and to emphasise that the experiences of Kaeo, Sand, Paap, Ruang and others will, in the long run, be one of the changing forces of their societies.

> A culture, while it is being lived, is always in part unknown, in part unrealised. The making of a community is always an exploration, for consciousness cannot precede creation, and there is no formula for unknown experience. A good community, a living culture, will, because of this, not only make room for but actively encourage all and any who can contribute to the advance in consciousness which is the common need. Wherever we have started from, we need to listen to others who started from a different position. We need to consider every attachment, every value, with our whole attention; for we do not know the future, we can never be certain of what may enrich it; we can only, now, listen to and consider whatever may be offered and take up what we can (1958/1993: 334–5).

Conclusion

In Thailand

During more than 40 years of national development planning, Thai society went through rapid change. Those who were in charge of social engineering by the nation state pursued economic development as the main driving force to increase material and social wealth. They also expected that this force would also bring positive political and cultural transformation of their society that would reflect the idealism of modernity. At the time of the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis, the development had been achieved as far as it was measured by monetary value at the national level. Before the coup of September 2006, political revision was also achieved to a certain extent as intermittent military regimes were brought to book and democratic conversion was seen, not least, in advancement of women's rights, especially in the areas of health and education. However, the cost of these achievements at the national level was high at the individual level, and those who paid the cost were concentrated in the lower strata of society: girls and young women of landless or small-scale farmers of the north and the northeast rural areas and of labouring families of towns.

Amidst the transformation of industrial structure, some of these women emigrated to towns as well as abroad in order to gain cash income, to increase life chances and/or because it was becoming difficult to live in villages. Further, there were those who 'chose' to be involved in sexwork which was not only labelled as 'deviant' or 'bad' but also was defined as criminal.[1] There were those who headed to Japan in aiming for better payment, bigger chances and/or just going further away from where they used to be. Among them were those who survived through the 'deviant' career of criminals as undocumented migrants in the sex industry. They often adapted themselves to changing conditions according to changing contexts by various means and acquired necessary skills and ways of thinking to fulfil their financial and/or spiritual needs and protect their self-esteem. In this regard, migrant sexworkers more or less derived positive meanings from their career development despite negative experiences within the same career, including having a 'deviant' identity and even being led to situations of slavery.

From a macro perspective, the reasons why these women 'chose' or were driven into, continued and quit sexwork were related to various factors of national social engineering, and to the economic development of Thailand within international relations with Japan, among other nation states. These macro factors were also and always interwoven into micro but more complex factors with longer histories, such as Buddhist beliefs or gendered expectations based on which individuals made personal decisions out of everyday interactions with others. All these factors were embedded in their particular society in a particular era, and thus it should be said that the women who went through life courses with drastic changes did so precisely in adapting themselves to and baring the brunt of this society. Contrary to the society's labelling of them as marginal and whilst being closely 'deviant', they met the demands of their social positions receptive to discursive and non-discursive demands of their families, communities, nation state or even the international world.

Method and agency beyond dichotomy

Throughout this book, I have been aiming to ensure a 'middle-ground' within the debate which sets 'sexwork' against 'sexual slavery' by illustrating the many complex ways in which the actual people's personal situations and responses and their society's structures interdetermine each other, intending to make a contribution to this field by my research.

An argument which tries to mould 'prostitution' into either work chosen as a result of the agent's free will or a slavery system with an iron cage in which women are necessarily subjected to economic and sexual subordination to men has not been useful, to say the least, for those who live it. If research or support activity, by its theory or practice, aspire to be productive to make a change for the better for those whom they focus on, it firstly needs to find ways to acknowledge their cultural and historical backgrounds with enough depth to be able to grasp that their experiences are variegated by multiple realities. A piece of research or a support activity needs to recognise the different situations of different agents in its focus, perceptively connect these situations with each other, and see these also in connection with the social structures which directly or indirectly influence them, whilst staying conscious that it will not be able to find a single truth as there is no correct single way of looking at a social phenomenon.

This book has been a trial of such methodology. Thus, with horizons of acknowledgment and action different from those of the agents in focus, it also clarifies that there is no easy solution that can overthrow the

complex power relations of realities overnight, the realities of 'prostitution', 'sexwork' or 'sexual slavery' that are more complex than a single school of discourse can explain. That said, a researcher with a privileged viewpoint to write as such, to use Bourdieu's lexicon, is at the same time required to search for ways through which the agents in focus can exercise their agency – ability to act – to change the current situation, if the agents are in unbearable situations because of their contingent lower social positions. This is probably a duty accompanying a trial of understanding others' experience of 'deviancy' from the outside, at least in the context of ethics in social research. It is certainly more important, also, that feminist thoughts to be practically usable to those who are in social positions vulnerable to human rights violation, economic exploitation and sexual violence, such as migrant women experience in the contemporary global sex industry, than it is for various positions to compete with each other to win the poll position in the race for the prize of an abstract notion of the absolute truth.

My respondents' agency in mind, what I could actually do as a non-sexworker researcher depends on contexts. In any case, the central actors are none other than those who have lived the experience of migrant sexworkers and the identities derived from such experience. Fundamentally, they know what they need. The more information they have to expand their horizons of acknowledgement and action, the more ambitious they can be as to what they need, and when they need it. Included in this are kinds of information that would assist them to maintain their ties to human-relation networks outside the sex industry and to keep their working conditions as positive as possible (see Figure 1 in Chapter 1), to sense the dangers of stepping into slavery situations beforehand, and thus to realise that there would be support from outside if they were in danger.

However, access to these kinds of information and to actual support networks becomes hindered when the agents are underground, publicly invisible and criminalised. In the current Japanese situation, the migrant sexworkers are treated as 'illegal migrants' and 'prostitutes' – in either case, criminalised at state-level discourse. Unfortunately, the civil-society discourse does not present prominent arguments against this trend. Then, once they happen to seek help from those who have ideas and interests that do not match their needs, there is a strong possibility of receiving unwanted pity or a lecture at best, or condemnation, discrimination or arrest at worst. In any case, the likelihood is that they would lose the source of income and be sent back to a 'home' that they might not want to go back to. From such 'illegal' migrants' viewpoint, even to seek help can present a huge risk.

To use a well-worn saying, those who have gone through the hardships of life, such as my respondents, are far from being ignorant about their situations; they are sensitive to the fact that there are people who stand in totally different social positions and interests from theirs, who often exercise political power over them. Then, as much as they know that it is important for them to use support from various communities, they may avoid having contact with outsiders even though there seem to be supportive feminists or researchers, not to mention the law enforcement authorities. It remains true that there are material constraints including language and cultural barriers, legal barriers which define their existence as illegal, and actual physical confinement by their managers, as has been argued in this and previous literature in this area. But, the awareness of 'seeking help itself as a risk' can be a good reason for migrant sexworkers not to be approachable unless they are found by being arrested or rescued only after having been in dire situations of slavery.[2]

The current issues

As touched upon in the Introduction, the migrant sexworkers' situation does not seem to have improved since my respondents' experiences. So I would now like to look briefly at recent changes and current issues surrounding the sex trade beyond national borders, which were not yet crystallised at the time of my fieldwork; they are examples of the ongoing dichotomous debate over prostitution: migrant women's involvement in the sex industry seen as either 'sexwork' or as a 'contemporary form of slavery'. Here, we can see newly developing areas of investigation in contradictions and antagonisms between sexworkers' agencies and anti-trafficking discourse, as Agustin has pointed out and I have dealt with in this book (2006b: 116).

The definition of slavery by inter-state treaties dates back to the Slavery Convention (1926). But it has only been since the beginning of the 1990s that trans-border trafficking in women and children in particular has come to be called a 'contemporary form of slavery' in policies of various UN organisations, with the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) at the centre. It is often called (a contemporary form of) 'sexual slavery' if it is considered to have happened in relation to the sex trade. This has resulted in *The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*, supplementing *the Convention against Transnational Organised Crime*, adopted in 2000. The UN Commission on Human Rights, which retains a working group on

contemporary forms of slavery, pursues relevant state parties' responsibility for trans-border trafficking in persons (UNCHR 1999a). In a meeting with NGOs on 16 August 1999, for instance, the Sub-commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights situated trafficking in persons in the continuum of systematic violence against women together with the Japanese military's 'comfort women' system during the Asia-Pacific War, and recorded Japan's failure to provide enough means of protection and rehabilitation to victims of both (UNCHR 1999b and 1999c). Social Death (a definition of being a slave), which O'Connell Davidson uses to symbolically portray prostitutes' situation in general (as discussed in Chapter 1), is also used in the context of judging the 'comfort women' system as military sexual slavery by Patricia Viseur-Sellers, a legal officer and a prosecutor on gender issues at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (Viseur-Sellers 2000: 133–6).

The International Labour Organization (ILO) also defines trafficking in persons as a human rights violation by forced labour and publishes reports on policy practices against its incidence in both sending and receiving nation states. In the 2006 report on Japan as a representative receiving state, the ILO recognised that trafficking to Japan was concentrated in the sex industry and highlighted 'the new and unacceptable forms of forced labour and sexual exploitation', pointing to the insufficiency of the state's practices to protect the victims whilst evaluating to a certain extent positively the government's action plan implemented in 2004 (ILO 2006: i–ii).

The above discourse based on the United Nations' protocol sees trafficking in persons itself as slavery or a slavery-like practice. However, as the so-called McDougall Report on 'Contemporary Forms of Slavery' admits, albeit during wartime conflicts, the definition of 'forced prostitution' is a broad one.[3] In this renowned report on sexual violence against women, it is stated that '"Forced prostitution" generally refers to conditions of control over a person who is coerced by another to engage in sexual activity' (UNCHR 1999b: 31). There is a problem of ambiguity here as what constitutes 'control' or 'coercion' by another person can only be clarified within a specific context. And the notion of forced prostitution as a form of slavery shares the same ambiguity in its definition with the trafficking protocol, as I noted in the Introduction. Good concrete examples are presented by my respondents' stories from Chapters 2 to 4; to what extent 'coerced by another to engage' in some act is considered to be coercion or in what situation 'control over a person' is considered to be control can be adaptable to any situation as much as to no situation in

actual people's lived experiences: it is contingent on who is interpreting which occurrence and from what perspective.

In such conflict of discourses, the argument for understanding women's involvement in the sex industry as a whole as a form of sexual slavery has not diminished. And there is also emerging criticism against this trend: to conceive 'trafficking' in parallel with 'transborder organised crime', as led by the UN convention and protocol, feeds into the impression that there must be a global-scale crime syndicate behind it. Such blanket presentations distort reality and alienate migrant workers who need jobs, labelling them as criminals or victims (Kempadoo et al. 2005: esp. xix–xxi).

Japanese civil support activities are especially focused on the area of migrant women as victims of trafficking. There is a danger, as I see it, of losing the sensitivity toward the agency of the women as migrants because these support activities tend to emphasise almost solely the victimhood of the women. Still, they are the major force designing programmes to secure health, safety and human rights, to cure the physical and psychological wounds caused by violence, to help start new lives and to prevent more enslavement from happening, based on the needs of the rescued victims at the time of their contact. Their pragmatic values should be recognised as well.[4]

From now on

In regard to women involved in the global sex trade, there is another emerging trend of thought in which I take part. It does not consider the women either as 'victims' of trafficking or as 'criminals' against immigration laws and/or the Prostitution Prevention Law, who should be deported either way. It sees them within a different frame of meaning. In this frame, they are treated as entitled to protection according to their human rights and rehabilitation from their violation, as much as to the right to work as defined by themselves in accordance with necessity and in terms of the realistic possibilities of the kinds of work and workplaces available to them.

My argument goes back now to the importance of recognising sexwork as work, as introduced in Chapter 1. However, this does not characterise sexwork as freely and subjectively chosen labour. Instead, it acknowledges that sexwork can lead to extreme exploitation, violence and oppression akin to slavery, and that cases are likely to occur more often to those who are prone to comprehensive discrimination or disadvantage, such as migrants, women, sexual minorities, the young, ethnic

minorities, the disabled and those with limited socio-economic capital. On top of this acknowledgement, my argument for sexwork still asserts the importance of recognising the right to work of people in the sex industry.

If the right to work is recognised, they would, at least theoretically, be able to assert it in public and act to change their current exploitative and/or violent working conditions by themselves in alliances with others in the same social position, just like any other group of workers. If their situation allows them to be socially recognised as workers, they would also practically be able to escape from being treated only as either victims or criminals, needing to rely on rescue or the support work of others when they are faced with exploitation and violence. They would no longer have to live underground, always faced with the threat of arrest and deportation. Would this not be a form of empowerment as important as rescuing those who fled from enslavement, often at the risk of their own lives? If so, empowerment as such would work to prevent them from being enslaved; this recalls the experiences of my respondents that demonstrated that maintaining good working conditions and effective social networks are the keys for sustaining their self-esteem and thus avoiding isolation and the eventual possibility of situations of slavery.

Particularly since the legal amendments corresponding with the establishment of the so-called Trafficking Laws within the Penal Code in 2005, the policing of the sex industry as a whole has become more stringent in Japan and, as a consequence, sexwork has gone further underground, with migrant workers even more invisible, as some sexworkers observe (SWASH 2007).[5] In this current climate, this book aspires to demonstrate how to reveal the multiple realities of women involved in the global sex trade, to connect macro and micro conditions, and link personal troubles to social issues. It seeks to attract deeper and wider attention to the issues of migrant sexworkers, from insiders as well as outsiders to the sex industry. It also aims to place migrant sexworkers themselves at the centre of relevant policy-making in future, empowering those, like my respondents, who have been in similar situations, and who have illumunated them within these pages.

Notes

Introduction

1. Reported collective and organised patterns of trade of persons beyond national borders are referred to as trafficking in this study.
2. For example, Jeffrey (2002: viii–xiii), Bishop and Robinson (1998: 16–42, 65–91), Trung (1990: 181–7)
3. Terms in Japanese language are noted with the initial 'J' hereafter.
4. See Kusaka (2000: 56–60, 84–9), Utsumi and Matsui (1988/1993: 209–2).
5. Art. 1 of Prostitution Prevention Law and Arts. 19 to 24 of Immigration Control and Refuge Recognition Law
6. A euphemism for offences related to the sex industry.
7. English translations from Japanese texts and conversations in Thai and Japanese are mine unless otherwise specified.
8. See J-NATIP F-GENS (2005), Kyoto YWCA APT (2001), Caouette and Saito (1999), Kamarado (1998), Shimodate Jiken (1995).
9. The representative movements between Japan and the Pacific are seen in JNATIP (2007), JNATIP F-GENS (2005), NWEC (2007) and a non-governmental organisation called Polaris Project based since 2002 in Washington DC, Newark, Denver, Los Angeles and Tokyo (www.polarisproject.org).
10. See JNATIP (2007), JNATIP F-GENS (2005) and Nyota and Aoyama (2007).
11. There is a new focus on triggers for sexworkers to quit the job and their later life courses by Sanders (2007).
12. For example: Kyoto YWCA APT (2001), Fukami (1999), Kamarado (1998), Josei no Ie HELP (1996), Utsumi and Matsui (1988), Shimodate-Jiken (1995). Agustin, in a European context, raises a similar point to mine here. She is very critical of the 'rescue approach' that, as a consequence, deprives migrants of their means of income generation and freedom for (upward) mobility (2007: 4–5, 139, 181–5 and passim; 2006a: 29–33; 2006b: 126–36; 2005: 84–5).
13. See Plummer (2001: 176–84, Chapter 11), Hammersley and Atkinson (1994: chapters 1 and 5)
14. See also James Clifford's critical evaluation of ethnography on the vogue of postmodernism (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 25).
15. See also Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 71–2) for more of critical reflexivity.
16. Rewards often offered in research on sexworkers include distribution of condoms and offering free health checks or counselling (see Sanders 2005: 24–5).
17. See Stones on Theorist Pattern Analysis (1996: 97); on Agent's Conduct Analysis (98); and on Agent's Context Analysis (122–3).
18. A recent piece by O'Neill and others resulted in municipal policy proposals regarding sexwork by which participatory action research is developed which include such principles as: 1) all research development and results are to belong to the participants; 2) creative ways including using art, rather than

just writing an interim research report, are to be incorporated for consultation with the community in focus; and 3) the monitoring and evaluation processes are to be incorporated into the research result (Campbell and O'Neill 2006: esp. 40–1).

19. It is problematic in the Thai context to use the term 'sexworkers' in English. In the Thai language, those who have been involved in self-empowerment activities for sexworkers would not use the word *soopenii* that is usually translated into English as 'prostitute', or *garii* ('whore'), as these have degrading connotations. They use *ying borigaan* instead, which is, according to participants in such activities, a more respectable and work-orientated term. Literally, this term translates as 'service woman', not 'sexworker'. The word for 'sex' is not usually uttered among sexworkers, reflecting the same tendency in wider society, but 'service' is a more open concept used in a broad range of businesses. It could be suggested that the fact that 'woman' [*ying*] combined with 'service' [*borigaan*] connoting 'woman who serves men' is an expression of women's subordination to men in English or Japanese. However, I give priority to the local context that finds 'service woman' more acceptable and encouraging than literally advocating 'sexworker' as an occupation. On the other hand, I interpret the combination of their preference of 'working' and 'service' in a businesslike sense as having a similar feel to the English term 'sexwork'. With all this in mind, I use 'sexworker' for Thai '*ying borigaan*' in English-language contexts, while noting that unlike the English the Thai term does not have the outright political assertiveness to claim workers' rights for those who use it.
20. www.socresonline.org.uk/info/ethguide.html.
21. In the Thai language, it is named *suun phithaksit ying borigaan* [learning centre for service women].
22. The same phrase is used in the title of an essay by a sexworker called Aline in Delacoste and Alexander (1987).
23. I was actually criticised by one of my hoped-for interviewees in Japan on this point. She, as a sexworker, declined my request for her account because she did not feel it was right to talk about sexwork in any way to a researcher who she did not see as useful to herself or to her peers. Specifically, she stated that if I were a medical or legal student she would have been willing to cooperate. I, a sociology student, had no concrete means or evidence for provision of any security measures, beyond a promise of support along with prepared ethical codes for interviews, to help her to feel that she would not be used with no return. I wholeheartedly feel that she was reasonable in all her criticisms, which proved highly educational for me. But I do hope to get back to her with the results of this research, that I might present them to her as 'useful'.
24. Ross Coomber (2002) questions the use of signed consent where it may prove compromising in terms of confidentiality and anonymity, particularly with regard to crime and illegal activities.
25. See also Garfinkel (1967/2002: 50) on 'trust' in the communicative attitude of people's daily life.
26. There is no single reliable way to estimate the number of sexworkers in Thailand, and elsewhere. Even omitting that sexwork is not a lifelong career but temporary and/or intermittent for many involved, it is an occupation

with various definitions and the figures vary enormously, from tens of thousands to millions. For example, a governmental body dealing with women's issues estimated 500,000 to 700,000 sexworkers in 1981 (NCWA 1981: 23). More recently, Amara Pongsapich, a Thai feminist scholar, introduced the figures of 77,000 to 100,000 issued by the government, 2 million by NGOs, and 150,000 to 1 million by the Institute of Population and Social Research at Mahidol University (1997: 37). Pasuk et al. estimated there to be between 65,000 and 2.8 million while introducing the most conservative figures issued by the Department of Contagious Diseases of Ministry of Public Health in 1996 to be 1,945 males and 64,345 females but 100,000 altogether when the figure included informal arrangements (1998/2002: 197–202).

27. The name in Thai is *kurongkaan songsum sakayapaap puu ying raeng ngaan kaamchart* [literally, project for encouraging the latent capability of women who worked overseas].
28. The IOM research was conducted in 1997–8 on returnee women in Chiangrai and Phayao provinces involving participatory observation, participatory action research, in-depth interviews, and focus group interviews with 55 women and some family members aiming at deeper understanding of the returnee women's experiences in order to convey it to relevant government officials to support the returnees. The report was published by IOM (Caouette and Saito 1999: 15–18).
29. Bourdieu's notion of habitus; defined as socio-biographical history of individuals 'turned into nature' (Bourdieu 1977/2002: 78). It is 'the universalising mediation which causes an individual agent's practices, without either explicit reason or signifying intent, to be none the less "sensible" and "reasonable"' (ibid.: 79).
30. See Merton (1968: 423–37) on status conflict and role-sets, and Stones (2005: 88) for habitus construction through a firm linkage with the agents' social positions.
31. This feminist activism was researched by Babior (1996: esp. 74–5; 234–41).
32. See Hochschild (2003b) and Parreñas (2001) on global female labour migration.
33. See my criticism of the US report (while not an endorsement of the Japanese government's failure to protect and promote the human rights of migrants) in Aoyama (2007: 107–10).
34. A workshop on HIV/AIDS and Human Trafficking as part of the 8th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific in Colombo on 20 August 2007 is a recent example. This workshop included advocates of sexworkers' right as workers from India and Japan (including myself). Criticisms were raised against any tightening of policing on sexworkers as a result of the protocol against trafficking in persons supplementary to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Responding to these criticisms, Paul Williams, the chair and then representative of the host organisation, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, stated that the 'UN has a system to review the protocol five years after the effective date. If it's necessary, we will review what should be reviewed. And we are currently cooperating with the [sex]workers with good terms' (from SWASH's DVD recording: see Conclusion, note 5 for information on SWASH).

35. Except those who are qualified as performing artists by the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law (Art. 19)
36. Article 3 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Chapter 1

1. To argue that prostitution, like any other social phenomenon, is extant through the interaction between structural conditions/resources and the related agents' agency/conducts, I am theoretically informed by Stones's version of structuration theory (see 2005: esp. 24–9).
2. Apart from Pateman (1988) discussed in the text below, see Barry (1995: especially 65–73), MacKinnon (1989: 59–61, 118, 148–9 and passim) and Dworkin (1987: 134–5, 161, 203 and passim). See also comprehensive reviews of feminist standpoints on prostitution in O'Neill (2001: 15–32) and Chapkis (1997: 11–32).
3. 'Emotional labour', a term coined by Arlie R. Hochschild, describes labour that requires the worker to control her own feelings by using her face or body in interaction with those to whom she offers it in order to create expressions observable to the other (1983: 7). 'Care work' involves caring for others as work, including assisting the handicapped and nursing the elderly, children and the diseased.
4. See footnote 8 below for examples.
5. Hashizume was not part of the similar debate in the English world occurring at the same time. For Japanese articles and books hereafter, the translations of the titles are mine; see the original titles in the References.
6. Ehara (1995) – from feminist perspectives – and Tazaki (1997) – from materialist perspectives – would be the representative anthologies. Hosoya (2002/2004: 199–210), in a concise manner, and Shibuya (2007: 28–30), in a comprehensive manner, give overall references on the debate and their evaluations in Japanese.
7. A nickname meaning 'peach-child of peach-river': 'peach' can connote eroticism, sexuality and fertility in Japanese.
8. See Sanders (2005, 174–9), O'Neill (2001, 33–41), Kempadoo and Doezema (1998: 3–9, 17–22); Delacoste and Alexander (1987: 14–18). See reports on the worsening working environment due to recent harsher policing in Hubbard (2006) for England and SWASH (2007: in English) for Japan.
9. These recent works are based more on empirical research or writing by (former) sexworkers themselves: for example, Day (2007); Campbell and O'Neill (2006); Parsons (2005); Sanders (2005); Weitzer (2000).
10. Sanders also finds guilt as one of the representative negative emotions found among her respondents: sexworkers in London (2005: 140–1).
11. See Kempadoo and Dozema (1998: 131 discussing racism), O'Connell Davidson (1998: 131–2), McKeganey and Barnard (1996: 95)
12. See ample examples of 'emotional labour' by sexworkers across cultures and conditions in Sanders (2005: 142–57), O'Neill (2001: 86–9, 141), Lever and Dolnick (2000: 85–6, 96–9), Chapkis (1997: 73–81), McKeganey and Barnard

(1996: 88–9) based on Hochschild's notion in *The Managed Heart* (1983). Although without referring to Hochschild, a round-table discussion by sex-workers in Kaname and Mizushima (2000) shows how their control (for alienation or utilisation) of their feelings at work in various circumstances is key to protecting their private emotions in a Japanese context.

13. Desiree, a self-employed and economically successful prostitute in Britain, to whom this book is dedicated.
14. See, for example, Alexander in Delacoste and Alexander (1987: 16–24) and Day (2007); Campbell and O'Neill (2006); Parsons (2005); Sanders (2005); Weitzer (2000).
15. Thailand has been counted as a leading Newly Industrialising Country (NIC) and Japan as a leading industrialised nation in recent years (Suehiro 2000/2002: 16–19, Harada and Ino 1998/2001: 121–7).
16. For example, Tannenbaum (1999: 244–5), Vanlandingham and Grandjean (1997: 132–3), Muecke (1992: 892), Reynolds (1977: 929–34)
17. See Whittaker (2000: 29, 39), Buapun (1999: 8), Fishel (1997: 450, 465), Mills (1997: 139), Mulder (1997: 36, 308).
18. Sanitsuda (2001: 218), Chatsumarn (1998: 30), Bhassorn et al. (1995: 52–3, 62–3, 94–7), Muecke 1992: 892)
19. Based on her study of farming families in the early 1970s, Potter distinguished the 'female-centered system' of northern Thailand from matriliny as well as from patriliny, both of which were centred around male consanguineous groups. In the 'female-centered system', formal authority in the family was still passed from man to man, father-in-law to son-in-law, but because the males needed to marry into the family group of female blood ties to gain access to the authority, and because property was passed from mother to daughter as a rule, the female's structural importance compensated for the male formal authority (1977/1979: 1–2, 20, 99).
20. This is my counter-argument to Bishop and Robinson's critique against Butler's theory. In researching the Western desire for sex tourism in Thailand, and quoting the same paragraph as I do here, they point to Butler's lack of materiality in relation to the global economy, and taking no notice of 'least resistance' to, or conservation of, repetition of normative gender relations as seen in the sexworkers' attitudes they observed in Bangkok (1998: 225–6).
21. See, for instance, Borthwick (1999: 213–18), Cook and Jackson (1999: 17–22) and Warunee (1997: 583–7, 595–601).
22. Jackson, however, notes that attitudes towards sex vary between classes and between ethnicities in Thai culture. The prudish attitude, according to Jackson, comes from upper-class Thais who are often influenced by Western education and from Chinese descendants who are often middle-class and tend to hold strict sexual mores (Jackson 1995: 47).
23. That is unless they try to 'go native', that is, sensitise themselves, either out of research interest (including purposes, processes and outcomes) or out of personal sexual attraction to a) particular person(s) from the other culture, or both (see Odzer 1994: 50, 60, 100–4, 113–19 and passim. See also Plummer 2001: 208–15 for a flesh-and-blood typology of the researcher-researched relationships).
24. As of January 2008, it was not known what effects the September 2006 coup would have upon the country's socio-economic conditions, as the

national-level political situation is reported to be still unstable even after the general election in December 2007 which brought a coalition government of five parties led by the one close to the former Prime Minister Thaksin, now in exile (*Asahi Shinbun* 2008; JETRO 2008).

25. Suehiro (2000/2002: 84–7, 193–5), Harada and Ino (1998/2001: 37–9, 142–3), Lauridsen (1999: 8–14), Medhi (1997: 24–5).
26. Nihon Toukei Kyoukai (2004: 51, 150–1, 164, 187), NESDB (1994: 10–12), Magome (1987/1992: 174–8).
27. In more recent figures, Japanese tourists to Thailand numbered 1.24 million persons in 2002, the second largest population next to Malaysians. Since 1998, however, more women than men have travelled to Thailand from Japan. The gap between the gender percentages has been small (4 to 6 per cent) but is constantly widening (JNTO 2003: 183–4).
28. Chaiwoot (1994: 6), Viraphong (1991: 427–8), TIC (n.d.: 2).
29. Pataya (2002: 2–4), Sudo (1988: 215–18; 224–5).
30. See Amemiya et al. (2002: 1–7), Parreñas (2001: 25), Booth et al. (1997: 11–13), Supang (1996: 118), Buijs (1993: 1), Castles and Miller (1993/1998: 34–5), Hugo and Anchalee (1987: 19–20).
31. See Castles and Miller (1993/1998: 19-29), Chant (1992: 19-24).
32. See Hochschild (2003b) and Parreñas (2001).

Chapter 2

1. Pronounced as /gEEo/ with the falling tone
2. Stations, sometimes known as brothels, organised by the Japanese military at the time for systematic and strategic sexual slavery. One of the first two Korean women who came out publicly as former ‘comfort women’ had been living in Hat Yai since she was abandoned there at the end of the Asia-Pacific war (Matsui 2000: 300–1, 321, 329).
3. See Kakwani and Krongkaew (1996: 17, 20), Chaiwoot and Grosskopf (1994: 7–8, 20–4), Sheehan (1993: 1–13), Ikemoto (1992: 218–2, 227–8), Suganya and Somchai (1988: 19–27, 40–4).
4. My calculations from Table 2.6: Emploted [sic] Persons by Industrt [sic] (MoLSW 2001: 14), Table 1.6: Employed Persons by Industry 1989-1993 (MoI 1992: 10), Table 1.2: Employed Persons by Occupation 1987 and 1988 (MoI 1987: no page number given) and Table 1.10: Employed Persons by Work Status and Industry 1983 (MoI 1984: 20).
5. My calculations from Table 4: Gross Domestic Product at Current Factor Cost by Industrial Origin and National Income (NESDB 1956–1996: no page number given) and Table 5: Gross Domestic Product at Current Factor Cost by Industrial Origin and National Income (NESDB 2000: 12) (provisional figure for 2000). The figures are based on each year’s GDP at current factor cost.
6. See Chaiwoot and Grosskopf (1994: 32), Xuto et al. (1994: 4, 24), Somphong (1993: 4–6), Suganya and Somchai (1988: 48) and NCWA (1981: 13–4, 23–4).
7. See Jeffrey (2002: 33), Samart et al. (1989: 1–2), WGCP (1989: 14–15), Warin and Ikemoto (1988: 43–52).
8. See Jeffrey (2002: 36, 52–3), Warin and Ikemoto (1988: 52) and Anderson (1977: 17–18)

9. See Suehiro (2000/2002: 191), Harada and Ino (1998/2001: 180–2), Sudo (1988: 220–1) and Tanaka (1975/1998: 15–17).
10. Kusaka (2000: 32–3, 37), Chalongphob and Yongyuth (1994: 5), NESDB (1956–96: 109), Tanaka (1975/1998: 17).
11. Darunee and Pandey summarise such examples of women's organisations' work starting around the mid-1980s: Foundation for Women, Women's Information Center, Committee on Women's Welfare Promotion, EMPOWER and Hotline (1991: 109–1, 123–40). By this time, the elite women's organisation NCWT had faced criticism from within its own ranks and had become aware that its ideologies and approach were not meeting the needs of those they were intended to enlighten (ibid.: 57).
12. Pronounced as /daao/ with the mid tone. Daaw died in June 2005 after a long struggle with illness while my PhD thesis on which this book is based was waiting for its viva.
13. Defined by the World Bank and the World Health Organisation (in Chaiwoot and Grosskopf 1994: 12–13).
14. Chaiwoot and Grosskopf (1994: 10–17), Ikemoto (1992: 214–34), and Sagunya and Somchai (1988: 13-45).
15. I sincerely thank SEPOM staff members for letting me use this table despite the fact that the research is still ongoing. An interim report has been published in Japanese by National Women's Education Center (NWEC) (Nyota and Aoyama 2007).
16. Alpha Research (2002: 16, 18, 317), Ito and Phannee (2001: 20–3).
17. Pravit Rojanaphruk, a columnist for *The Nation*, a national English-language newspaper in Thailand, writes about the hardship of the Aka tribe, one of the eight or so ethnic highlanders in the northern border areas between Thailand, Burma and Laos. Because the Thai government has not given most of them (90 per cent in 1996) identity cards with Thai nationality or mobility status, they are economically and socially discriminated against and disadvantaged (1996: 202–10). This regulation is being eased but police checks continue.
18. Pronounced as /maai/ with the high tone, and /yOOn/ with the mid tone.
19. See Whittaker (2000: 150–76) for cultural implications of abortion in rural Thailand.
20. Also, the fact that she was speaking in Japanese on this occasion might have helped her to articulate something that she would not have put into words in Thai, the single linguistic medium for her as a girl.
21. Compare Sanitsuda (2001: 231–2), Tannenbaum (1999: 248–9), Chai (1983: 77), Aphichat (1979: 239, 241, 260–2).
22. Mai had a teenage son who died in a motorbike accident four months after our interview.
23. NEC (2000: 39–45), Samart et al. (1989: 205).
24. Pronounced as /banyaa/ with the mid tone.
25. Samart et al. (1989: 22–3, 121–4), Warin and Ikemoto (1988: 54–5, 74–5, 86–7).
26. NEC (2000: 39–45, 73), Kitisak and Tivaporn (1989: 199–200, 227–8), Samart et al. (1989: 17–19).
27. Pronounced as /nok/ with the high tone.
28. In 2007, the Office of Women's Affairs and UNDP Thailand pointed out the fact that national statistics generally lacked distinguishing measurements

between men and women, and it had been difficult to estimate problems that women face. They thus launched Thailand's first 'Gender-Disaggregated' database. According to this database, women's total labour participation rate was 73 per cent, the employment ratio of women's to men's in waged employment in non-agricultural sector was 0.94, and the income ratio from the same sector was 0.82 (in Bangkok it was 0.91) in 2006 (UNDP Thailand 2008: 138–45).

29. See van Esterik (2000: 43–5), Lyttleton (2000: 125–9), Whittaker (2000: 13–14), Buapun (1999: 9), Doneys (1999: 6), Amara P. (1997: 37), Bond et al. (1997: 188–9), Amara S. (1992a: 58), Muecke (1992: 892-893), Richter and Bencha (1992: 3), Darunee and Pandey (1991: 13, 16, 27).
30. Muecke (1992: 892); and see Reynolds (1977: 929–30, 934) for sources from the 14th century.
31. Formal education began in 1855 as a result of the Bowring Treaty with the British Empire, but it was only for the male offspring of the elite. The first governmental school was set up in 1884 by the then King Chulachomklao and later opened to the middle-class and girls in 1901. The Primary Education Law was enacted in 1921 enabling the first four-year free universal education (Amara S. 1992a: 55–6, NSO 1981–4: 154–5).
32. The General Family Survey of 1994 conducted by the Institute of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University, showed that the differences in related values and attitudes between rural and urban populations were already wide in the early 1990s (Bhassorn et al. 1995). Historically, also, there were exceptions to the rules in elite-class texts in which some heroic princesses were depicted as warriors, dominant and/or scholastic (van Esterik 2000: 44–5, Reynolds 1977: 936).
33. See Mills (2002: 76–80), Whittaker (2000: 30–2), Bond et al. (1997: 188, 60–1), Warunee (1997: 589–91) and Akin (1983: 23–4).
34. Bond et al. (1997: 189), Bencha (1992a: 20–1), Muecke (1992: 895, 897), Akin (1983: 22).
35. Bhassorn et al. (1999: 5), see also NSO (2000: No. 47; 262) and Bhassorn et al. (1995: 65, 98) with regional differences.
36. See also Mills (2002: 77–8), Ishii (1991/2002: 107–9, 123–4) and Aoki (1979/1990: 94–5, 157).
37. To be ordained and enter monkhood does not have to be a lifetime commitment in Thai Theravada Buddhism. A man can enter monkhood at any time after 20 years of age and for any length of time. Typically, he would do this for three months during the rainy season when Theravada monks enclose themselves in their temple (Ishii 1991/2002: 200; Aoki 1979/1990: 89–92).
38. Mills (2002: 78, 96), Anthony et al. (1983: 188, 195), Aoki (1979/1990: 88).
39. One in 66, or about 1.5 per cent, was the constant figure for the rainy season, the period with the largest numbers of short-term monks during the 1980s and 1.7 per cent was the figure in 1967 according to the author's own table of Numbers of Ordained People in Thailand (Ishii 1991/2002: 35).
40. To become a novice does not require ordination but it is also only open to men.
41. Ishii notes in passing that ordination would have cost at least tens of thousands of yen (probably between 15,000 and 25,000 baht) in 1991 (1991/2002: 123).

42. Based on Phillips (1987: 91–3); see also Ishii (1991/2002: 37–44) and Tomita (1987/1997: 802).

Chapter 3

1. Buddhist-era dating is used in Thai daily life as well as in the country's official domestic documentation.
2. Mai had to leave school at the age of 11.
3. A Japanese-English word referring to a large-scale brothel where women serve customers while bathing together.
4. The long working hours, furthermore, might not have had the same intensive connotations in certain occupations in the informal sector in Thailand as in the formal sector. As Kaeo commented that she would not have to do anything when there were no customers, workers in this sector in Bangkok often had self-management of the quantity and intensity of their work. It was common in the informal sector at large not to make such a clear distinction between work and break time as in the formal sector.
5. Conducted by the Institute of Population Studies at Chulalongkorn University, with 3,237 respondents from both rural and urban areas of all regions of Thailand.
6. Daaw did not save enough money due mainly to the fact that she left sexwork sooner than the others.
7. A 1972 ILO report (the Krith Hart Report) characterises the informal sector by the following seven features still widely used today: 1) easy entrance; 2) local resources; 3) family ownership; 4) small scale; 5) labour-intensive production and/or hereditary skills; 6) skills acquired outside of formal education; and 7) a non-regulated competitive market (Fujimaki 2001: 12). Sexwork for my respondents meets all of these features except 2) and 3).
8. The cost was for two hostesses, two small bottles of Thai beer and one of oolong tea, two dishes of crisps and rice crackers, two glasses of orange juice for Banyaa and the other hostess, the service charge for accompanying the hostesses for three hours' chat, and a 10 per cent table charge for the club, with no charge for karaoke.
9. Kusaka analysed the culture of Thaniya as a whole as an exportation of the male chauvinism within 'Japanese company culture' (2000: 15–16, 49–50, 172–6).
10. Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act 1996: Sections 4, 5 and 6. In December 2003, however, the Thai government announced publicly that it was considering making prostitution legal and had been consulting with specialists in the relevant areas. Heated debate continues between the policymakers, scholars, lawyers, NGOs supporting sexworkers and sexworkers themselves at the time of writing (see Virada 2003).
11. From my field notes of December 2002, the same day the conversation took place.
12. See van Esterik (2000: 54–60), Amara P. (1997: 31–6), Darunee and Pandey (1991: 92–5, 175–7).
13. From my field notes of February 2003.
14. Liap was not my student but an EMPOWER attendee.

15. See Bishop and Robinson (1998: 58, 200), Sedgwick (1995: 197), and also Chapter 1.
16. Pronounced as /kai/ with the low tone.
17. EMPOWER and SEPOM, among many other NGOs, do such work in each of their fields.
18. See Sanitsuda (2001: 20–3, 201–2, 211, 218, 230–1 and passim), Whittaker (2000: 15 and 29–32), Kamarad (1998: 159), Suwanna (1997: 248–50), Ishii (1991/2002: 67), Trung (1990: 132–7), and Darunee and Pandey (1997: 127–9).
19. Sanitsuda (2001: 199-202, 218, 229), van Esterik (2000: 70), Chatsumarn (1998: 30, 32–4), Suwanna (1997: 44–50), Warunee (1997: 579, 582, 597), Ishii (1991/2002: 57–8).
20. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh is perhaps an exception among English-writing Thai scholars. She examines the canonical texts with gender analysis in developing the argument that Buddhism does not essentially subordinate women. She argues that the texts themselves have to be contextualised in the historical and social conditions in which they were written as well as with changes of interpretation through the ages – from some 2,000 years ago in India – and influenced by Hindus and Brahmins coming to Thailand (see, for example, 1998: 15–17 and 33–4, and also from my interview in January 2003).
21. Suung is pronounced as /suung/ with the rising tone. Sand is the same as in English.
22. See a detailed discussion on the relationship between modernity and migrant sex workers' experiences in Aoyama (2005: 5–22).
23. Advertising Research Center (1998), *Bangkok Post* (1991), *The Nation* (1991, 1990, 1989), TDRI (1988).
24. Television was not available to the majority of villagers in this study as it was too expensive (although there would usually be places villagers could gather and watch TV together). Still, it was itself, Mills suggests, a significant feature of life as 'a sign of the owner's modern status' (1997: 145).
25. Five years later, at the time of writing, she is married and abroad again.
26. Amemiya et al. (2002: 21), Ito and Phannee (2001: 16), Keisatsu-chou (1994: 98).
27. Based on the cumulated balance of entries and exits of foreign nationals by the Japanese Ministry of Justice.
28. An area regarded as an 'ethnic town' with restaurants serving Asian dishes other than Japanese. The streets mark the boundary of the entertainment zone, leading in one direction to Kabuki-cho, the largest red-light district in Japan, and in another to a residential area. Around this cross section, there are many Japanese-style 'love hotels' (see below).
29. A Japanese feminist sociologist with extensive writings on the social construction of female gender, female heterosexuality and the social structures, including nationalism, that uphold them. She is the Japanese translator of Jeffrey Weeks's *Sexuality*.
30. A common assumption among sexworkers I met in Bangkok in 2002. The Thai government officially started to act against trafficking in women and children to Japan specifically around 1994. According to Human Rights Watch, there was widespread newspaper coverage related to this move from 1994 to 1999 (2000: 188–90), including an official meeting between the Thai Minister of Labour and Welfare and officials from the Japanese government, urging the

Japanese Embassy 'to strictly inspect Thai nationals travelling to Japan and to tighten screening procedures for visa applications in Thailand' (*Bangkok Post* 8 January 1995, quoted in ibid.: 190). This could well be the basis of the assumption.

31. A typical amount for the 'debt' that trafficking agents have demanded since the early 1990s, although this seems to have gone up recently (J-NATIP F-GENS 2005: 52–3; Human Rights Watch 2000: 86–9; Kyoto YWCA APT 2001: 50; Fukami 1999: 12; Shimodate Jiken 1995: 152–3).
32. Not as prevalent as the 'hostess club' for men, a drinking establishment where heterosexual women can enjoy the paid company of usually young men.
33. A 'large-scale company' means a company with 1,000 or more full-time employees. This category applies to the male 'standard worker' in the upper strata of wage ranking in the Japanese official statistics of employment (Nihon Toukei Kyoukai 2004: 188).
34. See Overs and Doezema (1998: 205–9), Chapkis (1997: 26–31), Odzer (1994: 69, 265) and Lopez-Jones (1988: 277–8).
35. From the OPEC oil-price rises in 1973 until the beginning of the 1990s, there had been a trend for Thai people to emigrate to Middle Eastern countries, especially to Saudi Arabia. They tended to be male contract workers in their mid-20s to 50s from the northeast or the north (Peerathep 1982: 6–8, 46). A nationwide survey in 1992 found that 50 per cent of the remittance from emigrants who were the head or the spouse of the head of the households came from Middle Eastern countries (Guest 1995: 6). The fact that there are official records of Middle East migrants available suggests the gendered nature of their migration.
36. In the first four months of 1990, Isuzu, a Japanese car manufacturer 'captured the top spot in total vehicle sales' with a 24.7 per cent share of all car sales in Thailand. The company sold 'mostly commercial vehicles and one-ton pickup trucks' according to *The Nation*'s mid-year economic report (1990: 28).
37. Human Rights Watch reports that substance abuse and mental disorders have been identified by medical practitioners as acute problems among undocumented female migrants from Thailand in Japan as a result of abuse they suffer (2000: 103). Some of my respondents voiced their own or co-workers' drug use in Japan as well as in Bangkok.

Chapter 4

1. A few publications have overlapping themes: see Caouette and Saito (1999), Phakaamaat (1990/1994), Kamarado (1998), Foundation for Women (1995) and Shimodate Jiken (1995).
2. Teela Sanders' interviews with London sexworkers pointed out that it was not always the case that former sexworkers would go into another 'deviant' career (2007: 74–95).
3. As mentioned in the previous chapters, the stigma was strictly speaking attached to their 'deviant' career. However, it proved to be retained as part of their identity even after leaving the career.
4. Pasuk et al. note that one-fifth of the profit of international drug trafficking is estimated to be made in Thailand, amounting to twice as much as the nation's earnings from official exports (1998/2002: 86).

5. The Japanese Code of Criminal Procedure of 1948, until the time of this writing in 2008, allows the criminal court to 'detain the accused in case it shall have reason to believe that he [sic] has perpetrated a crime' and if 'there are sufficient grounds to suspect that he [sic] may escape' (Art. 60). Hence, Kaeo was lawfully detained in police custody before the verdict. The United Nations Human Rights Council has issued a recommendation to the Japanese government for revision of this Code for its potential violation of human rights.
6. The base script is used in this chapter again with permission from Kaeo. The English translation is mine.
7. See Goffman (1961/1991: 21) for the role of work in a total institution.
8. From the base script of the book from an interview with Mari Nyota.
9. See Footnote 33 of the Introduction.
10. Based on conceptual distinctions made by Stones. He first distinguishes between structures and resources that are external to an agent and those that are internalised in memory traces by an agent. He then divides the latter between the more general and enduring 'habitus', accrued over time, and the 'conjuncturally specific structures' that are employed at the immediate interface between the agent and her context of action. My use of Becker's 'cultural resources' is best thought of as made up of both the external and the two internal dimensions (2005: 66–7, 88, 91–3).
11. From the script of an interview with Mari Nyota.
12. From an interview with me in November 2002.
13. The support network for the women in the Shimodate case publicly appealed against the scandalous coverage of the case by a portion of the mass media (Shimodate Jiken 1995: 218).
14. Though Fishel does not precisely note the class background of these campaigners, only mentioning the patron-client model crisscrossing a general category of 'women' (1997: 447), we can induce that they must have had the initial capital to invest in the election campaigns.
15. Perhaps class difference among women is more acute here than generational and regional differences in terms of relative comfort with traditional agricultural mythology. Spirits and ghosts were one of the most popular subjects of casual conversations among my respondents, both in Bangkok – the cosmopolitan capital – and in Chiangrai – a city in the northern rural area.
16. From an interview with me.
17. Later, she migrated again, this time to the US.
18. *Teeng ngaan* [T]; defined here as a monogamous sexual and life-sharing relationship which respondents confirmed was stable and sustainable, whether legally registered or not.
19. See Stones (2005: 101, 190) for a discussion of 'horizon of action'.
20. Pronounced /paap/ with the falling tone.
21. For example, Walker and Ehrlich (2000: 33), Cohen (1996: 260–4), Odzer (1994: 15, 136–8), O'Rourke (1993: 115).
22. Cohen (1996: 275, 279–80), with similar examples in Walker and Ehrlich (2000: 139, 162).
23. Pronounced as /faa/ with the high tone.
24. Harada and Ino (1998/2001: 37–9, 142–3), Lauridsen (1999: 6), Medhi (1997: 24–5), Chaiwoot (1994: 2–3), Viraphong (1991: 427–8), TIC (n.d.: 2).

25. Lauridsen (1999: 3–4, 15–16) and see Chawin (1997: 78–9, 83, 89–90, 98–100) on Japanese loans.
26. Steinfatt (2002: 210–14) and D'Agnes (2001: 317–52): the '100% Condom Campaign' of 1989–91 officially and publicly advocated sexworkers' use of condoms with customers for prevention of HIV transmission, particularly in the Patpong area for media attention (D'Agnes 2001: 339–41, Lyttleton 2000: 60, 62, 109–210, Aphichat et al. 1999: 11).
27. See Stones (2005: 87–9) on habitus; see also Chapter 1, Footnote 12 for sexworkers' emotional labour.
28. See Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995: 181–4), Sarsby (1983: 3–15), Stone (1977/1988: 149–80) and Shorter (1976: 255–63).
29. H. L. Smith, quoted in J. A. Banks (1973) quoted in Shorter (1975: 262). See also Walkowitz (1992/1994: 15–17, 39).
30. Modernisation of Thai economic, political and social structures started in the 19th century, when the absolute monarchy of Siam opened its market, especially to the British (with the Bowring Treaty of 1855) and French colonising powers in the region. But it was not until the late 1930s that the kingdom was equipped with the state bureaucracy that would govern all of its territory (Mulder 1997: 47–8). In the early 1960s, the modernisation process permeated through to the general population with the implementation of the contemporary national development policy. Mills argues that the state's goal of universal primary education, first promulgated in the 1920s, reached rural villages typically around 1960 (2002: 36–7). It may, then, be the influence of television, rather than books, that acted as the major stimulus for certain modern notions that developed within people's minds on a mass scale. This possible difference of media could have affected the speed of the process. At the time, modernisation was also prone to escalation because the national economy was involved in global changes.
31. Pronounced /ruang/ with the falling tone.
32. Sudo (1988: 215–18, 224–5), Warin and Ikemoto (1988: 72–5), Suehiro and Tsuneishi (1987/1992: 112).
33. Suehiro (2000/2002: 194), NESDB (1994: 10–12), Magome (1987/1992: 174–8).
34. This is in part due to the fact that the vast majority (96.6 per cent in 1980 to 70 per cent in 1989) of migration from Thailand was to the Middle East, especially to Saudi Arabia, between 1980 to 1989 – Sand's father being one of this number. In that region, however, the actual ratio of female Thai documented migrants was a mere 5 per cent according to records for 1990 to 1993 (Amara P. 1994: 9, 12).
35. Based on the numbers of exposed 'illegal' migrant workers issued by the Japanese Immigration Control Office.
36. Thanks to Mihoko Fukushima for translating this exchange into English without losing the feel of the Japanese original.
37. See Footnote 10 above.
38. Supang and Risser (1996: 2–7), Castles and Miller (1993/1998: 19–29), Chant (1992: 19–24).
39. Coll and Magnuson (1997: 104–110), Kibria (1997: 205–9), Sodowsky and Lai (1997: 213–16).

40. Researchers point out: *kazoku seido*'s specific genesis from Northeast Asian feudalism (Ichibangase 1989: 85), a strict regime of gender division between the public sphere and the private sphere that is distinguishable from European or American gender divisions (Ueno 1988: 181–2, Morgan 1987: 182); the effect on society both men and women exercise via the particular gender division, hence, different meanings of patriarchy from European or American contexts (Lebra 1984: 302); and the transformation of *kazoku seido* itself with modernisation, industrialisation and urbanisation of Japanese society since the latter half of the 19th century (Ichibangase 1989: 87–8; Hane 1988: 9; Ueno 1987: 81).
41. A feminist sociologist specialising in Japanese women's issues, social welfare, and labour with gender analysis.
42. Referring to the studies mentioned in Footnote 38 above and Hajime Tamaki's extraction of specific features of *kazoku seido* (1971: 277–86).
43. See Yasukawa and Yasukawa (1987/1993: 390–2, 420–2), Hane (1988: 9), Mackie (1988: 62), Ueno (1988: 182), Buckley and Mackie (1986: 178–9).
44. Compare cases in Amemiya et al. (2002: 35–7), Pataya (2002: 16–17), Coll and Magnuson (1997: 110–12), Castles and Miller (199398: 243–4) and Summerfield (1993: 93).
45. Meanwhile, this attitude of hers did not mean that she did not want a mutually understanding relationship with her husband. As she stated elsewhere: 'I can say to him if there is something I don't like. He does the same. We talk it over and put each other straight. It's like that in our house. There is nothing to hide'.
46. See MacSpadden and Moussa (1993: 36) for a very similar statement from a refugee.

Conclusion

1. The 1996 Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act of Thailand (Art. 6 to 7) and the 1956 Prostitution Prevention Law of Japan (Art. 1 to 6).
2. Jyoti Sanghera's argument that it becomes possible to construct trafficking as a crime only after it happened is informative (Sanghera 2005: 14–15).
3. A special report by Gay J. McDougall adapted by UNCHR in 1998 provided a legal framework to judge the system of 'comfort women' as military sexual slavery in the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery. This was a people's (as opposed to a state's) tribunal organised by human rights organisations and international NGOs to adjudicate upon Japan's military sexual violence, to bring those responsible for it to justice, and to end impunity for wartime sexual violence against women, and was held in Tokyo in December 2000 (VAWW-NET Japan). The 'judgement' was written by professional lawyers of international standing, including Patricia Viseur-Sellers, and made full use of the McDougall Report.
4. JNATIP (2007: 12–34), JANATIP F-GENS (2005: 120–6)
5. SWASH (acronym for Sex Workers and Sexual Health) is a Tokyo-based self-help group of sexworkers, former sexworkers and their resource persons, committing themselves to advocacy of health and safety for sexworkers, research activities, and domestic and international networking.

References

Notes

- Following the Thai convention of referencing and citation, Thai authors' names are ordered as first name first; and places of publication in Thailand are sometimes not given.
- For Japanese titles the English translation of the title/the organisation involved is the author's unless there is a known original title/name.

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