The University of Hull

"Gender, Migration Decision-making and Social Changes in Roi-et Province, Northeastern Thailand"

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by

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ABBREVIATIONS

EBMR	Extended Bangkok Metropolitan Region
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GPP	Gross Provincial Product
GRP	Gross Regional Product
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NSO	National Statistic Office
RRA	Rural Rapid Appraisal
TDN	Thai Development Newsletter
TDRI	Thailand Development Research Institute

GLOSSARY

akatanyu	ungrateful
Amphoe	district
Baht	the standard monetary unit of Thailand
bun khun	the respect and gratitude owed by children to their parents
Changwat	province
ha-na-di	to search for good paddy land
Isan	Northeastern Region of Thailand
kamnan	the head of sub-district
katanyu	grateful
khwam than samai	modernity
khon Isan	Northeastern people
Krung Thai	Central Thailand
Krungthep	Bangkok
kwian	local cattle cart
Mae	Mother
muban	village
pai thiaw	to travel around
pai thiaw ha-na-di	to travel for searching good paddy field
pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham	to travel for searching jobs
pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn	to travel for individual experiences
pai thiaw Krung Thai	to travel for visiting relatives and/or for working in Central Thailand
pai thiaw Krungthep	to migrate and work in Bangkok (for young males)
pai thiaw Udon	to migrate and work in Udon Thani Province
pai thiaw Vieng	to migrate and work in Vientiane

pai tham-ngaan Krungthep	to migrate and work in Bangkok (for young females)
pai yaam yaat	to travel for visiting relatives
Pho	Father
phuyai-ban	village headman
rai	Equal to 0.16 hectares, or 0.4 acre
sanug-sanaan	to entertain, entertainment
Songkraan Festival	Thai traditional New Year's Festival
tambon	commune, sub-district

CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Over the past two decades the massive volume of movement of women from rural areas into large cities has been a widespread phenomenon in Thailand. Young and unmarried women, in particular, have moved to work as a cheap and plentiful labour force in various economic sectors in Bangkok and its vicinity. They work and remit part of their earned income back to their family in the village. As such, female migration is playing an increasingly important part in the Thai rural economy. Many rural households depend heavily on their migrant daughters' wage income and remittances for their living and farming expenses. Although both young female and young male migrants are leaving their villages to work in the cities, young migrant daughters rather than young migrant sons have traditionally been expected to be more responsible for their original household's livelihood. This is mainly because of the different gender roles and responsibilities between sons and daughters that are a feature of Thai traditional practice. Rural parents in many cases now prefer to let their daughter move to work in the city, whereas only some three decades ago their predominant preference was for their sons to move and their daughters to remain in the village. Gender is therefore an important factor in migration behaviour and decision-making, particularly from rural to urban areas. It is the gender dimensions of rural-urban migration that will provide the main focus for this thesis.

Migration decisions are seldom either purely a matter of individual decision-making or are influenced wholly by conditions from beyond the place of origin, but usually take place within the context of a household, which typically acts as an important mediator between the demands and opportunities of the labour market and the migration impulses of the individual (see Radcliffe 1990, Rodenburg 1997). Hence, rather than simply analysing decisions to migrate as an individual livelihood strategy, the household is adopted as the basic unit of analysis for the present study.

The primary assumption is that migration decisions are made and influenced by features of household relations, which reflect gender-differentiated household responsibilities and roles between male and female household members. Household relations and gender relations are thought to be important internal factors in the migration decision-making process, and warrant further investigation. At the same time, various external factors (such as economic opportunities, economic change, modernisation, social values, social change, migration norms, and so on) are also expected to influence or constrain the movement of both male and female migrants. Thus this study aims to explore the interpretation of both internal household factors and external socio-economic factors in terms of their influence on the process of migration decision-making in rural communities.

This study begins with a variety of questions relating to the influence of household and gender relations on the migration decision-making process. To what extent is there a gender difference in migration decision-making? To what extent have gender differentials varied across time? How and why do male and female household members make their migration decisions differently? Is the purpose of migration the same for young men and young women? What are the social, economic and familial conditions that have influenced any difference in migration decisions between men and women? What is the relative influence of household responsibilities and individual aspirations on the migration decisions of male and female migrants? How is migration influenced by prevailing gender and familial ideologies in Thai society? All of these questions are posed at the initial stage of the research, and provide the foundation for this enquiry into the influences of gender on the process of migration decision-making.

My initial interest in this research was on the 'internal' (i.e. household specific) influences on the migration decision-making process. I realised in the later stages of the research that 'external' socio-economic factors in both the place of origin and the places of destination cannot be ignored in analysing the migration decisions of male and female migrants, including how these have changed in character and influence over different periods of time. Theoretically, the study considers rural-urban migration decision-making as a social process, which brings

about many significant social and economic changes in migrants' personal lives and their household relations. In turn, those changes have also obviously affected the volume and pattern of migration, including changes in the process of migration decision-making. For example, at a time of rapid economic and social change, such as are found in the circumstances of the current economic crisis in Thailand, many migrants had to return home because of the economic constraints they faced in the city. The circumstance of 'migration reversal', in turn, affected household economic conditions, which drove some 'reversees' to re-migrate to the city in response to their household's economic constraints and needs (Parnwell 2001). As such, research into the causes and effects of the economic crisis and migration reversal in Thailand provides a good exemplary case study to examine the influences of social change and external factors on the process of migration decision-making, particularly as there have apparently been gender differences in migration behaviour following the economic crisis. The dynamics of post-crisis migration allow us to investigate in which way, how and why male and female reversees chose to re-migrate or remain at their home village, and why there may have been gender differences in terms of migration decision-making. Therefore, social and economic changes have affected migration decisions, even though these are taken in the context of household relations, which in turn may have been affected by the migration process. Rural-urban migration in this study is fundamentally recognised as a household strategy, but migration decision-making and behaviour may differ markedly according to gender.

Despite the fact that over the last decade or so there have been an increasing number of studies on gender issues and migration behaviour in the Third World (see, for example, Chant and Radcliffe 1992, Singhanetra-Renard and Prabhudhanitisarn 1992, Hugo 1992, Chant and McIlwaine 1995, Mills 1993 and 1997), very little attention has focused specifically on the extent to which gender issues have affected, and been affected by, the dynamics of migration decision-making and social change. The overwhelming majority of migration studies have neglected the detailed investigation and analysis of the reasons why migration has remained gender-

selective to some degree through successive periods of social change, and what gender issues have been involved in the process of migration decision-making.

This chapter provides some background to the study, outlines the objectives and scope of the research, and introduces some basic analytical concepts. It argues and debates some of the main concepts that are used in this research to explore and examine the research objectives. The concepts introduced here will be explored and clarified in more detail in Chapter Two, providing the theoretical framework and operational concepts for this study. The research objectives and themes are also clarified in order to provide an effective guideline and scope of work for this study.

1.2 Gender, Migration Decision-Making and Social Change

Migration is conceptualised in this study as a reflection of various patterns of social change. It effectively facilitates or impedes social change in both place of origin and place of destination. This study considers 'migration' as a major cause and effect of social change in most societies, since it can be viewed as an independent as well as a dependent variable in the examination of change. Social change in both places of origin and destination may be considered firstly as an independent variable, causing various conditions which underlie the migration process. When migration occurs, it too becomes an independent variable, affecting many kinds of change in sending and receiving societies as well as in migrants themselves and their households. In other words, migration is a two-way process: it is a response to social change and equally it is a catalyst for change for those areas gaining and losing migrants (Lewis 1982: 1-3). Therefore, migration, representing as it does both a cause and effect of social process, is a fundamentally important term in clarifying our understanding of social change in most societies.

Accordingly, migration as an on-going social process has been dynamic in relation to changes in social and economic development in different periods of time (Benmayor and Stones 1994). For example, the phenomenon of rural-urban migration from Northeastern Thailand to Bangkok first appeared in the mid 1950s and seems to have been related to the process of national economic development,

which has made rural people less self-reliant than in the past and more dependent on the market economy (Rigg 1994: 127). Their way of life has changed due to the need for cash income for household consumption and modern agricultural investments. Such social and economic changes have accelerated migration flows from the rural Northeast to the large cities for the purpose of finding work and remitting part of their earned income back home to help meet their household needs and wants. However, social and economic changes alone may not provide sufficient reason for migration to occur. There is clearly a need to examine and to explore the wide range of factors which have influenced the migration decision-making process involving different groups of people, particularly the difference between male and female migrants, which provides the main focus of enquiry for this research.

In the case of female migration in South-East Asian societies, decisions relating to the movement of migrant women are strongly circumscribed by different norms of household responsibility and gender roles. Young female migrants in Indonesia and Thailand, for instance, are often expected by their households to be more committed to sustaining ties with their home areas than young male migrants (Hugo 1992, Singhanetra-Renard and Prabhudhanitisarn 1992). Their parents both expect and receive much more economic responsibility from their migrant daughters than is the case for their migrant sons. Most young female migrants remit money back to their parents, at least until marriage and sometimes afterwards (Mills 1997).

In the Philippines, Eviota (1992: 140-1) insists that the migration decisions of young single women are usually structured with respect to the potential benefits that will accrue to the household as a whole. Migrant daughters are frequently expected to provide substantial economic assistance to their parents and siblings. However, female migration in the Philippines is also associated with gender-based household resource allocation and division of labour. Preferential inheritance, whereby sons are given the landholdings while daughters are urged to get an education, is a significant part of a broader process of women's decreasing access to household economic resources, in particular agricultural land. Young and single women have few alternative sources of work in rural areas, resulting in the movement of young daughters in considerably larger proportion toward the major cities. In contrast,

married Filipina women have little chance to migrate and work in the city because they are tied to their reproductive duties: domestic work, pregnancy and child-care (Chant and McIlwaine 1995). Thus, migration becomes an option open to the cohort of young and single women, but not an option open more widely to mothers and wives. However, recently married women in South-East Asian countries, including Thailand, have more chance to work in the city because their ageing parents are often willing to look after their grandchildren while letting their daughters work and send remittances back home (Mills 1993). This circumstance is a recent household strategy that has been adopted as a result of the growing participation of married women in the process of rural-urban migration.

In this regard, although female migration is a gender-selective circumstance relying upon differences of gender roles and household responsibility associated with the conditions of gender-based household resource allocation and divisions of labour, migration participation is not a selective process only between men and women, but also among women themselves. Women are not a homogeneous group. Women of different marital status, age group, and household positions have different chances to migrate to work in the cities. Such differences among women in terms of their social and familial background provide an important focus of enquiry within the context of gender-selective migration (Chant and Radcliffe 1992: 20-2). This study considers the selective process of female migration through the changing conditions of gender roles and responsibility in response to shifts in a combination of social change and migration decision-making. Therefore, to examine the influential factors in the migration decision-making process, this study focuses on the social phenomena of two closely related domains of social relations: gender relations and household relations in Thai rural society.

The study privileges gender relations and gender roles as significant internal household factors in the process of migration decision-making. Gender is fundamentally a social context, which is constituted by social relationships between male and female, fulfilling specific roles and responsibilities among them. It defines the meanings of such relationships, referring to the criteria or principles governing the choice of conduct in their interactions in any social process (Eviota 1992: 3-5).

Consequently, studying any type of social relations in any social process between the two sexes is an important route towards understanding a society and its dynamics of change. A deep understanding of gender relations and gender roles in household relations can help with our understanding of gender-selective migration and the process of change.

The study will draw on the relationship between migration decisions and social change (as both an independent and a dependent variable), as well as on the gender dimensions, in order to understand the influences of social relations, household relations, and gender relations on the process of migration decision-making. The investigation of these factors will be further illuminated by using the exemplary phenomena of post-crisis migration reversal and trends of re-migration in order to understand the implications of economic and social change and gender-selective migration in rural Thai communities.

1.3 Objectives and Scope of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine to what extent, how and why gender issues influence the process of migration decision-making and social change through the combination of household relations and gender relations. The rationale underpinning this objective was that such changes have brought about considerable adjustments to livelihood strategies when faced with some social and economic constraints.

There are two main themes to be investigated in this study:

(1) to examine the interrelationships between household relations, gender relations and other external socio-economic factors in the framework of the process of migration decision-making, and

(2) to examine the extent to which migration reversal and re-migration have acted as household coping strategies in different ways between male and female migrants during the current economic crisis in Thailand.

With respect to the first theme, household relations, gender relations, and other external factors are examined in the specific context of migration decision-

making, which are hypothesised to differ between male and female migrants. The analysis will examine the factors that have a genuine influence on migration decision-making, comparing factors internal to the household and external factors. These will be explored not only in connection with contemporary migration flows but also in relation to patterns of migration across time, through the collection of information on community histories and migration histories in the study areas. The focus will be on male and female migration, out- and return-migration, and migration reversal and re-migration.

The second theme aims to investigate the rural household coping strategies that have been deployed in the context of the economic crisis in the light of patterns of migration reversal and re-migration. This is done in order to examine the gender dimension in the contemporary process of migration in relation to household economic constraints and also their responsiveness in the face of rapid social and economic change.

Within these overall themes, the investigation emphasises the ways in which gender issues and social change interact with the migration decisions of individuals and households within the rural communities. Two key issues, namely the influence of household relations and gender relations on migration decision-making amongst migrants and other household members, are highlighted throughout the thesis.

In order to examine all themes, it was firstly decided that the study should be conducted in the place of origin where the process of decision-making and the transition to the act of migration could be investigated, and where the different characteristics of migrants and non-migrants could be identified and situated. It was also proposed to use the migrant's household in the place of origin as the basic unit of the study. The Northeastern Region of Thailand was chosen due to the fact that there are many more cityward migrants from the Northeast compared with the other geographic regions (NSO 1998a). Migration has developed to such an extent that most rural communities in the region are now much more economically dependent upon migratory incomes and remittances than in the past. In 1990 almost one in three rural households in this region earned an average monthly remittance of one

thousand Baht (approximately £16.70) from their household members working in the city (Phongpaichit and Baker 1996, 1998).

1.4 Thesis Structure

Chapter Two discusses theoretical and conceptual issues, which are central to the analysis of gender issues and the dynamic process of migration decision-making and social change, and the basis of household relations and gender relations. Key terms are defined and discussed. Theoretical approaches to the migration decision-making process are reviewed in order to develop the theoretical framework for this study. The framework leads to the classification of the basic ideas and principles, which in turn guided the field investigation for this study.

Chapter Three explains the methodology used for the study, which incorporates a combination of study area selection, selection of case studies, fieldwork process, and research tools. It also delineates a number of methodological issues and limitations. Measures taken to overcome problems encountered with these procedures are also discussed.

Chapter Four provides the necessary contextual background for migration and its gender dimensions in the Northeastern region of Thailand. It illustrates how the *Isan* rural way of life has determined gender issues in the patterns and decisions of migration. A brief historical background of traditional movements in the region in relation to gender issues is provided, together with the circumstances of *'pai thiaw'* as a contemporary concept of migration. The interrelationships between development and social change are also discussed in order to examine the circumstances of migratory changes in the Northeast.

Chapter Five provides the requisite background contexts to the study area and illustrates the significance and influence of economic and non-economic factors on out-migration and return-migration in the study communities.

Chapter Six presents the research findings and the analysis. The main themes of social change, migration decisions and gender relations are explored, and their interrelationships and influences to each other are examined through the

concept of co-evolutionary change. The main focus of this chapter is on the analysis of gender issues in the process of migration decision-making and social change over time.

Chapter Seven uses the circumstances of migration reversal and the economic crisis in Thailand as exemplary phenomena of migratory change and social change to explore how and why those circumstances have affected *Isan* migrants' way of life and their migration decision-making. A number of case studies are presented to highlight the gender dimension in the process of migration decision-making by all types of migrants: stayers, short-term reversees and remaining reversees.

Chapter Eight is a reappraisal of the whole set of ideas and analyses discussed in the previous chapters. It refines and develops the final concepts and theoretical framework of the study, which are then modified based on the research findings.

Chapter Nine draws together the research findings, the answers to the research questions, and assesses the theoretical implications. Some interesting points and issues arising from them are outlined and suggestions are made for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

Development of a Conceptual Scheme on Gender and Migration Decision-Making

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to locate my own conceptual framework and to debate the interrelationships between its three main factors: household relations, gender relations and migration decisions. The basic idea of the study is that the migration decision-making process both should be viewed at the household and individual levels, and involves social processes based on relationships between household members which are strongly influenced by gender. This also includes different social and household expectations towards the gender roles and household responsibilities of male and female migrants. Examining the gender dynamics of migration from a combination of economic, social and cultural perspectives can help with the comprehension and analysis of migration behaviour and decision-making.

This chapter is divided into three sections. Firstly, the conceptual scheme is developed from a review of the relevant literature, which is used to portray and delineate the interrelationship between household relations, gender relations and migration decision-making. This section discusses the importance of gender relations and household relations in both situating and providing obstacles to migration, set within the context of household expectations, household economic strategy, household responsibilities and gender roles. Secondly, the conceptual framework is integrated with a model of migration decision-making, and this is discussed as a framework for the analysis of the research findings. Finally, operational concepts are drawn out from the framework and major research variables are identified in order to clarify how we intend empirically to execute the research framework.

2.2 *Theoretical Debates on Gender, Household Relations and Migration Decisions*

2.2.1 *Gender approach to migration decision-making*

Since 1885, when Ravenstein first formulated his 'laws of migration',[1] a number of specific terms involving migration have been proposed and accepted (Kosinski and Prothero 1975: 1). For example, economists have approached the study of migration in terms of jobs and economic opportunities, whilst demographers have been more concerned with the role of migration in regard to population growth and distribution. On the other hand, the focus of attention of sociologists has been upon the social process of migration and the characteristics of migrants, and that of anthropologists upon the problems faced by migrants and their households within a host community and the transfer of 'cultural traits' between place of destination and place of origin. The geographer's main contribution has been to emphasise the spatial patterning of migration and the location decisions involved (Lewis 1982: 20). Through their different disciplines, the gender approach to migration has been recently postulated as influencing migration decisions and behaviour in various developing societies (see e.g. the studies of Morokvasic 1983, Brydon 1987, Brydon and Chant 1989, Chant and Radcliffe 1992, Chant and McIlwaine 1995). However, although gender differentials in the migration process have been clarified, there has also been no systematic analysis or detailed investigation of the reasons why migration is typically gender-selective to some degree in developing countries, why this may vary in particular places and/or at particular points in time, and what the implications are in different parts of the developing world (Chant and Radcliffe 1992: 1-2). Thus, this section aims to review and integrate the gender and other approaches to migration and migration decision-making centred on the basic questions of who makes the final decision to move, as well as what factors influence the decision and the decision-maker.

Fundamentally, migration studies can be classified into two main groups: those that focus on the causes or determinants of migration, and those which emphasise consequences of migration. Most of them have been based on hypotheses

to explain the determinants of migration. Among those hypotheses, the push-pull hypothesis, the human capital hypothesis (or benefit-cost analysis) and the selective hypothesis are the ones which have been frequently quoted and employed as frameworks for many migration studies (Jessadachatr 1989: 18-9). These hypotheses can not only explain the causes of migration but also relate to the process of migration decision-making. Although they are often used in a discrete manner, there is no fundamental conflict among these three approaches in the context of rural-urban migration. Any difference mainly rests on approach and emphasis. Meanwhile a combination of these approaches can help to illuminate the migration decision-making process by linking economic and non-economic factors surrounding individual migrants and their household. However, the integration of these approaches is both theoretically and methodologically challenging, and as such this represents the way ahead for migration research in the future.

The push-pull hypothesis

The so-called push-pull hypothesis has a long history within migration research. The original formation envisaged a combination of push factors (repulsions) from the place of origin and pull factors (attractions) from the prospective place of destination as lying behind any one act of migration (Boyle et al. 1998: 67). In the general context of rural-urban migration, which is the main scheme of this study, the push factors include agricultural depression, land pressure, food scarcity, and so on. At the same time, the pull factors consist of the better employment and educational opportunities, and the so-called 'bright lights' of the city (Jessadachatr 1989: 121). With this hypothesis, the genesis of migration is linked to dissatisfaction with the migrant's present situation, particularly as manifested in the perceived disparity of opportunities and the expected improvements that would result from migration (O'Conner 1991: 112, Potts 1995: 246-7). However, any simple focus on just push and pull factors is now generally considered to be far too simplistic to explain complicated migration behaviour. Some of those push and pull factors exert an influence on people in the same way, whereas others affect different people in different ways. In general, the sets of positive and negative factors may be different from one prospective migrant to another, although they may still influence the

prospective migrant's decision to move or to stay. As such, particular attention must be paid to 'intervening obstacles' that can impede particular migrations, such as household obligations at the place of origin, the high costs of moving and personal factors which may constitute barriers to migration (Boyle et al. 1998: 64, Parnwell 1993: 76-7). Without investigating such obstacles, the push-pull hypothesis can merely explain migration decision-making at the individual level, but not at the household level. In fact, migration is a fundamentally social as opposed to an individual phenomenon featuring a variety of social and household circumstances. However, the push-pull model of migration is a useful starting point for examining why people move (or do not move), why they move in particular circumstances, and why they return. With this hypothesis, the migration decision was previously rooted in the economic motives to maintain or improve the quality of life for the individual or family. However, Gavin Jones (1999) argued that economic determinism, though it may suffice for explaining flows of rural migrants, is clearly inadequate for generalising migration decisions. Many migrants have perfectly satisfactory economic roots in their home village. Poverty is not really the most significant migration push factor. It would be more accurate to say that the people who move are those who learn of particular opportunities elsewhere and have the resources to meet the costs of moving. They are not necessarily poor people, and many migrants are well-off in relation to their local communities (Lightfoot et al. 1983: 40). In this regard, migration should not be conceptualised as being caused by poverty as a *direct stimulus,* and its non-economic motivations are also distinctive features, such as the desire for experiences or wanderlust for the modern life in urban areas. The anonymity of city life has allowed young migrants in particular to enjoy more freedom and to be less constrained by the old-fashioned customs of their village community (Millet 1999: 12-3).

According to this, Rigg (1997) notes that the circumstances of migration in South-East Asian countries relate, in many cases, not only to young migrants escaping from low wages and lack of opportunity in the village, but also escaping hard and dirty work in agriculture in preference for modernity and excitement in the

city. The concept of life-style preference is the 'bright lights' hypothesis, which summarises the individual propensity for change in life-style associated with urban life through the migration process. Adventure, curiosity and freedom may be personal motives for some rural migrants, in particular those of a higher socio-economic status. However, the attraction of the 'bright lights' may be balanced against a moral dimension of migration, such as the perceptions by rural people that city life corrupts and is characterised by crime and prostitution (De Jong and Fawcett 1981: 38). Migration decisions, therefore, have been linked with factors such as previous migration experiences, destination knowledge and information, and the behaviour of migrants of a similar socio-economic position (Mills 1993).

Based on the push-pull hypothesis, factors involved in migration decisions within the household sphere can be categorised as either internal or external factors. Here, the 'internal' factors are central to individual aspirations of experiencing the 'bright lights' of the city and household economic expectations for a better standard of living, while the 'external' factors are modernisation, economic pressures and social norms. Both internal and external factors can facilitate or constrain migration decision-making and behaviour, and they may change over time as society itself changes. However, one important question which is not clearly examined by using the push-pull hypothesis is to what extent, how and why those internal and external factors have differently influenced the migration decisions of male and female migrants.

The human capital hypothesis

The human capital approach, initially proposed by Schultz (1961) and Sjaastad (1962), views migration as a kind of investment (Milne 1991). It deals with the idea of weighing up the costs of migration against its potential/prospected returns. This approach argues that an individual will choose to migrate to a destination which offers the greatest expected net gain between the benefits and costs of moving, compared to other destinations. Clark (1982: 21) clarifies that because the benefits of migration can only accrue over a period of time, this renders migration an investment in both the individual and the family/household. This regards migration as a holistic investment decision for an individual and his/her

family based on long-term as much as short-term benefits (Boyle et al. 1998: 62). The costs of migration consist of both monetary (the expense of food, shelter, and transportation) and non-monetary costs (opportunity costs - the earnings foregone - and psychic costs - the reluctance of migrants to be away from family, friends and familiar environments). Current and future monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits must be weighed in some fashion before movement will be undertaken. Migration decisions thus are seen as a means to attain some specific economic and non-economic goals and expectations.

A potential migrant will decide to migrate when (s)he has a reason to believe that moving will be profitable. However, (s)he usually believes the expected returns from migration will exceed the costs, even though things may not work out that way. This may be because his/her perceptions may be faulty (De Jong and Fawcett 1981: 25). This means that accuracy of information is crucial to the process of migration decision-making. Prospective migrants need perfect information (accurate and complete), which they can use to decide whether or not to migrate in respect of anticipated human capital gains (Boyle et al. 1998: 62).

Indeed, considering migration as an investment means that a prospective or potential migrant and his/her family usually weight the anticipation of advantages and disadvantages as (s)he perceives them. Accordingly, individual and/or household social and economic mobility may usually be seen as a motivation for migration in relation to its benefits and costs. This approach reflects two major factors in migration decision-making: first, the length of the period over which benefits will accrue; and second, the rate of return from moving. However, expected values may not be straightforward; there may be risk and uncertainty associated with the process of migration (Clark 1982: 22-3). These risks and uncertainties are seen as critical elements in the migration decision-making process (Milne 1991, Massey et al. 1993), but some external facilitators (in particular social networks) may influence the behavioural outcome (Stark 1991).

The approach explicitly incorporates motives of expected values as being central to the migration decision-making process, underlying subjective stimuli resulting from the consideration of values and expectations which migration will

yield. They then can be seen as the major determinants of migration decision-making in the context of personal and household opportunities and stresses (De Jong et al 1996: 750), due to a possible circumstance that migration is a household decision rather than an individual one, and its values are the household's expectations rather than just the migrant's individual aspirations. The household will encourage the migration of some of their members when they perceive that this will increase overall household income, including the income of those who stay behind. They will invest in the migrant by providing funds for travelling and installation in the expectation of eventually receiving remittances or return investment. The most interesting point of this approach centres on how we translate monetary and non-monetary cost-benefit comparison from net individual gain to net family gain. This leads to a fundamental question about how and why individuals, as family members with different gender roles and household relationships (e.g. parents, children, brothers, sisters, husband and wife), may have different motives of migration at the same time.

In short, it can be said that with this approach, migration behaviour is hypothesised to be a result of the positive evaluation of the value-expected returns from the movement in respect of individual aspirations and/or household expectations, but the direct influences of accurate information and effective social networks to facilitate movement and ameliorate constraints become salient during the process of migration decision-making. However, it is also important to recognise that a decision to move is not the only possible behavioural outcome of the decision-making process. Negotiation among family members may become an intervening process for the decision either to move or to stay. With the negotiation process, the migration decision may be made in a selective circumstance.

The selective hypothesis

The selective hypothesis claims that migration is strongly influenced by age, gender, race, marital status, education and occupation. Age selectivity probably has the most crucial influence on the decision to migrate and is universally accepted in many migration studies. The young are more migratory than the old because they have just entered the labour market and are ready to switch to new jobs easily, as well as normally having no difficulty in adjusting themselves to new surroundings. In

regard to gender selectivity, males are typically thought to be more migratory than females, but some studies find that gender selectivity is less uniform over time and countries (Morokvasic 1983, Chant and Radcliffe 1992). Other factors are also accepted to affect migration, but they seem to vary with socio-cultural conditions across space and time. This study emphasises gender selectivity in explaining the determinants of migration and migration decision-making.

Fundamentally, patterns of gender-selective migration must be explained in terms of socio-cultural contexts. Chant and Radcliffe (1992: 4) note that independent movement is more likely among men than women, in particular where there is strong *cultural pressure* for women to remain under the surveillance and protection of men-folk, as tends to be the case in North Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and South Asia. Men in these regions may still have more freedom to move than women, and may be better equipped in respect of education, training and access to work. Moreover, in certain cases women who undertake to move alone may face social stigmatisation, alienation and sanctions (Adepoju 1983: 62; Connell 1984: 965). These social constraints on female migration were very obvious in many developing societies in the past.

It is important to note that now while women, particularly young women, may increasingly migrate as individuals, decisions on their movement are strongly circumscribed by other members of the family unit or kin group (De Jong et al. 1996). Much evidence suggests that autonomous female migrants, who move alone and with their own motives of finding work, are increasing in several parts of the Third World (Morokvasic 1983: 28), but they are more likely to be young and single women than old and married women (Brydon 1987, Potts 1995). In most Asian societies, it is difficult for married women to migrate to work in the urban areas, whether the decision to migrate is based on the collective incentive of the household or the individual incentive for themselves. This is mainly because of their reproductive responsibilities. However, many parents have recently undertaken to look after grandchildren while letting their married daughters go off to work in the city and send remittances back home (Chant and McIlwaine 1995). Here the two

obstacles of female migration - women's reproductive responsibilities and socio-cultural restrictions on the independent movement of women - can be resolved by rearranging members' responsibilities within the framework of 'household strategies' (Chant and Radcliffe 1992, Chant 1997).

Chant and Radcliffe (1992) clarify that the household strategies approach attempts to explain female migration by looking at socio-cultural influences, by considering reproduction and production roles, and by examining power relations within the household. This approach recognises the importance of gender roles and the gender division of labour in the process of migration decision-making. In rural households, which rely upon a combination of subsistence and cash-crop production, migration arises not only because of the inability of local economic activities to satisfy livelihood requirements but also because the gender division of labour within the household releases certain members while retaining others (Chant and Radcliffe 1992: 22-3). The gender division of labour is crucial to providing a basic template for household decisions about who will migrate and who will stay. But it is not enough simply to recognise that only the 'gender division of labour' can explain different patterns of migration decisions between male and female household members. Household resource allocation provides the wider socio-cultural expectations of gender roles and gender responsibilities in developing societies (Radcliffe 1992). In Thai society, for instance, matrilocality has determined the patterns of resource allocation in favour of female household members. Agricultural land, as the main household economic resources in rural society, is inherited by daughters in exchange for responsibility to care for ageing parents (Pongsapitch 1997, Singhanetra-Renard and Prabhudhanitisarn 1992). Daughters, rather than sons, have been expected to pay back their parental obligations by providing a better living for the parents (Mills 1993, 1997). Even now, young female migrants are still expected by their parents to be more committed to maintain their household economic responsibility than their male counterparts. Rural parents both expect and receive much more from their migrant daughters than migrant sons. Migrant daughters mostly remit money to their natal families, at least until marriage and sometimes afterwards.

In summary, it can be implied that most of the numerous migration studies are based on the assumption of movement in response to 'economic factors'. Such studies rarely take into consideration the significant streams of migration that have arisen largely from 'non-economic factors'. Migration is considered in this study to be a response of people to all economic, social and cultural factors. It represents an effort on the part of family and individual to relocate from areas of lesser to areas of greater opportunities. It is based on decisions reached by individuals and households who perceive an advantage in the place of destination over the place of origin. However, the final decision to move or to stay has been influenced and selected by gender circumstances. Men and women have different social, cultural and economic costs and benefits in the process of migration.

Another major point to emerge in this study is that an intention or a decision to move may not end up with actual migration behaviour. It must be true that the individual does not always perceive constraints accurately until they are encountered. The reasons why people do not behave as they intend or decide may be summed up in the concept of 'stress', which is very important in the study of migration decisions at the micro-level (Gardner 1981: 65; De Jong et al. 1996; Boyle et al. 1998: 64). Migration stresses can act as forces or intervening obstacles, which include all economic, social and cultural constraints. For example, marriage may reduce migration intentions, particularly of women with greater reproductive roles. Limited household production resources obviously create pressures for migration through the evaluation of value expectations. Also, social and gender norms have influenced the migration process in the forms of social approval or disapproval, which can be expressed in the form of social support or social sanctions (De Jong et al. 1996: 750). These forces and constraints will be explored and clarified in the next section in terms of their influence on the migration decision-making process.

2.2.2 Gender, household relations and migration decisions

It is generally agreed that a household is a group of people who share the same residence and participate collectively in basic tasks of reproduction and

production, and that socially and culturally it contains members who are related by blood or marriage (Brydon and Chant 1989). The household is fundamentally seen to embrace various aspects of gender relations, which are often characterised by gender differences and inequality (Nelson 1992). Discourses on the contexts of household relations and migration decisions in this study begin with the notions of gender differences and inequality, which presumably provide different and unequal chances for migration for male and female household members.

The household is perceived as an important social institution,[2] which generates and mediates inequalities between men and women, and also signifies the differences in gender relations that make up the overall household relations among the sexes. This study classifies gender differences and inequality based on different division of labour and unequal resource allocation within the household in terms of household strategy. Socially and culturally, the household resources and labour are allocated differently by sex and age to where they are relatively more functional and efficient to provide common interests for the family as a whole (Mills 1993). However, although household tasks and responsibility may be theoretically distributed in a fair manner according to household decisions and expectations to benefit all household members, not all members act with the welfare of the whole household in mind. Some may be more altruistic than others. In fact, the conditions of gender-differentiated division of labour and resource allocation in most developing countries seldom provide equal household responsibilities (Layder 1997: 6), which leads to unequal requirements and contributions between male and female members towards the household interests.

A related point is that most women in developing countries spend most of their time for common household interests. Their main responsibility is to manage resources so as to provide sustainable livelihoods for the whole families (Wee and Heyzer 1995: 144-5). They shoulder both productive and reproductive roles for assigning economic tasks and ensuring that the daily domestic routine is kept in order. Although they appear to have considerable power at the household level in respect of making decisions and organising daily family affairs, many women are stressed by the heavy burden involved in trying to make ends meet on limited

economic resources. Moreover, while women are invariably charged with the responsibility of deciding domestic issues, men often intervene when what they consider important decisions have to be made (Chant and McIlwaine 1995: 125), especially in the realm of the household economy (Eviota 1986: 194).

In South-East Asia in the past, women tended to be subordinated to male authority in formal social and political structures based on kinship, religion or ethnicity (Karim 1995a, Pongsapitch 1997). Women were traditionally portrayed as passive, inferior, and dependent upon men as wives, daughters, and sisters. In particular, the women's economic roles were usually and mainly perceived as supportive. Even now, the segregation of gender roles where the husband is the breadwinner and the wife as the homemaker is still the ideal. However, it should be noted that women have increasingly played key roles in the household economy. This is reflected in the matter of fact that women's employment opportunities outside the household are much wider than in the past, and that gender-differentiated production and reproduction roles are seen to be less rigidly demarcated in South-East Asian societies. While Filipino women, for instance, have to shoulder the bulk of domestic duties, men help out to some extent with housework. It is not uncommon for Filipino men to wash clothes or to sweep up, and they play a role in looking after children (Eviota 1992: 157). Although they probably spend more time helping their wives with domestic work and child-care than is the case in other countries, however, it is undoubted that Filipino women still bear the more fundamental and regular responsibility for reproductive work than men. In this regard, their gender roles and responsibility, to some degree, reflect the changing process in the relatively equal treatment of male and female members.

This changing process is also obvious in dynamic migration behaviour, according to gender-selective conditions, in many developing countries. Radcliffe (1992) asserts in her study that in developing countries household strategy for migration is initially tied to gender-selective conditions and that migration offers fundamentally different opportunities for women and men. For example, married women with small children necessarily choose to stay at home in order to look after their children and give the chance to their husband to migrate to work (Chant and

McIlwaine 1995: 124; Halfacree 1995). This is fundamentally a pattern of gender-selective migration influenced by different gender roles and household responsibility, which are determined in respect of the social and gender norms of each society. In Thai society, in the past, social and gender norms determined migration decisions and strengthened the circumstance of gender selectivity, particularly for the movement of young women. Most parents formerly were hesitant to let their young daughters move to somewhere alone because of normative constraints. However, those norms have changed because of the influence of social and developmental changes in more recent time.

Over the last two decades there has been a dramatic worldwide expansion of women's participation in the process of rural-urban migration. This is basically a result of the development of the capitalist economy, which affects directly the monetary needs of rural people to sustain their household livelihood in the Third World (Walby 1997, Scott 1994) as well as changing the nature of employment opportunities. The confines of capitalist development in the countryside have gradually raised female migration, particularly young women have been targeted as a cheap labour force in various industries. However, it is arguable that women still have a narrower range of employment available than men. Most women end up in the service sector, and also in a fairly limited range of manufacturing sectors. Thus, migration does not really offer women the same employment opportunities as it does for men.

As a result of increasing female migration, household relations and gender relations have changed. The household has to rearrange the division of labour and household responsibilities among remaining household members for production and reproduction roles. In turn, changes in household relations and gender relations, as well as changes in wider employment opportunities for women in the cities, have caused changes in the gender-selective patterns of migration decision-making, with increasing chances for female prospective migrants. Therefore, the focus of this study on gender relations, household relations and migration decisions has advantages not only in terms of what is seen as being a core site for shaping and reshaping gender issues in the process of migration decision-making, but also in

terms of what is framed as a key institution for understanding the causes and effects of social changes and a gender-based migration transition. However, it is still doubtful that household and gender relations are the only influential factors in shaping gender differences in the process of migration decision-making. Other external factors may be as important, or even more important, in examining the process of migration decision-making in some specific circumstances and periods of social change.

2.2.3 *Migration decision and external factors*

In order to put all concepts and information into the rubric of the migration decision-making process, it is necessary to look at the linkages between household relations and some important external factors which are expected to influence the migration behaviour. The prominent external factors used in the framework of this study are economic conditions, modernisation, social networks, and dynamic social norms (in particular gender norms and migration norms), which have all changed along with social changes over periods of time.

Social change is generally seen as a result of changes in social structure and social process, which may affect parts of or the whole social system depending on its pattern and degree of changes (Layder 1997: 77). When social changes occur, the society will adjust or reshape social directionality, practices and behaviours through time and space. Social changes can be progressive or recessive, permanent or temporary, planned or unplanned, and useful or harmful (Magill 1995: 1216). This study defines 'social changes' as changes of people's way of life, and considers 'migration' as a central element in the process of social change and development. Migration is assumed to affect the livelihoods of people (particularly in developing countries) and to facilitate many conditions which help to transform the mode of production from being 'traditional' to being 'modern' (Kemp 1996: 45-7).

Social change is a part of social life, social interaction and social relations, which people have experienced throughout their life (Barnes and Vibulsri 1991: 1). Fundamentally, social change is accompanied by both benefits and costs, which are variably and inequitably distributed across society. People in different compositions

and conditions experience change unequally, depending upon who can gain better control of the process of change. In the Thai context, gender has been a manifest factor of inequity in social change. The social fabric and social changes have significantly affected Thai women and men in different ways, and have differently influenced opportunities to access resources for economic activities. Social changes have influenced various changes in socio-economic and socio-cultural practices between women and men within the household, and in turn those changes in the sphere of household relations and gender relations have also affected social, economic and cultural conditions within the household and the community as a whole, particularly in a situation when young rural women move in large numbers to work in Bangkok. Overall, household relations, gender relations and social changes have affected each other in the context of change in the migration process. Social changes then are expected to exert an impact on migration behaviour and migration decisions. As we shall see later, migration itself may be an important agent in the process of social change

Due to the massive volume of female migration, movement to the city has itself become a norm. It has recently become an accepted and recognised part of village life for young women to be absent from the village for much of the year to earn all or part of the family's livelihood (Mills 1993). In the past, only in an unfavourable agricultural season when not enough income and food were available in the village, was it a normal adjustment for men to seek work in the city. Now, it has become normal for both men and women in a village to become wage labourers in Bangkok. The migration norms, associated with gender norms and community norms, have now been outweighed by economic motives in that migration becomes habitual in rural communities rather than constituting a response to economic pressure. Young rural women in Northeastern Thailand, for instance, may grow up with either their own aspirations or household expectations that one day they will migrate to the city at least once in their life for the direct experience of urban life, as well as for earning and remitting some money back to their parents as a way of responding to their filial obligations. Being a 'modern woman', while being a 'good daughter', is a desirable community norm, and rural Northeastern women are often eager to comply (Mills

1993, 1997). This is in stark contrast to the situation only a decade or so ago. Thus, migration norms have changed in terms of their influence on female migration in Thailand (acting first as a barrier and then as a facilitative norm) over time and in relation to the process of social change.

A contemporary community norm affecting rural-urban migration decisions in Northeastern Thailand is modern life-style preference attainment, particularly amongst young migrants. Many of them migrate to the city with the main purpose of modern life-style preference rather than in responding to their household's economic needs. Mary Beth Mills (1997: 43) indicates in her study that young women in Northeastern Thailand leave the countryside for urban employment not only to earn the money they and their family need but also to allow them to participate in the attraction of the urban life-style and modernity at its most dynamic core, the Bangkok Metropolis. In fact, there are sizable groups of these young migrants who appear sceptical about the positive course of modernisation, and whose action is not really designed to achieve a better quality of life. They decide to move because it is Bangkok where the highest concentration of development and modernisation is to be found and this stimulates then to move. Many of them decide to move there without thinking about their future possibilities, or without weighing up the real benefits and costs of movement. They only look at change optimistically. They are reacting to change rather than initiating change. The influence of modernisation in determining migration behaviour must, therefore, be addressed in this study.

Another important component of migration decision-making is the existence of social networks. The constraint or facilitation of migration through the absence or presence of social networks is considered to be an important influential factor in decisions to move or to stay. It is also important to recognise that information and support from out-migrants and returnees influence the migration intentions and decisions of rural villagers. Previous studies on migration in Thailand (e.g. Lightfoot et al. 1983; Mills 1993; De Jong et al 1996) found that those who had relatives or friends in Bangkok were much more likely to consider and decide to migrate. The influence of relatives and friends, especially on the provision of accurate information, has been suggested as a relevant motivation factor in female migration in the

Northeast. Female migrants are more likely to rely on the quality of information flows through social networks. There is some evidence to show that the impact of relatives and friends on migration decision-making may be greater for women and younger people than for males and older people (Mills 1993, 1997). This implies that the influence of social networks on migration decisions, to some degree, differs by gender and age. Hence, social networks play a crucial role as an agent of migration information and also in guiding migration intentions and decisions.

However, most potential migrants in the village often have to rely on information from secondary sources, such as the media or from returnees and out-migrants. Secondary sources of information may be incomplete and not altogether accurate. Thus, uncertainty and risks become an important element in the evaluation of the possible advantages and disadvantages of migration (Parnwell 1993: 77). Reliable information flow through social networks is then a crucial factor in the migration decision-making process. In the case of Thailand, social networks influence potential migrants not only in terms of information flows but also in relation to migration support. Prospective migrants are mostly provided initial accommodation by experienced migrants, who also help to arrange employment. Social networks may therefore be significant in migration decision-making by taking care of the basic needs of migrants immediately after their arrival in the city. These supporting roles of social networks can lessen uncertainty and risks in the process of migration. They also help to remove socio-cultural constraints facing prospective migrants, and to influence community norms towards female migration. According to this, De Jong et al (1996: 751) note that once social networks were established, it was likely that female migration would become viewed as a desirable activity. This is obviously true in the case of female migration in Northeastern Thailand (Mills 1993). The norms of female migration in the region have changed from the traditional circumstance where young women were initially discouraged from migration to Bangkok. Now, however, young women are increasingly encouraged by their parents to move to work in the cities because they are more likely than their male counterparts to be able to manage their financial affairs and to be responsible in remitting part of their earned income back to their family.

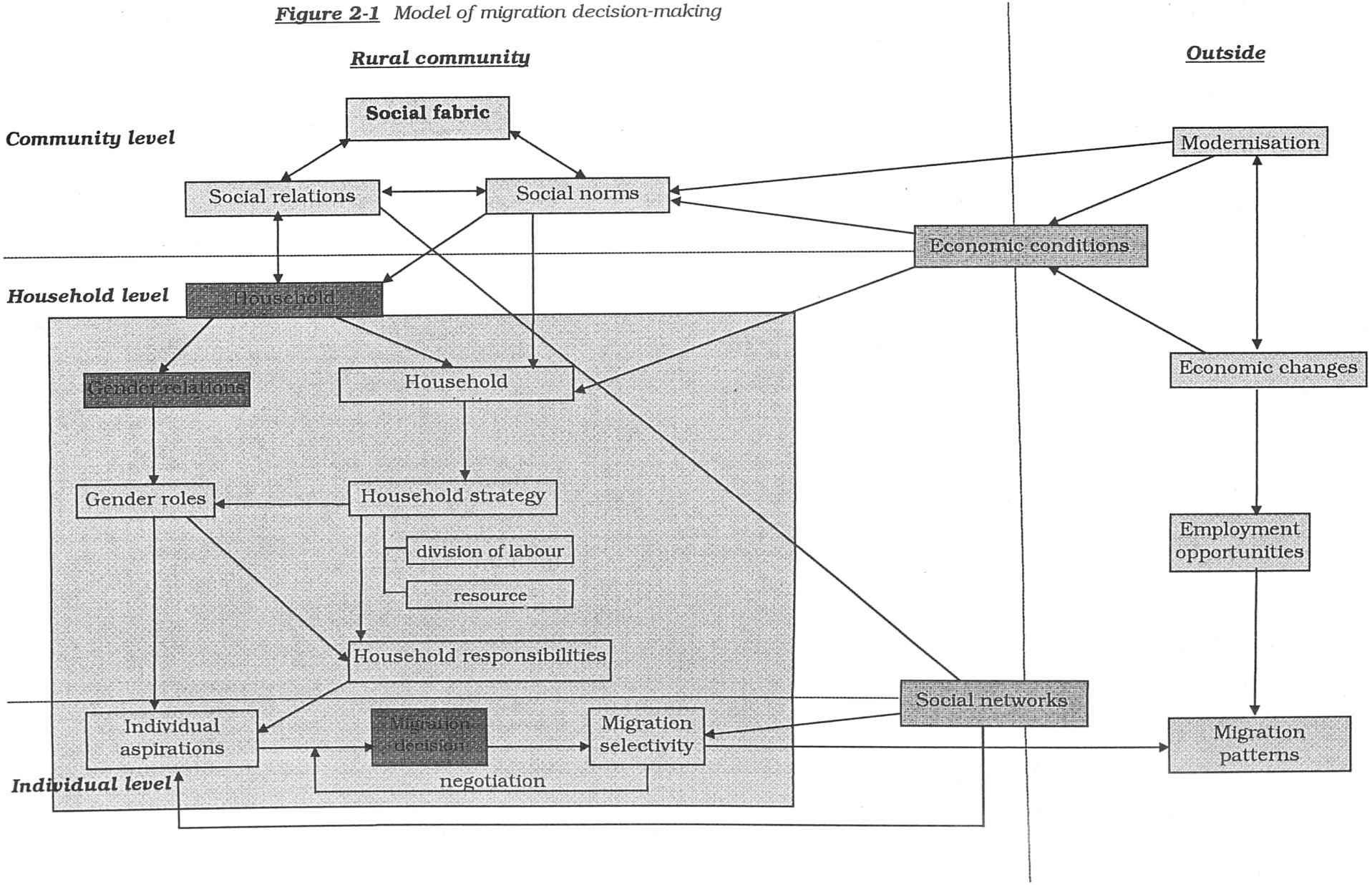
To summarise, the process of migration decision-making will be best understood if we include the influence of social change, along with modernisation, economic conditions, social networks, and community norms. Migration is fundamentally related to an overall view of internal and external household forces. They all influence the decision-making process in relation to male and female migration.

2.3 Conceptual Framework and Model of Migration Decision-Making

Three main factors are used in the analytical model of migration decision-making which provides the research framework (depicted in Figure 2-1); these are household relations, gender relations, and migration decisions. The basic assumption of the framework is that migration decision-making is a social process that is influenced by circumstances of household relations, in which the decision is processed in different ways and conditions between male and female household members.

Based on the research framework, 'social fabric' is considered to be a social process, which determines social relations and social norms in any community. The elements of the social fabric refer to the social and cultural connections of a community, which tie people altogether with its kinship and affinity system, and constitute the patterns of communal activities and mechanisms for local social control (Layder 1997). In a typical rural community in Thailand, people usually have close relationships, depending on each other, solving problems together, and counselling one another in difficult situations. They are culturally and socially expected to conform to proper social behaviour from role models within the community. If people behave against the community social norms, they will be sanctioned in some ways.

Figure 2-1 *Model of migration decision-making*



The term 'social relations' refers to the generalised social connections and bonds between people, or groups of people, in terms of social positions and the practices associated with them (Layder 1997: 82). The positions and practices themselves may vary according to social norms in each community. However, both social relations and social norms initiate role expectations between male and female household members, in harmony with their positions in the household and community. Social relations may affect the household members' practices in different ways depending on the nature and strength of social ties between them. The strong social ties in Thai rural areas have a strong influence on the rural people's practices and social behaviour (Kemp 1993: 82). This also includes migration practices and behaviour. According to the framework, social relations in Thai society formulate at least two social factors which influence the process of migration decision-making. They are household relations and social networks.

'Social norm' is a rule or a standard of behaviour defined by the shared expectations of two or more people regarding what behaviour is considered socially acceptable. Social norms provide guidelines to the range of behaviour appropriate and applicable to particular social situations (Marshall 1994: 359-60). Thus, one's role obligations in a social group are defined by that group's social norms, which anticipate certain social consequences from those obligations and the behaviour of community members (Johnson 1995: 190-1). Every member in each social group or community has to be aware of doing something which may conflict with the social norms, so that a member is constantly under pressure to conform to the social norms. If his/her decision does not comply with the social norms, (s)he will face social sanctions from the other members of the group or the community as a whole. Indeed, social norms transform what might otherwise be regarded as a socially desirable and appropriate form of behaviour into an actual behaviour with expected social consequences attached (Marshall 1994: 359). Social norms therefore determine role expectations among members of the household and the community. However, actual behaviour may differ from what are considered to be expected roles and behaviour as established in the social norms, depending on changing circumstances within the process of social change. In this regard, social norms may

change along with social changes across both space and time. In this study social norms are specifically considered as 'community norms', which are classified in the study mainly as gender norms and migration norms.

To understand the process of migration decision-making, the study focuses on 'household relations' because they are the fundamental influences on decisions in relation to each household strategy, including migration. Household relations comprise two main components. One is 'gender relations', which is a reciprocal pattern of social and cultural interaction between women and men in the sphere of social relations and household relations. This emphatically considers gender difference and inequality in the relationship between the sexes, as well as the 'gender roles' of women and men in the household and community. The other is 'household expectations' which is a strong desire to have or achieve something important in relation to common household interests. Naturally, a human's desire is boundless, so household expectations here are shaped and controlled by social norms. To achieve these expectations, the household should have a well-planned series of actions, which is called a 'household strategy', in order to conform to social norms and values.

The household strategy can be categorised into two elements, which basically respond to household social and economic expectations. These are household division of labour and household resource allocation. The division of labour between members of a household is a plan for the relative deployment of household members' time and activities, while household resource allocation is a plan to allocate any household resource (such as land, property and production) for all household members. Both plans are interchangeable and integratable alternatives to support household expectations and aspirations, and resolve the household's economic constraints. The household strategy also refers to an individual's plan for allocating time and resources to work within or outside the household for the household's common interests. Each household usually specifies work roles and positions for each member. Some may work outside the household as an employed worker in the market economy in order to obtain money to buy goods and services in the market; some undertake domestic production work, such as farming or raising poultry, in

order to supply and earn some money for the household; and some may support domestic reproduction/consumption work, such as child-care, cooking meals, house-maintenance, and so on (Marshall 1994: 223-4). Each household's work roles and strategy, whether imposed by one person or decided collectively, are characterised as 'household responsibilities'.

In fact, household division of labour and resource allocation are typically provided differently for male and female members, and also ascribe different gender roles among the household members depending upon the community's social and cultural determinations. For example, in a highly patriarchal system, women may not be able to control all external resources to which they have access and which they bring into the household (Papanek 1990), whereas in a bilateral kinship system such control is less problematic, with women able to engage in extra-household economic activities and retain control over their income (Karim 1995b). Gender roles have directly influenced household responsibilities, through which different responsibilities are allocated among male and female household members.

At the final stage of the migration decision-making process, gender roles and household responsibilities influence socially and culturally the individual aspirations of migrants (such as life-style preference and parental obligations), which at the same time are also influenced by social networks. Where all these factors can be coordinated harmoniously without any social, cultural or economic tensions, migration decisions can be taken quite freely. However, in cases which result in stresses or conflicts, 'negotiation' must intervene in the process of migration decision-making, with gender, age and marital status having some bearing in the negotiation process.

In this study the term 'negotiation' encapsulates both the conflicts of decision-making between daughters and parents and the ways in which young women attempt to change some of the social norms that dominate their life course beyond conceptions of gender relations. However, it appears to be the case that household conflicts over migration decisions in rural Thai community are unlikely to arise, because now most parents seem to favour cityward migration by either male or female household members. They perceive that there will be more advantages than

disadvantages to the household and to the migrants themselves. Thus, a closer look in this study at the negotiation process behind migration decision-making should help with understanding changes in the migration pattern from the past to the present.

Social networks also have an important influence on the process of migration decision-making and migration selectivity. Social networks play a crucial role in shaping the extent to which established migrants may find jobs for prospective migrants as well as providing facilities for newcomers (Menjivar 1994, Hagan 1998: 55).[3] The networks partly affect the individual's aspirations and also the process of negotiation and migration selectivity. Most Northeastern migrants moved only when they had realised a specific job and place to stay. They depended heavily on relatives and friends from their home village for information and employment opportunities. Information that is circulated within the networks almost inevitably supports a good deal of migration. The networks based on kinship and peer groups not only increase prospective migrants' confidence about moving, but also serve to neutralise the parents' opposition to the migration of their son or daughter.[4] Thus, kinship-based and friendship-based networks are very important for conditioning migration decisions and migration selectivity in Northeastern Thailand (Lightfoot et al. 1983, Mills 1993).

Another important external factor in the framework is 'modernisation',[5] which indirectly influences migration decisions through social norms and economic conditions. The obvious influences of modernisation on the process of migration decision-making are the patterns of modern life-style and commodity consumption, which are different from their traditional way of life. These patterns influence the individual aspirations and household expectations which lie behind the migration decision-making process. Indeed, modernisation is a new way of life which in turn effects changes in social norms and creates economic pressures in the rural community. Most young people like to leave the countryside both to seek urban employment and to experience the modern way of life in the city.

To conclude, migration decisions are the result of a wide variety of socio-economic and socio-cultural pressures on household relations. Migration decisions

take account of household expectations and gender relations, and interpersonal relationships in a variety of social networks. This helps to explain why migration cannot be explained at the micro-level by any single variable, but requires consideration of groups of variables. The study of the interrelationships between migration decisions and gender issues must therefore consider various variables which includes household internal factors and external factors in order to strengthen our understanding of the migration decision-making and migration selectivity.

2.4 The research terms and operational concepts

This section introduces a group of operational concepts and definitions that will help to clarify the subsequent research discussion. These concepts and definitions are closely interrelated to the research approach and framework discussed in the previous sections.

In this study, *gender* is a pattern of relationship ascribed to social difference, which is socially and culturally constructed rather than biologically determined (Moore 1994: 11, French and James 1997: 4). The concept of gender focuses on differences between women and men and the extent of inequality between them according to their positions and roles in the household.

Migration is specifically defined here as rural-urban movement, and thus does not include international movement. The term is loosely defined to cover migration patterns and behaviour to different destinations and in different periods of time. Theoretically, this study considers migration as a form of socio-economic behaviour where the potential or prospective migrant and his/her family make a conscious decision whether or not to migrate through a process by which perceived consequences are weighed and evaluated. This process involves comparisons of better opportunities between the present residence and alternative destinations.

Migrants refers to all villagers who have migration experience including all types of migrants: out-migrants, returnees, reversees, and stayers. The term *'out-migrants'* generally means the villagers who are presently working somewhere else far away from their home village. *'Returnees'* are the ones who return either

temporarily or permanently after having worked somewhere for a period of time. *'Reversees'* are a group of returnees who have been forced to return to their home village due to the constraints of the post-1997 economic crisis. Reversees can be roughly classified as two groups: short-term reversees and remaining reversees. *Short-term reversees* are reversees who have made a decision to re-migrate after returning home for a short spell, while *remaining reversees* are the ones who have returned home because of the economic crisis and have made a decision not to re-migrate but instead to remain in their home village. These migrants may not want to re-migrate during the tense period of the economic crisis, or may be unable to re-migrate for various reasons. Another group of migrants is 'stayers'. *Stayers* are out-migrants who were able to keep their jobs and survive in the cities during the period of the economic crisis.

Non-migrants are villagers who do not have any migration experience. *Potential migrants* are non-migrants who have decided to migrate and have made definite plans to do so in the future; who express desire to migrate but have not made definite plans to migrate; or who have not really thought about migrating but fit the profiles of actual migrants. *Prospective migrants* are non-migrants who expect or are expected to migrate to work or live somewhere far away from home in the near future. They usually have some specific plan for their future movement.

Determinants of migration are classified by the characteristics of a migrant's household as well as different circumstances between migrants' and non-migrants' households in the same locality. This study considers both economic and non-economic factors as the determinants of migration. It is not acceptable to stress that economic motives determine migration intentions and migration decisions. Many non-economic factors (such as the 'bright lights' of the city, modern life-style, social norms, gender norms, parental obligations, and so on) are as important as economic factors in affecting the decisions made by the migrants and their family.

Migration decision means the process of thinking about and choosing to move by any household member to find paid work in the prospective destination. This decision should come after a period of discussion, of thinking, or of negotiation

among the household members. The process of migration decision-making in this study is hypothesised to be different between male and female migrants and prospective migrants.

The economic crisis refers to the serious current economic problems which occurred in Thailand after July 1997. The economic crisis caused many problems for migrant workers. Many of them were laid off and forced to return to their home villages in order to survive economically. This circumstance is referred to as 'migration reversal', which is also expected to affect male and female migrant workers differently.

Migration reversal refers to the circumstance in which a large number of temporary migrants who had flowed into the city when times were good there (or particularly hard in the countryside) but who had to return to their home villages when the incentives were reversed. By definition those who are reversees may have returned home because working in the city no longer provided any hope for them to succeed in achieving their goals or household expectations. Reversees returned to the village because it is cheaper to live there, or because they could not afford to remain in the city. This circumstance is quite different from *return migration*, which is a general term used when migrants return either permanently or temporarily to their place of origin after a period of absence at the place of destination, typically after succeeding in achieving their social and/or economic goals.

2.5 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have attempted to provide a critical discussion of the theoretical, conceptual and definitional debates which are pertinent to my study. This study conceptualises migration decision-making as a complicated social process, which cannot be examined by using only single approach, variable, or factor. All approaches - cf. the push-pull hypothesis, the human capital hypothesis and the selective hypothesis - are integrated into the research framework. Both economic and non-economic factors, as well as factors internal and external to the household, are included in the analytical approach to examining gender issues in the

process of migration decision-making and social change. The study hypothesises that household relations and gender relations have influenced significantly the migration behaviour and decisions of male and female household members, responding in particular to gender differences and gender inequality.

According to the hypothesis that gender issues and migration have affected, and been affected by, social changes, the study not only examines gender issues and migration decision-making in the past through community histories and migration histories, but it also examines those interrelationships by using the contemporary circumstances of migration reversal and the economic crisis as an exemplary case study. The study theoretically believes that migration reversal and the economic crisis has affected migrants in both their individual and household socio-economic surroundings, and that it has pressurised rural people to change their circumstances of migration decisions and migration selectivity. Migration reversal is expected to clarify our understanding about the patterns and process of migration decision-making because the characteristics of return movement and economic development following the 'shock' of the economic crisis had clear gender dimensions which we expect to illuminate current thinking and behaviour in relation to gender, migration and responsibility today.

Chapter notes

[1] Ernest G. Ravenstein deduced broad generalisations of the characteristics of migrants and migration streams which he preferred to call the 'Law of Migration'. His generalisations can be briefly summarised as follows:

1. Most of the migrants usually move only a short distance, whereas those who travel long distances generally go to the centre of industry and commerce.
2. The direction of the migration is from agricultural to industrial areas. Urban dwellers are less migratory than rural dwellers.
3. Migration proceeds step by step.
4. Every migration stream has a counter-stream.
5. Females are more migratory than males, especially for a short-distance move.
6. Migration increases with the improvement of transportation, and economic development.
7. The major causes of migration are economic (Jessadachatr 1989: 19-20).

[2] The household is usually considered as an institutional unit, while 'the family' refers to kinship and is considered to have a strong ideological component (Chant 1991). In reality the household and the family overlap in the context of social relations. In general, most households are made up of families, and only a minority of households have members other than family members living in them.

[3] Many migrants follow their relatives and friends to the same city and even to the same areas of the city, the same boarding house, the same type of work, and the same employers. The aggregate patterns of rural-urban migration are highly place-specific routes linking particular villages with particular urban destinations, established and sustained through the medium of information and offers of help sent or taken back by earlier migrants (Hagan 1998).

[4] Many migrants' parents will be worried less about their children who move in groups, which are believed to afford both protection and a source of continued contact with the village, than they do about children who left home alone (Lightfoot et al. 1983: 19).

[5] Modernisation is a pattern of social change as a result of socio-economic development beyond the mainstream economic development approach, which provides a circumstance of centralised growth in major cities. The industrialised zones in the cities have pulled rural people to migrate to work there. Thus, migration here is an effect of over-industrialisation and over-modernisation, and also is a result of 'a failure' of rural development and agricultural development. This is a phenomenon of 'maldevelopment' (Parnwell and Arghiros 1996).

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Once the research questions have been set and clarified in terms of what is to be studied, under what circumstances, for what duration of time, and with whom; a site, a number of participants, and appropriate data collection strategies need to be designed (Janesick 1994: 211). This chapter introduces the selection process for the study area and elaborates the research design and methodology, which entails procedures for selecting the research site and conducting the fieldwork. These procedures and the associated research methodology are detailed in this chapter, together with some of the problems that were encountered during the course of the fieldwork and the measures taken to overcome them. This chapter is divided into two main parts: study area and site selection, and research design and methodology.

The field research started in February 1998 with the collection of substantial statistical and other information on the consequences of the economic crisis in Thailand and the circumstances of migration reversal. This was undertaken through my research networks, which include some officials and key informants who work in relevant ministries and were responsible for analysing, planning and implementing governmental programmes to counter the negative impacts of the economic crisis and migration reversal. This information was used for selecting a suitable study area and fieldwork site according to the research criteria. The second step of the study, involved micro-level research activity in the study site, and was conducted during June to December of 1998 in order to further explore and examine the research questions and framework.

3.2 Study Area: Selection

The selection of the study area in which to conduct fieldwork for this study centred on three main criteria: the area where people have significantly experienced rural-urban migration over the last three decades, where people have largely depended on their migratory income and remittances, and where people have been obviously affected by the circumstances of migration reversal and the economic crisis.

The study examines the research framework by using an area of study in the Northeast, which is the poorest region in Thailand and is often seen as a 'problem region' due to the conditions of environmental and locational disadvantages, relatively underdeveloped infrastructure and communications, and low agricultural yields (Grandstaff 1992, Rigg 1993, Parnwell 1993). Moreover, the rural non-agricultural economy is insufficiently developed to offer alternative local sources of income, industrial development in the Northeast is minimal (Kaewjinda 1992), and the region's human resources are being severely depleted by migration to Bangkok and the Central Region for a source of income with which to supplement their meagre livelihood from farming (Fuller et al. 1983, Parnwell 1983). The Northeastern region has a long history of migration, particularly of circular movements to urban centres (see Textor 1961, Lightfoot et al. 1983, Parnwell 1983, Rigg 1989, Fukui 1993). The high incidence of population movement away from their home villages provides perhaps the clearest indication that the Northeast is the most suitable study area.

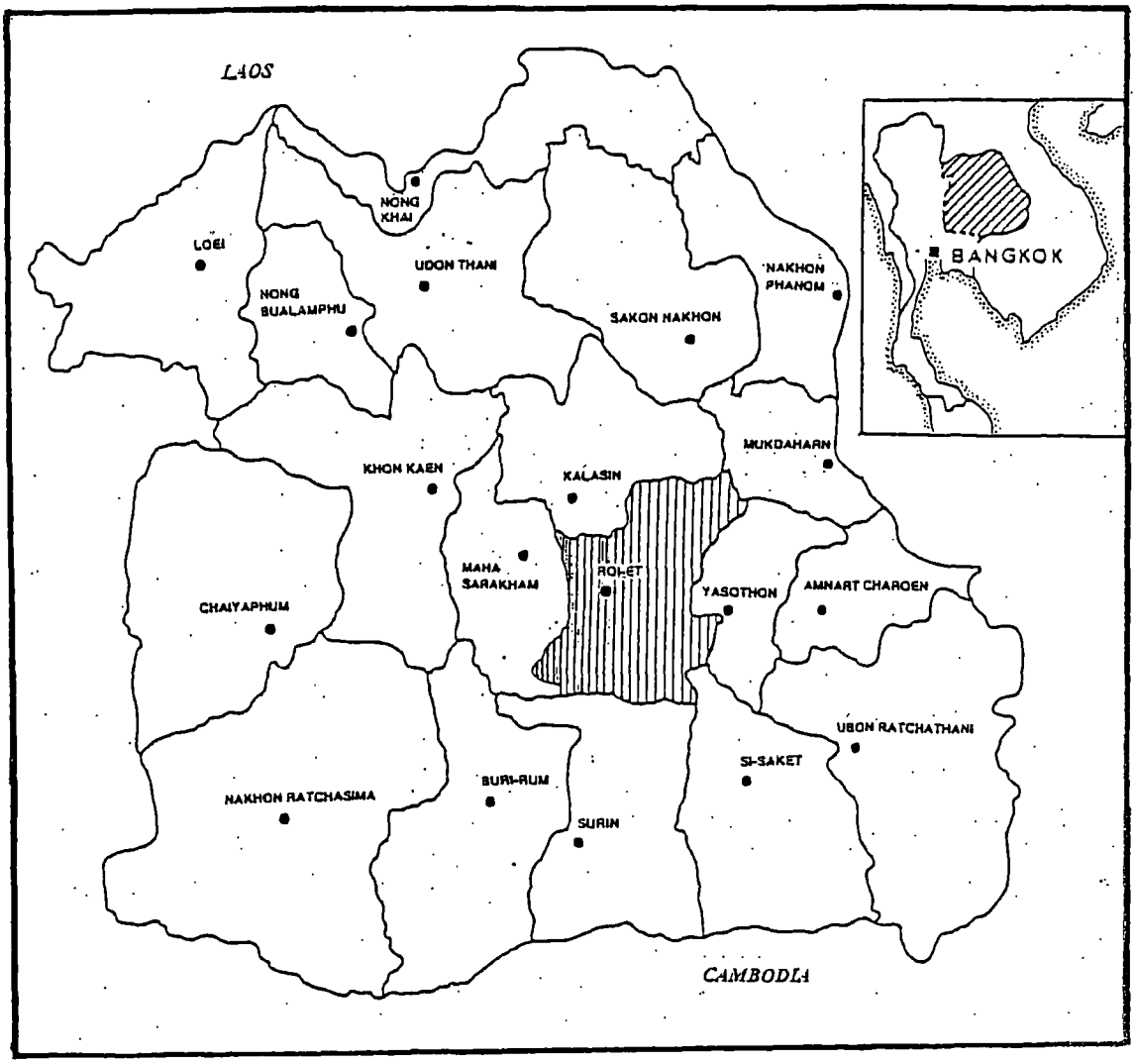
It was decided, given limited resources and time, that for the purpose of practicality and manageability the selection of a specific study location could be a single district in one Northeastern province. The choice of a particular province and district was guided by consultation with some migration scholars and local officials, and by examination of relevant data. Some secondary data and former migration studies in Northeastern Thailand were reviewed in order to classify a good representative site for this study. Furthermore, some information was gathered by informal discussion with some government officials who are responsible for statistics

involving the circumstance of the economic crisis and labour migration. All this information was used to classify the most suitable province.

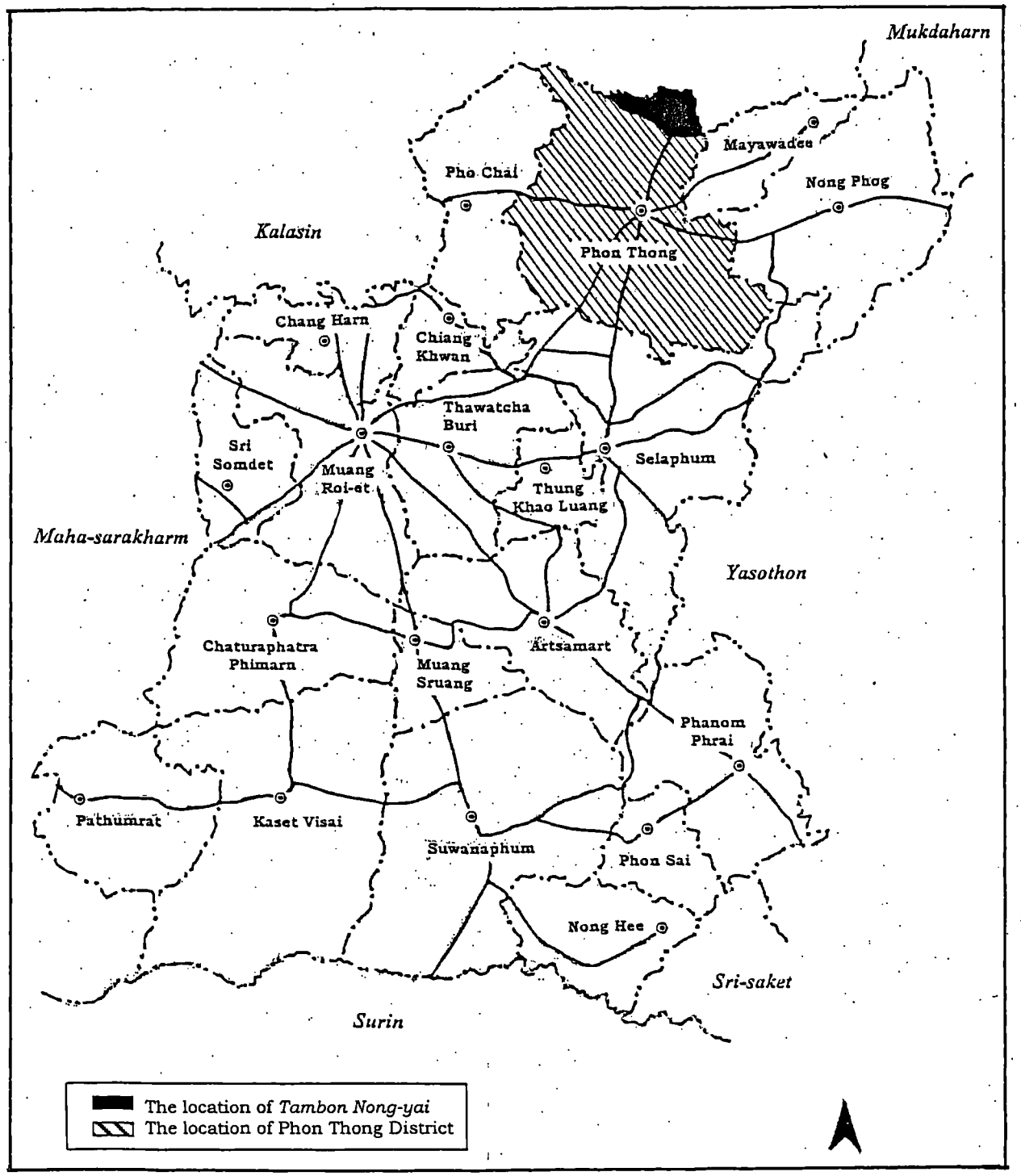
At the provincial level, Roi-et (see Map 3-1) was selected primarily because, of all the Northeastern provinces, it has long been recognised as the poorest province as well as having the highest gross rate of migration to Bangkok. The NESDB (National Economic and Social Development Board) reported in 1994 that Roi-et was the poorest province in Thailand with 560,297 poor people or 53.92 per cent of the total population in the province, compared to 28.59 per cent and 16.32 per cent of the total Northeast and the total Thailand respectively (see Table 2 in Appendix 1). However, it is notable that in 1996 the percentage of poor people in Roi-et had decreased to only 12.74 and the rank had shifted to the fifteenth poorest in the region, while Kalasin had become the poorest province in the region with 36.89 per cent (see Table 3 in Appendix1). This changing figure is mainly because the NESDB changed the method to calculate the statistics on poverty by changing the in-put and out-put factors. The truth is that between 1994 and 1996 Roi-et, according to its gross provincial product (GPP) (Roi-et Provincial Office 1997), did not have any indicator that showed rapid and successful economic development. Agriculture, which has long been the main economic sector of the province, still provided low yields and low profits. The study chose to do field research in Roi-et not only because it was the poorest province but also because research of a similar nature had been conducted in this province (see Fuller et al. 1983, Lightfoot et al. 1983, Parnwell 1983).

In Roi-et, provincial statistics and secondary information were collected and interviews were conducted with some provincial officers who were responsible for activities involving migration reversal and governmental programmes to resolve the rural problems caused by the economic crisis (e.g. the Governor's Office, the Department of Labour, the Department of Social Welfare, and the Department of Community Development). These interviews were used to select one district out of the 20 districts in the province (see Map 3-2). Here, Phon Thong was selected as the district where the research would be conducted for several reasons: during the last three decades Phon Thong has had a noticeably increasing rate of female migration,

Map 3-1 *The location of Roi-et Province and the Northeastern Region of Thailand*



Map 3-2 *The location of Phon Thong District, Roi-et Province*



thus allowing purposive selection of an appropriate location; the number of laid-off migrant workers who had returned to their home villages was the highest in the province (see Table 3-1); and because this area has been recognised as having obvious and large migration networks linking the villagers with migrants in many areas of Bangkok.

Like most areas in Roi-et, Phon Thong has environmental constraints on farming which restrict agricultural income opportunities, and has limited availability of alternative sources of local off-farm employment and income. Environmental constraints are similar to extensive areas of the Northeastern region as a whole. Specifically, there is a problem of shortage of water for agricultural and household use in many areas, particularly during the dry season. Hence, it is only possible to grow one crop a year on each land plot, either paddy or a choice of cash crops (cassava and sugar cane). Only households with suitable and large land holdings benefit from cash crop incomes. Many poor households (often with access to only small and marginal plots) have little choice but to migrate to work in Bangkok for a supplementary household income. Migratory incomes and remittances are thus very important for most rural households in the area. When the economic crisis erupted and many laid-off migrant workers had to return home, many of them could only stay in their home villages for a short while before re-migrating to Bangkok to re-energise their household economy. This circumstance was very obvious in Phon Sai District and Phon Thong District (see Table 3-1). Migration reversal here is not a household survival strategy, but re-migration is. A study in the Phon Thong area would therefore contribute to the coverage of all the objectives of this research.

Table 3-1 *The number of reversees in Roi-et Province, by district and sex, between July 1997 and 15 September 1998.*

Districts	Total reversees			Short-term reveresees		Remaining
	Male	Female	Total	No.	%	Reversees
Muang	45	9	54	12	22.22	42
Selaphum	430	140	570	67	11.75	503
Phon Thong	***1,408***	***553***	***1,961***	***1,546***	***78.84***	***415***
Thawatcha Buri	121	58	179	48	26.82	131
Chang Harn	122	26	148	32	21.62	116
Chaturaphatra Phimarn	107	34	141	96	68.09	45
Artsamart	165	51	216	73	33.80	143
Muang Sruang	80	21	101	4	3.96	97
Sri Somdet	189	49	238	127	53.36	111
Kaset Visai	417	106	523	131	25.05	392
Pathumrat	102	25	127	20	15.75	107
Suwanaphum	24	21	45	21	46.67	24
Mayawadee	110	33	143	65	45.45	78
Nong Phog	268	112	380	255	67.11	125
Phanom Phrai	19	9	28	10	35.71	18
Phon Sai	13	14	27	22	81.48	5
Pho Chai	10	2	12	1	8.33	11
Chiang Khwan	110	84	194	28	14.43	166
Nong Hee	338	134	472	46	9.75	426
Thung Khao Luang	152	29	181	87	48.07	94
Total	4,230	1,510	5,740	2,691	46.88	3,049

Source: Provincial Office of Labour Protection and Welfare, Roi-et.

Initial contacts at the district level were established through the help of provincial and district government officials who were my friends and senior undergraduate students in Chulalongkorn University. Having obtained the necessary documentation and information to conduct research work from the Provincial and District offices, and formal letters of introduction from the Roi-et Governor, preliminary investigations in Phon Thong District were carried out over a short period. From interviewing local officials at the provincial and district levels, *Tambon* (literally sub-district) Nong-Yai was identified as being most appropriate to the research criteria in relation to the circumstances of migration reversal and the impacts of the economic crisis. With a total of 385 reversees in *Tambon* Nong-Yai, surveyed by local officials of the Ministry of Interior, it contained the largest number in the district (a more detailed discussion of the circumstances of migration reversal and the characteristics of reversees will be provided in Chapter 7). This means that *Tambon* Nong-Yai was the most suitable study location in an area which had been seriously affected by migration reversal and the economic crisis. More importantly, *Tambon* Nong-Yai was identified as the core area where villagers have strong

migration networks, most noticeably through the largest family name of *'Phonyiam'* in Phon Thong district, and has been linked with various sources of employment in many areas of Bangkok and its vicinity for more than two decades. This strong migration network will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

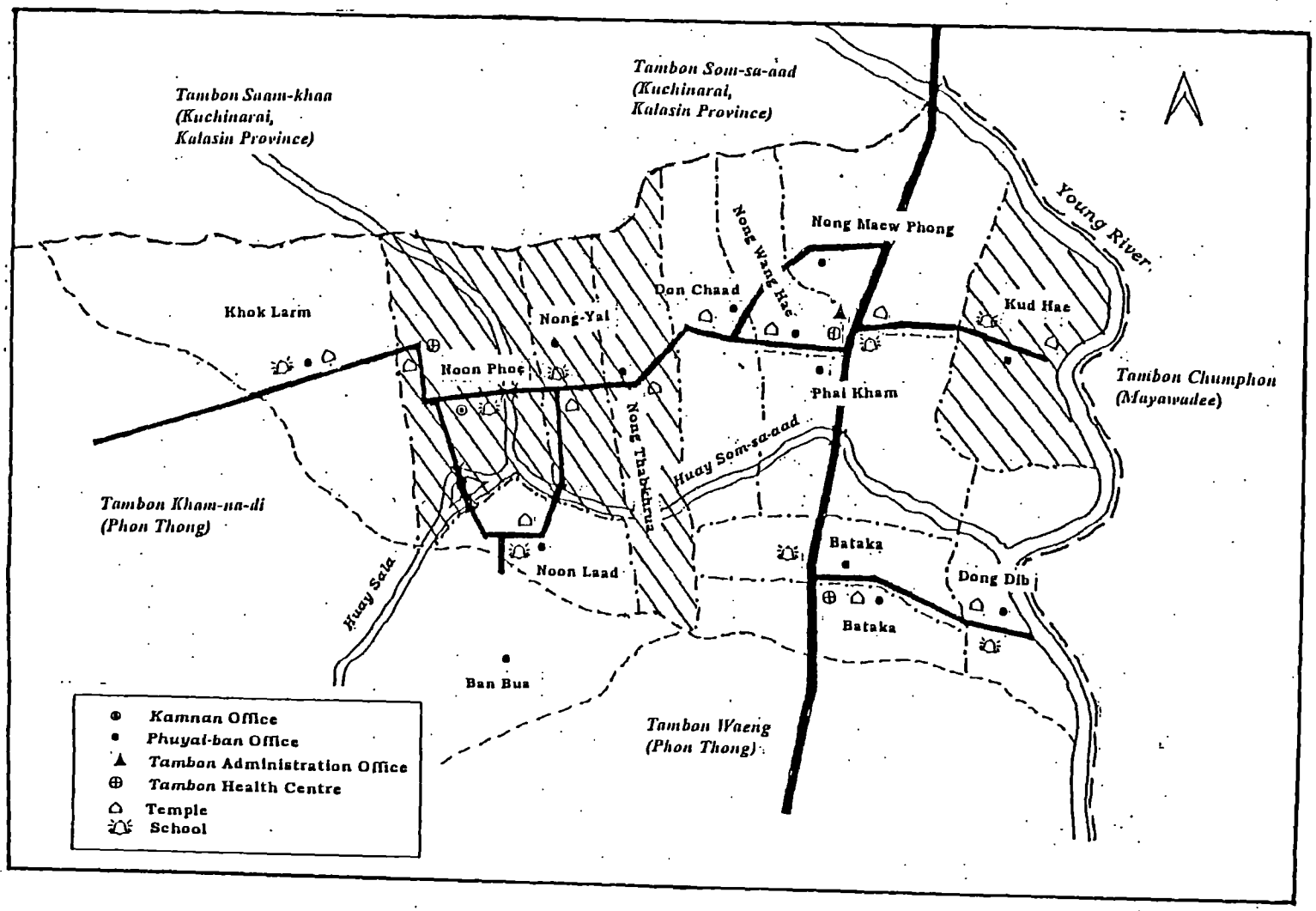
Due to the limited resources and time available, it was necessary to focus the study on a few selected communities found to be associated with a large volume of out-migration and a significant level of migration reversal. The primary research sites were selected by collecting village information and by conducting semi-structured interviews with village headmen *(Phuyai-ban)* and key informants in all 13 villages of *Tambon* Nong-Yai. With transportation support from the Phon Thong District Office, the research method of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) was conducted in order to gain further details regarding the circumstances of previous migration, the recent migration reversal, and the impacts of the economic crisis on the migrants' households and the community as a whole. Although at this stage it was not possible to be entirely sure of the accuracy of the data sources mentioned above, it was deemed useful and sufficient as a rough guide to choose a suitable location of the study. All information from the RRA survey were carefully analysed to identify a few communities as the primary sites for further fieldwork. Three villages (namely Ban Noon Phoe, Ban Nong Thabkhrua, and Ban Kud Hae) were chosen based on two main factors. The first was the size of the population and households, which allowed classification size of the villages into large, medium and small villages respectively. The second was the volume of both remaining reversees and short-term reversees after the economic crisis had erupted. However, after preliminary interviews with a small sample in Ban Noon Phoe, I found that the migration networks of the family name *'Phonyiam'* centred in the area of three villages: Ban Noon Phoe, Ban Nong-Yai and Ban Nong Thabkhrua. The villagers in these three villages not only had close kinship connections but also had strong migration networks in the areas of Lard Phrao 101 in Bangkok and Bang Phlee Yai in Samutprakarn, while Ban Kud Hae had strong migration networks in the areas of Din Daeng and Huay Khwang in Bangkok. Therefore, I changed the study sites from an initial three study villages to two study

communities. They are the Nong-Yai community, which includes three connected villages (Ban Noon Phoe, Ban Nong-Yai and Ban Nong Thabkhrua), and Ban Kud Hae. This is mainly because I expected that the clearly identifiable migration networks would provide a clearer understanding of the migration decision-making process and the transformation of female migration, which has been encouraged and facilitated by the strong migration networks in those areas.

Of the two study communities, the Nong-Yai community was situated in the centre of *Tambon* Nong-Yai, while Ban Kud Hae was situated on the fringe of the *Tambon* (see Map 3-3). These two communities were considered to represent broadly different social and economic contexts in terms of social relations, household relations, economic conditions, social networks, migration networks, and migration behaviour. These circumstances will be explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

Indeed, selecting 'a village' for qualitative research is not simply a matter of walking into a number of villages with a set of guidelines and finally discovering a site which seems to meet the selection criteria. On the contrary, the process and outcome of village selection was socially and culturally constructed by different interactions between the researchers and the people concerned. In my cases, it was a supportive process based on my own background status as a researcher in Chulalongkorn University and good connections with different groups of people including provincial- and district-level officials. The diversity of support I gained from the Roi-et Governor's Office and the district officials at Phon Thong significantly helped me approach the community leaders easily. Moreover, when I started doing my fieldwork in the selected communities, I also gained huge support from some district officials and local leaders. In particular the head of the Community Development section at Phon Thong District is a native in Ban Noon Phoe, and one of his colleagues is a son-in-law of the head teacher of a primary school in Ban Nong Thabkhrua. Therefore, I had a very good connection to establish good relationships with the villagers in my study communities. They supported me not only with official statistics and information, but also by introducing me to significant informants in the study area.

Map 3-3 Locations of the study communities in Tambon Nong-Yai, Phon Thong District,



3.3 Research Design and Methodologies

3.3.1 Informants and research methods

The study is designed to capture the full range of rural-urban migration in the study communities from the past to the present. To draw the whole picture of the process of migration decision-making over periods of time, it was necessary to gather data from household case studies representing all types of migrants: remaining reversees and returnees living in the study communities, and short-term reversees and stayers working in Bangkok at the period of the study. The selection of these research samples was based on criteria which were translated from the research objectives and conceptual framework, as follows:

1) The study includes all types of migrant households. Therefore, the household case studies should comprise at least one household member representing any type of migrants. In the cases of remaining reversee and returnee households, I interviewed the migrants themselves and their parents and/or spouse. In the cases of stayers and short-term reversees, I interviewed their parents and/or spouse in the study village and tried to build up a bridge to interview the migrants themselves in some specific areas of Bangkok at a later stage.
2) A main research objective is to examine the extent to which household relations and gender relations, as well as other important external factors, have influenced the migration decision-making process along with the circumstances of social change. Thus, individual and household migration histories are as important as information on present migrants and their households in the contemporary circumstances. The informants would include both a present migrant and an experienced migrant, as well as covering an equal gender proportion between male and female migrants.

Initially, the selection process for case studies did not follow a systematic structure. The fieldwork used the purposive method and the 'snowball' method to classify the household case studies and representative informants. The case study

selection responded to the main study enquiries of gender and migration. It firstly used purposive method procedures with the provision that any household case study in the study communities would have at least one remaining reversee or returnee, either male or female, living in the household. In each household case study, separate in-depth interviews were conducted with the remaining reversee and/or returnee and his/her parents and/or spouse, with the aim of obtaining an equal proportion of male and female informants. The household case studies were also selected by using some different types of household socio-economic conditions in order to examine all internal household factors and external socio-economic factors in the contemporary circumstances of migration reversal and the economic crisis in Thailand. At least two types of informant households, affected households and unaffected households, were classified by details of their household agricultural and non-agricultural economic conditions, including their main household income earnings and agricultural processing (land ownership and capital acquisition).

During the interviewing process, all information relevant to the research objectives and framework were sought. However, in fact not every informant could give the entire range of qualitative information required by the research. In each case of incomplete or inexplicit information, other reference persons were identified for further interviewing in order to cover those gaps, for example: Who was the first migrant moving to work in Bangkok? Who established the strong migration networks in the community? Who was an initial migrant following the migration networks?, and so on. The 'snowball' method was thus used to investigate all reference persons for deeper and more accurate information.

A particular aim of each interview was to find out about the migrants' networks connecting him/her with a particular destination in Bangkok. This information was expected to provide a possible chance for the later follow-up study to interview short-term reversees and stayers in the reference areas. A related in-depth interview was also conducted to collect pertinent information from those migrants' parents and/or spouse in the study village, involving not only their household migrant networks but also their own networks if they were returnees or reversees.

After five months in the study communities, I was able to manage and set very good connections with many short-term reversees and stayers in Bangkok through their parents, spouse and siblings. Then a second complementary survey was conducted in Bangkok by following the routes and networks of short-term reversees who moved back to work in various industrial firms in four main destination areas: Lard Phrao 101, Din Daeng, Huay Khwang, and Don Muang. The case study selection methods in this part of the research also used the purposive method in the first instance to interview short-term reversees, and the snowball method in the later stage to interview stayers. The snowball method gave a very good chance for me to interview many referred and introduced stayers who worked and lived in the same areas for short and long periods, including Mr Thawin Phonyiam, the one who had established (and still operates) the strong and wide migration networks of the Nong-Yai community.

The number of informants and case studies interviewed in each group of migrants, classified by the study communities and gender are shown in the following tables:

Table 3-2 *Informants classified by types of migrants and study communities*

Types of Migrants	Nong-Yai		Kud Hae		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Stayers	28	22.4	13	23.6	41	22.8
Short-term reversees	6	4.8	6	10.9	12	6.7
Remaining reversees	23	18.4	8	14.6	31	17.2
Returnees	38	30.4	18	32.7	56	31.1
Migrant parents	30	24.0	10	18.2	40	22.2
Total	125	100.0	55	100.0	180	100.0

Source: field research between June and December 1998.

Table 3-3 *Informants classified by types of migrants and gender*

Types of Migrants	Male		Female		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Stayers	17	19.3	24	26.1	41	22.8
Short-term reversees	6	6.8	6	6.5	12	6.7
Remaining reversees	16	18.2	15	16.3	31	17.2
Returnees	26	29.6	30	32.6	56	31.1
Migrant parents	23	26.1	17	18.5	40	22.2
Total	88	100.0	92	100.0	180	100.0

Source: field research between June and December 1998.

The majority of informants belong to the Nong-Yai community (69.4%) because it is a large community comprising three villages (Ban Noon Phoe, Ban Nong-Yai and Ban Nong Thabkhrua), while Ban Kud Hae is a small community. Although this proportion was not the result of a systematic selection process, the study tried to interview male and female informants in as equal proportions as possible. According to the snowball method, every reference person was visited in order to investigate and appraise whether (s)he was suitable to be a case study. Many reference persons were not included in the above tables, even though they were key informants for some information. In comparison with the gender distribution of informants in Table 3-3, the proportion was nearly a balance of percentage between the sexes in every type of migrants. It was quite difficult to select case studies by providing the exact proportion for each group of informants due to the lack of the relevant statistics or reliable estimates of the number of migrants in each type. Moreover, although the study tried to interview male and female informants in equal number, the fact is that more female than male informants were willing to co-operate fully for interviewing, particularly in the group of stayers.

However, it should be noted that, as Table 3-2 shows, these selected case studies and informants provide a good coverage in balanced percentage for each group of migrants between the two study communities. I therefore conclude that there is no constraint of 'proportionate informants', which might affect any analyses from the data provided.

3.3.2 Gathering the data

The research fieldwork was conducted based on informal semi-structured interviews and participant observation techniques. The observation techniques were used for gathering subjective information on internal socio-cultural and socio-economic household factors particularly household relations and gender relations, which could not be summed up using only in-depth interviews. According to the indication of participant observation discussed by Reinharz (1992), my fieldwork could be classified as a partial participant observation rather than a complete participant observation because I chose to take part in some specific household

social and economic activities of the classifiably important case studies. I tried to visit my main case studies every couple days and had informal conversations and discussion with all household members. I sometimes joined them for lunch or dinner and also went to work with them in their rice and cassava fields. These patterns of participation made me get close to them and gain 'trust' from them. 'Trust' is very important for doing qualitative fieldwork. With interpersonal trust, most informants give much and genuine information about themselves and their family (Fontana and Frey 1994: 367). Gaining trust from my household case studies and key informants made it easier for me to ask some sensitive questions, such as about gender conflicts and inequality between daughters and sons, as well as between husband and wife, in the process of migration decisions and negotiation. Therefore, the approaches of participation observation and informal conversations, and an ability to establish trust with the informants, yielded much valid and reliable data for this study, in particular the subjective information involving gender relations and household relations.

I also took part in various village activities as they occurred, particularly the community ceremonies where some migrants returned to participate, including religious and merit-making ceremonies, funerals and wedding parties. Moreover, residing in the *Phuyai-ban*'s house gave me many chances to attend village meetings and informal meetings between the *Phuyai-ban* and groups of villagers as well as between groups of village leaders and some government officials. All these focus of participation provided me with good chances to discuss with some government officials and village leaders from outside the study communities various points of view on the circumstances of migration reversal and the impacts of the economic crisis.

In the process of in-depth interview, I used semi-structured interview guides and two main means of recording data: field notes and tape-recording. When interviewing uncontroversial topics, I took notes in the full view of informants. Where information was potentially sensitive (such as gender inequality, gender differences or gender conflicts within the household), I memorised key points and phrases for

making notes in private. Basically, when I wanted to search for some sensitive information, I usually made it in the way of 'informal conversation and chatter' in a relaxed atmosphere. I tape-recorded only when interviewing some key informants and case studies, of whom I always asked for permission, mostly about the community histories, household migration histories and their own migration experiences.

A series of 5-10 formal interviews was conducted with each migration type. I separately interviewed migrants and their parents, and also avoided interviewing any parent in the presence of others when the topics were related to some sensitive points. Consequently, multiple interviews were applied to validate specific information, especially the information of gender relations in any household decisions. Indeed, almost all informants were co-operative at any time I visited for interview or observation of their household activities. This can be largely attributed to three factors. Firstly, the *Phuyai-ban* announced my presence and aims of my work in the village, and asked for their co-operation. Secondly, according to the ways in which I approached my qualitative fieldwork, I always walked around the village and visited some informants every day. Then they got used to my presence and were relaxed and at ease with interviews and general chats. In most cases, the informants were interviewed and observed informally. Finally, the researcher had an advantage on the basis of qualitative research, according to Lee (1993) and de Laine (2000), that I can speak the *Isan* language. It not only made it easier for me to understand the *Isan* cultural and social contexts but also made the informants feel comfortable when explaining complicated and subjective information. Moreover, understanding of *Isan* culture provided me with an ability to learn all circumstances from the insider's perspective. This kind of understanding made enabled the researcher to use the perspectives of both 'insider and outsider' for theoretically grounding all information during the whole period of fieldwork (Miller and Glassner 1997).

Guidelines for the semi-structured interviews were provided. They, in detail, covered three main parts. Firstly, the community profiles and migration histories were conducted by interviewing the community leaders (formal and informal leaders)

and other key informants (such as the elders, monks, the most respected villagers, and other reference persons). The community profiles comprised the following main information: a common way of life involving the patterns and practices of social relations, social networks and community norms (gender norms and migration norms); the community histories and its social changes (time-series of significant social and economic changes in the community); the community demographic, social and cultural components (kinship, lineage system and social stratification); and the community economic system (agricultural patterns, sources of income, etc.) in the past and contemporary periods. This part of the interview used the 'narrative approach' method, where essentially the researcher acted as a good listener and the interviewee was a story-teller rather than a respondent (Hollway and Jefferson 2000: 31). The formal interview consists of questions and answers, where the interviewer sets the agenda and in principle remains in control of what information is produced. With the narrative approach, the agenda mostly covers community histories and community and household migration histories, depending on the narrator's experiences.

Secondly, the household profiles were constructed by interviewing the household case studies and members (migrants and their parents and/or spouse) for the following information: basic information of household demographic, kinship and socio-economic relationships; local concepts of migration and its conditions in terms of gender issues and the migration decisions; time-series information including a detailed consideration of household migratory changes and migration histories; the on-going interrelationships between migration behaviour and the dynamic socio-economic circumstances of the household; the conditions of contemporary migration behaviour and decisions (derived from their individual aspirations or household expectations); interrelationships between migration decisions and other important factors of household relations and gender relations (gender roles, household obligations and household responsibilities); the linkages and support between individual migrants and their household under the circumstances and influences of migration and social networks; and social and economic pressures or impacts of

migration reversal and the economic crisis, and subsequent adjustments in household livelihood strategies.

Finally, individual profiles were investigated for all details: the personal socio-economic characteristics and contribution to the household; the reasons for movements, both outward and return; the mover's perceptions of the migratory experience; the economic activities of the mover and returnee since migrating and returning respectively; the influential factors in individual migration decision-making; and information on any future planned for individuals. This also included the investigation of migration networks in all areas where those migrants and returnees had migrated to work since their initial migration.

After interviewing each informant, field notes were processed for primarily grounding and analysing my qualitative information based on four core questions, suggested by Hollway and Jefferson (2000: 55), as follows:

- What do we notice?
- Why do we notice what we notice?
- How can we interpret what we notice?
- How can we know that our interpretation is the 'right' one?

Detailed field notes for each interview were written down, with the addition of my own notes and observations to evaluate and analyse the information set within the framework of the above questions. I then provided some additional questions for some unclear points from the previous interview in order to further interview the same case study during a subsequent visit or to interview a reference person.

Fundamentally, the first part of my field notes was expected to come as close as possible to providing a 'mirror reflection' of reality (Miller and Glassner 1997: 99) that existed in the contexts of information and observation, while the second part was expected to assess the meanings informants attributed to their experiences and conduct. I tried to describe the information with depth and detail, and tried to represent the informants' views fairly and to portray them as consistent with his or her own meanings.

It should be noted that one of the fieldwork problems associated with those procedures was the demands it placed on the memories of the informants. This problem was minimised by careful interviewing with crosschecking wherever possible between responses and different questions, with references to specific events to jog informants' memories, and with follow-up interviews of any reference person from the responses.

Finally, after the fieldwork was completed, I embraced fully the task of 'writing-up'. Similar to the fieldwork process, the period of my writing-up was another opportunity for me carefully to search and re-search for the reality of my fieldwork in the textualising procedures. In this process, decisions had to be made on what to include in the analytical contexts. How to avoid taking a moralising stance towards others was a concern, combined with the importance of maintaining the anonymity of most informants.

3.4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter discusses my research methodologies for conducting fieldwork and undertaking the writing-up, focusing on methodological sequences and related complications. With the semi-structured interviews and participant observation, it should be stressed that the depth and breadth of understanding through the qualitative data collection phase was invaluable. It helped this study to develop a schematic model of migration decision-making relating to gender issues and migrant household livelihood that embraced all internal and external household factors, the household coping strategies and responses to economic hardship as consequences of the economic crisis, and also the transformation patterns of female migration in a multiphase illustration of household migration decision-making pathways.

I believe that with the amount of resources and time I had, I have done my best in my fieldwork to achieve the aims and objectives of the study. Although I am confident that the depth of my qualitative research can complete the answers to the research questions, I would have interviewed more informants both in the study communities and in Bangkok if I had had more resources and time available.

However, the information I collected is adequate to enable me to analyse the theoretical framework, as will be seen in the following chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR

Background to Gender and Migration in Northeastern Thailand

4.1 Introduction to the Northeastern Region of Thailand

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a background context to migration and its gender dimensions in the Northeastern region of Thailand. It is divided into four sections. The first section explores the *Isan* rural way of life, and debates the *Isan* cultural and social dimensions of gender and migration in the sphere of social and household relations. This should help to understand how the rural *Isan* way of life has determined gender-role and economic-role expectations differently between sons and daughters, which has affected the patterns and behaviour of migration in *Isan* rural communities. The second section examines and outlines patterns of traditional movements in the region to help understand the importance of previous phases of migration in the social, economic, cultural, and gender aspects. The section is expected to clarify how and why gender has influenced patterns of migration from the past to the present; and how and why *pai thiaw* (which has involved in some aspects of traditional movements) has changed its traditional patterns of movement to become the main pattern of *'pai thiaw Krungthep'* which is interpreted as a concept of contemporary migration by *khon Isan* (people of *Isan*). The last section explores how and why migration relates to social and economic changes in the region, as well as how and why it is important to the people's ways of life. The discussion highlights the current social changes and migration circumstances across Thailand and in the Northeast, and also underlines the influences of social change upon migration behaviour in the region.

To start with, however, this section introduces some essential socio-economic information on the Northeastern region of Thailand in order to aid understanding of the background of the rural people in this region.

The Northeastern region of Thailand, or *Isan*, consists of 19 provinces (see Map 4-1) with a total population of about 20.6 million people in 1997 (see Table 4-1), or approximately 33.9 per cent of the national population (60.7 million). The region roughly corresponds with the Khorat Plateau, a gently undulating plain that constitutes a large part of the Mekong river basin, and covers some 168,854 square kilometres or almost exactly one-third of the total area of Thailand (Parnwell 1983: 25, NSO 1997). Although it is the second largest region with the largest population size, it is regarded as a peripheral area of the country with its economic backwardness and political marginality having for a long time seen the region subordinated to Bangkok and the Central region. Its peripherality is not only characterised by topographical (as plateau land) and geographical conditions (Parnwell and Rigg 1996: 221-2), but also results from a poor physical environment: poor soils with low fertility and water retention capacities, arid area, water shortage, and soil salinity (Kaewjinda 1992: 24-7). In addition, the Northeastern landscape is more prone to flooding during the rainy season and to drought during the lengthy dry season. Due to the fact that the Mun and Chi river systems provide the only reasonable potential source of irrigation for the region, the irrigable area is just 20,000 square kilometres of farmland or around 11.8 per cent of the region (Sluiter 1993: iv), compared with more than 60 per cent in the Central region (Parnwell 1983: 25). These conditions have affected the region's unsuitability for agriculture, especially paddy cultivation, which is shown by the fact that it has over 40 per cent of the nation's rice-growing area but produces less than a quarter of the total crop (Rogers 1989: 34). A large proportion of its agricultural land is better suited to the cultivation of vegetables and upland cash crops (cassava, maize and sugar cane).

Table 4-1 *Thailand's areas and population by region, during 1977 and 1997.*

Region	Areas		Population (million people)					
	(km²)	(%)	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997[1]	%
Northeastern	168,854.34	32.91	15.148	16.720	18.885	20.059	20.609	33.92
Northern	169,644.29	33.07	9.202	9.834	10.585	11.682	11,178	18.40
Central	102,335.99	19.95	9.723	10.779	12.078	13.084	13,638	22.45
Southern	70,751.19	13.79	5.467	6.046	6.716	7.402	8.084	13.31
Bangkok	1,443.85	0.28	4.743	5.468	5.609	5.562	7.239	11.92
Total Thailand	512,993.65	100.00	44.273	48.847	53.873	57.789	60.748	100.00

Source: Institute of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University, in Wongserbchart et al. 1993.
[1] National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister, 1998.

It is unfortunately true that the region is at a disadvantage in agriculture in comparison with other regions. As a result of poor agricultural conditions, *Isan* has continuously been the poorest region of the country, with the highest amount of population under the poverty line officially announced by the government (see Table 4-2). The relative poverty of the region is also a primary factor which has driven people to find jobs in the Central region and Bangkok (Fuller et al 1983 and 1985). The outflow of migrants to Bangkok is the obvious circumstance in the poor provinces of the region like Roi-et, migration being either permanent or temporary, often as circular or seasonal migration after the planting and harvesting periods (Lightfoot et al 1983, Parnwell 1983).

Table 4-2 *Poverty in Thailand, 1994 and 1996.*

Region	1994			1996		
	Population	No.of Poor	% of Poor	Population	No.of Poor	% of
Northeastern	20,275,264	5,797,514	28.59	20,428,314	3,970,152	19.43
Northern	11,118,497	1,463,984	13.17	11,140,208	1,249,968	11.22
Central	2,624,482	187,745	7.15	2,883,801	177,968	6.17
Western	3,606,375	449,239	12.46	3,368,918	314,133	9.32
Eastern	3,603,561	271,831	7.54	3,812,848	143,613	3.77
Southern	8,083,591	1,397,798	17.29	7,948,165	914,823	11.51
Bangkok & Vicinity	9,843,153	86,708	0.88	10,396,873	66,559	0.64
Total Thailand	59,154,923	9,654,819	16.32	59,979,127	6,837,216	11.40

Source: National Economic and Social Development Board.

4.2 *Isan Rural Way of Life: Debates on Isan Cultural and Social Dimensions of Gender, Household and Migration*

Based on the process of social change in *Isan* society, there have been perceptible changes during the past decades in the extent of traditional and modern

Isan ways of life in the spheres of social relations, household relations, and gender relations. For example, in the past courtship amongst young men and women should be done in public during a festival. It could also be carried out semi-privately in places such as the porch of a young girl's home or in the open air basement where the girl may be weaving or pounding rice (Klausner 1993: 84). At present, in contrast, it is obviously a normal behaviour that a young boy comes to ask a young girl to go out with him without any permission from her parents. They, each other, can hold hands in public places as it is now seen as ordinary behaviour. In the past, this was deemed inappropriate and improper behaviour, and was considered as a taboo in *Isan* rural ways of life. The change in social intercourse in this manner is actually an influence of modernisation, which has gradually come to the village society through various channels: the process of social change and development schemes, as well as a result of mass rural-urban migration amongst the young generation. In this section, I explore the changing forms and circumstances of social relations, debating mainly on *Isan* cultural and social dimensions of gender, household and migration.

4.2.1 Gender and household relations in Isan society

Social relations in rural *Isan* society are distinctly based on kinship and social intercourse, which gives stability to ways of life accumulated by long tradition. Certain kinship and social intercourses have determined social relations among the members of the community and formed gender and household relations among the household members (Rogers 1989: 73). Their close relationships obviously still maintain strong social ties and influence their rural ways of life. A typical *Isan* household, as a basic unit of those relations, consists of a clearly defined group of co-resident close kin, and is more likely to be an extended family. The *Isan* extended family traditionally comprises the home of a single family with relatives other than the immediate family of parents and children, perhaps in a separate house within the same compound. Although each unit in the compound may live separately, connections between households are maintained. Between certain households, there is, in fact, an exchange of money, food, goods, and labour that goes beyond close

kinship. This social circumstance occurs most prominently in the relationship called "*het namkan kin namkan*" (work together and eat together), which is typically found between the households of parents and their daughters residing in the same village, or neighbouring villages[1] (Fukui 1993: 329-30). This pattern of social relations has strongly tied *Isan* rural people in the same household as well as in the same compound close to each other. It also functioned as the significant core of local and traditional practices of subsistence and self-sufficient economy in the former days.

One of the prominent foundations of social relations and household relations in *Isan* society is the dominance of uxorilocalism, which is the strong preference for initial post-marriage residence in the home of the wife's parents. This matri-uxorilocal preference may have been more broadly distinct in the Northeast and North than in other regions of Thailand (Singhanetra-Renard 1982, Rogers 1989, Klausner 1993). Linked to the residence pattern, *Isan* society practices the traditional inheritance of land through daughters, so that even when a daughter and son-in-law would move out of the wife's parents' home, they would move into a house of their own in the same village and often within the same fenced compound as the house of the wife's parents (Fallon 1983: 161-2). Though the couple move into their own house (*ook-hien),* in some cases, after moving, the parents' and daughter's households may continue to 'work and eat together'. However, mostly the couple will receive at least a plot of agricultural land from the wife's parents to cultivate for themselves. In the case that the parents have a small amount of land to give the couple, they always work the parents' fields together and share the rice yields. Then the social intercourse transforms *'het namkan kin namkan'* into *'het namkan pankan'* (work together and share). It may be a simple halving, or the parents may give a certain portion to the daughter's household (Fukui 1993: 331-2). Indeed, inter-household cooperation (like helping each other) is not limited to households of parents and daughters but is also found among close kin. This kind of relationship provides the basis for social relations among members in the rural community.

It has been insisted in recent *Isan* studies (e.g. Rogers 1989, Klausner 1993, Fukui 1993, Mills 1993) that the inheritance customs in *Isan* society have continued

to favour uxorialism, particularly for land inheritance.[2] Each child in the region traditionally inherits an unequal portion of land. The traditional inheritance customs in *Isan* society is an obvious circumstance where sons purposively inherit moveable property such as water buffalo and money while daughters inherit real estate such as farmland and houses. This is mainly because sons are generally expected to leave home and obtain land through marriage; the principal duty of daughters is considered to be looking after their elderly parents, accordingly they receive farmland in order to live near their parents[3] (Fukui 1993: 332). In the studied communities, the youngest daughter is mostly expected to play this role, so she receives the largest share of farmland inheritance. This pattern of resource allocation has not only provided the principal household responsibility of daughters but also differentiated household gender-role and economic-role expectations between daughters and sons. Daughters have been always expected to care for ageing parents and provide them with a better living, while sons have been flexibly expected to be responsible for the household economy. Even now, these patterns of gender-differentiated household expectations continue to be practiced and apply for all daughters and sons who move to work far away from their home village. Migrant daughters are mostly responsible for their household economic needs by remitting parts of their earned income back home, while migrant sons feel free from this responsibility. They may remit some money to their parents if they have more saving money than they need for their living and entertainment expenses. These circumstances of gender-differentiated household expectations will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

According to the discussion above, it appears that *Isan* household relations and gender relations, which regulate gender-role expectations between sons and daughters, are determined by their traditional social relations and uxorilocal practices. Therefore, the thesis sets its sights on exploring how gender-role expectations between sons and daughters have come to influence daughters' behaviour, for example, in relation to the phenomenon of mass female migration from *Isan* to the capital while they are simultaneously expected to be responsible for caring for their ageing parents and for the household economy.

4.2.2 *Gender-role expectations and female migration in Isan*

Understanding the division of labour within the household is another important condition to realise the gender-role expectations in *Isan* society. As in the previous days, men were expected to do the heavy work connected with the rice crop such as ploughing, while planting and harvesting were expected to be done by both men and women. For the household tasks women fetched the water from the well and did the cooking. They also did the spinning and weaving of silk and cotton, while men did bamboo, thatch, and wood work. The building and repairing of the house were men's responsibilities. Boys and girls assisted in all kinds of work but left the heavy work for their parents. Both boys and girls learned from an early age how to find natural food for household consumption (such as collecting mushroom, catching frogs, snails, fish, and so on), as well as to do regular household and farm tasks (such as grazing cattle, fetching water, and so on). Although the division of labour was not so sharp at the childhood level, the girls generally tended to follow the patterns of the mother's tasks, and the boys stepped into the shoes of the father's tasks (Klausner 1993: 67-8). In fact, the division of labour for both household and farm tasks between the sexes in *Isan* society is not rigid, and there are no strong sanctions to preserve clear-cut gender responsibilities. There are only a few tasks that are exclusively the responsibility of one sex. For example, the cutting of timber and house construction are exclusively reserved for the men; while the care of silk worms, spinning, and weaving are the sole responsibilities of women. Apart from these tasks, although a general division of labour is maintained, both men and women will help each other when necessary. There is no loss of prestige or loss of face involved in doing a job usually performed by the other sex (Ibid.: 68). The need to carry out that kind of job generally arises when there is sickness in the family or when the family have lost labour through death, divorce, or seeking work in the city. This non-rigid division of labour allows both *Isan* male and female villagers to go to work far away from home without creating any problem of labour shortage in the household, whether they move permanently or temporarily. It is particularly prominent in cases where out-migrants remit portions of their income to their family

for hiring agricultural labours in their absence. Therefore, the gender-role expectations of household labour for farm and domestic tasks in the past have transformed to be the economic-role expectations, from migrant sons and migrant daughters, for supplementary income to cover the household farming and living expenses.

There are at least two conditions, involving gender-role expectations, which affect migration patterns in *Isan* society. One is the gender division of labour, and the other is resource allocation under the conditions of inheritance customs. In the past, while the non-rigid gender division of labour seemed to allow opportunities for men and women to leave their households, the conditions of uxorial inheritance which creates a specific role expectation for the daughter to care of the parents in old age discouraged daughters from going far away from the family. As a result, daughters were expected to stay at home to help their parents with both farm and household tasks, while sons were able to travel elsewhere (or *'pai thiaw'*) even for individual purposes.

To consider a son's role expectations, in 'traditional' times, an unmarried son provided his natal family with labour and a secure economic base. After marriage, he had to move into his wife's parents' household. His labour, therefore, transferred to his wife's parents, leaving his own parents in the care of a daughter and her husband. The son's major responsibility was towards his wife and her family. In contrast, a daughter was expected to bring in a husband to help care for and support her parents and younger siblings. At least one daughter, mostly the youngest daughter, was expected to remain with the parents and also to serve as a source of old age security. Her major responsibility was to provide parents with both short- and long-term assistance (Yoddumnern-Attig 1992: 20-1). However, in contemporary times, the gender-role expectations of a son and a daughter have gradually and evolutionarily changed in a number of ways due to social changes and economic development - which has changed the social and economic foundations in the rural community and the dramatic growth of Bangkok - which stimulates the young village boys and girls to become mobile in seeking cash work. The rate of migration from the

rural Northeast is constantly increasing (Phongpaichit and Baker 1996, 1998). This circumstance has changed children's role expectations as a source of household labour to be a source of money remittances by unmarried out-migrants.

From the fieldwork of this study, it seems to be obvious that now most parents in the study communities do not forbid their daughters to seek wage work in Bangkok, as they may have done in the past, but instead they now often encourage their daughters to move in anticipation of income. An old mother of a young girl working as a seamstress at Din Daeng, explains *"I have two daughters who have migrated to work in Bangkok. I encouraged them to go to Bangkok after finishing their primary schooling. They both send me part of their incomes regularly. We don't need them here for household agricultural and domestic tasks like we needed them in the past, but we need their remittances for our household expenditures. They also want to leave for a new experience in Bangkok. It is better to let them migrate for the benefit both of themselves and our household as a whole."*

However, at the early stage of female migration from the study area, only a few young and single girls were able to be mobile alone because most parents were worried and afraid that their daughters would be cheated and get a bad job like prostitution. As a result of this gender concern, cityward migration has been male-dominated for a long time. Over the last two decades, as kinship-based migration networks in Bangkok have provided assurances to anxious parents, the last barriers to the mass migration of young girls, in particular the parent's consent, appear to have been broken down. The migration networks have also provided resourceful migration information and support from native out-migrants and experienced migrants for prospective migrant and initial migrants to use and follow. As the migration networks have influenced female migration, young girls have gradually been able to go on their own and get jobs through the support provided by their close relatives and friends. Their parents do not seem to have been able to, or wanted to, control female migration any more. It has been increasingly difficult to forbid young girls to leave when their entire community of friends have left the village. The crucial

influence of migration networks on female migration will be explored and discussed for more detail in Chapter 6.

4.2.3 ***Household obligations, individual aspirations and female migration from the Northeast***

According to traditional household inter-generational relations in *Isan* society, as well as in overall Thai society, children have various duties and obligations for doing something in return to their parents. Literally, this is referred to as *'bunkhun'*, which places children in a position of strong obligations to repay a 'meritorious debt' to their parents (Klausner 1993: 275). The children are socially and culturally classified as being in a life-long debt relationship to their parents for having been born and brought up and should constantly repay this debt through not only their obedience and respect to their parents but also their responsibilities for gender-role expectations as a good son or a good daughter (Mills 1993: 97-8). In praising a child, one will refer to how 'grateful', or literally *'katanyu'*, (s)he is towards one's parents, and how 'respectfully' the child acts. To be *katanyu* is a highly valued character trait in Thai society. However, the gratitude is expected to be returned in different ways by sons and daughters. In practice, a man can appreciate the social pressure to enter the monkhood as a means of repaying and 'sending merit' to his parents, while a woman who is excluded from the monkhood[4] is expected to demonstrate her gratitude for parental *bun khun* by caring for the day-to-day needs of her parents (Rogers 1989: 52-3). A daughter is traditionally expected to be more responsible in household needs than her brother. This responsibility changes little even when she has married and set up her own family. In contrast, the son feels free from household obligations after getting married and moving to his wife's parents' household.

Even today these principles in the study area still retain some effective influences on the decisions of many female migrants, but the means to repay parental obligations has been extended to include regular remittances sent back to their parents. This form of obligation has been realised and practiced continually for more than two decades by many of *Isan* young female migrants. The changing form

of household obligation to be a good son or a good daughter now depends upon how strong the household gender-role and economic-role expectations are in the family, and how young migrants can cope with the tensions between their household obligations and their individual preferences. However, the pressures of parental obligations on female migrants might be varied by the differing socio-economic conditions of each village community and in different periods of time. For example, during the period of the economic recession, the commitment of young female migrants in the Nong-Yai community to remit money back to their parents regularly has been less serious than that of their counterparts in Ban Kud Hae. The Nong-Yai community has better socio-economic surroundings to help its people cope with their household economic difficulties than those in Ban Kud Hae.

Accordingly, Mills (1993: 19-20) argues in her study of female migration in Ban Naa Sakae (a village in Mahasarakham Province, Northeast Thailand) that female migration is rooted at once in values of being a 'good daughter' by sending remittances regularly and in powerful individual aspirations for the comforts and the attractions of modernity *(khwam than samai)* in the city. The first refers to the relationships of *bun khun.* From this point of view migration to Bangkok becomes an important means for young girls to acknowledge their obligations to parents by earning money to send home. Urban wages present an opportunity for them to fulfil their obligations in a form that is now both concrete and highly valued by their parents and the community as a whole. The second draws upon the powerful imaginary of modernity and the display of new consumer commodities as symbols of success and social status. Most rural youth, both men and women, see the move to Bangkok at least in part as an opportunity to have experience at the centre of contemporary modern society and to earn the cash income needed to purchase the modern commodities which can be used to express themselves as modern men and modern women. In this regard, female migrants have faced contradictory purposes of migration. While they are urged to be modern women responding to their individual aspirations for the urban life-style preference, they are socially and economically

expected to behave as grateful daughters responding to their gender-role expectations and parental obligations by providing their parents with a better living.

However, one may doubt whether *Isan* young men feel responsible in the same way as their female counterparts. This can be explained as a matter of fact that gender-role expectations between son and daughter in the Northeast are different. Although every child has an obligation to repay their parents, they are expected to fulfil this obligation in different ways depending on gender. A son can ordain as a monk for 'repayment' in the short time, while a daughter is expected to repay in the long period by supporting the household needs and caring for the ageing parents. In the study communities, for instance, most parents expect their migrant daughter to remit a portion of her wage to support the family, while they really do not expect so much in the same way of their migrant son. This argument will be explored later on the field data in the analytical chapters.

To summarise, in rural *Isan* society relations between parents and children are socially close. The principal ties are based on respect, obligation, and gratitude of the children towards their parents. The control and authority of parents over their children are pervasive, and most children obey their parents without questioning such authority (Klausner 1993: 147, Mulder 1994: 57-8). In the past, the word of one's parents was virtually an order, especially in the case of young girls. Most of the parents gave more restriction to and controlled their daughters' behaviour while giving more flexibility to their sons. The obviously different migration behaviour between sons and daughters is that the parents traditionally forbade their daughters to live far away from the community, while sons were allowed to *pai thiaw* during free time from farming activities for their own experience or for fun without any household requirement or responsibility. Therefore, in the early stage of mass migration of youths to the cities, males had more chances than females to be mobile. Female migration radically changed after the export-oriented economic development in Thailand required more female workers in various industrial firms (Phongpaichit and Baker 1998). Most of the parents now rarely forbid their children's cityward

migration. The lure of easy money from non-agricultural employment in the city makes it difficult for the parents to refuse. For children, particularly daughters, they see the cash jobs in the urban areas not only as a way to partake in the attractions of city life but also as a means, through their remittance, to pay obligation and gratitude to their parents. These two motives of migration decisions for young female migrants will be examined later in terms of their genuine influences by using fieldwork data in Chapter 6.

4.3 *Pai thiaw and Traditional Movements in Northeastern Thailand*

'Pai thiaw' is a common Thai expression meaning "to go sightseeing" or "to go wandering" or simply "to go somewhere". Literally, it means a temporary absence from a place in the same vein as the somewhat aimless behaviour denoted by this expression (Fukui 1993: 313, Parnwell 1993: 31). In general aspect, *pai thiaw* is traditionally interpreted with an overtone of fun and enjoyment, involving movement with no specific destination or timetable, but in social and cultural aspects it has functions and the prospects of being a channel of social mobility (Kirsch 1966: 370-8). The strong social and cultural values which are attached to the mobility, and to the knowledge and experience of different areas, meant that travellers generally could count on enhanced social status upon their return to their home communities. Conversely, young men were regarded as ignorant and cowardly if they had never moved away from the village (Parnwell 1993: 31). Therefore, *pai thiaw* in *Isan* society is not only for fun but also for some specific social and cultural purposes involving *Isan* ways of life (Fukui 1993, Hayashi 1993). In fact, the *pai thiaw* behaviour in *Isan* society can be traced back over several centuries through some traditional movements.

This section is divided into two parts. The first part explores the implication of traditional movements, which basically include the circumstances of *pai thiaw* in the process of mobility, towards the gender dimensions in the traditional *Isan* ways of life. This exploration could be useful to understand the gender difference and

domination in the process of the traditional movements in *Isan*, as well as to understand their social and cultural significance. The second part presents the implication of *pai thiaw* as a concept of contemporary migration in order to understand the circumstances of mass migration by youths from the Northeast, and also to understand the reasons and expectation of *Isan* people towards migration patterns and behaviour.

4.3.1 The traditional movements

Migration from the Northeast is not an entirely new phenomenon; it has been going on for a long time, but in a form that is different from the mass migration for employment which is dominant at the present time. The traditional movement of the *Khon Isan* (Northeastern people) has several forms, but the most important movements, which come close to the notion of 'migration' in this study, were the *'Nai-hoi* caravan' and *'Ha-na-di'*.

(a) Earlier trading movement: Nai-hoi caravan

During the previous days there were two forms of movement associated with trading in *Isan* society. First was short-distance trading caravans, which operated occasionally, particularly when there was a problem of rice-shortage or disaster in the village. The caravan brought some local products including dried chilli, salt, tobacco, charcoal, medicinal herbs and other forest products, which were bartered for rice with other villages which had good yields of rice. This form of trading caravan was set up by a few people amongst their household members and close relatives or friends. Then both men and women were able to travel together. They usually migrated for a short time and short distance within the region.

In contrast, the other form of trading movement was a long-distance caravan, the so-called *'Nai-hoi* caravan', which operated during the dry season after the harvest. Edward Fallon (1983) indicates that the *Nai-hoi* caravan in *Isan* is the legendary caravan which brought cattle and buffalo to the Central plains, where the animal's action power would contribute to rice cultivation in areas more favoured with government irrigation infrastructure and high farm prices due to proximity to Bangkok's large rice-mills and nearby port. Formerly, a caravan began when at least

six or ten men rounded up their own and their neighbours' surplus animals, setting off for the three-month adventure with a hundred or more head of cattle. They mostly headed for such destinations as Nakhon Ratchasima, Saraburi, Ayudhaya, Lopburi, Nakhon Sawan, and Phetchaburi. In each caravan one man was recognised as the *'Nai-hoi'* holding overall responsibility for planning and co-ordinating the trip, which was usually risky in terms of losing some animals to disease and theft or disappearance in the course of the caravan. Indeed, the caravan occasionally failed to return home. When they returned from their expeditions to *'Krung Thai'* (Thailand), they mostly brought back not only a large amount of money from selling the cattle but also a few novelties for household use. Clothing was the most frequently-mentioned good purchased by caravan members to take back to the home villages (Fallon 1983: 246-7).

According to an interview with a former participant of the caravan in Ban Noon Phoe, a study village, around the early 1950s such caravans set off regularly from several villages, rather than being formed from among men and surplus animals of a single village. In the study area, there were two famous *Nai-hoi.* The *Nai-hoi* took responsibility for the security of all participants, but they did not take responsibility for lost or stolen cattle. Each participant had to look after his own animals. Every year there was at least a single post-harvest caravan in the area. The participants were divided into not more than 10 sub-groups, which comprised 8-10 members with a leader. Each member was able to bring no more than 12 buffaloes or oxen. Then, there were around 80-100 members in the caravan with approximately 1,000-1,200 cattle. The participants had to pay 4 Baht per animal. The *Nai-hoi* earned around 4,000-5,000 Baht a trip (about two or three months, mostly during January and March), while the participants might earn 5,000-8,000 Baht or more from selling animals. This was a really big amount of income at that time.

This activity was really male dominated because it was very risky and hard work. Men who participated in the caravan had to be seriously recruited by the *Nai-hoi.* The participants should have some experience of fighting and capability in the martial arts to take care of themselves and their own cattle without making any

burden to the others. Women were not allowed to participate in the caravan. Most participants were married men rather than young single men.

According to Fallon (1983: 248-9), the *Nai-hoi* caravan ceased during the late 1950s and early 1960s, or roughly the decade following the introduction of extensive road-building in the Khorat Plateau. The caravan declined, apparently because improved roads allowed livestock dealers to travel to the animal-surplus area and act as middlemen in livestock transactions. In addition, development of agricultural technology not only provided an artificial stimulus for the use of tractors and threshing machines in the Central Plains, but also reduced the demand for cattle and buffalo. The cheaper cost of transport and the lower demand for draught animals contributed to the disappearance of the fabled caravans.

The traditional movement of *Nai-hoi* caravan may be difficult to conceptualise directly as a pattern of migration, but its movement is fundamentally important for the later migration process from the Northeast to the Central provinces. The caravan itself can be classified as a form of seasonal movement for earning some money during the dry season, but its consequences are more interesting. Firstly, the caravan created social networks between *khon Isan* and Central Thai people. Travelling with the caravan, the participants had to contact the Central Thai people. Some of them had good relationships and came back to visit or work as agricultural labourers in the Central plains. If they were lucky, they might acquire an agricultural land plot and move their families to settle there. At the same time, some young participants did not return home after post-harvest caravan trips and decided to stay for agricultural labouring or marrying with local women. This was a channel of the earlier stage of establishment of networks for the latter-day migration flows. Secondly, the caravan participants usually received some social prestige from other villagers because of their experience of travelling to *'Krung Thai'*. For *Isan* people, *'Krung Thai'* was an unfamiliar culture to them which helped form their prevailing attitudes towards the region that only strong and brave people were able to travel there and contact Thai people. Therefore, the *Nai-hoi* caravan was a channel to raise their social prestige. For example, at Ban Noon Phoe a young and single participant

might receive some preference from his fiancee's parents and even the exemption or reduction of dowry for his wedding. This was because the parents believed that the caravan-experienced man would be able to look after their daughter properly. Finally, the nature of the caravan participation, which was male dominated, affected the form of male-dominated migration during the early period of migration for employment in the Central and Bangkok. Most parents always thought that travelling to Bangkok, or literally *'pai thiaw Krungthep'*, was very dangerous for daughters, and it was not safe for women to have contacts with Central Thai men. Female migration from the Northeast to Bangkok was obstructed with these kinds of perceptions for decades until transportation and information become more accessible for them.

(b) Movement for land pioneering: Ha-na-di

Another important pattern of traditional movement in *Isan* society is *'ha-na-di'*. The literal meaning of *ha-na-di* is "to seek good paddy land". This does not mean to seek paddy land elsewhere because one has none where one is; rather, it is to seek better land than one already has. *Ha-na-di* migration is a well planned activity, requiring courage and decision-making, since it involves large numbers of family and relatives (Fukui 1993: 314-5). Indeed, *ha-na-di* was basically the reason for permanent rural-to-rural migration in responding to the agricultural constraints in *Isan,* particularly due to the environmental problems (such as flooding or drought or the poverty of the soil) rather than the problem of having no agricultural land (Hayashi 1993: 367).

Migration for *ha-na-di* mainly involved movement in search of new agricultural land for both cases of in-migration and out-migration. This pattern of migration generally involved entire household movement, including a male household head and his wife and their unmarried children. Hence, male and female household members, as well as all age groups, seemed equal in the process of this pattern of migration. However, in fact, at the first step of searching for new land, the land pioneers were still dominated by males. The wife and children usually followed

their male household head after he had already found and possessed new agricultural land.

Nevertheless, there is no evidence that *ha-na-di* is a social institution common to all people from the earliest times, and it is even unclear how far back it dates in *Isan* society. According to Fukui's study (1993: 122-5) at Ban Don Daeng in Khon Kaen Province, *ha-na-di* was the most important reason for in-migration between 1900 and 1912, and was still important continuously until 1934. The places of origin of the people who moved to the village in search of new land were mainly from Roi-et and Mahasarakham, neighbouring provinces of Khon Kaen. In contrast, after that period of time *ha-na-di* was the most important reason for out-migration during 1935 and 1974. The destination areas were Udon Thani Province and other districts in Khon Kaen. However, since 1975 migration for reason of employment has become the dominant type, while migration for *ha-na-di* declined because searching for new land become more difficult due to the closure of the land frontier, and because Thailand's policies of macro-economic development aimed at developing export-oriented industries have driven rural people to move to find non-farm work in the cities. Such work has been expected to earn more income than agricultural activities. It seems that the factors that influenced employment migration in the earlier periods were: first, the intrinsic factor of increased population pressure on land, while the supplies of new agricultural land become increasingly limited; and, second, the extrinsic factor of a changed economic environment in which the benefits of non-farm work become higher than those of agricultural activities. These conditions both push and pull *Isan* people to migrate to work in the cities.

It is a matter of fact that *ha-na-di* migration usually passes through several steps from place to places. This pattern of migration is not necessarily a once-for-all move. Rather, it commonly involves a number of comings and goings between the native village and the first and second destinations (Fukui 1993: 312-3). Indeed, *ha-na-di* is an extremely well planned migration and utilises well-organised networks. The movement covers a range of purposes from *pai thiaw* to *ha-na-di*. *Ha-na-di* migration is preceded by a certain amount of *pai thiaw* to gather information, and for

some conditions to search for and inspect arable land. Having found suitable land, a pioneer makes a purchase agreement with the owner (if there is one) and moves to settle there with his family and siblings. It is also preceded by the exchange of information involving a widely based social interaction and by the formation of routes connecting the village of origin and the destinations. In this regard, the concept of *'pai thiaw'*, in accordance with *ha-na-di* movement, is not only for the purpose of travelling around, but also involves some aspects of social functions for gathering information and forming networks in the process of searching for better agricultural land (Hayashi 1993: 367-9). *'Pai thiaw ha-na-di'*, therefore, consist of routes of travelling with a more specific purpose of land pioneering than only the departure from the village, particularly when a family could not annually produce sufficient rice to feed the members. This is because producing enough food is the main objective of traditional *Isan* farmers.

However, in recent years, when a family in the Northeast could not produce sufficient rice for the family, someone in the household, mostly the male household head, has had to travel to find wage work for earning a supplementary income for the family rather than to search for better agricultural land as with *ha-na-di* in the past. Hence, the household survival strategy of *'pai thiaw ha-na-di'* has changed to be *'pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham'*, which literally means travelling to search for work, elsewhere outside the village. This pattern of *pai thiaw* has gradually developed to be the cityward migration in the contemporary circumstances.

4.3.2 Pai thiaw: the movement for employment and experience

This study considers *'pai thiaw'* as a part of the local concept of contemporary migration, which is distinctly rural-urban migration rather than rural-rural migration because of the 'bright lights' of the city and the greater employment opportunities in the urban than in the rural, with two obvious motivations: for finding work *'pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham'* and for individual experience *'pai thiaw ha-prasobkaan'*. However, this study believes that almost all *Isan* migrants combine these two reasons in their cityward movement. Many may move to the city mainly for earning and remitting money back to their family, but they also aim to have new

experiences and enjoyment of living in the big city. On the other hand, although many may travel to the city mainly for experience or to 'see the world', they have to work to support themselves there. Their family may support only the costs of travelling and initial accommodation, whereafter they have to survive by themselves. Therefore, they all intrinsically have those two reasons for migration. However, *pai thiaw* as the concept of migration provides a sense of movement in terms of temporary migration, rather than permanent migration, like the notion by Parnwell (1993: 31) that *'pai thiaw, as with other traditional forms of mobility, represented a form of circular migration'.*

Moreover, *pai thiaw* also contributes to a local sense of gender-differentiated movement. According to this, Kirsch (1966) documented that *pai thiaw* was a common practice in every generation of *Isan* young men. They went off looking for adventure and sometimes for work. They might go for several months or even years. In addition, although most eventually returned home, some married and settled in far-away communities (Mills 1993: 137). These arguments explain a clear circumstance that in the past many *Isan* men liked to travel far away from their home village for either a short or long time, and principally not only for fun but for several reasons such as working, experiencing the wide world, or pioneering agricultural land as discussed before. This argument is confirmed by Jonathan Rigg (1989), who concludes that are there three principal reasons for migration in *Isan* circumstances: as a strategy of survival, as a strategy of accumulation, and for fun. He classifies in his study that *"[Isan] migrants may have several reasons for working away from home. Individuals travelling to 'see the world' may also travel with the hope of accumulating funds, whereas those migrating to survive may be fortunate enough to secure employment that enables them to accumulate some capital"* (1989: 55).

Accordingly, Pira Sudham (1993) reflects the reason for rural-urban migration from the expression of *khon Isan* that migration to work elsewhere is considered as a road to become wealthy, while Peter Rogers (1989: 50) notes that Northeastern migrants place a high value on their freedom to have fun and see little merit in work for the sake of work. From these different aspects of reasons for rural-

urban migration from the Northeast, migration is not only a circumstance responding to the household's survival from poverty or lacking employment and income-earning opportunities, but also a condition of responding to gain individual aspirations or satisfy household wealth expectations. It, then, may be true that poverty is probably a prime reason for the drift towards the cities, but the main motivations may be personal dreams in search for fun and experience or accumulating capital for either individual aspirations or household expectations (such as for children's education, small business investment, house-building, buying agricultural land, and so on).

An important question in this circumstance is why and how many *Isan* migrants have travelled far away from home for accumulating capital. This can be explained by the fact that now *Isan* socio-economic structure has been changed from the traditional subsistence economy to the cash economy. While agricultural activities cannot earn sufficient food or income for the family due to the poor quality of soil and environmental problems, people cannot revert to search 'for the new land' elsewhere. Moreover, in the rural areas there are very limited opportunities for non-agricultural employment. Many poor people have little opportunity to earn enough income to survive through their small landholdings and inadequate local employment opportunities. They thus have to migrate to work in the city either as a strategy for survival or for accumulating some capital for improving their standard of living. Thus migration to work in the city is now an obvious alternative for them. Migration to Bangkok and other big cities, thus, can serve many purposes for rural people from the Northeast, including *'pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham'* and *'pai thiaw ha-prasobkaan'*. Now *'Pai thiaw Krungthep'*, literally travelling to Bangkok, is ordinarily the main target for both young men and young women, and it can be imagined that there are many fewer teenagers in *Isan* villages than in Bangkok.

In conclusion, traditional movements in *Isan* rural society were obviously male-dominated. Women alone could not travel far away from home. They might accompany their father, brother or husband to go somewhere and for some

purposes, such as *'pai yaam yaat'* (literally meaning to travel to visit relatives). They were able to travel elsewhere only if they got permission from their parents, while men were autonomous to join any patterns of traditional movements, particularly after leaving the monkhood. In the former days *Isan* men travelled with the *Nai-hoi* caravan to sell their surplus cattle for earning some money after the harvesting period, while, in other cases, some men wandered in search of new land *(ha-na-di)* because their agricultural land was of poor quality and produced low yields. It cannot be denied that traditional migration in *Isan* society was congruent with changes over time in the rice balance in the household and the village. However, those movements were replaced later by the movement for employment away from the village, whether short or long term, or with or without any household economic obligations. Since then this form of movement has been practiced continually by both male and, increasingly, female *Isan* migrants. However, the reasons behind contemporary migration do not only consist of finding work but also the pursuit of individual experiences of modern life in the big cities.

4.4 Social Change and Migration Patterns in the Northeast

Significant changes which have affected the traditional movements in the Northeast into the contemporary phenomenon of mass migration to Bangkok, comprise three main development circumstances: infrastructural development, agricultural development, and modernisation. They are bound to bring major changes in the social and economic conditions in the rural way of life. This study considers those three circumstances which have influenced social change and migratory change in *Isan* from the past to the present.

Firstly, according to Rogers (1989), infrastructural development in *Isan* began in the early twentieth century. The first railway line from Bangkok to Nakhon Ratchasima (Khorat) was opened in 1900, but it was not extended eastwards to Ubon Ratchathani until 1926, and the northern branch to Nong Khai was completed only in 1955. As late as 1962 there were practically no paved roads in the region. The take-off point came in 1958 with the construction of the 150 kilometres Friendship

Highway from Saraburi to Khorat. A huge infrastructural investment programme (including roads, dams, and irrigation schemes) was then started by American aid pouring into the Northeast to strengthen the Thai borders and stamp out any threat of communist insurgency[5] (Sluiter 1993: 61-2). Despite the fact that infrastructural development has encouraged socio-economic progress in both urban and rural areas, costs to the natural resources also have been paid. Distinctly, the development paved the way not only for commercial logging which damaged millions of hectares of forest areas in only a few decades but also enabled people to convert the land to grow export crops like cassava, maize and sugar cane. There is clear evidence that in 1951 sixty-five per cent of *Isan* was covered with forest, but in 1985 only eight per cent forest cover remained (Ibid.: 62). For that reason, infrastructural development has not only caused huge damage to the environment but also accelerated changes in the rural socio-economic base from subsistence to market orientation. Moreover, due to the improvement in transportation facilities, the villagers in the Northeast have been drawn closer to the cities both inside and outside the region. It has consequently become one of the factors facilitating the out-migration flows of many *Isan* people.

Secondly, as recently as the late 1950s agriculture in the region was a virtual rice monoculture, but its production process has been shifted towards intensification and commercialisation (Parnwell 1983: 25). The attention paid by the governmental and international organisations to the region for agricultural development began in the early 1960s (Kaewjinda 1992: 28-9). New cash crops and agricultural technology were launched to the rural Northeast. The *Isan* farmers switched themselves from subsistence and bartering farmers to cash-earning farmers and agricultural methods have shifted from labour-intensive to capital-intensive. Tractors, *'khwaay lek'* (two-wheeled ploughing machines) and other convenient agricultural machines replaced the animal and human labour forces (Parnwell 1993). Now the demand for agricultural labour is less than the supply. Unemployment and underemployment of agricultural labour has therefore encouraged the search for work elsewhere in response to the needs for a cash income for investing in new agricultural

development and technologies. This has also urged *Isan* farmers towards the cities as a pool of cheap labour in various sectors (Bell 1997: 67).

Finally, the rural development programmes promoted by the government have encouraged rural people to improve and shift their standard of living by imitating the urban ways of life, namely 'modernisation' (Muscat 1994, Mills 1997). Modernisation has flooded various urban-style consumer goods such as refrigerators, colour televisions, videos, motorcycles, pick-ups, cars, convenient machines, fashionable clothes, and so on. Such money as the villager gains is more likely to be used for these luxuries of modern living and improved housing than to be invested in farming. In order to buy these commodities people have to earn more by wage labouring, because the income from agriculture is not sufficient for those demands. The rapid increase of wage labourers caused by the flood of consumer goods has had a decisive impact on the village economy (Tomosugi 1991: 105).

These three changes have been causes and effects of each other. Agricultural development and modernisation need good infrastructural development to facilitate their related development activities. When infrastructure has been developed, it has accelerated agricultural development and modernisation into the rural sector. All these three development circumstances have effectively obliged *Isan* rural people to seriously depend upon the cash economy, which in turn has pushed them to leave their home village to be wage labourers in the cities.

The rural *Isan* society has now conclusively switched from a primarily subsistence or bartering economy to the cash economy. The needs for cash income and the modern life-style have had a profound effect in stimulating rural people to achieve their aspirations by moving to work in the city. Migrants, particularly young migrants, have been induced to go to Bangkok and other big cities where money, city life, and progressive civilisation are available.

The circumstance of cityward migration from *Isan* to Bangkok was firstly reported by Robert Textor (1961). His survey, 'From peasant to pedicab driver', indicated that in the 1950s the majority of Northeastern migrants entered the unskilled labour force as Bangkok's pedicab *(samlor)* drivers, while a few others

worked as construction workers. Most of the *samlor* drivers were around 25 years of age, were already married, and almost all were male farmers. This form of migration was described as a pattern very much like the cyclic migrants: men came to the city for some months or years, sent home much of their earnings, and then returned home to rejoin their families and cultivate their farms. Many repeated the cycle two, three, or more times. Obviously, they migrated because of the depression of the local agricultural economy and the lack of income-earning opportunities in their villages of origin. Many of them could earn almost as much in a month in Bangkok as they could expect to earn in a year from their farms. However, *samlors* were outlawed from the streets of Central Bangkok in 1960, and thus many of the older *samlor* drivers returned to live permanently in their villages, whilst younger migrants quickly established themselves as drivers of taxis and motorised *samlors* (or literally *'tuk-tuk'*). Others found work in factories and construction sites (Parnwell 1983: 44).

According to Textor, during the 1950s labour migration from *Isan* to Bangkok was strongly male-dominated, particularly by male household-heads. However, at that time, there would be a large number of *Isan* migrants flowing to work only for emergency cash needs in years which had flood or drought problems. They might spend six months or a year in the capital depending on the available labour force for farm work in their family. There is a clear evidence of the previous employment movement from the Northeast, noted by Klausner as follows:

> ". . . [G]oing back in time even before the Bangkok-Northeast railways line was built, northeasterners came to the Central Plain area principally for cash work. It was always the men over thirty who came, almost exclusively, to the capital and surrounding Central Plain area for a few months time. There was very little cash in the Northeast, and, yet, there was what might be termed emergency cash needs . . . [to recover from flood and drought problems.] " (1993: 102).

In reality, labour migration from the Northeast to the Central plain was established before the 1950s. There were well-established patterns of seasonal migration linking between *Isan* migrant workers and Central Region farms (Fuller et al 1983: 26-7). They came to work in the paddy fields rather than to work as wage labour in Bangkok. However, due to Chinese immigration being severely restricted by the Thai government, in 1949 demand for labour in various industries in Bangkok switched from Chinese immigrants to Thai labourers (Johnston 1975). This brought

about changes in the internal level of rural-urban migration. Many of them moved in from the countryside, including the Northeast. More and more *Isan* labourers headed to find work in Bangkok.

Since then the number of *Isan* migrants moving to work in Bangkok and the Central region as seasonal wage labourers increased steadily up until the late 1970s (Ashakul 1990: 6). The influx of *Isan* rural-urban migrants was boosted in the 1980s because of Thailand's economic boom (Phongpaichit and Baker 1998: 131). However, the boom of various industries in Bangkok and many provinces in the Central region was not the only factor in migratory change in the Northeast. One of the factors contributing to the migratory changes dealt partly with the failure of agricultural development efforts to the rural Northeast (Rigg 1989, Kaewjinda 1992, Parnwell 1993), and was partly a response to the uneven development and governmental maldevelopment strategies aimed at achieving rapid economic growth and modernisation (Parnwell and Arghiros 1996). Very few economic activities have been spread to rural areas to absorb the increased incidence of seasonal unemployment of the rural labour forces. Consequently, the so-called 'Extended Bangkok Metropolitan Region' or the EBMR (Parnwell and Wongsuphasawat 1997) has proven to be attractive to Northeastern migrants since it contains a wide range of better job opportunities, higher wage rates, better education opportunities, and the cultural and social amenities ('bright lights') of the cities.

In brief, it is evident that migratory changes in the Northeastern region have been accelerated as a consequence of various social and developmental changes, particularly in the last three decades. However, it is a matter of fact that whatever factors having influenced the migration decision-making process, social changes and developmental changes have not necessarily affected everyone to the same extent. This is because there are many variables that influence the decisions of different groups of migrants in different periods and circumstances. Although the discussion in this chapter does not centre on the gender dimensions, many points mentioned above indicate the interrelationships between gender and the pattern and process of migratory changes and social changes.

4.5 Concluding Remarks

Although the Northeast has become more integrated into national development policies, it is still a backward and underdeveloped area of the country, especially in economic terms. Its development of infrastructure and agriculture has not yielded the utmost economic benefits because of its topographical, geographical and environmental constraints. Moreover, these changes associated with modernisation have modified the *Isan* rural way of life from a basis of self-sufficient and bartering economy to the conditions of the cash economy and consumerism. An obvious changing circumstance and consequence is the influx of female migration to the capital city. Although rural-urban migration from the rural Northeast is not new, its pattern and behaviour have long been male-dominated up until the last two decades. It may be true that those social, economic and developmental changes have accelerated female migration from the region, but the direct influences come from subsequently changing patterns of household relations and gender relations among rural people. The notions of individual aspirations, household gender-role and economic-role expectations, and household obligations have been discussed in this chapter in order to explore their fundamental interrelationships with female migration and behaviour of *Isan* contemporary migration, which is conceptualised as *'pai thiaw Krungthep'* with two main motivations: *'pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham'* and *'pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn'*. Purposively, the discussion reflects some fundamental influential factors in the process of migration decision-making, which have been shown to be not only economic but also non-economic in character. All these influential factors will be applied in the next chapter to explore the circumstances of out-migration and return-migration in the study communities, and will then be examined in relation to the process of migration decision-making in Chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter Notes

[1] Traditionally, the *het namkan kin namkan* relationship began with the parents helping the daughter's household and continued with the daughter's household becoming increasingly independent and finally looking after the parents. In the early stages, the daughter's husband is almost like a farm labourer, providing labour but taking almost no part in management. Later, he begins to participate in managing part of the parents' fields expected to be his wife's future inheritance. When the parents retire from farming, the land is effectively managed by each daughter's household, even if transfer has not formally been complied (Fukui 1993: 333). Thus, the *het namkan kin namkan* between parents and children is closely connected with the family cycle, inheritance, and the transmission of management.

[2] According to the uxorial inheritance customs in Ban Don Daeng, Khon Kaen Province in Northeastern Thailand, observations by Hayao Fukui (1993: 144) indicated clear evidence that daughters tend to inherit land, particularly paddy land, while sons usually inherit movable property (money, cattle, and so on) or upland. Although land is often sold between siblings after inheritance, the ownership of paddy land tends to concentrate in the hands of the daughters/sisters.

[3] However, this is not a strict rule applied for all households. In cases where parents have large land holdings, these tend to be divided between sons and daughters with the youngest daughters receiving the largest share, while smaller holdings tend to be inherited by daughters or only by the youngest daughter. Farmland is also allocated to sons when the parents have no daughter.

[4] Spending a few months in the monkhood is among the most important obligations a son has to do for his parents (Mills 1993: 20).

[5] According to Dixon (1977: 222), road construction in the region was geared to security rather than development, and a whole series of schemes were primarily designed to increase the government's popularity in sensitive areas of the region.

CHAPTER FIVE

Roi-et, the Study Communities, and Factors of Migration

The main purpose of this chapter is to explore the socio-economic background of Roi-et Province and the study communities in Phon Thong District, and to discuss the significance and influence of economic and non-economic factors on outward and return-migration in the area. The discussion contributes to the fundamental understanding of the process of migration decision-making affected by those factors. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section predominantly discusses the general socio-economic conditions in Roi-et, which are considered as push factors that influence cityward migration. The discussion uses basic socio-economic information from 1995, before the current economic crisis in Thailand, because this can represent the prevailing socio-economic circumstances in the study area without any latent factors. As we shall see later in this thesis, the economic crisis has affected the rural people's way of life in many respects, largely because the village economy had become somewhat dependent upon remittances from out-migrants to Bangkok and its vicinity. This is where the effects of the economic crisis were most apparent. The second section introduces the study communities in terms of location and general environment, explores household and demographic characteristics, and clarifies the communities' current socio-economic circumstances. The final section examines and discusses the factors involved in out- and return-migration. The discussion covers consideration of economic and non-economic factors, which act as push and pull factors in migration from the study communities, and an examination of the gender dimensions of household expectations and individual aspirations towards outward and return-migration. This also examines the circumstances of migration as *'pai thiaw Krungthep'* and the other

significant reasons for migration among male and female migrants and prospective migrants.

5.1 The Socio-Economic Conditions in Roi-et Province

Roi-et is one of the 19 provinces *(Changwat)* located in the Northeastern Region of Thailand, occupying an area of about 8,299.46 square kilometres, or around 5,187,155 *rai.* Roi-et has a common boundary with Kalasin and Mukdahan in the North, Yasothon in the East, Si Sa Ket and Surin in the South, and Mahasarakham in the West (NSO 1996: 29). Roi-et is divided into 20 districts *(Amphoe),* 181 communes *(Tambon),* 2,174 villages *(Muban),* and 1 municipal area (Roi-et Provincial Office 1997). The total enumerated population on December 31, 1997 was 1,302,422 persons, of whom 652,107 were males and 650,315 were females. Roi-et is one of the more densely settled provinces in the Northeast, with 156 people per square kilometre, compared with 122 for the whole region (see Table 1 in Appendix 1). Most of the population live in rural areas. According to the national population statistics, in 1995 about 97.22 per cent of the population in the province were inhabitants of non-municipal areas while only 2.78 per cent were residing in the municipal area (NSO 1996). These figures are supposed to reflect the circumstances of rural-urban imbalance in Roi-et, which also implies rural-urban inequality and urban bias in development. However, although it is a fact that non-municipal (rural) people in the commercially lagging Northeast (like in Roi-et) generally suffer from poverty and underdevelopment to a greater extent than those of municipal (urban) areas, there are serious questions concerning whether it is correct to conceive of discrete 'rural' and 'urban' entities, and thus relationships (Rigg 1997: 91-2). This has been discussed as a result not only of deficiencies in registration methods for the official definition of rural and urban inhabitants, but also the degree of circulation between rural and urban areas (*Ibid.*: 92). This applies equally to the circumstances of circular migration in Roi-et. Therefore, the rural-urban imbalance does not really reflect the true or entire circumstances of rural-urban inequality and urban bias in development.

Roi-et was settled relatively early in the history of the Northeastern Region, and throughout the nineteenth century it was one of the main centres of economic and political activity beyond Khorat (Lightfoot et al. 1983: 5). Although it has a long history of settlement and development, it remains socio-economically backward. This is partly due to its location being some 512 kilometres from Bangkok, Thailand's centre of economic development and urbanisation. Furthermore, Roi-et is located off the principal arterial road links and railway networks, thus lacking suitable provision of transportation. The unsuitable topographical and geographical conditions also cause disadvantages for agricultural production, which is the main economic sector in the province. These disadvantages have affected the Gross Provincial Product (GPP) of Roi-et, in particular its agricultural sector, which produces only around 20 per cent of the total GPP. Table 5-1 shows that in 1995 the largest share of GPP was the sector of wholesale and retail trade, constituting around 25.42 per cent of the total. The annual growth rate of GPP in Roi-et was only 4.83 per cent in 1995 (at constant prices), compared with the GRP annual growth rate of 6.4 per cent for the Northeast and on GDP annual growth rate of 8.4 per cent (NSO, 1996). The total GPP of Roi-et was 24,235 million Baht and the GPP per capita was 20,247 Baht. Using the GPP per capita, Roi-et was lower than the annual per capita GDP (Gross Domestic Products) (70,754 Baht) by a factor of around 3, and lower than the annual GRP (Gross Regional Products) of the Northeast (24,834 Baht) by 18.47 per cent (Roi-et Provincial Office 1997: 4). This shows that Roi-et is one of the poorest provinces in the region and the country as a whole. According to the report of the Roi-et Provincial Office, in 1995 the GPP per capita of Roi-et was ranked sixty-ninth from 76 provinces in the entire country. Hence, Roi-et was the eighth poorest province in the country. Being one of the poorest provinces in the country creates a strong image in the people's minds of a better prospective life elsewhere, which partly drives its rural people to move to find their fortune in the big cities.

Table 5-1 *Gross Provincial Product (GPP) in Roi-et, between 1991-1995.*

(Unit: million Baht)

Sectors	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995		% of annual growth rate[1] (constant prices)
					No.	%	
Agriculture	4,432	5,551	4,882	4,685	4,984	20.57	2.45
Mining & quarrying	16	15	15	21	26	0.11	3.14
Manufacturing	701	768	1,078	1,193	1,290	5.32	3.27
Construction	1,107	1,099	1,113	1,724	2,062	8.51	7.88
Electricity-gas-water	165	222	257	280	309	1.28	5.95
Transportation & communication	696	811	1,118	1,230	1,231	5.08	8.32
Wholesale and retail trade	3,902	4,355	4,852	5,498	6,161	25.42	5.12
Banking, insurance and real estate	414	534	747	977	1,159	4.78	9.48
Ownership of dwelling	874	861	929	1,035	1,075	4.43	1.93
Public administration and defence	1,285	1,563	1,767	1,824	2,234	9.22	6.70
Services	2,100	2,485	2,868	3,041	3,704	15.28	5.08
Total GPP	15,692	18,263	19,667	21,510	24,235	100.00	4.83
Per capita income (Baht per person)	13,693	15,744	16,672	18,151	20,247	--	--
Population 1,000 persons)	1,140	1,160	1,173	1,185	1,197	--	--

Source: National Economic and Social Development Board.

[1] *Chulalongkorn University, Social Research Institute (CUSRI) 1994: 91.*

The main agricultural product in Roi-et is rice. In 1995, 83.32 per cent of the total cultivated area produced rice, 7.79 per cent consisted of upland crops (e.g. cassava, sugar cane, kenaf and maize), and the rest was used for vegetables, fruit, and other products (Table 5-2). The provincial administration has been encouraging farmers to shift away from subsistence wet rice to the cultivation of upland cash crops, and also to make greater use of modern farm inputs (fertilisers and pesticides) and new agricultural technologies. However, the market prices for upland crops (in particular cassava) are very variable and unpredictable, which frequently acts as a disincentive for farmers to invest their scarce financial resources in upland crop production. Moreover, Roi-et now has practically no frontier land into which the agricultural area could be extended, and the government has not done much to intensify agriculture which is still dependent almost everywhere on rainfall rather than on irrigation. All these conditions contribute to low agricultural development in

the province, and also drive rural people to seek alternative work in the non-agricultural sector.

Table 5-2 *Land use patterns in Roi-et, 1995*

Patterns of land use	Rai	%
Total area	3,351,010	100.00
Housing area	65,694	1.96
Agricultural area	3,122,609	93.19
Paddy	2,791,917	83.32
Upland crops	264,877	7.90
- Cassava	163,874	4.89
- Sugar cane	76,093	2.27
- Kenaf	12,815	0.38
- Others	12,095	0.36
Fruits and tree crops	61,171	1.83
Vegetables and flowers	4,644	0.14
Idle land	59,069	1.76
Others	103,638	3.09

Source: Office of Agricultural Economic, Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives

Another manifestation of the province's economic backwardness is a severe shortage of non-agricultural employment opportunities. Attempts are being made by some government organisations to tap some of the potential which exists for the development of small-scale (village-based) cottage industries (Kaewjinda 1992). The government has also instituted regional development policies to encourage the redistribution of industrial development from Bangkok to the big cities of the Northeast, but it is fair to say that these attempts have failed significantly to create any effective industrial centre in the region (Dixon 1977, Rigg 1997). Hence, employment opportunities in the rural areas at present are generally limited to agricultural activities and construction work. As a result of low benefits from agriculture and limited opportunities for off-farm employment, rural people in Roi-et have for a long time preferred to migrate to seek work in Bangkok, where employment opportunities are known to exist, rather than work on the farm (Textor 1961, Lightfoot et al. 1983, Kaewjinda 1992).

5.2 The Study Communities

5.2.1 Phon Thong and the location of the study communities

Phon Thong District is located in the north of the province, around 48 kilometres from Roi-et city centre. It occupies 778 square kilometres, or around 585,025 *rai*. The district is divided into 14 communes, 163 villages, and 1 sanitary district, named *'Sukhaphibarn Waeng'*.

The major occupation of the people in Phon Thong is agriculture. The main crop is rice (particularly glutinous rice), which is predominantly grown as a subsistence crop for household consumption. The next important crops are cassava and sugar cane, which are grown mainly as cash crops. In general, the soil in this area is suitable for upland crops rather than paddy. Large areas of upland crops cover the north of the district, including the study communities in *Tambon Nong-Yai*. The upland cropping areas have been expanded from time to time due to the increased demand for cassava and sugar cane from the cassava mills and a sugar-refinery in the study area. In fact, most factories in Phon Thong are food-processing industries, but there are also some small industries (such as cement blocks, printing firms, and so on), and local cottage industries (such as mat making, silk weaving, gem-stone cutting, and so on). The sugar-refinery, named *'Mitraphon'*, is the only large-scale factory, located in Kuchinarai District (in Kalasin Province), around 5 kilometres from the study communities.

The field study was conducted in four villages located in the north of Phon Thong District: Ban Nong-Yai *(Mu 1),* Ban Noon Phoe *(Mu 2),* Ban Nong Thabkhrua *(Mu 9),* and Ban Kud Hae *(Mu 4)* (see Map 3-2 and 3-3). They are divided into two study sites: the Nong-Yai community (comprising *Mu 1, Mu 2, and Mu 9*) and Ban Kud Hae *(Mu 4)*. The Nong-Yai community constitutes villages that have the same roots in terms of social and household relations. They were established by native people during the same period of over 75 years ago (in 1924). Its social relations are based on close kinship; the largest family name in the Nong-Yai community (as well as in the whole of *Tambon Nong-Yai*) is *'Phonyiam'*. The villagers' social relationships and networks are, therefore, very strong and closely connected. In contrast, Kud Hae

was established by a small group of evacuees from Ban Kao Noon Khor, which is now in Kuchinarai District, as of 1916. They came to settle there but remained somewhat isolated, having fewer social and economic connections with the native people. Generally, these two sites have three distinctive differences. Firstly, they have different roots of kinship, social relations and networks, which translate into different migration networks and patterns between the two communities. Secondly, their economic conditions are different due to their different topographical and geographical environments. Kud Hae has been recognised as having the worst agricultural conditions and being the poorest village in *Tambon Nong-Yai.* Finally, their experience of state development assistance has been highly unequal; because the Nong-Yai community has long been the centre of the commune, and has mostly been governed by *Kamnan* (the head of the *Tambon* organisation) from the *Phonyiam* family, most development projects have been implemented in the Nong-Yai community, while Kud Hae has long been neglected.

The agriculture in the area depends mainly upon rainfall although there are natural water resources and small irrigation weirs throughout the area. The Young river flows past the northeastern part of the study area, and supplies water for farming in the flooded area in Ban Kud Hae and Ban Dong Dib. Several creeks, named *'Huai Som-sanuk'* and *'Huai Sala',* also provide water for farming in almost all the other villages in *Tambon Nong-Yai.* 18 other swamps and 5 small irrigation weirs in the commune only supply agricultural water for rice farming in a limited area, and cannot store enough water for domestic consumption throughout the year.

5.2.2 ***Household demographic characteristics and gender composition***

The total population in the two study communities was 2,815 people in 1998, or around 27.76 per cent of the total population in *Tambon Nong-Yai.* The Nong-Yai community has 2,371 people and 449 households, while Ban Kud Hae has only 444 people and 99 households. Kud Hae is the smallest village in *Tambon Nong-Yai,* according to the number of population (Table 5-3). The average population per household in the study communities is 5.3 and 4.48 persons respectively. Compared

to the past, the family sizes in both study communities now are smaller than in the last decade, where the average was generally more than 6 persons per household. This circumstance is recognised by the *Kamnan* as being a result of the economic constraints. The villagers cannot afford to have more than two or three children with a limitation of agricultural land to produce enough rice for consumption and cassava for cash.

Table 5-3 Number of households and population in *Tambon Nong-Yai* in 1998.

Village Number	Muban's Name	No. of Households	Population (persons)			Males/ 100 females
			Male	Female	Total	
1	***Nong-Yai***	***153***	***373***	***396***	***769***	***94.2***
2	***Noon Phoe***	***175***	***522***	***531***	***1,053***	***98.3***
3	Nong Wang Hae	157	493	537	1,030	91.8
4	***Kud Hae***	***99***	***234***	***210***	***444***	***111.4***
5	Dong Dib	112	255	271	526	94.1
6	Bataka	152	375	376	751	99.7
7	Noon Laad	89	254	228	482	111.4
8	Don Chaad	268	541	699	1,240	77.4
9	***Nong Thabkhrua***	***121***	***277***	***272***	***549***	***101.8***
10	Khok Larm	257	553	587	1,140	94.2
11	Nong Maew Phong	137	405	387	792	104.6
12	Phai Kham	189	379	373	752	101.6
13	Bataka	157	293	321	614	91.3
	Total	2,066	4,954	5,188	10,142	95.5

Source: Community Development Office, Phon Thong District, Roi-et.

Traditionally, households in the communities were surrounded by large compounds,[1] which nowadays are shared by as many as three or four households because of the limited amount of available land and the steadily increasing population. According to the village headmen *(Phuyai-ban)* in the study communities, the most common type of family now is the nuclear family consisting of a husband, wife, and their unmarried children. Only the households headed by a villager older than 50 years of age traditionally consist of an extended family, comprising elderly parents, a daughter's family, and/or unmarried children. There is also a new type of extended family, which comprises elderly parents and their grandchildren, while their parents migrate to work in the cities. Many young married migrants leave their children with their parents when they go to work in Bangkok to earn more income. They remit part of the money earned to their parents for the dual purpose of caring for their children and obligatory payments to their parents.[2] This is often found among families that are poor and have less than 10 *rai* of agricultural land. There is

also a new type of nuclear family which contains only elderly couples, or a single elderly person of either sex. They all have children or grandchildren working elsewhere in the cities. Although they have close relatives in the village, with whom they keep in close contact, they prefer to live alone and receive money from their migrant children or grandchildren.

Obviously, matrilocal residence is still an important custom for both nuclear and extended families in the study communities. However, a daughter from a poor family, who marries a young man from a better-off family, will most likely prefer to reside in her husband's parent's compound which is generally located in the same village or in a village nearby. This is so that she can easily come back to visit and take care of her parents. This alternative type of residential arrangement is quite common in the study communities.

Gender composition is another important point to consider in terms of household and demographic characteristics; here, again, there is a noticeable difference between the two study communities. The sex ratio, defined as the number of males for every 100 females (Table 5-3), shows that in Ban Nong-Yai and Ban Noon Phoe that there are obviously more women than men (100 : 94.2 and 100 : 98.3 respectively), while in Ban Nong Thabkhrua there are slightly more men than women (a ratio of 101.8 : 100). In contrast, the sex ratio of 111.4 : 100 in Ban Kud Hae indicates the obviously larger number of men than women registered as living in the village. Moreover, the figure in Table 5-4, which considers the percentage of population by sex and age group, shows that in the Nong-Yai community there are more females than males in every age group with the exception of 'between 18.1 and 50 years'. Conversely, in Ban Kud Hae there are more males than females in every age group with the exception of 'more than 50 years'.

Table 5-4 *Number and percentage of population in the study communities in 1998, by sex and age group.*

Unit: persons

Population by sex and age group	Nong-Yai		Kud Hae		Total of Tambon Nong-Yai	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total population	2,371	100.00	444	100.00	10,142	100.00
Male	1,172	49.43	234	52.70	4,954	48.85
Female	1,199	50.57	210	48.30	5,188	51.15
0.1-6 years	277	100.00	47	100.00	324	100.00
Male	138	49.82	24	51.06	162	50.00
female	139	50.18	23	48.84	162	50.00
6.1-12 years	219	100.00	46	100.00	265	100.00
Male	107	48.86	28	60.87	135	50.94
female	112	51.14	18	39.13	130	49.06
12.1-18 years	625	100.00	63	100.00	688	100.00
Male	305	48.80	32	50.79	337	48.95
Female	320	51.20	31	49.21	351	51.02
18.1-50 years	914	100.00	236	100.00	1,150	100.00
Male	464	50.77	129	54.66	593	51.57
Female	450	49.23	107	45.34	557	48.43
More than 50 years	336	100.00	52	100.00	388	100.00
Male	158	47.02	21	40.38	179	46.13
Female	178	52.98	31	59.62	209	53.87

Source: Community Development Office, Phon Thong District, Roi-et.

According to the *Phuyai-ban*, the reason why more males than females of the 18-50 age group live in the village is related to the effects of the current economic crisis in Thailand. More migrant males than females have returned home since mid-1997 due largely to the fact that the males, especially young men, have found it difficult to survive in Bangkok during this period. Meanwhile, the female migrants have been able to survive even though their earnings had decreased relative to before the crisis. This is mainly because most young male migrants tended to spend more of their income on entertainment and rarely saved money from their urban earnings. Therefore, they had no or less money set aside to support themselves in Bangkok during the harsh times of the economic crisis, unlike the female migrants. They thus had to return home as an individual survival strategy, especially where their rural household could not support them through unemployment in the city.

5.2.3 Socio-economic structures

Agriculture and wage labour form the basis of the economy in the study communities. Most households in the communities earn their living primarily from agricultural production by engaging in both rice farming and cash cropping. Only 5 households in the Nong-Yai community who have no agricultural land earn their living solely from non-agricultural activities, such as through work as wage

labourers, traders and mechanics (repairing motorcycles and tractors). Table 5-5 also shows that there are only 6.01 per cent (or 27 households) of the total households in the Nong-Yai community which earn their main income from wage labour, while the comparable figure for Ban Kud Hae is 21.21 per cent (or 21 households). Moreover, every *Phuyai-ban* in the study communities insists that almost every agricultural household has a supplementary income from at least one household member who migrates to work in Bangkok as a seasonal or circular migrant. In the Nong-Yai community there are only 29 households (6.46 per cent) who have no household member working in Bangkok, while in Ban Kud Hae every household has at least one member currently migrating to the cities. This circumstance implies that agriculture in the communities cannot produce sufficient income for these 'rural' households, and thus many of them have to depend upon the income from wage labouring and migrants' remittances. In *Tambon Nong-Yai* a large number of households which are solely dependent upon wage labour are found in Ban Nong Waeng Hae, Ban Don Chaad, and Ban Bataka, but generally their significance is minimal.

Table 5-5 *Main occupations in the study communities in 1998*

Unit: households

Items	Nong-Yai		Kud Hae		Total of Tambon Nong-Yai	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total households	449	100.00	99	100.00	2,066	100.00
Agricultural households	444	98.89	99	100.00	1,970	95.35
Occupations						
- Agriculture & wage labour	417	92.87	78	78.79	1,807	87.46
- Wage labour & agriculture	27	6.01	21	21.21	163	7.89
- Only wage labour & others	5	1.12	-	-	96	4.65

Source: Community Development Office, Phon Thong District, Roi-et.

Rice, as the staple food of the village household, is the most important crop in the communities (Table 5-5). Glutinous rice, grown primarily for consumption, is the main crop for every household. A household having to buy rice is considered to be one sign of poverty (although, obviously, there are exceptions to this 'rule'). The large group of small farmers who hold less than 10 *rai* of agricultural land always grow glutinous rice in preference to cash crops (cassava and sugar cane) for subsistence needs. With such small landholdings, it is no surprise that many of them grow insufficient rice for household consumption. According to the *Phuyai-ban*, in 1997

there were 83 and 22 households in the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae respectively who faced rice shortages. They had to purchase rice for more than three months annually before the next rice-harvesting period. In the cases of medium agricultural land holdings between 11-20 *rai*, only upland areas which are unsuitable for rice farming are used for cash cropping and the rest are used to cultivate rice mainly for household consumption purposes. They may sell some rice when they have a surplus. A small group of large-scale land holdings of more than 20 *rai* consist of farmers who can manage to grow both rice and upland crops for cash annually.

Table 5-6 *Land use in the study communities in 1998.*

Items	The Nong-Yai community		Ban Kud Hae		Total of Tambon Nong-Yai	
	rai	%	rai	%	rai	%
Total area	9,667	100.00	4,062	100.00	51,874	100.00
Agricultural area	8,152	84.33	3,250	80.01	43,652	84.15
Paddy	5,059	2.33	1,780	43.82	21,357	41.17
Upland crops	2,209	22.85	1,263	31.09	18,864	36.37
Fruits and vegetables	460	4.46	115	2.83	1,999	3.85
Others (rubber, eucalyptus)	424	4.39	92	2.27	1,432	2.76
Housing area	343	3.55	65	1.60	1,022	1.97
Public land use	539	5.57	272	6.70	2,715	5.23
Community forest	258	2.67	345	8.49	3,345	6.45
Others (road, water resources)	375	3.88	130	3.20	1,140	2.20

Source: Community Development Office, Phon Thong District, Roi-et.

Apart from agricultural activities, chickens are raised mainly for household consumption. Only some households, who have small rice mills in the village, raise pigs for additional income. There are 9 and 1 rice mills in the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae respectively. Some poor households raise buffalo and/or cattle and keep them for a few years, selling them on when capital is required. This constitutes a form of money saving for future expenses. Some well-off households buy buffaloes and cattle as an investment, rearing the animals for a short time and then selling them at cattle markets held in Phon Thong.

During the dry season, some villagers in the Nong-Yai community use the land surrounding swamps and near creeks to produce vegetables and tobacco for home consumption and cash respectively. Those in Ban Kud Hae use the banks of the Young River for the same purpose.

After the harvesting periods for rice and cassava, many villagers earn extra income from tending other farmers' cassava plots, either in the village or in neighbouring villages, for eventual harvesting and sale to the local cassava mills. The villagers who own trucks will set up a group of close relatives and/or friends, consisting of around 15-16 persons, to share their costs and benefits in tending cassava plots. This pattern of co-operative work can be considered to be a new type of social relationship in the study area, here referred to in Thai-Lao as *'het nam kan pan kan'*. This socio-economic relationship started a few years ago. Other villagers who have no truck and capital mostly earn some extra money from hiring their labour for work in cassava and sugar cane fields. Some of them also travel to work as sugar cane cutters in the Western and Eastern regions (e.g. Suphan Buri, Kanchana Buri, Rayong, Chon Buri, Chantha Buri, and Prachuab Khirikhan).

As we have seen, however, villagers in the study communities cannot derive their entire livelihood from agriculture alone. A supplementary cash income is necessary. Every household has to sell their agricultural products in order to pay back their agricultural loans, to finance their children's education, purchase consumer goods for the whole family, and fulfil the household's needs or individual aspirations (such as repairing or rebuilding the house, buying luxury goods or a motorcycle, and so on). In the study communities, most agricultural households now earn a supplementary income by selling cassava and some surplus rice, but it is not enough for the households' needs and wants. As a result of this, incomes from wage-labouring and remittances from cityward migrants have become vital for the families' needs and wants. However, as we shall see below, it is the contention of this study that non-economic factors also have an important influence on migration in the study communities.

5.3 ***Factors of Migration in the Study Communities***

This section mainly discusses the factors which influence migration decisions in the study communities. It focuses on the two fundamental migration patterns, out-migration and return-migration, in order to clarify the significance and influence

of economic and non-economic factors upon the migration decision-making process. Based on Figure 2-1 in Chapter 2, the context of discussion is roughly distinguished by two levels: internal to the household (household and individual), and external to the household (inside and outside the community). The influential economic factors are primarily classified as migratory income and remittances and employment opportunities in the places of destination, while non-economic factors comprise modernisation in the destination area (which influences modern life-style preference amongst individual migrants and prospective migrants) and social norms and values including social mobility, parental obligations and gender norms (which determine household economic-role and gender-role expectations between male and female members).

5.3.1 Out-migration

The process and pattern of out-migration in the study area is generally little different from that in the Northeast as a whole. It consists predominantly of temporary movement rather than permanent out-migration. However, the pattern of temporary migration has changed, over time, from seasonal migration to circular migration. There is evidence of substantial seasonal migration in the past, and significant short-term or circular movement at present. In comparison, migrants in the study communities now move to work in Bangkok for a longer period of time than those in the past, depending upon their migration motivations, which basically tend to differ between migrants in different groups of age, sex and marital status. According to the *Phuyai-ban,* nowadays most single and young men and women like to move away from their home village for a period of time, and then return to get married and farm in their village. Many of them just want to *pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn* for a while and come back to live in the environment which they are familiar with. A young respondent at Din Daeng, in Bangkok, explained *"living in Bangkok remains an unrealisable and uncomfortable life for me. I expect to go back to live in Ban Kud Hae after getting married and, if it can be realised, after collecting enough money to build my own house."*

Sumalee Phonyiam, a young female migrant from Ban Noon Phoe, suggested *"At the time of our initial migration, many of us, young female migrants, faced the unknown circumstances with a feeling of enormous insecurity. We felt that we were being removed from the secure village environment and thrust into a strange world where we did not yet know the rules. We also experienced the tension between the pain of departure and the fear and loneliness in Bangkok at the same time as being dazzled by the bright lights, and the plentiful opportunities that the city offered for us to actually achieve our aspirations. From my opinion, Ban Noon Phoe is a pleasant and healthy place, while Bangkok symbolises disorder, chaos, and evil. When I first came to Bangkok, everything was so different, the people as well as the physical environment. The language, the customs, the attitudes were all strange. They were all new for up-country people like me. I felt lost, alone, and afraid that I would be cheated and taken advantage of by the Bangkokians."*

However, most of them accepted that although they experienced fear of the unknown as well as anxiety associated with the urgency to find work and the need to find a place to settle, they had to cope with living there since in Bangkok they might achieve something better and fulfil their individual aspirations and household expectations according to both their economic and non-economic motivations.

Out-migration in the Northeast has long been recognised as a result of economic factors being both push factors, like poverty and low agricultural incomes in the home villages, and pull factors, like the higher income and more employment opportunities in Bangkok and other big cities. This judgement might be obvious for a macro-level analysis, but it is somewhat different for micro-level analysis focusing on individual and household circumstances in which non-economic factors also have a distinctive influence on the migration decision-making process (Textor 1961, Lightfoot et al. 1983, Fuller et al. 1985, Kaewjinda 1992, Mills 1993 and 1997).

Superficially, the migration pattern in the study communities seems to be governed by the demand side of the labour market in Bangkok, with those individuals who are best suited for the determinant types of employment having the highest possibility of migrating, regardless of the circumstances of their household

division of labour. This implies that the decisions of migrants and duration of the migration spell are not highly influenced by their household socio-economic bases in the village, as tended to occur in the past. Although the migrants from both the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae usually state that the economic constraints and the lack of employment opportunities in their home village are the main reasons why they migrate to work in Bangkok, from the in-depth interviews and participant observation, it has been observed that economic motivations alone cannot fully explain the phenomenon. What forces migrants to Bangkok are not only economic constraints and limited employment opportunities, so much as a complex social and cultural process. Particular attention should be paid to sojourners who are mostly young men and women, and often single. For the migrants in the study communities, the economic motive is most frequently attributed to married migrants, while the motive for attaining modern life-style preferences seems strongest among the younger generation. Many young respondents address the issue of the relative influence of the bright lights of Bangkok in determining out-migration behaviour. However, marital status change has been suggested as a relevant motivation factor either to return to the home village or to migrate over a longer period. This is actually a circumstance of the changing process in the migration life cycle.

Non-economic factors of migration, not only modernisation but also social norms and values, have a crucial role in either facilitating or inhibiting an individual migration decision. Social norms and values in this study are categorised into three main socio-cultural contexts: social mobility, parental obligations and gender norms.

Social mobility as a motivation for out-migration has been emphasised as a consequence of educational and occupational advancement (Payne and Abbott 1990, Elliot 1997). Aspirations for higher social status are seen to be frustrated by the lack of opportunities for educational and occupational advancement in rural communities. As a result, the decision to move, usually to an urban area, is made with a goal of enhancing opportunities for social mobility. Migration to Bangkok is perceived as the major means of enhancing social mobility by most young villagers in the study communities. Success in building up their own career is a source of pride and prestige for young migrants, while for the migrant households the upgrading of

property and the improvement of the standard of living create a means of raising their social status in the village society.

At present, money is a critical concern of life for villagers in the study area, as well as in rural *Isan* as a whole. Money is essential for every aspect of their economic and social activities, and not just a means for surviving or satisfying household basic needs. Money is also seen as a critical resource for maintaining dignity and respect within the community. *Pho Prem* (father *Prem*), one of the formerly poorest farmers in Ban Nong-Thabkhrua, has become rich since 1992 when his two daughters migrated to work in Germany. They have remitted to him a lot of money for building a new modern-style house and buying a motorcycle and other electrical appliances. He, subsequently, has received more respect from other villagers than in the past, although many villagers gossip about the event, focusing particularly on the occupations of his daughters. They have been suspected of working as prostitutes. Obviously, money or benefit from migration, particularly in the form of luxurious commodities, is one of the most important means by which the villagers express and lay claim to a high social status in the study communities. The aesthetic styles and standard of material display are valued for increasing the convenience of daily life and bolstering local claims to 'progress' as a measure of social mobility. Therefore, migration into wage employment in Bangkok for accumulating money is a foundation for migrants' individual aspirations and household expectations, attributing wealth and social status.

To clarify parental obligation as an influential factor of out-migration is difficult to unravel because it seems to be a pattern of symbolic interaction between children and their parents. Many young migrants in the study communities may verbally express that an obligation to the parents is their main motive to work in Bangkok, but in reality, for many cases, their main purpose is to experience the modern way of life in the capital city. However, this circumstance is traditionally different between daughters and sons. In general, according to *Isan* traditional practices, a good child has to look after and take care of his/her parents, work for and help his/her parents, support the family's day-to-day needs, obey and respect

his/her parents, and make meritorious offerings when his/her parents die (Mills 1993: 94). Specifically, *Isan* daughters traditionally have to fulfil their household obligations by contributing to the material well-being of their parents. Young and single migrant daughters, therefore, are more likely to be expected regularly to remit supplementary income to the parents than migrant sons who can ordain as a monk for their traditionally obligatory 'repayment'. More specifically, to take care of the ageing parents who can no longer work to support themselves is supposed to be the duty or household obligation of the youngest daughter. It is accepted as entirely normal and correct. Although she works far away from home, the youngest migrant daughter is usually expected to return home for this duty. There is an interesting finding in Ban Kud Hae that some youngest-daughter migrants choose to migrate and try to build up their own career in Bangkok as an attempt to get away from the pressures and obligations of the close-knit family. They initially expect to find a well-paid job and remit money back home as well as trying to settle in the big city, but finally they have had to return home to care for their ageing parents.

Srinuan, a youngest-daughter migrant from Ban Kud Hae, for instance, went to work in Bangkok for many years and sent money back home monthly. However, she was forced by her parents and siblings to come back home due to the duty of caring for the parents. She complains that she wants to escape from this duty because it is a very hard work to care for ageing parents. She has to provide everything the parents want. Although it is a traditional practice and most youngest daughters are pleased to do this, she still thinks that it is an unfair duty for the youngest daughters. It seems to be a payment for her sins from her previous life.

In the past, young and single women traditionally demonstrated their gratitude for parental sacrifices by contributing their labour to both household tasks and agricultural production. They were not allowed to migrate anywhere else. Since the migration boom in the 1970s, they mostly have changed their contribution by promising their parents to remit money for hiring agricultural labour and providing for their general material well-being. They consider migration to work in Bangkok as a means to respond to their parental obligations. However, the migration

manifestation of parental obligation is basically different between male and female migrants, and between rich and poor families. To investigate this circumstance, it is necessary to examine parental obligations together with household expectations.

Many young girls from poor families in the study communities have been expected, even required, by their parents to migrate in pursuit of earning remittance money to help meet family needs. After finishing primary school, many parents try to find connections with out-migrants or their relatives to encourage their daughters to work in Bangkok. Nowadays, there may be only a few parents who expect their daughters to stay and help them with domestic and farm work as a way of meeting their household obligations. Working in Bangkok and remitting supplementary income are deeply expected by most parents as a form of obligatory payment from their migrant daughters. At the same time, a migrant son is not expected so much to remit money back home. Many parents explain that their son should seek experience outside the community before managing his own family after getting married.

Indeed, the effects of household obligation and expectation as factors encouraging or inhibiting migration appear to be inextricably bound up not only with each other but also with other social fabric elements (such as social norms, migration norms, gender norms and so on) in the migration decision-making process. The whole social fabric of the *Isan* rural community - its distinctive set of norms, values, beliefs, and customary practices - are considered as 'filters' in the migration decision-making process (Mills 1993). They have influenced the evaluation of the positive and negative social and economic impacts of migration to any alternative destination, and influenced the subsequent decision to move or to stay. A staying strategy may also arise from a perception that the evaluation process has resulted in an excess of positive over negative impacts favouring the home village. In the past, the migration norms in the study communities considered migration to Bangkok as a dangerous practice for women, therefore female migration was restricted. In contrast, at present, migration has become habitual. Most parents give their permission when a daughter wishes to leave home for Bangkok. They hope their daughter will find a good job with sufficient wages that she can assist the

family either by regular wage remittance or, as is more common, by periodic contributions of larger sums. Movement to Bangkok itself has become a new community norm. It has been accepted and recognised as a part of village life for young daughters to be absent from the village for many years to work in Bangkok. Although in the Nong-Yai community, for instance, there are alternative non-migratory solutions open to movers to improve their household agricultural income, they are not seriously considered because both migrants and their parents all accept, without any doubt, the positive impacts of working in Bangkok in the process of migration evaluation.

Gender norms involving out-migration can be considered in the aspects of economic-role and gender-role expectations between daughter and son in the sphere of household relations. In the study communities, devotion to the family unit is a crucial gender norm for daughters. Beginning in their early teens, young men spend much of their time hanging about with friends in the community and neighbouring communities where they may go seeking fun and entertainment. This often limits their daily economic contribution to the household, even though at times of peak labour demands these young men work long hours in the fields along with the rest of the family. Moreover, many interviewed parents complain about how much money they have to pay for entertainment for their sons living in the village. By going to Bangkok, most parents hope that their sons will at least be able to support themselves. They thereby cannot only reduce the cost of supporting the living expenses of their sons but they may also receive some supplementary income in the form of remittances.

Mae Chan (mother *Chan*) at Ban Noon Phoe explains that she never expects her migrant sons, 19 and 23 years old, to send money back home. It is just a good condition that her migrant sons do not require any money from her when they go back to Bangkok after visiting the village during the *Songkraan* festival. However, some migrant sons, particularly ones from families of all sons or whose sisters are not out-migrants, remit some money for their parents.

In contrast, daughters who migrate to work in Bangkok are usually considered to have more responsibility for the household economy and are more likely to be a source of financial support to their parents. These responsibilities change little even when daughters have married and moved away to set up their own families. *Mae Chan* said *"From my migrant daughters (17 and 21 years old), I can regularly receive some remittances every two or three months. If I have to choose between permitting sons or daughters to work in Bangkok, I will have no hesitation to let my daughters go rather than my sons. Although I am always worried about their security in Bangkok (particularly over their sexual behaviour), it is a necessity of our family. We have a small amount of agricultural land (16 rai) to support a family with 8 household members. Remittance earnings from migrant daughters help us to hire agricultural labourers, buy agricultural inputs, and support our living expenses."* Therefore, the economic-role and gender-role expectations between male and female migrants in the study communities are quite distinctive.

Female migration appears to be an obvious gender-role expectation in the study communities. Recently, the initial migration of female migrants has occurred mostly when they are aged between 16 to 18 years. They initially migrate with their female relatives or close friends to Bangkok. They mostly come back after getting married and/or becoming pregnant, and then many of them re-migrate after delivering the baby or after their children start schooling. The latter groups are more likely to fall in the age-range of 21 to 30 years.

Among married women who mostly move to the city with their husbands and/or their children, migration is usually a shared decision. Single women who come to the city alone or with their relatives or friends, on the other hand, mostly state that they have initially made the decision themselves, although it is a fact that they often ask permission from their parents. This suggests that marital status probably has as important part to play in influencing migration decisions.

In brief, out-migration in the study communities has been motivated by both economic and non-economic factors. The economic motives are frequently attributed

to potential migrants in poor households, while the non-economic motives, particularly attaining modern life-style preferences, seem strongest for those in higher socio-economic status households. These two kinds of influential factors on out-migration are basically different between male and female, between single and married, and between young and old migrants. The older and married migrants probably have moved mainly because of economic reasons, but the majority of young and single migrants have become exposed to a very different way of life in the city. For gender conditions, a number of single female migrants state that they want to experience the modern way of life in Bangkok, but also state that it is their duty to work in Bangkok in order to supplement their family earnings until they get married. Female married migrants, in contrast, express the economic motive as the main purpose of migration. They need to accumulate money for building their own house, improving their agricultural production, establishing a small business in the community, and providing for their children's higher education. Overall, the general impression is that female migrants perceive their initial migration as a means of underpinning their individual aspirations of modern life-style preference as well as responding to their household obligations and household expectations to provide economic support. Meanwhile most male migrants have moved with the main motivation of *pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn* rather than being driven by economic reasons. In addition, out-migration is also considered by individuals themselves as a means of upward social mobility. Due to their social norms and values, moving to the primate city can confer greater social status on migrants in the eyes of fellow villagers. It is a clear circumstance that, within the same prevailing socio-economic conditions, there are more young and single migrants than old and married migrants, and only some married villagers migrate to work in the city. This would appear to be because the economic determinism model has little applicability to migration decisions in the study communities.

5.3.2 Return-migration

This section explores what factors influence the return-migration decisions; how and why there are differences between male and female returnees; and what are

the expected consequences of return-migration as far as the migrants themselves and their families are concerned. It will consider return-migration as a part of the continuous process of circular migration, and explores the return decisions from the perspective not only of the permanent returnees, who come back to live in their home village without intending to re-migrate, but also the circular returnees, who come back before the period of the economic crisis and might be expected to re-migrate at some stages in the future. The advantage of this approach is that the study is able to identify those factors which play a significant role in the return decisions, and to understand the relative dimensions of various factors influencing the patterns of return-migration in different periods of time. In general, all these influential factors are likely to change from time to time and to be differentiated by various characteristics of the returnees, including gender factors. This makes it important to explore all the characteristics of short- and long-spell returnees as well as prospective returnees (out-migrants). As all migrants are potential returnees, it would be incorrect to neglect those out-migrants who expect and/or are expected to go back home at least at some stage during their sojourn in the cities.

In the study communities, circulation is the obvious pattern and process of both out- and return-migration. Many of the migrants have participated in the process of circular migration for at least three cycles. Some of them may migrate, return and re-migrate in the same year. While villagers want to move to the cities for various reasons, they mostly intend to return to live in their home village, and demonstrate this by retaining close social ties with their community. It is generally a fact that a single migrant has at least one parent or sibling still living in the village, and a married migrant has a spouse and/or children living there. They maintain close contact with their family and relatives. It is generally recognised that most *Isan* out-migrants return at least once a year to visit home during the *Songkraan* festival. They come back not only for a holiday but also for re-cementing social relations with their home village. Return-migration may thus be seen as an important mechanism whereby migrants can enjoy whatever opportunities that the city offers whilst forming social networks which allow them also to maintain a presence, connection

and a stake in their home community. They remain rooted to the village, perhaps because of the felt need for a security back-up where a migrant feels a little disoriented by the way of life in the city, or perhaps because they get used to or want to keep their ethnic identity as *khon Isan* (see Parnwell and Rigg 1996) which is deeply rooted in their way of life.

In reality, there is a multiplicity of reasons for return-migration which in turn implies that its factors tend to be more heterogeneous than homogeneous. For example, some returnees head back home after a short spell of initial migration because they do not like the way of life in Bangkok (see the case of Mrs Nujorn in Box 5-1), while many of them return home after a long spell of migration because they feel bored with life in Bangkok (see the case of Mr Thepnakhon in Box 5-2) or because they come back to get married and settle to raise their own family (see the case of Mrs Boonruam in Box 5-3). This argument is drawn from the observation that, although economic benefit is a significant determinant of spell length, 'social factors' emanating from the migrant's place of origin seem to exert an important degree of influence over the decision to return. In this regard, 'failure' of working in the destination does not appear to be an overriding reason for returning home. Shorter spells of migration result not from the lack of success in finding a job at the expected wage in the destination, but rather from other social factors and strong social ties between migrants in the cities and their households in their community of origin.[3]

Box 5-1 *A case study of a short-spell return migrant*

Mrs Nujorn, a permanent return-migrant in Ban Noon Phoe, initially migrated to work in Bangkok in 1990 when she was 20 years old. She wanted to go to Bangkok because she really fancied to pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn, or travel for experience. She was in a better-off family, which had a large amount of agricultural land for all children and did not have any household economic problems. She followed her aunt to work as a house-worker, having a salary of 1,200 Baht per month. She worked there for only 3 months then returned home without any intention to migrate to Bangkok again. She made her decision to return home because she missed her parents and the way of life in the village. She really disliked the bewildering life in Bangkok. Moreover, she was the youngest daughter, and all of her 5 brothers and 2 sisters had already got married and settled in their own households. All her older brothers and sisters wanted her to come back to take care of her aging parents. Of course, she readily accepted to do this duty. She was not reluctant to return home when her family required. She got married a year after returning home. Now she has two sons. Her agricultural family has 15 rai of paddy fields and 23 rai of cassava. She and her husband do not need or want to migrate to work in Bangkok.

Box 5-2 *A case study of a long-spell return migrant*

Thepnakhon, a young male return-migrant in Ban Nong Thankhrua, is 21 years old. Two years after finishing secondary school, he migrated to work as a mechanic for an air-conditioner firm in Bangkok, during 1994 and 1996. He got a good wage of around 4,500 and 5,000 Baht per month in the first and third year of migration respectively. His family has only 10 rai of paddy and 3 rai of cassava, but this amount of land can produce enough income for his small nuclear family, comprising parents and two children. He migrated to work in Bangkok because he himself wanted to experience the modern way of life, while his parents expected him to find a well-paid job and remit money to support the educational expenses of his younger sister. During the first year of working, he monthly remitted around 1,000-2,000 Baht, but in the second and third year he remitted only two times a year a total of 5,000 Baht, because he spent most of his income for drinking and entertainment. He returned home because he felt that he has got enough working and living experiences and that he was bored with the way of life in Bangkok. However, he insists that he may re-migrate to work in Bangkok if he feels bored with the quiet life in the village. Income from working in Bangkok is not totally necessary for his family. They can earn enough income from agriculture and some odd work in the village.

Box 5-3 *A case study of return migration for getting married*

Boonruam, an out-migrant from Ban Kud Hae, is now 38 years old. She initially migrated to work in Bangkok when she was 13 years old (in 1973). Her mother encouraged her to migrate because of the family's poverty. Her family has 32 rai of upland paddy, which could not produce enough income to raise a big family of two parents and nine children. She firstly went to work as a shopkeeper's assistant for only 300 Baht per month. She moved as a seasonal migrant who had to come back to help her parents on the family farm during the cultivation periods. She changed work many times during 8 years of seasonal migration. In 1981, when she was 21 years old, she got married with an out-migrant from a neighbouring village. Then she and her husband returned to settle and raise their own family in Ban Kud Hae. In 1990 her husband decided to re-migrate to work as a street vendor in Bangkok because they needed to accumulate money for their children's education. She followed her husband to live in Bangkok in 1994. She has not worked because she has to care for her youngest 5-year-old son. She explained that after getting married she and her husband intended not to re-migrate to work in Bangkok, but they could not earn enough money from a small plot of agricultural land in their home village. They obviously made their decision to re-migrate because of economic considerations.

It is noticeable that job opportunities available to men and women migrants differ, and that the nature and reliability of job opportunities in the destination labour market influence and contribute to the timing and destination of migratory spell for male and female migrants (Hare 1999). For many cases of return-migration in the study communities, some specific jobs like seamstresses and house-workers, for instance, mostly taken by migrant women, are less likely to allow frequent returns home. In contrast, migrant men mostly choose to occupy the kinds of jobs in which they can have a certain amount of freedom, such as car or motorcycle taxi-driver and other unskilled work. They can quit when they want to return home and easily regain this work when they re-migrate.

In comparison, males' migratory employment spells are distinctly shorter than those of females also due to the prevailing migratory purpose of men in the study communities being predominantly to experience the modern way of life in Bangkok, or *'pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn'*, while that of their female counterparts is to *'pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham'*, or to work in order to earn supplementary income to remit back home. The length of migratory spell of male migrants thus depends upon their individual aspirations and interests rather than their household obligations and responsibilities, unlike the case with most migrant women. They may stay working in Bangkok or return to the home village as long as they individually want, while many female migrants, particularly ones who belong to poorer households, have to bear a greater burden to be responsive to their household economic and social obligations. Many female migrants have little choice but to continue working in Bangkok in order to remit some money back home, while some involuntarily return home because they have to take care of their ageing parents.

In point of fact, there are some noticeable differences in the circumstances of return-migration between the past and the present. During the past two decades, young villagers in the study communities migrated and joined the non-agricultural employment in the cities; but upon getting married, they retired from such works and shifted back to their agricultural roots. Some of them, particularly male household heads, might subsequently have re-migrated when they have financial problems, perhaps because of the natural disaster (such as flood or drought problems during the previous agricultural season) or because they have more household expenses required (such as for their children's education). In contrast, nowadays both single and married migrants do not want to return to their home village for a short spell not only because of the limited amount of agricultural land and opportunities for off-farm employment in the village, but also because they enjoy their modern way of life in the big city[4] and want to build their own careers rather than head back to being farmers. In any case, many of them now have more experience of working in the cities than working on the farm because they tend to move to Bangkok as soon as they finish their primary education. They may

eventually want to come back to live in their home village or somewhere in rural *Isan*, but not in the short time. However, although almost all migrants in the study communities have had an intention to return to their home village since they left, it is not clear when they will return home.

According to this, Ahlburg and Brown (1997: 128) suggest that while migrants may intend to return home, they often do not have a specific idea on the timing of their return. They also claim that it is the intention to return home rather than its exact timing that affects the behaviour of migrants. Macpherson (1994) adds the argument that intention to return home has an obvious effect on migration behaviour, particularly involving the remittances which are of importance to the place of origin. Brown (1997) documents that migrants who intend to return home remit significantly more money than those who do not, while Poirine (1997) clarifies specifically that older and married migrants who intend to return home are more likely to be motivated to remit out of individual interest rather than parental obligations or altruism. It seems that return-migration may be influenced mainly by migrants' individual intentions and decisions.

In the study communities, the influential factors on the intention and decision to return home are actualised as a combination of economic and non-economic motivations, involving elements of both their household responsibilities and individual interests. However, the factors are also basically attributable to the migrants' individual characteristics differentiated by marital status and gender. Married migrants, both males and females, mostly migrate to work in Bangkok because of their household responsibilities in the face of economic constraints, therefore they have an obvious intention to return home when they have been able to accumulate enough money to fulfil their household socio-economic ambitions. They generally tend to be the permanent returnees, and their intention to return home can predict actual behaviour of return-migration and remittances. Many of them remit money to their family in order to build a new house, establish a small business in the village, buy agricultural land and/or luxurious goods, and so on. In contrast, most single migrants have less commitment to the household economic

responsibilities than the former group. They often approach both out- and return-migration mainly based on their individual interests. They usually head back home because of non-economic factors (such as for getting married, taking care of ageing parents, feeling bored with life in Bangkok, and so on). However, they seem to be only temporary returnees, as in the cases of Mr Thepnakhon (Box 5-2), Mrs Boonruam (Box 5-3), and Mrs Khamphan (Box 5-4). Although they almost entirely intend to return home permanently at some stage, it is difficult to clarify when and where they will return to settle permanently, particularly in the cases of young male migrants who traditionally have to settle in their wife's family compounds. Many single male and female migrants follow the same circulation pattern of migration until they get married, then they may return permanently or they (mostly male return-migrants) may re-migrate (usually alone or with their spouse) and join the circulation of married migrants who will mostly end their movement when they can fulfil their household's economic expectations. Therefore, intentions to return can predict the actual behaviour of return-migration as well as remittances beyond the conditions of marital status and gender difference.

Box 5-4 *A case study of a return-migrant for taking care of ageing parents*

Khamphan, a return-migrant in Ban Kud Hae, is the youngest daughter of the family. She is now 24 years old. She initially migrated to work in Bangkok when she was 13 years old (in 1987) after finishing her primary schooling. She worked as a hairdresser's assistant in her older sister's shop for 5 years, then she changed her job to being a sewing-machinist in a tailor's shop because she wanted to live on her own. She got a good wage of around 4,000-6,000 Baht per month. She worked there until late 1998. At that time she earned a large income of around 12,000 Baht per month. She regularly remitted money back to her mother a total of 5,000 Baht every two months. However, she has been required to return home at least twice to take care of her mother who is widowed and more than 60 years old. She comes back home for three or four months and then re-migrates to work in the same firm. Lastly she returned home to get married in December 1998. Her mother wanted her to return home permanently, but Khamphan insists that she may re-migrate with her husband at some stage in the future because she still likes the modern way of life in Bangkok, and because she has not got used to working on the farm.

However, prospective returnees may postpone their departure with a view to accumulating higher levels of savings to meet their growing individual or household aspirations, or may accelerate their return when social changes affects their migration conditions. Such a change may convert intentions into a particular decision to return. Another important factor, which inhibits return-migration in the

study communities, is that most migrant households hold only a small plot of agricultural land. Farming a small agricultural land plot (in particular less than 10 *rai*) may produce only sufficient rice for household consumption, but may not earn sufficient income for the family's wider livelihood needs. Building up and retaining a career in Bangkok, therefore, is a more likely alternative for young migrants from poor households. Although there are some opportunities for non-agricultural employment (especially working in the cassava mills and sugar-refinery) near the study communities, the limited work and cheap wages available do not attract out-migrants to return home. In addition, working near their home village also limits their chances of experiencing modernity and autonomy in Bangkok.

One of the obvious consequences of return-migration in the study communities is that when migrants return to their home village they (particularly return-migrants who succeed in achieving their migration economic purposes) mostly spend their accumulated savings for social investment rather than economic investment. Since the 1980s, remittances have flown from workers in Bangkok to their relatives left at home. The remittances are large relative to local income, and account for changes towards a modern life-style in the villages for raising the migrant household's social status.[5] However, it is not always true that spending remittances does not stimulate the local economy. Remittances are partly spent to buy new agricultural equipment (such as tractors) to enhance agricultural productivity, and in some cases to buy agricultural land. Some return-migrants also employ their savings to start small businesses - such as grocery, mechanical repairing shop, tractor hire, and so on.

Studies of migration remittances (e.g. Stark 1991, Ahlburg 1991, Macpherson 1994, Harris 1995, Connel and Brown 1995, Brown 1997) suggest that accumulating money for both economic and social investments in the home community through the process of remittances differ between single and married migrants as well as between male and female migrants. This study also found that married migrants, both males and females, mostly remit a large amount of money regularly with a view to accumulating capital assets for raising their household economic mobility, which

is probably an obvious commitment of all married migrants. Their remittances are also driven, at least in part, by the incentive of individual social mobility, and not, as is often thought, only by altruism and household responsibilities. In contrast, for single migrants the commitment to remit money back to their family is quite different between the sexes. Young male migrants rarely remit money home, as they often spend their incomes on their individual interests (such as paying for individual entertainment, buying attractive clothes and luxurious things, and so on) rather than paying attention to their household economic responsibilities. Although young female migrants also spend part of their income on their individual interests, many of them regularly remit money to support their household's needs. Single female migrants in the study communities obviously have more commitment to remitting than their male counterparts, at least until they get married.

Another important point is that return-migration is also likely to bring about a transfer of valuable human capital. A returnee may bring not only his/her accumulated capital but also his/her working experience and skills to manage, e.g. a small business in the home village. The average returnee has significant labour experience and appears to possess relatively higher levels of human capital in comparison with the average non-migrant. It is a fact that the return-migrants in the study communities are still of an economically active age and are not entering retirement. Therefore, his/her experience of working in Bangkok may be useful for him/her to build a new career (such as hair-dressers, tailors, mechanics, shop-keepers, and so on) in the home village even though there might be limited opportunity to diversify these economic activities because of inadequate demand.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has illustrated the pattern of migration in the study communities as predominantly constituting circular migration, consisting mainly of single and young, male and female migrants. They predominantly move to Bangkok in order to experience the modern way of life and to have fun (often referred to as *'pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn'*), although at the same time they have to find work in order to

sustain themselves in the cities (often referred to *'pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham'*). The 'bright lights' of the city are still very attractive for young villagers who move out to find new experience and fortune. However, this chapter has shown that there are some important differences in conditions between young male and female migrants. Young male migrants usually travel far away from home to enhance their own experiences rather than to accumulate funds either for themselves or for remitting back to their family, as their female counterparts do. This is partly because traditional *Isan* social and cultural practices place more household obligations and responsibilities on females than males. Although young female migrants also aim to migrate for their own experiences and fun, many of them have a strong commitment to remit and repay their parental obligations. In contrast, most older and married male and female migrants move to work in Bangkok mainly for their household economic purposes. They regularly remit their earned income back home in order to accumulate funds for their household's economic and social mobility. However, there are still some difference between the two sexes of this group. It is a fact that there are more male married migrants than their female counterparts moving to work in Bangkok. This is basically because women in the *Isan* rural society have been expected to take more responsibility for caring not only for their children but also their ageing parents. It is not really a specific division of labour amongst the household members, but, when there is any requirement for migration for the couples, most married men will migrate to work while women stay at home to fulfil their household reproductive responsibilities. Similarly, the decisions regarding return-migration tend to be motivated by non-economic factors rather than economic ones. Although many married migrants decide to return home permanently after fulfilling their economic ambitions, for almost all single and young migrants social factors in the decision to return home (particularly to take care of ageing parents, getting married, and individual reasons like feeling bored with, or bewildered by, life in the city) are the most important determinants of how long migrant workers stay in their jobs and how often they re-migrate before returning home permanently. In sum, non-economic factors are more important than economic factors in influencing

both out- and return-migration, but the circumstances of those patterns of migration are differentiated by the determinants of individual characteristics, especially marital status and gender.

This study considers the pattern and process of circular migration as a way in which *Isan* migrants retain their social ties with their family and the community. Social networks between people in the places of origin and destination have been manipulated in order to function as supportive linkages to persuade villagers to migrate to work in Bangkok and to lure migrants to return to their home village. It is a fact that although working in Bangkok can earn migrants a larger amount of money than working on the farm, and also give them a more comfortable life than in the countryside, most migrants inherently do not wish to live in the city permanently. They want to return to live in the rural *Isan* society at some stage during or after their sojourn in the city. However, it is a fact that the migrants themselves have changed their motivations for out and return-migration at different times and periods in their migration life cycle. This implies that the circumstances of migration in the study communities have changed from time to time depending upon changing conditions of social relations amongst the individual, household and community. This also includes the consequences of development and social changes in both places of origin and destination, which have significantly influenced the factors and process of migration decision-making. One of the main ideas of this research is to explore the significant role of social changes and development in the migration decision-making process. It is hypothesised that it will reveal significant differences across time and gender.

Chapter Notes

[1] Most dwellings of the two study communities are clustered along the paved and gravel roads in the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae respectively. Most village dwellings are of one storey built on stilts and made of wood, though some of them are city-style structures of two storeys that have ground floors of concrete and are made of both wood and cement block. Apart from household dwellings, the compounds mostly contain barns for rice storage and some have buffalo shelters, cooking shelters, and outdoor toilets. Often the space under dwellings on stilts is used as a work area for silk-weaving and bamboo-working, or for agricultural equipment storage (e.g. ploughing machines, etc.). Fruit trees and vegetables, which are grown mainly for household consumption, occupy other parts of the compounds.

[2] This is an obvious different condition between single and married migrants. Most of married migrants who leave their children with their parents regularly remit money back home.

[3] This also can be proved by Hare (1999) through his study of rural-to-urban migration in China.

[4] With this regard, migration behaviour is usually considered as a product of 'modernity' (Jones 1999) or an outcome of social process of connecting individual and social changes in everyday life (Giddens 1991: 32-3).

[5] It is apparent in the study communities that remittances are often used for house-building or the improvement of the residence. This investment is also regarded as a migratory consequence. According to this, Mr Denphong, the chief of the health centre at Ban Noon Phoe and the owner of a construction company at Ban Nong-Yai, explains that his business annually booms before the *Songkraan* festival due to the fact that many migrants often remit a large amount of money in order to finish building a new house or improving their house, especially the toilet, before they bring their friends to visit their parents during the long holiday.

CHAPTER SIX

Gender Relations, Migration Decisions and Social Changes

6.1 Introduction: The Analytical Framework

Within migration research in general, an economic focus on labour migration has long been, and in many respects remains, predominant. To understand the factors responsible for either encouraging or discouraging the movement of economically active people is apparent from an overview of migration studies which explore the main question of why people migrate (Boyle et al. 1998; Rose 1993). During the 1950s, the prevalent economic models of migration behaviour assumed that all migrants were motivated by economic necessity as a result of economic deprivation (such as unemployment, over-population and so on) at the place of origin and the promise of abundant employment at the destinations elsewhere (Chamberlain 1997: 5). In contrast, the interface between migration and gender remained a neglected area of research up until the early 1990s in the study areas of both developing countries (see Chant 1992, Momsen 1993, Lawson 1998) and developed countries (see Bonney and Love 1991; Boyle and Halfacree 1995 and 1999). These cited studies show how gender issues are important in the studies of migration behaviour. However, gender issues in the migration decision-making process within the family have been poorly analysed, although they are the subject of ongoing work by some migration researchers and feminist scholars (Chant 1992; Green 1994, 1997). Neglecting 'gender' in migration research misleads important points in understanding the process of migration decision-making, which is fundamentally made in a household unit rather than by an individual (Halfacree and Boyle 1999: 3). Therefore, the relationships between the two sexes within a household must not be neglected in the study of the migration decision-making process.

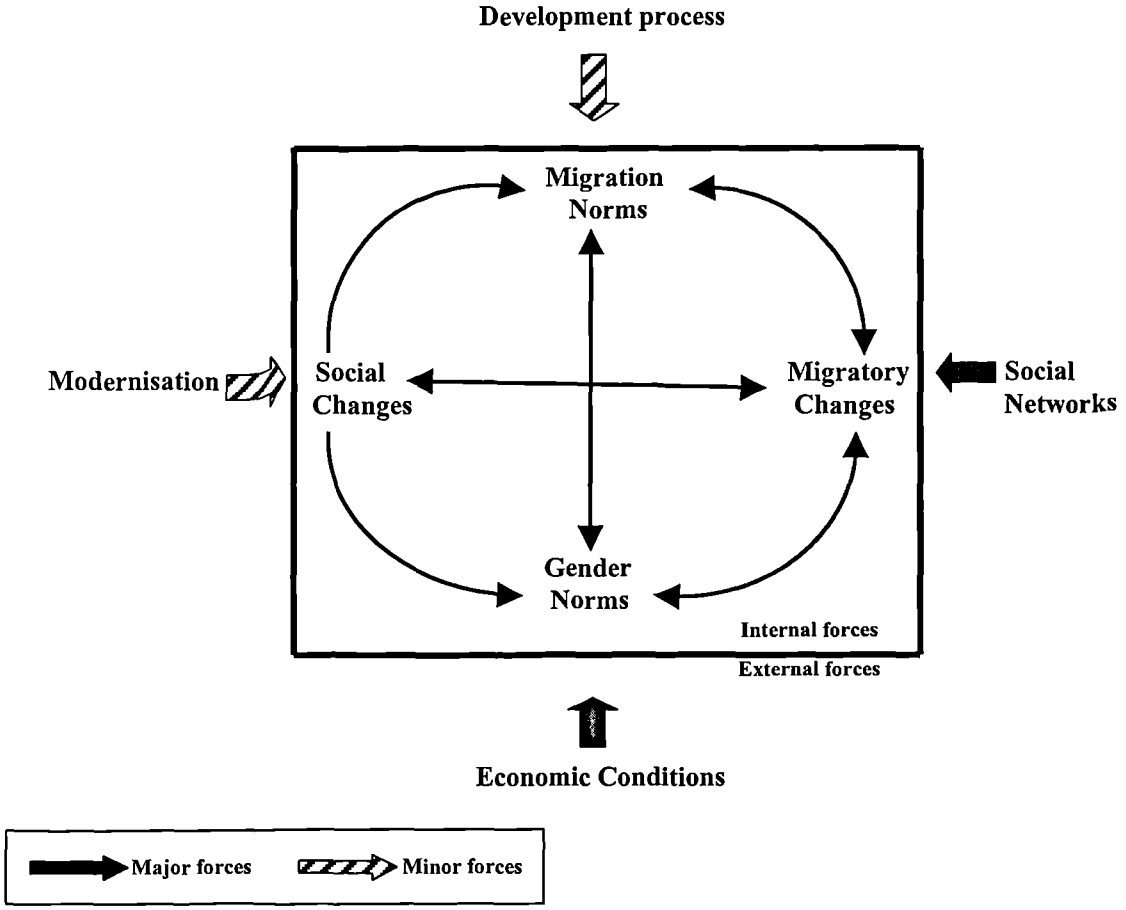
This study has a basic assumption that migration decisions arise from the connection of household relations and social changes inside and outside the community. This means that migration behaviour is not just a response to the local 'push' factors of economic deprivation and/or environmental disadvantages and the 'pull' factors of employment elsewhere (see Momsen 1993; Richardson 1983, 1997). It is, in fact, a combination of individual and household decisions, associated with social and cultural factors. This assumption recognises the significant role of household relations and gender relations as pivotal in the shaping of migration behaviour. Indeed, once household relations and gender relations are taken into perspective then the migration motivations become more complex. They seem to be not merely a bridge, but a conduit, between individual aspirations and household expectations (Chamberlain 1997). This argument explains how the links between household relations and gender relations continuously play a significant role in influencing the migration decisions of and between male and female migrants, and thereby contribute towards an understanding of migration decisions and social changes in rural communities.

To examine empirically the links between social change, migration decision-making and gender factors, the study focuses on its main objective: *to what extent, how and why has the migration decision-making process been influenced by gender and social change?* It has a central hypothesis that social changes have co-evolutionarily affected, and been affected by, the community migration norms and gender norms which have differentiated the migration decisions between male and female migrants throughout periods of time.

To examine this hypothesis, the study will analyse relationships and interactions between social changes, migratory changes and the community migration norms and gender norms based on the co-evolutionary process as framed in Figure 6-1. According to Norgaad (1994) the term 'co-evolution' refers to the pattern of evolutionary change of at least two closely interacting components of change, which affect the evolution of their relationships and entities. With the co-evolutionary explanation, when any change occurs, people evolve in response to the

change. At the same time, the change also evolves new circumstances in response to the evolution of people. People and change, therefore, can be thought of as interrelated and co-evolving in response to their interrelationships. They evolve in response to change in each other and in relationships between them, or more simply, they co-evolve. For example, when development projects are promoted in rural communities, they have affected rural people's response either in support or in resistance, and in turn they have been certainly affected by the characteristics of people and the community problems. Therefore, the development projects may or may not create any changes depending on how effectively the projects and the people respond to each other. However, changes in the co-evolutionary process usually take a long period for adaptation to occur and often involve gradual changes rather than radical changes. Co-evolutionary changes are considered as changes in time series, and having major influences from within the community as well as having minor influences from outside.

Figure 6-1 *The co-evolutionary process of social changes and migratory changes*



From the Figure, according to the co-evolutionary process, people's way of life could have changed and been influenced by internal forces rather than external forces. The study presumes that the social changes and migratory changes in *Isan* rural community have interrelated with each other directly and indirectly through relationships with community migration norms and gender norms. Indeed, those two kinds of community norms have also interacted with each other on the basis of household relations and gender relations. This is hypothetically because gender differences have long been predominant factors in household relations and migration decisions in *Isan* society, and it is a fact that migration was characterised by male domination up until the 1970s (see Mills 1993, 1997). Migratory changes have also been influenced by external forces, but to a different degree. Economic conditions (in particular employment opportunities in big cities) and social networks (based on their close social and cultural ties) have been major forces, while development programmes and modernisation have been minor forces.

For example, social networks provide practical information and knowledge about city life and employment opportunities for prospective migrants and their parents. They also provide newcomers with emotional and cultural support and various other resources, including initial housing (Lightfoot et al. 1983, Menjivar 1994, Hagan 1998: 55). At the same time, the development programmes promoted by the government provide some positive information and knowledge to shift rural people's attitudes toward modernity as the target of successful rural development (Mills 1993, 1997). The villagers have steadily absorbed ideologies of modernity and materialism through the process of social and economic development. All these factors have gradually affected changes in migration norms and gender norms in the study communities from male-dominated migration flows to female-predominant migration. It is evident that parents in the study communities have shifted their decisions from not allowing their daughters to migrate far away from the community in the past to encouraging their young daughters to work in Bangkok at present. Changes in their migration decisions are presumably initiated by changes in community migration norms and gender norms, including changes in household

gender-role and economic-role expectations between daughters and sons. Fundamentally, the household gender-role and economic-role expectations, which have been formed by the social and cultural conditions of parental authority over the household obligations of a son and a daughter, have influenced the migration decision-making process in the spheres of household relations and gender relations.

This study does not believe that migration is only an objectively purposive circumstance, but it is an almost inevitably subjective response to some conditions. In many cases, female migrants in the study communities have little choice whether or not to migrate. They have to migrate in response to specific social and cultural requirements, which they find difficult to resist, in particular their household responsibilities according to their household economic-role and gender-role expectations. According to the fieldwork, many migrant parents confirm that they encourage, or even require in the case of poor households - their daughter to work in Bangkok because they have higher expectations of household responsibilities and, of course, economic returns from their migrant daughters than those from their migrant sons. Although many female migrants themselves claim that they make their own decision to migrate because of their individual aspirations to experience the modern way of life in Bangkok, most of them insist that they also commit themselves to respond to their household's economic expectations for fulfilling their parental obligations. According to *Isan* culture, the different conditions of household economic expectations and parental obligations between sons and daughters may give many female migrants little choice, in particular those from a poor family. Therefore, gender should be a fundamental issue in explaining why male and female migrants have been involved differently in the migration decision-making process. This hypothesis discusses the significance of gender relations and household relations in the process of migration decision-making within the household by exploring the way in which migration decisions are made in the context of household expectations and shaped by gender relations amongst the household members. It also examines the interrelationship of social relations, social norms and social networks, which are all hypothesised to have influenced migration decisions (see

Figure 2-1, and the explanation of the model of migration decision-making in Chapter 2).

To analyse and examine the analytical frameworks, this chapter aims to discuss the connection of social change and migration decisions as a result of co-evolutionary circumstances in the sphere of household relations and the dimension of gender differences. It explores the way migration decisions are made in the context of household expectations, and shaped by gender relations amongst the household members. It also examines the combination of gender roles, household economic strategies, and household social obligations, which are all hypothesised to have influenced the migrants' individual aspirations and the migration decisions. Specifically, it discusses the ways in which differences of generation and gender have been involved in the process of migration decision-making within the context of social and economic expectations and mobility, which combine with historically-rooted patterns of household reciprocity to encourage the movement of rural youths into Bangkok employment. At the same time, the discussion explores any kinds of household conflicts and negotiations in the process of migration decision-making: between parents and children, and between male and female household members. The chapter also addresses these issues in relation to the dominant ideal of household and social ties between parents, migrants, and the community. All of these will be analysed by using qualitative data from field research in the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae.

The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section discusses the connection of social changes, migration transitions, migration decisions, and gender differences in the study communities in order to explore the conditions of changes which have influenced migration patterns and migration decisions across time. The discussion is also expected to examine the links of those combinations through changes in community migration norms and gender norms in the dynamic patterns and process of cityward migration. The last section critically explores all influential factors of the migration decision-making process based on the spheres of household relations and gender relations, as well as the contexts of social relations and social networks which have encouraged or discouraged migration in the study

communities. This section also examines the issues and the combination of gender-role expectations, household economic expectations, and household responsibilities in the process of migration decision-making. The discussion is expected to be able to clarify the influences of gender on the migration decision-making process.

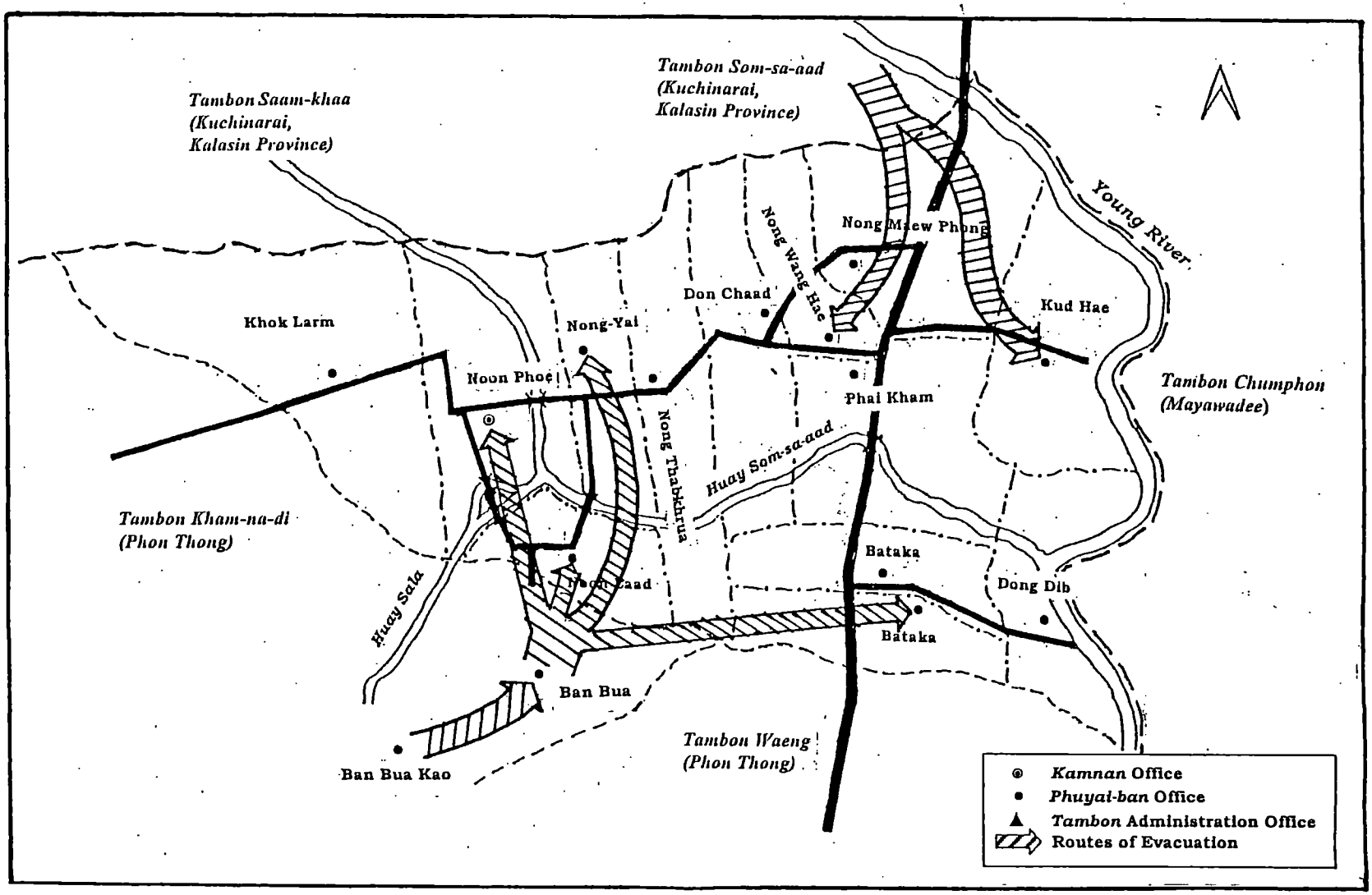
6.2 Social Changes, Migration Decisions and Gender Relations

This section is divided into three parts. The first part explores and discusses the co-evolutionary process of social and economic changes in the study communities in time series, which are roughly separated into three periods: before 1960, during 1960 to 1980, and after 1980. The analysis is based on changes in people's way of life in particular aspects of their household social and economic circumstances. The second part examines the interrelationship between migratory changes and gender differences. It assumes that, throughout the co-evolutionary process, migration behaviour has also changed from time to time and has seen differentiation between male and female migrants in different periods of time. The last part aims to analyse changes in community migration norms and gender norms, which influence changes in migration dynamics and gender differences on the process of migration decision-making by exploring the interrelationships between social changes, gender relations and migration decisions. The analysis aims to provide basic knowledge of gender issues in the process of migration decision-making set against conditions of change in community migration norms and gender norms.

6.2.1 The co-evolutionary process of social and economic change

The Nong-Yai community was established in 1924. Before this establishment, villagers settled for a long time in Ban Bua Kao, located in a flood plain area, which is now in *Tambon Khamnadi*, Phon Thong District. Around 1917, the villagers had a serious outbreak of cholera, causing many deaths. Therefore, they evacuated northward to settle together in Ban Bua, which is now the neighbouring village of Ban Noon Laad (see Map 6-1). They lived there for 7 years. In 1924, all of the dwellings were burnt down because of a careless child. Then, the villagers moved

Map 6-1 *Evacuated routes and settlement arrears of villagers in the study communities*



again. At that time, they moved separately to settle in 4 hamlets, which now are Ban Noon Laad, Ban Noon Phoe, Ban Nong-Yai, and Ban Bataka. Each settlement was kin-related and small, varying from 6 to 13 households.

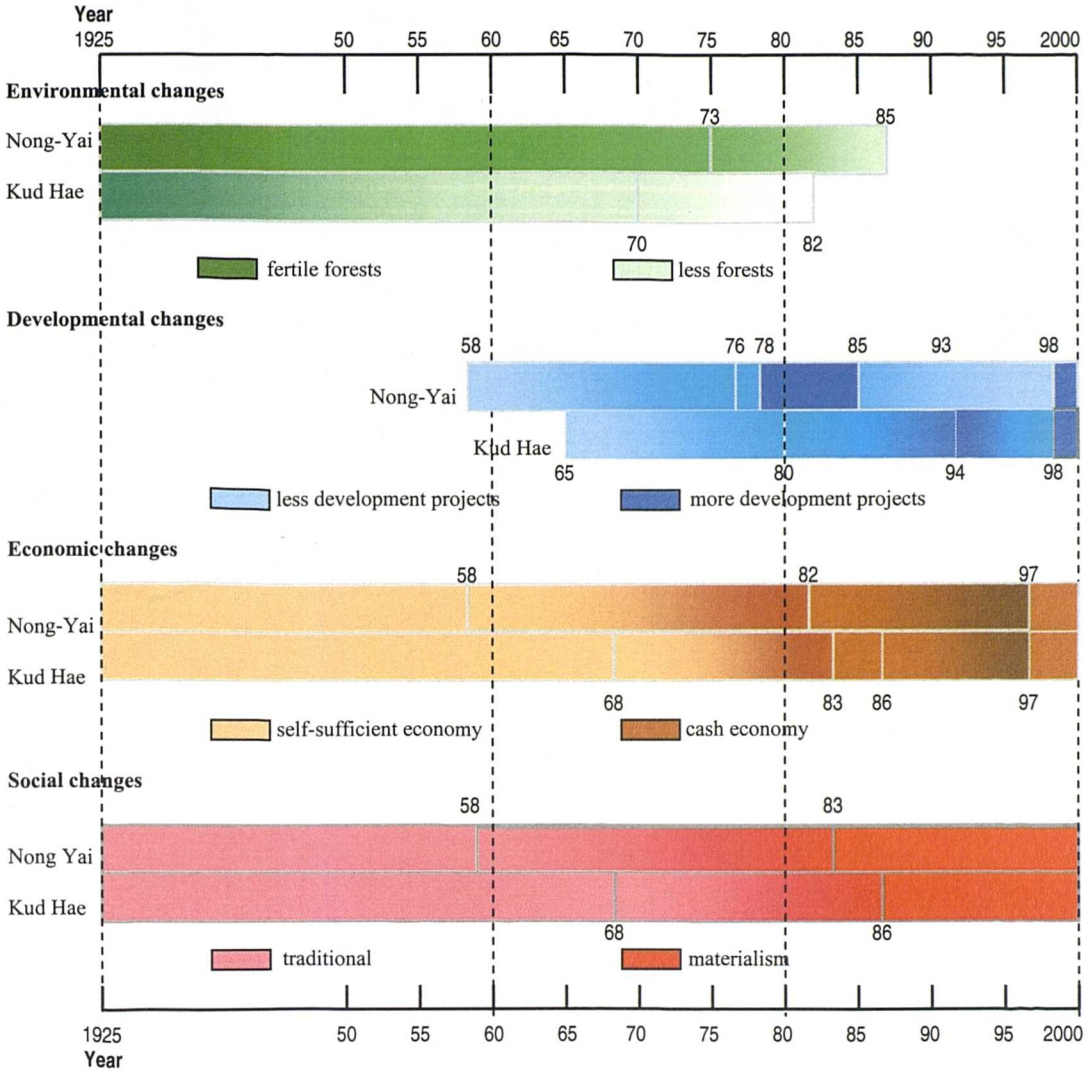
Ban Nong-Yai and Ban Noon Phoe were located in the flood plain areas surrounded by *Huai Som-sanuk, Huai Sala* and big swamps such as *Nong Yai, Nong Waeng Yai, Nong Saeng,* and *Nong Kork.* The areas were very suitable for rice farming, and also covered with rich forest. The villages were self-sufficient in rice and products from the forest (e.g. game, mushrooms, bamboo shoots, medicinal herbs, etc.). There were also a lot of fish for the villagers to consume throughout the year. Because of their rich natural resources, both villages expanded very quickly in the 1970s by married couples and *ha-na-di* immigrants who came to buy and open up new agricultural land. As a result, Ban Nong Thabkhrua was separated from Ban Nong-Yai in 1980.

In similar historical circumstances, Ban Kud Hae was established in 1917 due to a serious outbreak of cholera. The villagers evacuated from Ban Kao Noon Khor, which is now in *Tambon Som-sa-ard,* Kuchinarai District. They separately moved southward to settle in two areas and later established two villages: Ban Nong Waeng Hae (*Mu 3*) and Ban Kud Hae (*Mu 4*) (see Map 6-1). Hence, the villagers in these two villages have fundamentally close kinship and relationships. At that time, in Ban Kud Hae there were only 5 households settled near the Young River. Due to annual flooding of its agricultural areas, and its location far from the centre of the commune, the village expanded very slowly. Before 1960, villagers in Ban Kud Hae were rarely in contact with people in other villages in *Tambon Nong-Yai* because of transportation difficulties. They only have good relationships and networks among close kin between Ban Kud Hae and Ban Nong Waeng Hae.

Due to the Nong-Yai community having richer natural resources and better quality agricultural land than Ban Kud Hae - although they were settled nearly in the same period of time - their process of social and economic change was different (see Figure 6-2). With better environmental conditions, the Nong-Yai community had been more attractive for *'ha-na-di'* immigrants to settle down in the community since

the late 1950s. However, during the 1960s, there were few *ha-na-di* immigrants moving in the community, and only some forest areas were cleared and converted to agricultural land to meet slightly increasing demands for land from the newcomers. Most of its forest areas were rapidly converted during the late 1970s and the early 1980s and were completely cleared by 1985. In contrast, in Ban Kud Hae only a few close relatives of the villagers immigrated to settle in the village. Most of its forest areas were converted to be agricultural land by the villagers themselves rather than by the *ha-na-di* immigrants. Therefore, before the 1970s the circumstances of the *ha-na-di* immigration had not effectively influenced social and economic changes in the study communities. Their mode of production was still centred around the self-sufficient economy. Most villagers still cultivated rice, planted vegetables and fruits, and foraged forest products only in quantities sufficient for domestic consumption. Cash crops were unknown and had not yet penetrated to the communities. The villagers bartered their products with each other, but they also sold some forest products to outside merchants. The way they produced and the way they lived did not change so much. Their way of life and household relations did not change distinctly although some immigrants moved to live in the communities. This was mainly because most newcomers adapted themselves to live with the majority of native people harmoniously. The distinctive social changes really started in the late 1970s.

Figure 6-2 *Co-evolutionary process of changes in the study communities since 1925*



Villagers in the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae had started adapting themselves on the process of co-evolutionary change partly due to the penetration of governmental development programmes since 1958 and 1965 respectively. Most development projects in the early period focussed on constructing dirt roads to connect all villages in the area, and on building a few schools and health centres. Government officials also tried to launch the ideology of 'modernisation' as the main outcome of concrete developmental change. Nevertheless, during the 1960s and the early 1970s the developmental changes had few effects on the villagers' traditional way of life and self-sufficient economy. The effective development programmes in the study communities really started in 1976. A number of development programmes had been designed to raise the villagers' standard of living, while encountering the

threat of Communist insurgent movements in the study area, in particular the improvement of up-country road networks connecting to Roi-et and nearby district town centres. The road networks were the fundamental source of social and economic changes in the communities on various occasions in the later decades. The benefits of improved transport were expected to kindle new support from villagers for allowing government forces easier access to insecure areas suspected as the location of Communist insurgent movements.

The study area was identified as an area threatened by Communist insurgents in the early 1970s due to the fact that the largest *Isan* Communist camps in the 'Phuphan Forest' expanded their movements into areas of Dong Mae Phek Forest, around 15 kilometres from the Nong-Yai community. All villages in *Tambon Nong-Yai* and its neighbouring sub-district, *Tambon Khamnadi*, were identified as sensitive Communist insurgent areas. The government had special budgets to promote development programmes in those two sub-districts, in particular the road networks and agricultural development programmes.[1] However, the development programmes did not directly lead to social and economic changes in the study communities, but the crucial influence was the circumstance of *ha-na-di* immigration. In fact, when the Communist insurgents came to camp in the Dong Mae Phek Forest, they also encouraged their relatives and friends (from some areas in Kuchinarai District and Khao Wong District in Kalasin Province) to immigrate to clear agricultural land at the fringe of the Dong Mae Phek forest areas. The new immigrants cultivated rice and vegetables as provisions for the camp, and worked as spies for information on the movements of the government officials. In 1976, more than 50 per cent of the forest areas were opened up for agriculture. By 1980, the government succeeded in launching an amnesty strategy, persuading the Communist insurgents to give up their movements and return to their home villages. As a result, most of the Communist insurgents' supporters also returned home; the cleared agricultural land was then sold to local people and new *ha-na-di* immigrants from various districts in Roi-et, Mahasarakham, Kalasin, and Yasothon. The newcomers not only settled in new communities on the cleared Dong Mae Phek forest

areas, named Ban Pak Chong and Ban Naa-ngaam in *Tambon Khamnadi*, and in the Nong-Yai community, but also brought new agricultural practices of cassava cultivation into the study area. Dramatic social and economic changes, therefore, started after 1980 and centred on the agricultural boom in cassava cultivation.

Indeed, the government officials had also promoted new agricultural technologies and cash crops (maize and cassava) since 1975, but only a few farmers were interested in the new cash cropping. The farmers changed their agricultural practices only by accepting the new agricultural technologies, in particular ploughing machines and chemical fertilisers and pesticides, because they expected to increase their paddy yields. After flooding problems in 1978, more farmers accepted cash cropping in order to earn a cash income to recover their shortfall of rice production. However, the crucial economic changes started in 1981 when the native people realised the success of cassava cultivation practised by the *ha-na-di* immigrants. They then rapidly expanded to farm cassava. The forest areas and vacant agricultural lands in the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae were completely converted to plant cassava by 1985 and 1982 respectively. As a result of the cassava extension, a cassava mill was established at Ban Bataka in 1986 to take advantage of the cassava supplies in the area. This, in turn, sped up the expansion of cassava fields because the villagers had more benefits from selling cassava to this mill than travelling to sell elsewhere due to the minimal local transportation costs. The flowing of cash into the village and the increasing dependence on the cash economy has also changed the practices for rice cultivation in the communities. Many villagers have intensified their cassava cultivation, while leaving their paddy fields idle. Consequently, some households have produced not enough rice for their household consumption. They, furthermore, have expected to earn more and more cash income from cassava in order to match the rising demands for cost for agricultural inputs and new technological equipment, and for luxury consumer goods for the modern way of life. Cassava cultivation has been practised by most of the agricultural households in the study communities because it has been expected to make more

cash income than paddy cultivation. Since then the economy in the study communities has rapidly changed from a self-sufficient economy to a cash economy.

Another important factor of developmental change is the development of infrastructure, which has fundamentally made a bridge with the social and economic changes in the study communities. Three decades ago, the villagers communicated with nearby villages and travelled to the town centre in Phon Thong by foot or by local cattle cart *(kwian)*. There was not any public transport service. During 1975 and 1980, there were gravel (literally *'hin luk rang'*) roads connecting all villages in *Tambon Nong-Yai*, and there were some mini-bus services from the villages to Phon Thong town centre.[2] The development of infrastructure in the study area started having a large impact on agricultural development from the early 1980s. The feeder roads and increases of vehicular transport afforded convenient paths for merchants (from Roi-et, Phon Thong and Kuchinarai) to buy agricultural products from villagers and for villagers to take their produce to sell in the markets. Distinctive social changes came to the communities in 1981 when the minor roads to Phon Thong and Kuchinarai were paved, and public transport from Roi-et to Bangkok (via Phon Thong) started operating. This made the world smaller in the villagers' opinion. The villagers could not only travel to Bangkok more easily than in the past, but could also have more chance to contact the modern way of life in the big cities. This circumstance has effectively influenced social changes in the study communities from a traditional way of life to a modern way of life.

Moreover, the responses of the villagers to a modern way of life have also affected the need for a cash income to provide material goods as an expression of their modernity. Material needs for the modern way of life have been more and more important, particularly among the young generation. Indeed, the villagers started incorporating materialism in their way of life in the early 1960s, but it has been accelerating in the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae since 1983 and 1986 respectively due to the boom in cityward migration to Bangkok. Migration to Bangkok has provided not only better economic opportunities but also a more modern life-style for migrants and their households. Therefore, not only social

changes but also migratory changes in the study communities have affected and been affected by economic changes.

An obvious social change in the study communities is that the changes to modernisation and materialism have significantly affected the people's way of life and their household relations. In the past, parents and children worked together in the farm, lived together in the same house, and shared troubles and happiness with each other. Now, working in agriculture does not earn enough income to meet the household's needs. Each household needs more and more cash for their living and farming expenses. Consequently, now at least one household member in the study communities has to migrate to work in Bangkok for a supplementary income. Migrant children remit parts of their earning income to support their family for household and farming expenditures. They, therefore, have to live and work separately. Most of them may have only one chance to meet each other for a few days each year during the *Songkraan* festival.

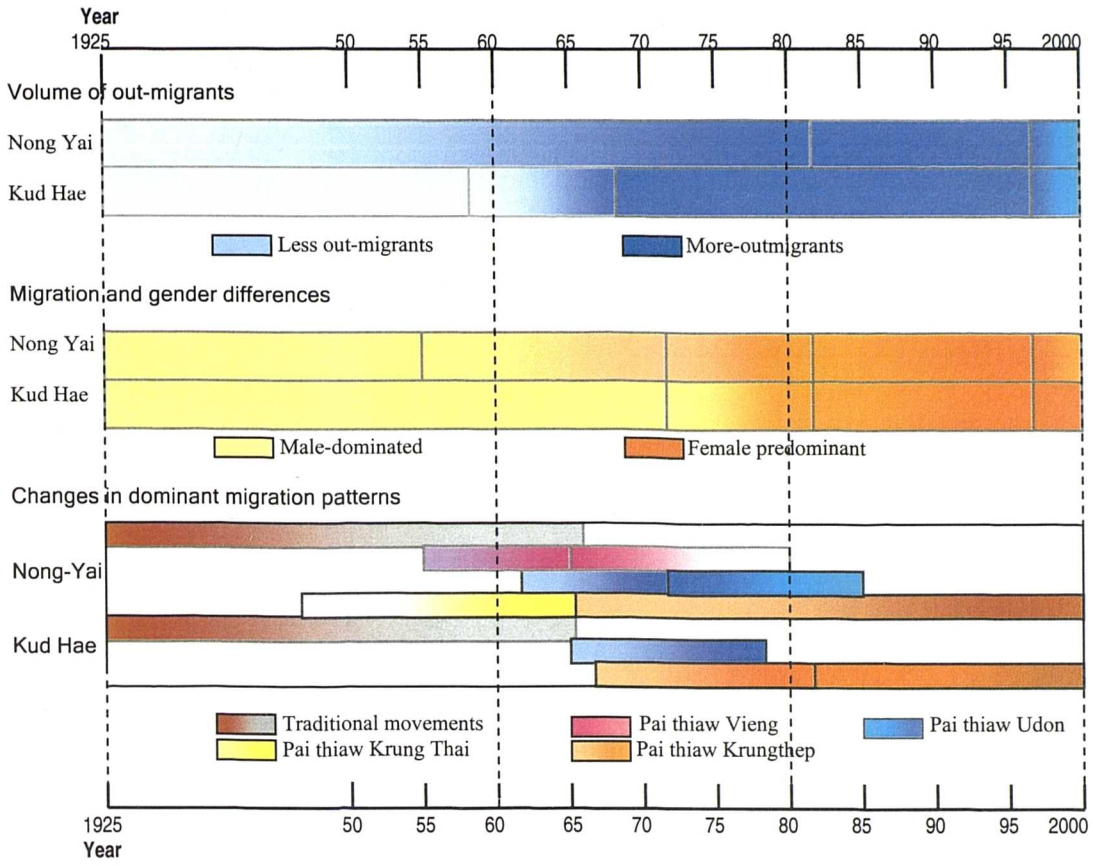
However, it is noticeable that all changes discussed above have affected and been affected to each other on the co-evolutionary process, rather than through cause-and-effect circumstances. The villagers have gradually adapted their way of life to respond to the changes which have penetrated the communities. They did not change their way of life immediately, or follow the guidance of those changes. In fact, although the accumulation of changes started in the late 1950s, the co-evolutionary process of social and economic changes become distinctive in the early 1980s when *ha-na-di* immigrants came to settle down and started cultivating cassava in *Tambon Khamnadi* and *Tambon Nong-Yai*. The conversion of forest areas and vacant agricultural land to cassava plantations, as well as agricultural promotion by government officials, has gradually and effectively transformed the local economy from self-sufficiency to a cash economy, and the people's way of life from traditionalism to materialism. However, it is a fact that the accumulation of changes within the communities has become more radical and diverse through the massive cityward migration to Bangkok since the early 1980s. Therefore, the co-evolutionary process of social changes in the study communities has not only been interrelated

with economic changes, but it has also combined with migratory changes, which will be discussed for more detail in the next section.

6.2.2 *Migratory change and gender differences*

Before 1960, when the economic conditions in the study communities were still self-sufficient and the villagers' way of life was traditional, the household male and female work force in the study communities were very important for both household domestic and farm tasks. During the cultivation period the grown-up household members spent most of their time on farm task, and normally spent their free time after planting and harvesting for household-based tasks, which were less identified with a specific time schedule and specific gender responsibilities. Their free time was generally occupied with growing vegetables and fruits, raising some chickens and pigs, weaving and dying cloth, basket-making, building or repairing the house, and repairing farming equipment. They lived, worked and ate together *(yuu nam kan, hed nam kan, kin nam kan).* The villagers rarely moved out to work elsewhere. Although there had in fact been a few out-migrants working in the Central region since 1945, the migration pattern was rural-rural migration rather than rural-urban migration. Cityward migration in the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae actually started in 1960 and 1965 respectively, when some villagers moved to work in Udon Thani and other big cities around the Northeast. Migration conditions in the study communities radically changed when many villagers moved to work in Bangkok in the early 1970s because there were more employment opportunities and higher incomes in Bangkok than elsewhere. However, at the early stage of cityward migration there were more male than female migrants (see Figure 6-3).

Figure 6-3 *Migratory changes and gender differences in the study communities*



According to Figure 6-3, in 1945 villagers in the Nong-Yai community started moving to work as agricultural hired labourers in rural areas of the Central region (which they referred to as *'pai thiaw Krung Thai'*), but at that time there were only a small number of out-migrants. More specifically, all of them were males. Since 1955, some villagers had crossed the Laotian border to work in Vientiane in both rural and urban areas. The volume of out-migration gradually increased after 1960, when Udon Thani became a popular destination for non-agricultural employment. Since then, there have been more and more out-migrants working in big cities around the Northeast and the Central region, including Bangkok. Mass out-migration to Bangkok started in the Nong-Yai community in 1978.

In contrast, there were no out-migrants from Ban Kud Hae to elsewhere up until 1965, when the villagers started migrating to work in Udon Thani. However, the mass migration to Bangkok from Ban Kud Hae also started in 1978. This relevant circumstance was mainly because in 1978 there was a big flood problem in the study

areas. Almost all households lost their paddy and cassava fields. Then many of them chose to migrate to work in the big cities for earning the income needed for their family to survive, and also to collect some money for their next-year cropping. During that crisis, not only male household heads and young males but also young females in the study communities migrated to work in Udon Thani and Bangkok. In Bangkok, they went to work as wage-labourers in warehouses at Khlong Toey, in fresh markets at Bang Rak and Sathupradit, and in tailor shops at Huay Khwang and Din Daeng. Some of them worked as taxi-drivers. This was a critical point of change in female migration in the study communities. There is evidence that female migration from the Nong-Yai community started much earlier than that in Ban Kud Hae. Parents had started easing their concerns about their daughter's migration because some of them had direct experience of working in Bangkok, and the others (who had no experiences of cityward migration) had more information from the return-migrants, in particular the bright side of working in Bangkok. This was also the starting point for mass migration to work in Bangkok.

This study also found that since 1978 the villagers had gradually changed their attitudes towards working in Bangkok. Many of them had realised that working in Bangkok for only a few months could earn them a large amount of money equivalent to the annual agricultural income of a whole family. Daeng, a forty-five-year-old male taxi-driver in Bangkok from Ban Nong-Yai, explains the circumstances of social changes and migratory changes in the study communities as follows:

> "In the old days, when I was a child, we were self-sufficient farmers who bartered for vital needs we did not produce, but now the value of money itself dominates the community economy, and our life-style has changed. The more we rely on monetary values, the more difficult our lives become. Although my income in the city as a taxi-driver does not make me rich, it is better than working in the farm. My monthly income earnings now are equivalent to what my family earns from farming in a year. Agricultural income is a pittance compared to migratory income. There are fewer and fewer farmers every year."

Comparing Figure 6-2 with 6-3, we can see that cityward migration in the study communities started after social and economic changes had occurred. After the cash economy and materialism had spread to the communities in the late 1950s, the need for a cash income and materials to adopt the new cash crops and upgrade their standard of living pushed poor villagers to move out to work in big cities elsewhere. The poor villagers had insufficient agricultural land to earn enough

income to meet their cash needs. Their land could only produce enough rice for household consumption. However, in this period more men than women migrated to work outside the communities. Female migration in the Nong-Yai community started in 1960, while in Ban Kud Hae started only in 1972. Female migration increased only slowly up until 1978. After that, there were more and more female migrants from those two communities.

However, along with social and economic changes over more than four decades, gender differences in the process of migratory change have interrelated with the different patterns of migration in both the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae. Those interrelations can be classified into 5 patterns of migration as follows:

1) Traditional movements

According to elder key informants in Ban Noon Phoe and Ban Kud Hae and as we have seen earlier, there were two patterns of traditional movements in the study communities: short-distance trading caravan and *'Nai-hoi'* caravans. In fact, only a few villagers joined the *Nai-hoi* caravans, but it was much more normal behaviour for the villagers to occasionally operate the short-distance trading caravan when they experienced some problems of rice-shortage. The short-distance trading caravan usually brought local products, especially forest products (such as charcoal, dried game and medicinal herbs) and dried fish, travelling to barter with other villages for rice and salt. Both men and women participated in this movement. This pattern of traditional movements had changed its practices since the late 1950s. The short-distance caravan ended in 1965 due to merchants from Phon Thong and Bua Khao coming to buy local products in the villages, making it no longer necessary for villagers to operate the caravan.

Mr Suwan Phonyiam, now 60 years old, had experience of participating in the *Nai-hoi* caravan twice when 19 and 21 years of age. After leaving the monkhood, he did not participate in the caravan anymore because he got married with a woman from a better-off family. It was not necessary for him to risk himself with the *Nai-hoi* caravan. However, after the period of harvesting, he and his wife usually joined the short-distance trading caravan with his wife's close relatives. Although his family

was not facing economic constraints, he and his wife wanted to join the short-distance trading caravan because it was a very good chance for them to have experience and friendships with villagers in other communities. This pattern of traditional movement was the only chance for women to travel far away from home during the period before 1955.

2) Pai thiaw Krung Thai

'Pai thiaw Krung Thai' literally means travelling to Thailand (but it is practically interpreted as travelling to Central Thailand). Before and during the 1960s, the villagers mostly called Bangkok and the Central Region *'Krung Thai'* in the sense of another country with a different culture from theirs. Most of the migrants who *pai thiaw Krung Thai* were males and individually migrated for a short time after the harvesting period, mostly for visiting their relatives and friends. However, many of them also worked as wage-labourers in paddy fields in the Central region. Therefore, this migration pattern was mainly rural-rural migration rather than rural-urban migration. Some of them had a hidden purpose to their migration as for land pioneering *(ha-na-di)* and for gaining individual experience of travelling elsewhere. However, there were no *pai-thiaw-Krung-Thai* migrants (from the study communities) who moved out to settle in the Central Region. They went to work as agricultural wage-labourers only during dry season and returned home before the rainy season started.

This pattern of migration had been recognised in the Nong-Yai community during 1945 and 1964, while there were no *pai-thiaw-Krung-Thai* migrants in Ban Kud Hae. The first migrant who engaged in *pai thiaw Krung Thai* was Mr Samai Thuhaa at Ban Noon Phoe. He is now 75 years old. He had experience of migrating to work as a harvesting wage-labourer in Lopburi during December 1945 and February 1946. A short time after he left the monkhood, he went to visit his uncle who had married and settled down in Lopburi. His uncle helped him to find harvesting work in paddy fields. He got a wage payment of 15 Baht per *rai*, including food and accommodation by living with the farm owners. He worked and lived together with other hired labourers, both males and females, from Singburi. He moved from field to

field for nearly two months. He explained that at that time there was no one in the study communities moving to work in Bangkok because of a lack of connections and networks. He just wanted to *'pai yaam yaat'* (literally meaning to visit relatives in *Isan* language) rather than aiming to work there. He insisted that most *pai-thiaw-Krung-Thai* migrants moved for experience rather than for cash benefits because they had no economic constraints in the village.

3) Pai thiaw Vieng

Cityward migration, during the period of 1950s and 1960s, consisted of *'pai thiaw Viang'*, or travelling to Vientiane. The migrants to Vientiane mostly were members of poor households in the Nong-Yai community who had a small amount of agricultural land. There were thirteen former migrants to Vientiane: four married men in Ban Noon Phoe, two couples in Ban Nong-Yai, and two married and three young single women in Ban Nong Thabkhrua. Three of them have remained in Lao, while the others returned to the villages around 1975. There were no migrants to Vientiane from Ban Kud Hae. The main purpose of their migration was working for a supplementary income for their household's economic/nutritional survival and possibly for land pioneering. Their migration decisions were actually made within the household and by the male household head. According to interviews with five of the former migrants to Vientiane, more of the migrants to Vientiane were males than females, and there were more married couples or divorcees than single migrants. Female migrants moved to work as housemaids, traders, and agricultural wage-labourers, while their male counterparts mostly worked as pedicab-drivers and wage-labourers in logging and farming. Many migrants wanted to settle there because the cost of living in Vientiane was cheaper than in *Isan,* and there were richer natural resources in Laos than in Roi-et.

Mr Kularb Phonyiam[3] (see the case study in Box 6-1), one of the former migrants to Vientiane, explained that before 1965 the villagers did not know anything about Bangkok, and that migration in this direction was very limited. They were really afraid of going to *Krung Thai* because Thai people might cheat them. In contrast, they noticed that Laotian people in Vientiane were honest, kind and

sincere. However, in my opinion, it might be because of the familiar culture and the same language, which made them feel safe and comfortable to migrate and work in Vientiane rather than travel to *Krung Thai.*

> ***Box 6-1*** *A case study of a male migrant to Vientiane before 1957.*
> *Mr Kularb Phonyiam, now 70 years old, was one of the earlier migrants to Vientiane. He moved to work in Vientiane in 1955 when he was 25 years old. He migrated with his friends to work as agricultural wage-labourers. He married and has settled with his new family in Vientiane until now. He urged his older brother, Mr Khamphoo Phonyiam, to follow him to Lao in 1973. His brother worked in Vientiane for nearly 3 years. In 1975, Mr Khamphoo had to return home due to the political revolution in Lao. Mr Kularb described the way of life in Vientiane, during the late 1950s and the early 1970s, as being a peaceful city with rich natural resources. Although wage income in Lao might be lower than in Thailand, the living expenses were much cheaper. Migrants could save much money for remitting to the family in Thailand.*

Migration to Vientiane continued to be popular for the villagers in the Nong-Yai community up until 1967, when it ceased due to the problems of political revolution in Lao. Crossing the border to Vientiane was very restricted for men, because the Laotian government was aware of the influx of spies and hired soldiers from Thailand. Hence, there were more women than men allowed by the government to migrate to work in Lao between 1967 and 1975. After the victory of Pathet Lao in 1975, many of the *pai-thiaw-Vieng* migrants had to return to the Nong-Yai community. The new Pathet Lao government closed all chances for Thai migrants. Many poor return-migrants, having a small plot of agricultural land, then tried to move to other destinations to work in the non-agricultural sectors, particularly to Udon Thani.

4) Pai thiaw Udon

During the 1960s and 1970s, after the harvesting period, some villagers moved as seasonal migrants for cash jobs in Udon Thani where there were jobs available in sugar-refineries, tobacco mills, and the service sector (because Udon Thani was a large American army base). The villagers in both the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae called this pattern of migration *'pai thiaw Udon'.* Although there were some seasonal migrants moving to work in other big cities in the Northeast (such as Khon Kaen and Khorat – or Nakhon Ratchasima), Udon Thani

was the most popular destination in the study communities. Most of the migrants were male household heads and some were young men and women in their late teens and early twenties. It was a normal circumstance for male household heads and young sons to work together as unskilled labourers or pedicab-drivers in Udon Thani, while young daughters had to accompany their parents. At that time, most villagers in the study area had a negative attitude towards female migrants, particularly the ones who migrated alone to Udon Thani and Bangkok. They were generally considered prostitutes. In contrast, women were able to migrate to Vientiane without any negative gossip and interpretation.

The migration decisions of migrants to *pai thiaw Udon* were actually made by the household heads rather than the young migrants themselves. There was a very interesting point that many of the young male migrants who already had experience of *'pai thiaw Udon'* could later have easier chances to migrate to Bangkok on their own, though they also had to ask for their parents' permission. Another interesting point was that during the 1970s, Bangkok was not a well-known destination for most migrants because the villagers had less information about Bangkok, and because travelling to Bangkok was very difficult and expensive. Bangkok in their mind was still dangerous and unattractive. However, although migration to work in Bangkok was not yet popular, social networks of migration to Bangkok had already started to be established since 1968. The resulting social networks gradually influenced the behaviour and decisions of migration to Bangkok.

5) Pai thiaw Krungthep

Since the late 1970s, as a result of the establishment of migration networks in Bangkok and the development of transportation and infrastructure, more and more villagers from the study communities migrated to work in Bangkok as seasonal migrants. They identified their migration to Bangkok as *'pai thiaw Krungthep'* (literally meaning travelling to Bangkok). Most of the male migrants went to work as unskilled labourers in warehouses and construction sites, while their female counterparts worked as housemaids. They largely moved to Bangkok after the harvesting period and returned home during the *Songkraan* festival and might stay

in the village until they finished their paddy planting, then they would migrate to work again.

In the Nong-Yai community, the first group of migrant workers started moving to Bangkok in 1964.[4] It was surprising that they consisted of three young female migrants. They were friends who had the same family problem. They were divorced. They initially aimed to move away from the village for a while in search of agricultural wage-work in Khorat, but once they arrived there one of them, Mrs Suay,[5] met a male friend from a neighbouring sub-district. Her friend persuaded them to travel further to Bangkok. One of them (Mrs Taa) returned home after spending a week in Bangkok, while the others (Mrs Suay and Mrs Whan) remarried and settled with their new families in Bangkok. They lived in Bangkok for 22 and 13 years respectively. They both set up well-connected networks for later male and female migrants from the Nong-Yai community, post-1968.[6] They initially supported them by arranging accommodation and employment opportunities for the initial migrants. Since then most newcomers from the Nong-Yai community had firstly stayed at these two pioneers' houses for a while until they become settled themselves.

The first *pai-thiaw-Krungthep* migrant in Ban Kud Hae was Mr Pee Anantaphum who ran away from home in 1968 when he was only 18 years old because his parents did not allow him to get married. He followed his friends from Ban Nong Waeng Hae to work in Bangkok for four years. He then returned home with a large amount of money and told his relatives and neighbours about the bright side of economic opportunities in Bangkok. In early 1972, the second migrant, Mr Hiang Waeng-oui, followed his brother-in-law from Phon Thong town centre to work as a street vendor at Bangkapi when he was 24 years old. He circularly migrated for 10 years before he brought his family to settle in Bangkok until now. However, in Ban Kud Hae the migration networks were not set up by those two former out-migrants. The networks were primarily set up in late 1972, when a group of tailoring trainees followed their friends from Ban Nong Wang Hae who had migrated to work in tailor shops at Huay Khwang and Din Daeng in Bangkok. By 1971, a migrant in

Ban Nong Waeng Hae returned from Din Daeng with his tailoring knowledge. He established a tailor training shop for juveniles at Ban Nong Waeng Hae, requiring a small fee for tuition. Many students from neighbouring villages in *Tambon Nong-Yai* attended the training course. Most of them subsequently migrated to work in tailor shops in Huay Khwang and Din Daeng.

During the 1970s, in the early stage of migration to Bangkok, most migrants were males who migrated to work for saving and sending money back for their farming expenses. Women, particularly young girls, were rarely allowed to migrate due to their parents wanting them to stay and help with domestic and farm work, as well as being concerned about their daughter's security. However, it is evident that from 1972, with the support of migration networks, some young girls started negotiating with their parents to be allowed to migrate to work in Bangkok. In the late 1970s, there were many cases of young girls who ran away from home following their close relatives and friends to Bangkok (see the case study in Box 6-2).

Box 6-2 *A case study of run-away female migrant in Ban Noon Phoe*

Mrs Tugkatar Phonyiam, a 38-year-old returnee, was a run-away female migrant to work in Bangkok. She ran away after she finished her third year of secondary school. She, like many young girls in Ban Noon Phoe, had dreamt to work in Bangkok because she saw some young female migrants return home with expensive modern dresses. She intended to go to Bangkok as soon as possible after she finished her first level of secondary school, but her mother wanted her to continue studying at a higher level. She asked her mother to let her go to Bangkok with her close friend from Ban Nong Thabkhrua. She was refused. Without any permission, she and her close friend followed a close female relative, who returned home for the Songkraan festival in April 1975, to work in a small cloth-making firm. She got a low wage of 600 Baht per month. However, soon after she settled in Bangkok, she changed her job to working as a waitress, a shopkeeper assistant, and a receptionist in a department store. She remitted some money back to her parents and let them know that she was safe, and stayed with her close relative. She had run away from home for 4 years, since she was 15 years old. She firstly returned home when she was 19 years old to get married, and then migrated again with her husband. She and her family with two children just returned to settle and work in the village last year.

During 1978 and 1982 more and more young girls negotiated to work in Bangkok. Although many parents were still reluctant to permit their young daughter to migrate, they had to find a reliable migration network for their daughter because their daughter might run away with someone who was unreliable. This circumstance, related to the increasing accessibility of information about the way of life in Bangkok, gradually changed parents' attitudes toward female migration. Since

1982, female migration has gradually been accepted by most parents in the study communities. Therefore, more and more young girls have migrated to work in Bangkok.

In brief, gender differences in the migration process and the transformation of migration patterns have basically been determined by community social and economic conditions. When the economic conditions in the study communities still consisted of a self-sufficient economy, migration was considered a social activity rather than an economic activity. Men migrated mainly for individual experiences and for visiting their close relatives or friends, while women were not allowed to migrate elsewhere. When community social and economic conditions were gradually replaced by materialism and the cash economy, migration to work in big cities for a supplementary income was progressively practised and female migration was, step by step, accepted. By the establishment of migration networks and the flow of migratory information, most parents in the study communities have changed their attitudes toward female migration, little by little. These changes involved co-evolutionary changes of community migration norms and gender norms, which have affected and been affected by migratory changes which have seen a shift from male-dominated to female-predominant movements.

6.2.3 *Changes in migration norms and gender norms*

Although migration networks in the study communities were firstly established by female migrants in 1968, during the late 1960s and 1970s there were still fewer female migrants than their male counterparts. This is because of the rigidity of migration norms and gender norms in the community. According to the community migration norms and gender norms, before 1960 young women were absolutely not allowed by their parents to travel alone far away from home, while mature men (generally after leaving the monkhood) were able to do so after the rice harvesting period. Men might travel (or *pai thiaw*) to visit their relatives or friends as well as to work as wage-labourers in other provinces. This was mainly because in *Isan* society, women were considered as family dependants who could not protect themselves as well as men. They were also considered to have less knowledge and

working skills than men. Most parents in the study communities believed that it should be very difficult for women to find good jobs in the cities, and that they might be forced to work as prostitutes (see the case study in Box 6-3). However, the community migration norms have gradually changed due to the consequences of migratory change in the mid-1960s when some female migrants went to work in Udon Thani, and after 1978 when many young men and women followed their parents to work in Bangkok. Then, migration norms and gender norms in the study communities started changing and affected the behaviour of female migration.

Box 6-3 *A case study of migrants' parents in Ban Kud Hae*

Mr Saen Maatrapharb has 8 children, 4 males and 4 females. They have all migrated to work in Bangkok. He explained about some social constraints on female migration in Ban Kud Hae that: "Around twenty years ago most villagers never wanted our daughters to work in Bangkok, mainly because people said that when they went there they might be sexually abused and forced to be prostitutes. The men there were very bad. While I let my sons go to work in Bangkok, I always denied my daughters to work there. But I eventually could not keep all my daughters at home. By 1980, my oldest daughter asked to follow her older brother to work in the same firm as him. I could not refuse her request because her two older brothers gave me a serious promise to look after their sister. After that the other daughters followed their older sister to Bangkok. All of my daughters gave me the same reason for their requirement to go to Bangkok. They wanted to find a well-paid job and save money to send back home for supporting our household needs, but I knew that their real reason was because they saw some of their friends and relatives come back from Bangkok with splendid dresses like a movie star on the television. They wanted to have a chance to experience that kind of modern life-style."

Indeed, the flow of mass female migrants from the study communities was rooted between 1978 and 1980, when some households received economic benefits from their migrant daughters' remittances. Some built a new house, some bought new cassava fields, and some spent the money to intensify cassava cultivation. The scenarios of successful female migrants associated with strong migration networks helped in removing parents' concerns about the insecurity of their migrant daughter in Bangkok. Restrictions on female migration have declined since then. Female migration has gradually been allowed, and consequently there have been more and more female migrants going to work in Bangkok and its vicinity. However, the genuine mass female migration from the study communities to Bangkok really started in 1981 when public transport from Roi-et to Bangkok started operating. The convenient transport not only reduced the cost of travelling to Bangkok but also provided a good chance for migrant parents to visit and realise the way of life and

working conditions of their migrant children in Bangkok through their own experiences. This also directly caused changes in the parents' attitudes toward their daughter's out-migration to Bangkok, which was formerly considered as an unacceptable activity for young girls.

Some evidence in both the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae shows that in the early 1980s there were still obvious conflicts between young daughters and their parents in the process of migration negotiation. This kind of household conflict was mainly because the decision to move out was primarily a function of the changes in the family division of labour for both domestic and farm work, and because parents still had traditional authority on any decisions involving household affairs. However, while their parents wanted to keep their daughter staying at home, most young girls wanted to have experience of working and living in modern environments like in Bangkok (see the case study in Box 6-3). The process of negotiation was very crucial due to the fact that those young girls saw successful female migrants returning home with splendid dresses and with the praise of their parents who had received a large amount of money from their migrant daughters. As a result of this, young girls mostly have dreamt to have a chance to work in Bangkok, at least once in their life, for experiencing the bright lights of the capital city and for receiving the same praise from their parents and others in the village. They noticed Bangkok not only as a big city with more economic opportunities but also as a modern city, which has lots of enjoyment and alternative way of life to experience. They have wanted to migrate to Bangkok both for *'pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham'* and *'pai thiaw ha-pra-sobkarn'*. During this period, the economic motive was less important than the non-economic one, particularly in the Nong-Yai community, which had sufficient natural resources and agricultural yields to sustain most of its households.

Since the late 1980s, the demand and supply of the household labour force for agricultural activities has reduced. Young men and women migrated to work in Bangkok for the higher income and remitted parts of their income to their family for hiring agricultural labour instead of using their own labour. Most agricultural labour in the communities consisted of married villagers, comprising both non-migrants

and seasonal returnees, it was no longer necessary for migrants to move only for the periods after ploughing and harvesting, as in past decades; they could migrate to Bangkok at any time while committing themselves to remit some money back home. The increased opportunities to earn a cash income from non-agricultural sources have become very important as a means to underwrite the risk of income earned from agriculture. It seems likely that migration decisions have resulted from household expectations to diversify their sources of income. Therefore, in the perspective of migrant parents, migration norms are the economic success of the migrant to earn a lot of money from working in Bangkok. Migration in their mind is to *pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham* and to remit some money to help meet the household's needs. In contrast, many young male and female migrants in the study communities claim that they have used the commitment of remittances as an excuse for migration. They genuinely set their aims of migration for experiencing the modern way of life and for enjoyment in the capital city, like *'pai thiaw ha-prason-karn'*, and responding to their parental expectations of economic support to provide their household with a better standard of living.

Now, young children in the study communities consider migration as a bridge to gain both individual experiences and household economic success. Suchada Phonyiam, for instance, is 16 years old and studying in level 3 of the secondary school. She has made her own decision that she will go to work in Bangkok after finishing school next year, even though her parents want her to continue studying in higher education. She wants to follow her school friends to work in Bangkok. She expresses her reasons for her migration decision as follows:

> "Most young people in Ban Noon Phoe want to work in Bangkok. The one who does not go to work will be stigmatised by the others as a person who is incapable to gain recruitment in the cities. The one who does not want to work in Bangkok will be considered as being stupid and fearful of adventure in the outside world. Studying may or may not give a good chance for economic success, but migration is an obvious chance for the rural people to raise individual and household economic and social mobility. This is a kind of social pressure, which drives young girls to attempt to migrate and work in any big city. In my case, my friends have significantly influenced my decision to migrate to Bangkok. That is the norm. Everybody wants to go to Bangkok. I am following that norm. I want to see Bangkok. I want to have some kind of autonomy from my family. I want to do something which is more challenging and adventurous."

The responsibility to remit money back to help meet their household needs is more strongly committed to by migrant daughters than by migrant sons. A

former *Phuyai-ban*, Mr Sao Janthip, at Ban Kud Hae suggests that in general most of the female migrants in the village often send money back for supplementing their family's livelihood. It is seen as shameful if they go to work without remitting any money back home. It is really a household expectation of parental obligatory payment that pressures on the female migrants from Ban Kud Hae. The female migrant is always expected to maintain a close connection with her parents and to supplement the household economy. In contrast, most of the households in the community do not expect any supplementary income from their migrant sons. Young male migrants mostly spend their income for drinking, gambling and entertainment. Some interviewed parents responded that they let their sons migrate to Bangkok because they wanted to decrease their household expense for their son's entertainment. If their sons still lived in the village, they would at least have to pay for their son's drinking and smoking. They rarely expect their sons to send any money back home, but they will be very appreciative if their migrant sons can remit them some money.

To summarise, for many parents in the past, the thought of letting their daughter migrate to work outside the community was like showing them 'the dark side of the moon'. However, as a result of social and economic changes and having more extensive and supportive migration networks (details of migration networks in the study communities will be discussed in section 6.3.2), most parents insist that all they need to do now is find a reliable network to send their daughter to work in Bangkok for household economic support. They expect a bit more economic support from their migrant daughter than their migrant son. The changes in migration norms and gender norms in the study communities have affected the pattern and process of migration decision-making over time, in particular in relation to female migration. However, the migration decision is still influenced and processed throughout crucial factors of household relations and gender relations. This argument will be discussed and proved in the next section.

6.3 *Gender Influence on the Migration Decision-Making Process*

This section aims to analyse the gender issue as seen through the process of migration decision-making and social change. Fundamentally, this study considers migration as a complex phenomenon. The villagers and their families make decisions to migrate or not to migrate through a process involving complicated household relations. They might have obvious support from their migration networks in the destination, and they are more likely to rely on information flows from their networks. However, the final decisions have to be made through household relations and gender relations between the household members, particularly between parents and a son and/or a daughter. The social relations, social norms, household relations and gender relations are seen as critical elements in the decision-making process. This section will explore all combinations of influential factors in the migration decision-making process, especially social relations, social norms, social networks, household relations, and in particular gender relations.

6.3.1 *Gender and social relations*

Villagers in the study communities traditionally knew and depended on each other because of their close kinship and friendship. The close social relations among them, in particular among household and kin members, have tied individuals to their family and the community. Their traditional social relations have for a long time directed all of the villagers' decisions regarding household affairs, including migration. However, after the mass cityward migration started in the past two decades, the grassroots of rural *Isan* society has been gradually destroyed because materialism and modernisation have drawn people from the countryside, disrupting traditional household relations and gender relations. Many men and women have left their farm to find jobs in the industrial sectors, and also left the elderly and young children behind in their home village. Social interactions between household members have been interrupted and have changed from the traditional rural to the modern urban way of life. As a result, traditional social norms, values, beliefs, and practices have gradually been influenced and even replaced, by those from an outside culture.

Social norms in the study communities have also changed and declined in significance in affecting migration decisions among the villagers, because the positive sides of migration are more influential than any expected negative social impacts. In the past three decades, social norms involving in particular female migration were uncompromising. A family from which a young daughter had migrated to work elsewhere was considered as a very poor family. According to the *Phuyai-ban* at Ban Nong Thabkhrua, in many cases successful young and single female migrants might be gossiped about, for instance that they had economic success from working as prostitutes. This was because rural women were considered as having less working skills than men. They were not expected to be able to get a reputable and well-paid job as men were.

Traditionally, social relations and social norms in the study communities have formulated the gender and economic roles of household members. Parents and children have been expected to play different roles and duties. Parents and children have known what they have to give and take to and from each other. If they practised something which was against their expected roles, they might experience social sanctions from the community. In this regard, the migration decisions have depended on the different roles that members are expected to perform and how strong the social norms applied to members of different status and gender have been.

In the study communities, the villagers have traditionally classified different gender roles and household expectations between sons and daughters. Sons have been considered as long-term 'out-family' members, while daughters have been considered as long-term 'in-family' members. This is mainly because the sons are regarded as belonging to their wife's family after getting married, and they will have their own household to be responsible for. According to the field data, most parents do not expect their sons to be responsible for the household economy in the long-term. If the parents have to choose between having a son and having a daughter, most of them will choose to have a daughter. Having a daughter is not only a long-term insurance for their ageing future but also a good investment with a high

possibility to get a good economic return from their daughter and their son-in-law. Being a daughter, a woman in the study communities is expected to help and care for her parents all the time for their entire life. It is a daughter's duty to contribute her labour for all domestic and farm work once she is grown up enough to work, at least until she gets married. The requirement of household obligations for a daughter is still strong in the study communities. However, due to the condition that most young daughters now prefer to work in the city rather than work in their household farm, the means to repay household obligations has changed its pattern. A young and single migrant daughter is expected to be a 'good daughter' by regularly remitting part of her income back to her parents. A migrant daughter who cannot contribute such duties and obligations to her parents will be blamed and looked down on by the community, even though she succeeds in her individual social and economic mobility, such as becoming rich or having a high status in her career.

As a result of changing patterns of social relations and social norms, now most parents in the study communities expect their daughter to migrate to work in Bangkok. During the previous three decades, tensions over migration decisions were especially strong for parents of young women who have expected to work in Bangkok, while paradoxically nowadays the tensions are strong for parents of young women who do not expect or want to migrate to work in the cities elsewhere.

6.3.2 *Gender and social networks*

Although either social relations or social norms are important to migration decision, the other elements particularly social networks and information flow are also critical. The social networks of relatives and friends in the destination are influencing the decisions of cityward migration. The relatives and friends encourage and direct migration by providing information and facilities for the prospective migrants. They also provide assistance for seeking employment and also emotional support at the destination (Ritchey 1976, Hare 1999). They play a crucial role in creating 'chain migration'[7] by continually sending information back to their home village and helping fellow villagers. The flow of information from migrants to friends and relatives in the home village has supported the potential and prospective

migrants to learn about the urban way of life and prepare themselves to be ready for migration. It is evident that only a few initial migrants from the study communities arrive in Bangkok alone. Most initially travelled to Bangkok with their friends, neighbours and relatives who already worked there. Advice, housing and work were all to be found via the networks, possibly provided before the movement in cases of female migrants. The majority of female migrants from the study communities have initially got advantages from their social networks. They mostly have come to Bangkok to take up a job that has already been offered to them, usually through a close female relative or friend who has been working in the same firm.[8]

The close social ties in the study communities have obviously influenced migration decisions through kinship and household relations. In the Nong-Yai community, *'Phonyiam'* is the largest family name of people who have strong kin relations. More than seventy per cent of villagers in the community belong to this kin group by blood and marriage. They have long helped and depended on each other in most activities. Migrants from this kin group have retained strong social ties with the community. The core areas to which the *'Phonyiam'* migrants move to work in Bangkok and its vicinity are Lard Phrao 101, Hnaam Daeng, Yannawa, Bang Phlee, Don Muang, Bang Born and Phra Pradaeng. The strongest connection for the *'Phonyiam'* migrants is the networks established by Mr Thawin Phonyiam who has a sub-contracted business firm of telephone wire operation at Lard Phrao 101. He has encouraged many of the initial *'Phonyiam'* migrants to work in his company, and then they may change their jobs later. He has also supported their family to follow the migrants by searching for some work for wives and children and providing initial accommodation for them.

In contrast, there is not a single dominant family name in Ban Kud Hae, although there is a group of family names which have kinship-based relations among villagers in Ban Kud Hae, Ban Nong Waeng Hae, and some areas in Phon Thong town centre. Those family names belong to the *'Waeng'* kin group; such as Waeng-oui, Waeng-som, and Tarn-waeng. However, the kinship-based relations of the *'Waeng'* have not established strong migration networks in Ban Kud Hae. The core

areas of migration for the villagers in Ban Kud Hae are at Huay Khwang, Din Daeng, and Khlong Ton.

Since the early 1980s, the migration networks amongst migrants from Ban Kud Hae have centred on the areas of Huay Khwang and Din Daeng, and employment as tailoring wage-labourers, street vendors, and taxi-drivers (for both car and motor-tricycle -*tuk tuk*). Recently, the networks of migrants from Ban Kud Hae have expanded to the new areas at Khlong Ton (for jobs in furniture factories and artificial flower firms) and Rangsit (for jobs in textile and electronics factories). Indeed, most jobs available through their networks (in particular tailoring, hairdressing and labouring in textile and electronics factories) prefer to hire young female teenagers. Most of young girls in Ban Kud Hae migrate to Bangkok only a few years after finishing their primary school. They firstly follow to work and live in the same work places of their siblings, relatives or friends, and then probably change their jobs later. Now, tailoring workers and street vendors (especially selling hot and cold drinks and snacks for tailoring workers around Huay Khwang and Din Daeng) are very popular jobs amongst migrants from Ban Kud Hae.

A female returnee at Ban Nong Thabkhrua indicated that the migration networks are effective in taking care of the basic needs of migrants immediately after their arrival in the metropolis. Newcomers do not have to make their own housing arrangements, at least in the initial stages of migration. They receive assistance from more experienced fellow migrants in Bangkok. They also receive help to adapt to the urban environment in a partly familiar context rather than to be left to fend for themselves. The experienced migrants provide the newcomers with knowledge of how to get around, where to eat cheaply, where work can be found, how to earn an income, and how to live safely.

Migration supports may also come from siblings and relatives in their home village, usually in the form of caring for children by grandparents. This tends to be because married female migrants are unable to pay childminders, and because they may consider life in the city to be too dangerous and inconvenient for their young children. Their children will have a healthier upbringing in the countryside. Although

child support is the most important form of help from their home village, it is not uncommon for food, especially rice, to be sent to the migrants. They may take sacks of rice with them when they visit home once every three or four months, or their parents or siblings may deliver the rice to them by sending it with the local van or minibus services, which are special transportation services between the study area and the core migration areas in Bangkok. These circumstances confirm that social networks in the home village are also important in supporting cityward migration. These are obvious conditions, which help to maintain close social ties between the migrants and their household in the study communities.

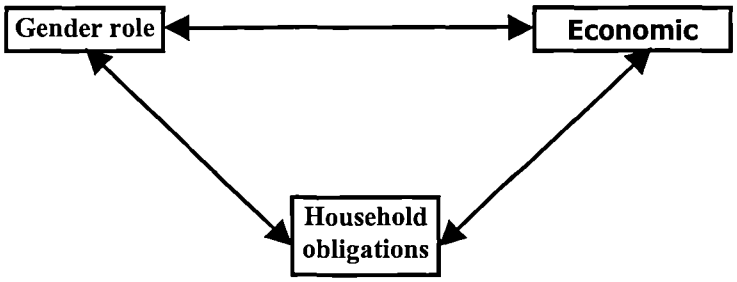
From another perspective, the motive of migrants to maintain community-based social ties reflects their intention and decision to return to their home village after a period of migration. Indeed, gender difference and marital status are fundamental factors influencing their intention and decision to return. Both male and female married migrants, especially those who left their children at the home village, maintain very close connections with their family and regularly remit money mainly for household economic purposes. They will absolutely return home after a specific time, or when they can fulfil their economic expectations. In contrast, young and single male and female migrants have different conditions depending on their household social and/or economic commitments. Young and single male migrants seem to have fewer household commitments than their female counterparts. They may move to work in Bangkok without any contact with their family for a long period, and they may move further to a permanent destination if they get married. In contrast, young and single female migrants, especially the youngest daughter in the family, have serious commitments to their household duties and obligations for which are responsible. Like most young female migrants in the study communities, Waegwon Tarnsab in Ban Kud Hae had to send remittances to her parents regularly, and had to return home when she got married. She returned home with her husband to live with her parents. She is the youngest daughter, hence she and her husband have no choice but to return to live with and care for her ageing parents.

Therefore, social networks have functioned in the process of migration decision-making in two main directions. On the one hand, social networks

functioning as migration networks in the destination areas provide information and opportunities for prospective migrants to make decisions as to where, when and how to migrate. On the other hand, social networks in their home village play a significant role as a safety net for migrants to return home at any time they need, like the circumstance of migration reversal after the economic recession in mid-1997 (for more detail see Chapter 7). They also act as a beneficiary, or a banker, who keeps migratory income for the migrants in order to fulfil their individual and household economic ambitions or social commitment, such as their parental obligations.

6.3.3 *Gender and household relations*

In the sphere of household relations and gender relations, this study considers three influential factors that affect the migration decision-making process: household gender-role expectations, household economic-role expectations and household obligations. This part examines the significance of gender relations and household relations in the process of migration decision-making by exploring the triangular combinations of those three factors.



As expected by many of the migrant parents in the study communities, young female migrants should provide economic returns to help meet their household needs and achieve social and economic mobility. However, not all of the migrant households really need economic returns from their migrant daughters. In general, female migration in the study communities is not limited to the more impoverished segment of a community but involves households across the social strata; young women who leave for Bangkok come from poor, middle-range, and even prosperous households. Consequently, the term 'household economic expectations' does not only mean the economic expectations of poor households to recover their economic

constraints, but also generally includes the expectations of migrant households to fulfil their economic ambitions. In the study communities, these expectations connect to the gender-role expectations and household obligations which require that 'daughters' have to be responsible for the good life of their parents and to fulfil their expected role as 'good daughters'. For young daughters, a deep sense of household obligations is an irresistible social and cultural requirement (Mills 1993, 1997). If any daughter denies paying back her parental obligations, she will be stigmatised by the community as *'luk akatanyu'* (an ungrateful child). Therefore, female migration, as a way to respond to parental obligations, is a product of complex circumstances, embedded in social and cultural tensions beyond household relations and gender relations (Mills 1997: 39). Being 'good daughters' as a set of reciprocal duties and obligations between parents and children is socially and culturally accepted as the standard for appropriate behaviour between parents and daughters in the study communities.

Although every child should certainly return the favour to his/her parents, the means to pay back the obligations are traditionally different between son and daughter. This traditional circumstance is still obvious, though it is not so rigid, in the study communities. Before marriage, a son's most important obligation to his parents is to ordain as a Buddhist monk. To be a monk is the ultimate in meritorious practice given to the parents, and is seen as the primary duty a young man owes his parents. Daughters cannot ordain as a monk (they can ordain as a nun, but no merit is gained for their parents), therefore, their fulfilment of *bun khun* obligations is limited to contributions to the physical and material well-being of the household and respectful obedience to parental authority (Mills 1993). A daughter's obligations to her parents do not end. Parents still can call on married daughters for assistance both in farming and other household activities. Particularly, most married daughters in the study communities have not expected to move very far, often into a new house built within the same village or a nearby village of their parents. If separated by necessity, they will visit regularly to care for their parents (see the case study in Box 6-4).

Box 6-4 *A case study of married daughter in Ban Noon Phoe*

Mrs Chinda Phonyiam, 27 years of age, lives in her maternal village, Ban Noon Phoe, in a small house with her husband and two children (aged about 8 and 6 years). She has many relatives, and she lives in the same compound as her parents' household. After getting married when she was 19 years old, she and her husband lived in her parents' house for two years. She moved to live in her own house after her next sister got married. At that time, her husband wanted to settle the new house in his home village, Ban Khok Laam neighbouring to Ban Noon Phoe, but her parents did not allow her to go. They required and helped her to build a new house nearby their house. They gave a crucial reason that they wanted her, as the eldest sister, to help with farming. They did not want to separate their agricultural land of 15 rai for paddy and 20 rai for cassava as an inheritance for her and her sister. They wanted their two daughters not only to live close to but also to care for them.

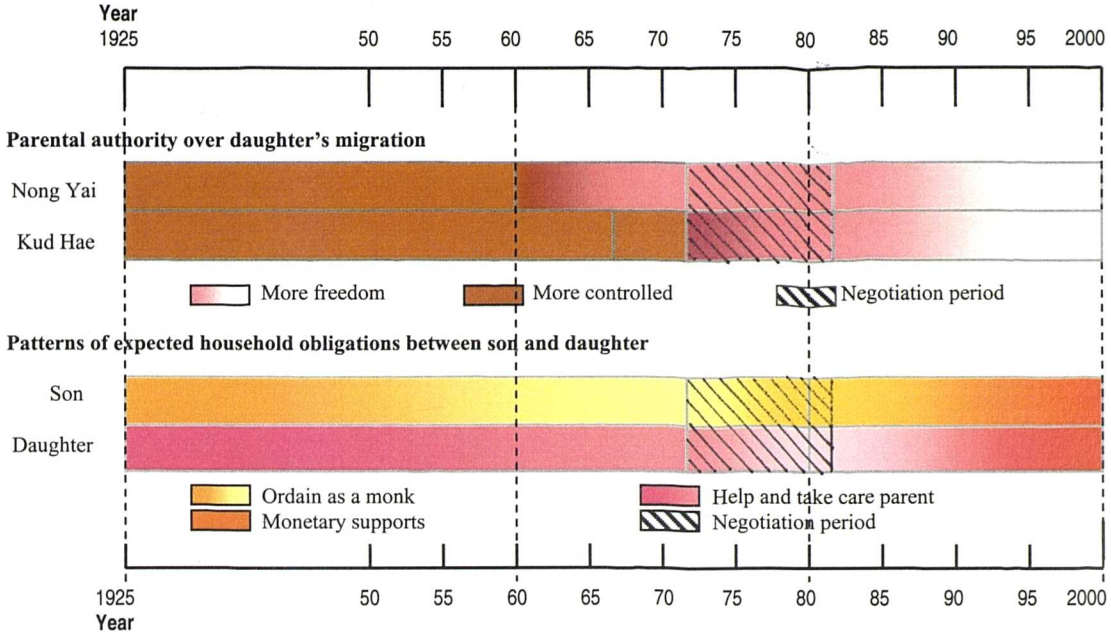
Parents in the study communities have for a long time expected their daughter to meet their *bun khun* obligations by having more household economic responsibilities than a son has, because a daughter will certainly receive household property as part of her inheritance, while a son is expected to receive inherited properties from his wife's family. A son in a poor family might not inherit anything from his own family. Due to this traditional pattern of resource allocation, a daughter has also accepted her significant role in relation to household economic responsibilities, while a son has enjoyed more freedom to manage his own life, traditionally after leaving the monkhood. Regarding this, many parents have thought that *'pai thiaw ha-pra-sobkarn'* would help their son to be mature before having his own family. In the past, the daughter had less chance to travel around because she had been expected to contribute to both domestic and farm work, and also she had less need for 'experience'. However, although the son had freedom to *pai thiaw ha-pra-sobkarn*, he had to come back to help with the household farm work. Therefore, the migration pattern in the past was clearly the seasonal migration dominated by male migrants.

Nowadays, due to the fact that the community economy has changed from self-sufficiency and barter system to a cash economy, the patterns of household division of labour and resource allocation have also changed. Agricultural activities do not depend on the household labour force anymore; hiring labour is the main agricultural practice in the study communities. Young children now have few

agricultural skills because they have spent more time in school than in helping on the household farm. Moreover, many of them recognise agriculture as hard work with an uncertain income, while non-agricultural work in the cities gives them a regular and much higher income as well, and also gives them a chance to experience the modern way of life. They try hard to study in secondary school because they will have a wider chance to apply for jobs in the cities. Due to these circumstances of social and economic change, parents have changed their household economic expectations towards their daughter and son. This also results from the condition that now many households in the study communities have only a small plot of agricultural land which can only be inherited by their daughter, while their son may not inherit any land. The parents therefore grant more flexibility in terms of household economic expectations to their son than to their daughter.

According to Figure 6-4 the parental authority over the migration decisions of a daughter has gradually declined from the condition of being more controlled to being more free. In the Nong-Yai community this circumstance started changing in 1960, while in Ban Kud Hae it started in 1968. Since the early 1990s, young daughters in the study communities have had gradually more freedom to make their own decision about with whom, when and where to move, but the parents mostly have asked for a commitment to remit money back home regularly. For the patterns of expected household obligations, the Figure shows that even now the parents still strongly expect their son to ordain as a monk for paying his parental obligations, while they expect some economic support from their son. In contrast, the parents have changed their expected household obligations towards their daughter from staying close to the parents in order to help and take care of her parents to being the household economic supporter by moving to work somewhere else.

Figure 6-4 *Parental authority, household obligations and gender factors*



In accordance with the changing patterns of household economic expectations, when respondents were asked if they could allow only one child to go to work in Bangkok, who would be the most suitable migrant between their son and daughter, most of them would choose to let their daughter migrate to the capital city, for two main reasons:

1) Now it is not necessary to be concerned about the insecurity of the migrant daughter. There are many close relatives and friends in the destination to help and take care of each other. Moreover, transportation and communication are now very convenient. The parents can easily travel to visit their migrant daughter by using the local van and minibus services, which will pick up the passengers at home from every village in *Tambon Nong-Yai* and deliver them directly to the migrants' accommodation.[9] They can also telephone to talk with their migrant daughter conveniently. Bangkok today is not that far and not that dangerous anymore, in their opinion.

2) The migrant daughter has more household responsibility than the migrant son. The migrant daughter regularly, or more often than the migrant son, remits money back to her household. Most households which have a migrant daughter are more likely to receive economic returns. Some households may not only receive no

remittances from their sons but may also have to send money to support their migrant son's living expenses. Migrant sons usually spend most of their earned income on fun, drinking, smoking, and entertainment. Migrant daughters may have less income than migrant sons, but she has fewer expenses as well. She can save more money and can send back more for household supplementary income.

Therefore, movement to the city has now been accepted and recognised as part of village life for young daughters, who may be absent from the village for much of the year to earn all or part of the family's livelihood. Most young female migrants claim that they decide to work in Bangkok not only for their own experience of modernity but also as a way of responding to their parental obligations. For example, Kalaya Phonyiam, a female migrant from Ban Nong-Yai, came to Bangkok at the age of 16 to find a job. As the eldest of three children, Kalaya felt it was her duty to help her family by finding a well-paid job in Bangkok. Her mother asked her aunt to bring Kalaya to work in the same place as a waitress in a restaurant where bed and board was provided. Kalaya sent all but a tiny fraction of her wages back home and continued to do so until she married at the age of 21. She has thought that: *"it is her obligation to give her parents enough food to eat and enough money to spend. We, all daughters, have to be responsible for our parents' better life."* Although it is true that not all daughters can practice like Kalaya, they will fully expect to do so if they are able to.

In contrast, many young male migrants, even those male respondents who firstly presented their main decision to migrate as a means of providing a supplementary income for their families, insisted that they have placed the emphasis on migration decision as an individual impulse, rather than as a part of the household strategy. Somsak Phonyiam, a young male migrant from Ban Noon Phoe, went to work in Bangkok for five years. During the first six months of working in the capital city, he remitted money back home twice for a total of 4,000 Baht. After that, he never remitted any money to their parents again. He explained his situation that: *"My parents do not need my remittances, while I need to spend my earned income for everything in Bangkok. To take care of the parents, it is better for me to return home*

and help them with their farm tasks. Working in Bangkok gives me a lot of adventurous experiences, but not enough saving money to send back to my parents."

However, migration decision-making among married migrants is not so distinctive between males and females. They both migrate to work in Bangkok aiming to raise their household economic and social opportunities. Klin and Mai, a married couple in Ban Kud Hae, explained why they migrated to work as street vendors for nearly 5 years. The desire to improve their children's chances of education and occupation is their main reason. They own a small plot of agricultural land, which is not enough to pass on to their three children. They decided to provide a high-level education for their children to build up their own career in the city. This is in fact, now a prominent reason for many married migrants in the study communities. Jampee's father, at that time he migrated, was employed in a warehouse at Khlong Toey. An economic improvement was only one consideration in his decision to migrate. For him, migration implied better economic opportunities to sustain and improve his family's circumstances (to build a new house and buy luxurious electric appliances), as well as to enable Jampee to have a chance to study at college in Roi-et.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

From the field study, migrants in the study communities express their migration decisions to work in Bangkok as being rooted in the motive to maintain or improve the quality of life for themselves and/or their family. This motive for migration does not involve only their household economic conditions but also their non-economic conditions, such as social mobility, modernism, and so on. The young migrants in particular are dissatisfied with the present situation in their home village, which is manifested in the perceived disparity of social and economic opportunities. They expect improvements (which would result from migration) whether these opportunities are income, social status, affiliations, or other aspects of physical improvement. Economic conditions and modernisation may be explained by the push-pull approach to their migration decisions, but, in fact, those factors are

only partial influences on the decisions. Gender relations and household relations among migrants and other household members have more directly influenced decisions than those external factors. According to the fieldwork, in most case studies, migration decisions have been obviously different between young male and female migrants, while the process of migration decision-making has gradually changed over an extensive period of time as a product of co-evolutionary processes of social change, economic change and migratory change.

Those changes have affected social norms, migration norms and gender norms of the study communities. In the past these norms controlled and restricted female migration to work in the cities, particularly in Bangkok. The changes have gradually affected social and economic conditions and have weakened the previous norms. At present, female migration is a predominant practice for all households in the study area. The new gender norms and migration norms, which support female migration, are now important factors in determining household gender-role and economic-role expectations in the process of migration decision-making. However, the gender issues are more distinctive among young and single migrants than their married counterparts.

The study found that household relations and gender relations have become the main effects of growing tensions in the process of migration decision-making between parents and daughters. In most cases, young migrant daughters offer the best prospects for accumulating the money and material resources needed to secure a comfortable livelihood as well as symbols of modern status for their parents. Migrant daughters choose to leave to work in Bangkok and remit part of their income back home as a means of paying their 'meritorious debts', to gratefully fulfil their parental obligations. In contrast, most parents do not seriously place household economic expectations on their migrant sons, who also do not classify migration as a way of meeting their parental obligations. This circumstance displays gender differences in the migration decisions between migrant sons and migrant daughters. While the migrant sons mostly present themselves autonomously, the migrant daughters present themselves within a set of household obligations and responsibilities.

These tensions in the migration decision-making process will be clarified more distinctly in the next chapter, which uses the genuine pressure of economic crisis on migrants' household as a scenario to further emphasise the gender issue in the migration decision-making process, in relation to two important migration patterns: migration reversal and re-migration. Fieldwork has shown that gender issues are quite central to post-crisis migration dynamics.

Chapter Notes

[1] Under this political condition, *Tambon Nong-Yai* was afforded special favour in the allotment of numerous development budgets provided by the Community Development Programme (CDP) within the Ministry of Interior and the Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) within the Prime Minister's Office. The latter had the greatest effect on the community through the large number of rural roads that it constructed. The most obvious result was a greatly enhanced rate of agricultural and economic change.

[2] However, the mini-bus services in the study communities during the 1970s were frequently reduced when road conditions were difficult, particularly during the rainy season. This problem was similar to most rural areas in *Isan* (see Lui 1973). Therefore, trips from the villages to the local towns during this period of time have had minimal impact on the people's way of life in the communities. The obvious effects had occurred since the early 1980s.

[3] Mr Kularb Phonyiam is now still living in Lao with his family. The researcher fortunately had a good chance to interview him when he and his daughter's family came to visit his older brother, Mr Khamphoo Phonyiam, in Ban Noon Phoe. He was one of the earliest migrants who moved to Vientiane as *'Pai thiaw Vieng'*. He and his family have been living in Lao for more than four decades.

[4] Before the establishment of migration networks, there were only a few migrants from the Nong-Yai community who came to Bangkok mainly for higher education. Most of them were boys from better-off families. They moved to stay with monks who were their relatives, or who came from the same village or neighbouring villages. Some of them moved to Bangkok while they were novices or monks. They applied to study both religious and formal education.

[5] Mrs Suay was divorced when she was 22 years old, after getting married for four years and having a child. She felt hurt and thought that she could not live in the village. At that time, she thought that she was grown up enough to take care herself for travelling in the outside world. Although her parents did not allow her to migrate, she ran away with her friends. She firstly wanted to work in Khorat for a few months, but when she went further to Bangkok she could not cope to survive by herself. Therefore, she informally remarried with her friend, who brought her to Bangkok, and settled with her new family in Bangkok.

[6] By 1968, Mrs Suay started helping her younger brother and close relatives from Ban Nong-Yai to work in a small factory near her home at Sathupradit in Bangkok. Since then she had helped many of the initial migrants from Ban Nong-Yai and Ban Nong Thabkhrua to find jobs and let them initially stay with her for a while until they had settled. She and her husband also played a role as co-ordinators for the newcomers to search for jobs, such as housemaids for female migrants and unskilled labours for male migrants.

[7] The term 'chain migration' is defined by Pryor (1975: 4) as the movement in which prospective migrants learn of opportunities, are provided with transportation, and have initial accommodation and employment arranged by means of primary social arrangements with previous migrants. The overwhelming significance of chain migration makes most migration decisions within communities highly dependent on past migration experience. There is a clear difference between the pioneer migrant who establishes a chain of migration and strikes out to a new and little-known destination and a migrant who moves in an atmosphere of almost complete certainty along an established chain of migration.

[8] There is also a similar circumstance of initial support from social networks for female migrants in other developing countries. Denis Hare (1999) suggests that the majority of female migrants in the Third World have a pre-arranged job prior to their departure for their initial migration. And most find this job through an introduction provided by female relatives and close friends who are other workers in the same firm, or under the same employer.

[9] This circumstance is quite obvious in most *Isan* villages now. Local entrepreneurs set up van or mini-bus services to handle the regular movement of rural people between the city and remote villages to support the flow of temporary migration (Phongpaichit and Baker 1998: 131).

CHAPTER SEVEN

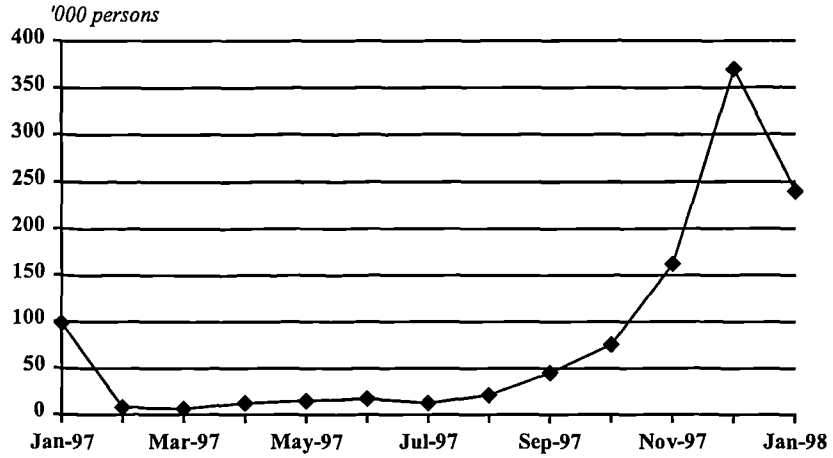
Gender, Economic Crisis and Migration Reversal in Northeast Thailand

7.1 Introduction: The Economic Crisis and the Study

Thailand's economic bubble, growing with increasing uncertainty since the early 1990s, finally burst in July 1997, leading to a rapid and widespread economic downturn (Phongpaichit and Baker 1998: 126). Many business firms collapsed. Investment fell significantly, especially in the property, construction and manufacturing sectors (Hewison 1999: 8). One of the main effects was that private investments slowed down, some firms reduced production and some shut down temporarily or permanently. Very many employees were laid off (Phongpaichit 1998). The situation had not improved by the end of 1998, when this research was conducted. By then, the economic crisis had pushed the number of unemployed up to 1.31 million, compared with 623,000 and 486,000 in 1997 and 1996 respectively; other estimates,[1] however, placed unemployment somewhat higher (Laird 2000: 3). Survey data from the Labour Force Survey, undertaken in February 1998 by the National Statistical Office (NSO), found that the number of unemployed in Thailand had drastically increased since July 1997 to a peak in December 1997, but had slightly decreased by January 1998 (see Figure 7-1). The survey also found that most laid-off labourers were unskilled labourers in the construction and manufacturing sectors, and were Northeastern migrant workers who had returned in their masses to their home village since mid-1997 (NSO 1998b: 10). Without any job, they could not survive in a big city like Bangkok. They thus had to return to their home village involuntarily. They changed their migratory status from 'out-migrants' to 'reversees'. John Laird (2000) suggests in his recent study that the economic crisis and the massive number of reversees had seriously affected migrant households in

the countryside, due to the strong links between rural incomes and urban employment (Parnwell 2001).

Figure 7-1 *Number of unemployed labourers between January 1997 and January 1998*



Since mid-1997, vital social changes in *Isan* rural communities have occurred as a consequence of the economic crisis, although it should be noticed that its effects have been generally more problematic in urban areas rather than rural areas. Many rural households have lower living standards than before the economic crisis erupted, due to the constraints of less income and higher living expenses (Laird 2000: 3-6). As a result, rural remittances from *Isan* migrant workers have been substantially reduced or curtailed by the economic downturn. They also mentioned that the circumstance of 'migration reversal' has made it worse for the reversees' household economies. Having a reversee means that the migrant household in the village has had more members to feed. The reports in the 'Thai Social Monitor', based on studies by the World Bank and UNICEF (in collaboration with Thai universities and the NSO), also concur that those constraints have affected social interactions between laid-off workers and their households (Shivakumar and Premyothin 2000; Shivakumar et al. 2000). They suggested that poor households needed support from the government to assist their social recovery. The economic crisis, therefore, has not only involved a change in economic circumstances, but has also effected social and migratory changes in the rural Northeast. Although the economic crisis has stimulated quite a lot of academic writing on the causes,

characteristics and consequences of the rapid decline in the Thai economy, only a small number of studies have addressed the social consequences of the crisis. Very few have specifically dealt with migration and none has explicitly worked on the gender aspects of post-crisis migration dynamics. This study aims to examine the genuine impacts of the economic crisis and migration reversal on household circumstances, in particular with gender issues forming the main focus of enquiry.

There have, however, been studies of the interrelationships between economic crisis and gender in other contexts. There were some articles (e.g. in Aslanbeigui, Pressman and Summerfield 1994) which examine the experiences of economic crisis due to foreign debts, which occurred in the 1980s and early 1990s in many developing countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia (such as Zambia, Chile and South Korea). They suggest that the economic crisis and economic transformation in those countries affected people's way of life, and had a particular impact on women. The consequences of the economic crisis in Zambia, for instance, made women bear a great burden as a result of rising unemployment and lower wages (Geisler and Hansen 1994). In South Korea, in times of economic downturn, women were more likely to be laid off than men (Fuess and Lee 1994). Chilean women, during the same period, were forced to take jobs in the unstable informal sector, which did not have any social insurance benefits (Montecinos 1994). The main argument of these was that the economic transformation had a strong and negative impact on women. They provided the evidence of 'gender bias' in social and economic practices, which negatively affected women in those societies. Those discussions on gender issues and the impacts of the economic crisis are very useful for understanding the broadly similar circumstances that have occurred in Thailand since the onset of its own economic crisis.

To understand the impacts of the economic crisis and migration reversal on gender issues, this study explores how and why the economic crisis and *migration reversal* have affected *Isan* rural people's way of life from the particular perspectives of gender relations and migration decisions. It also examines how and why *affected and unaffected households* have responded to these consequences in different ways

in their household coping strategies, particularly in relation to household gender-role and economic-role expectations between male and female household members.

First of all, we have to clarify the definition of 'migration reversal' and the characteristics of 'affected and unaffected households' in relation to the economic crisis. Earlier studies of 'migration reversal' were undertaken by Alan Gilbert (1992, 1993, 1994) who mentioned that signs of 'migration reversal' appeared in Africa and Latin America during their economic crises in the 1980s. He suggests that migration reversal is a significant shift in the migration process, and is one of the changes occurring as a result of deteriorating economic circumstances in urban areas. This argument was also discussed later by Deborah Potts (1995). She uses the term 'migration reversal' to refer to a large number of temporary migrants who, having flowed into the cities when economic conditions were good, have to return to their home village when the conditions are reversed. Those economic conditions make urban life intolerable and rural life seems more attractive. Thus, migration reversal has occurred in cases where urban advantages have reversed, such as through income squeezes and the increasing cost of urban living (Potts 1995: 260). By this definition, therefore, reversees may have to return home because working in the city could no longer fulfil their individual aspirations and/or their household economic expectations. It may also be that migrants could no longer afford to stay in the cities. Potts also points to the difficulty in isolating 'migration reversal' from normal 'return migration', and suggests that migration reversal clearly constitutes a 'coping strategy'[2] in the face of persistent and deepening economic crisis (Potts 1995: 260).

This study defines 'migration reversal' as a pattern of massive return movement of rural-urban migrants who have been forced to quit their jobs due to the effects of the dramatic economic downturn in Thailand, or who simply cannot continue to cope/survive in the city. This pattern is basically different from normal 'return migration' in that reversees have involuntarily made their decision to return home due to the fact that working in the city is no longer an option. Many of them were laid off, had their earnings reduced, or were even cheated on their wages. With regards to this study, migration reversal clearly responds to the extent to which

people are somehow being forced to return home by the economic crisis. A return to their home village is both an unexpected and undesirable position to find themselves in.[3]

This study classifies the characteristics of 'affected and unaffected households' by considering two main indicators: their main source of income and the degree of household dependence on their migratory incomes and remittances. It is evident that in the study communities the affected households are mostly small-land-holding households. Their small plot of less than 15 *rai* of agricultural land (for both paddy and cassava fields) cannot produce sufficient food and income for their household to survive without any support from some source of off-farm income. Their household economy has distinctively depended on remittances from migration. Therefore, the reversees in affected households are more likely to be expected to re-migrate to find jobs for their household's economic survival as soon as possible. In contrast, unaffected households are obviously the ones that have a larger amount of agricultural land, or more diversified sources of income. These households can survive from their household's income in the village. Mostly, they have not experienced any obvious economic problems associated with the reduction or cessation of remittances, and do not economically expect their household reversees to re-migrate.

This study hypothetically views the economic crisis in Thailand as a pattern of rapid and widespread economic change. This dramatic change may influence changes in the way of life of the *Isan* migrants and their households in the village, and also may affect some factors of household relations, in turn causing migratory changes during the period of the economic crisis and/or in the near future.[4] Unlike the normal circumstances of migration, the economic crisis has left fewer options for the migrants to make decisions. In essence, the migrants may have three options: stay working in the cities and make the best of deteriorating conditions; return to their home village and readjust to the rural way of life such as by providing the principle of self-sufficient agriculture that has been promoted by King Bhumiphol Adulyadet and the Ministry of Interior since the crisis erupted in 1997 (see the

Ministry of Interior 1998, Chanyapate 1998); or re-migrate after returning home for a short spell. To explain which of these options the migrants may choose, it is useful to apply Rigg's suggested reasons for migration from Northeastern Thailand. He suggests that Northeastern migrants may have several reasons for working away from home, but they can be classified into three principal reasons for migration: as a strategy of survival, as a strategy of accumulation, and for fun (Rigg 1989: 55). Accordingly, if laid-off workers move to work in Bangkok mainly as 'a strategy of survival', they may stay working in Bangkok because they will find fewer employment opportunities for their own and their family's economic survival in their home village. This is obviously because *Isan* village life is no longer self-sufficient and for many the rural economy provides an inadequate source of livelihood. Nowadays, there are few remaining natural resources in the communities and most kinds of food are not as freely available as they were before. Money is really necessary for living and farming expenses, therefore many reversees may return home for a while and re-migrate later when their saving money runs out. The ones who move mainly as 'a strategy of accumulation' are likely to have returned home during the tense period of the economic crisis and waited for the economic recovery because their earnings may have been reduced, or they may have lost their jobs. With a smaller amount of income, they could not accumulate money to remit back to their family. Finally, those who moved for 'fun' are likely to have returned and will remain in the village until the economic recovery starts because the economic downturn made it impossible for them to sustain a fun life in the big cities. They would have more fun in the village than in the city.

These circumstances are evident in the study communities. For example, Mrs Thongjan Janmaphrao, a divorced migrant from Ban Kud Hae, had no option but to stay working as a street vendor at Din Daeng for the survival of herself and her two children. She has no agricultural land in her home village. She cannot even think about the choice whether or not to return home. In contrast, Mr Rangsit Phonyiam, a teenaged reversee at Ban Nong Thabkhrua, returned home only a week after he realised that his daily wage was reduced. With an income of less than 4,000 Baht

monthly, he would not be able to pay as much as he previously did for entertainment. Having no fun, life in Bangkok appeared boring for him. Similarly, Mr Prakob Phonyiam returned to Ban Noon Phoe when his monthly income was reduced from 12,000 Baht to 6,000 Baht. He could not save any money to remit back to his family, thus he decided to return home. Indeed, during late 1997 and early 1998 many laid-off migrant workers returned home, but since May 1998 many reversees have been moving back to work in Bangkok because their family needed economic support for the living and farming expenses for the following farming season.

Therefore, the process of migration decision-making tends to be different between these three groups of migrants: 'stayers', 'short-term reversees' and 'remaining reversees'. 'Stayers' are migrants who were able to keep their jobs and survive in the cities, like Thongjan. They probably want to maintain their chances of working in the long term because they realise that it would be more difficult to apply for other jobs after re-migration. They, therefore, chose to stay working in Bangkok rather than return home. 'Short-term reversees' are reversees who have made their decision for re-migration after returning home for a short spell. Their various reasons to re-migrate may be household economic pressures or social pressures and/or their individual preference. 'Remaining reversees' are the ones who return home because of the economic crisis and have made a decision not to re-migrate but instead to remain in their home village. These migrants do not want to re-migrate during the tense period of the economic crisis, or may be unable to re-migrate for various reasons.

Another very important point to be explored in the circumstances of migration reversal in rural *Isan* is the evidence that there were more male than female reversees returning to their home village in the study communities. While the official statistics reported by the NESDB (National Economic and Social Development Board) and the NSO show that during late 1997 and early 1998 more female than male *Isan* migrant workers were laid-off[5] (Ekachai 1997, NSO 1998b), data from the Ministry of Interior indicate that more than 65 per cent of laid-off migrant workers who returned to their home village in *Isan* were males. According to the field

research, this study finds that a number of female laid-off migrant workers stayed working in Bangkok and many others re-migrated after a short spell of returning home. Most of them worked in the informal sector rather than apply for jobs in the formal sector. All these circumstances will be discussed in the next two sections, which attempt to explore the interrelationships between gender, migration decisions and the impacts of the economic crisis.

7.2 Gender, Migration Decisions and the Impacts of the Economic Crisis

This section explores the interrelationships between gender, migration decisions and impacts of the economic crisis as a phenomenon of social change. Its main analytical contribution centres on an examination of how and why the current economic crisis in Thailand has influenced the patterns of migration decisions differently between male and female migrants, and between affected and unaffected households. The analysis of those interrelationships focuses on the gender and household relations between the migrants and their families.

Data surveyed by the Roi-et Provincial Office show that Phon Thong district had the largest number of reversees in Roi-et (see Table 3-1 in Chapter 3). Between 1 October 1997 and 15 September 1998, there were 1,961 reversees who returned to their home villages in Phon Thong. The percentage of male reversees was almost three times that of their female counterparts (see Table 7-1). However, 1,567 reversees (or 79.9 per cent of the total) re-migrated to work in the cities after a short spell of return, while the other 394 reversees (or 20.1 per cent) remained in their villages. Nearly half (48.2 per cent) of the total remaining reversees were in *Tambon Nong-Yai,* which also had the largest number of total reversees in the district during the same period of time. Mr Narongsak Phonyiam, the head of the TAO (*Tambon* Administration Organisation) of *Tambon Nong-Yai* explained reasons why *Tambon Nong-Yai* had the largest number of remaining reversees who had chosen to remain in their home village.

"There are at least two main reasons. The first reason is because Tambon Nong-Yai has quite good conditions for agriculture. It has a large flood plain area, which is suitable for paddy cultivation and appropriate high-level agricultural land for cassava farms. More than a half of the total agricultural households in Tambon Nong-Yai can earn enough agricultural income to survive during the harsh times of the economic crisis. Many parents of middle-range and rich households are reluctant to let their reversee children re-migrate while the economic crisis has not recovered. The other reason is because there is a cassava mill located in Ban Bataka (Mu 6) and a sugar-refinery (named Mitraphon Factory) in the neighbouring sub-district, only three kilometres from Tambon Nong-Yai. The cassava mill provides some permanent and seasonal non-agricultural jobs for villagers during July and April every year. Therefore, during late 1997 and early 1998 this mill helped some reversees to earn some money and remain in their home villages. Moreover, since mid 1998 the Mitraphon sugar-refinery has recruited local people to prepare to start processing sugar cane in November 1998. Many young reversees have applied for those jobs. They expect to work in those two factories at least during the period of the economic crisis. Although wage income from those two factories is less than an income from working in Bangkok, most parents are happy to have their children stay at home. They do not want their children to move back to Bangkok during the harsh period, and, at the same time, their children can also help them do agriculture."

Mrs Somjit Phonyiam, a grandmother of two male teenaged reversees, explained her feeling toward her reversee grandchildren as follows:

"I am really happy that my migrant grandchildren have returned to stay with me. I have been so lonely in this big house with my husband. We are more than 65 years old now. We can't do any hard work. We just wait for their (my youngest daughter and her husband) remittances. Although my reversee grandchildren may earn only 100 Baht daily from the sugar-refinery for only four or five months a year, it will be enough for their annual personal expenses if they remain in the village. Now, we do not have any economic constraints. Their parents are still working in Bangkok and remit some money regularly. If my grandchildren can stay home for longer, we would be very pleased."

Data from field research (between June and December 1998) in Table 7-2 show that, from the total of 385 reversees in *Tambon Nong-Yai*, around 50.6 per cent had re-migrated to work in the cities, while the rest (190 reversees or 49.3 per cent) remained in their home villages. However, the trend was a little different in the study communities. Data in Table 7-3 suggest that, from the total of 144 reversees, 52.1 per cent were remaining reversees and 47.9 per cent were short-term reversees. In Ban Kud Hae there were more remaining reversees than those who had re-migrated to the cities, while in the Nong-Yai community the percentage of short-term reversees was a little more than that of remaining reversees. Disaggregating these figures, it was found that in the Nong-Yai community there were more male remaining reversees than male short-term reversees, while there were more female short-term reversees than female remaining reversees. This means that more than half of male reversees decided to remain in the community, while more than half of female reversees went back to work in Bangkok. This circumstance was different in Ban Kud Hae, where most male and female reversees chose to remain at home rather than to re-migrate to Bangkok. However, this circumstance in Ban Kud Hae

does not mean that female reversees in the village had fewer economic and social pressures than those in the Nong-Yai community. In fact, more female than male migrants from the village decided to stay working in Bangkok rather than return home after being laid-off or having their wage income reduced. The village headman of Ban Kud Hae explained that there were many female migrants who had not returned home as reversees. They had stayed working in Bangkok because most households in the village were poor. They needed economic support from their migrant daughters, who shouldered a heavier household economic responsibility than their migrant sons.

Table 7-1 *Migration reversal and re-migration in Phon Thong district, Roi-et, by sub-district and sex, between 1 October 1997 and 15 September 1998.*

Sub-districts	Total reversees			Short-term reversees		Remaining reversees	
	Male	Female	Total	No.	%	No.	%
Khog Kog Moang	161	51	212	196	92.45	16	7.55
Na-udom	87	27	114	114	100.00	0	0.00
None Chai Sri	26	8	34	34	100.00	0	0.00
Phon Sawan	51	39	90	86	95.56	4	4.44
Pho Thong	200	82	282	174	61.70	108	38.30
Pho Sri Sawang	25	2	27	19	70.37	8	19.63
Wang Samakkhi	126	13	139	125	89.93	14	10.07
Waeng	114	40	154	123	79.87	31	20.13
Sra Nog Kaew	96	59	155	145	93.55	10	6.45
Sawang	31	5	36	33	91.67	3	8.33
Nong Yai	**254**	**131**	**385**	**195**	**50.65**	**190***	**49.35**
Um-mao	83	16	99	96	96.97	3	3.03
Kham Na-di	154	80	234	227	97.01	7	2.99
Total	1,408	553	1,961	1,567	79.91	394	20.09

Source: Provincial Office of Labour Protection and Welfare, Roi-et.
** data from field research between June and December 1998.*

Table 7-2 *Migration reversal and re-migration in Tambon Nong-Yai, Phon Thong District, Roi-et, by village and sex, between June and December 1998.*

Villag No.	Village Name	Total reversees			Short-term reversees			Remaining reversee		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	**Nong-Yai**	**19**	**24**	**43**	**7**	**14**	**21**	**12**	**10**	**22**
2	**Noon Phoe**	**20**	**14**	**34**	**13**	**5**	**18**	**7**	**9**	**16**
3	Nong Waeng Hae	19	11	30	9	5	14	10	6	16
4	**Kud Hae**	**22**	**11**	**33**	**8**	**4**	**12**	**14**	**7**	**21**
5	Dong Dib	17	7	24	10	4	14	7	3	10
6	Bata-Kaa	17	9	26	6	2	8	11	7	18
7	Noon lard	19	4	23	12	4	16	7	0	7
8	Don Shard	15	9	24	6	3	9	9	6	15
9	**Nong Thab Khroa**	**26**	**8**	**34**	**11**	**7**	**18**	**15**	**1**	**16**
10	Khog larm	19	8	27	10	1	11	9	7	16
11	Nong Maew Phrong	16	7	23	14	7	21	2	0	2
12	Bata-Kaa	24	9	33	8	5	13	16	4	20
13	Phai Kham	21	10	31	14	6	20	7	4	11
	Total	254	131	385	128	67	195	126	64	190
	Percentage of reversees	100	100	100	50.4	51.1	50.6	49.6	48.5	49.4

Source: field research between June and December 1998.

Table 7-3 *Number and percentage of reversees in the study communities, between June and December 1998, by community and sex.*

Community /Sex	Total reversees		Short-term reversees		Remaining reversees	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Nong-Yai	111	100	57	51.3	54	48.7
- Male	65	100	31	47.7	34	52.3
- Female	46	100	26	56.5	20	43.5
Ban Kud Hae	33	100	12	36.4	21	63.6
- Male	22	100	8	36.4	14	63.6
- Female	11	100	4	36.4	7	63.6
Total	144	100	69	47.9	75	52.1
- Male	98	100	39	39.8	48	60.2
- Female	57	100	30	52.6	27	47.4

Source: field research between June and December 1998.

From these two tables, it is evident that more male than female reversees returned home in the study communities, as well as in *Tambon Nong-Yai* as a whole, after the economic downturn. However, this does not prove that the economic crisis affected more male reversees than their female counterparts. According to the percentages of each sex, while more male than female reversees remained in the villages, a higher percentage of female reversees had re-migrated to the cities after a short spell of migration reversal. This means that, in a situation where fewer female than male migrants returned home as reversees, more percentage of female than that of male reversees re-migrated to work in Bangkok. The information from the interviews of village headmen suggests that women in the study communities had

more pressures from their household than men to make their migration decisions. Young and single female reversees had to re-migrate because they had to respond to their household economic responsibilities, while married female reversees had to remain at home because of their duty to care for their young children. In contrast, married male reversees decided to re-migrate because of their household economic responsibilities, while many young and single male reversees preferred to stay at home without any pressure to re-migrate. It can be claimed that this is actually a consequence of gender stratification in the process of migration decision-making. Women and men in different age groups and marital status are expected to respond to their different household responsibilities according to their traditional gender-based division of labour.

This research asserts that the circumstances of migration reversal and re-migration are a complex mix of individual, familial, social and economic conditions in the process of migration decision-making. In the study communities, it is evident that many migrant households depend on their members' migratory income and remittances as an important source of household living and farming expenses. Therefore, they have to evaluate how the migrants' earnings or lack of earnings will affect the household economy when making decisions either to remain working in Bangkok, to return home, to re-migrate and work in Bangkok, or to remain at home for a longer period. They actually evaluate how the loss of remittance income and the return of reversees may effect the household's economic situation and survival. This evaluation is especially vital in affected households, where the reversees previously provided a major source of household income by remitting part of their wage earnings. Therefore, migration decisions are not merely made by individual migrants. Migrants discussed their situation with their parents and/or their spouse. Relationships between household members have inevitably influenced the process of migration decision-making during the period of the economic crisis.

Therefore, to understand the whole picture of interrelationships between gender relations and the impacts of the economic crisis on the process of migration decision-making, this research conducted not only in-depth interviews with

reversees and returnees in the study communities but also undertook a follow-up study by following the routes of re-migration to interview short-term reversees and stayers who were working in Bangkok during late 1998. The follow-up study was conducted in the main destination areas of Lard Phrao 101, Din Daeng, Huay Khwang, and Don Muang by interviewing 41 stayers and 12 short-term reversees. The study therefore can examine the above mentioned interrelationships for all three specific groups of migrants: remaining reversees, short-term reversees and stayers, set against the characteristics (affected and unaffected) of the migrants' households.

7.2.1 Remaining reversees

In this study remaining reversees are migrants who had returned home from working in the cities since mid 1997 due to the impacts of the economic crisis, and remained in the study communities between June and December 1998 when this research was conducted. Based on the real number of remaining reverses surveyed by this research, data in Table 7-4 show that there were 54 and 21 remaining reversees in the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae respectively. Most of them were in the age group ranging from 20 to 29 years. There were distinctly more male than female remaining reversees in every age group in those two communities. However, there were some significant gender differences between single and married remaining reversees in the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae. In the Nong-Yai community, there were more single male than married male remaining reversees, while there were more married female than single female remaining reversees. In contrast, both male and female remaining reversees in Ban Kud Hae were more likely to be married rather than single, and there were not any single female reversees who had remained in the village. The difference in the individual characteristics of remaining reversees between those two communities was associated with the household economic conditions of their affected and unaffected households. It was evident that Ban Kud Hae had poorer agricultural conditions than those in the Nong-Yai community. The poor agricultural conditions in the village had made the villagers depend on migratory income and remittances from their young and single migrant daughters. Young reversee daughters could not

remain in the village for a long spell. They had to re-migrate in order to provide their parents with a better living.

Table 7-4 *Remaining reversees in the study communities, by sex, age and marital status.*

Community /Sex	By age group			By marital status	
	< 20	20-29	=> 30	Single	Married
Nong-Yai					
- Male	6	16	12	19	15
- Female	4	9	7	8	12
Ban Kud Hae					
- Male	3	9	2	6	8
- Female	0	5	2	0	7

Source: field research between June and December 1998.

Among the group of single male remaining reversees, their age varied from 18 to 22 years old. All of them lived in the Nong-Yai community, while there were none in Ban Kud Hae. The village headman in Ban Kud Hae explained that since the economic crisis had occurred there had been only 2 single female reversees who had returned home for a short spell before re-migrating. The last one re-migrated to Bangkok in June 1998. Most young and single female migrants in Ban Kud Hae had stayed working in Bangkok because they knew that their remittances had been very important for their household living and farming expenses. They mostly belonged to affected households. In contrast, almost all the young and single female remaining reversees in the Nong-Yai community belonged to unaffected households. Their parents were very pleased that their daughter had returned home during this period. They did not want their daughter to stay in Bangkok to suffer a hard life. Although the return of their daughter had reduced their household supplementary income, it had not affected their household's economic survival. Some young female remaining reversees believed that they would have been able to survive in the city if they had wanted to stay there, but they also realised that they would have a much easier life in their home village during this period of time. Many of them were just waiting for a better chance to re-migrate after the economic recovery (see the case study in Box 7-1).

Box 7-1 *A case study of a female remaining reversee in Ban Nong-Yai*

Miss Methinee Phonyiam, a young female remaining reversee at Ban Nong-Yai, explained her experience of being laid-off and her plan to re-migrate as follows:

"I really like working in Bangkok because it lets me have some freedom. I started migrating at the age of 15 to work as a housemaid. Since then I have never had to ask anybody for money and I have felt the freedom of being and doing what I pleased. I had many odd jobs after that. Two years ago, I worked as a waitress in a big restaurant on the outskirts of Bangkok, called Bang Plee Yai. I earned a large amount of money from wages and tips. I remitted part of my income back to my parents every two months. However, when the restaurant business declined because of the economic crisis, my income was reduced. In late 1997 my employer laid off many employees, including me. It was really hard to find another job at that time, and the living costs were very expensive. I thought it might be better to return to my home village, which offers cheaper living expenses. Therefore, I returned home to have a rest for a while. I really expect to re-migrate when the national economy can recover. I, honestly, do not like to do farm work, and my parents also do not want me to stay home for long because they also want some supplementary income from my remittances."

Among the group of young and single male reversees, their age ranged from 20 to 23 years old. Before the economic crisis, they purposively migrated to work in Bangkok for individual experiences and for fun (*pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn*) rather than as a result of their household economic responsibilities (*pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham*). Many of their parents let them migrate to Bangkok mainly because they might find a preferred occupation and possibly find their future wife (see the case study in Box 7-2). The parents did not require any serious economic responsibilities from their young migrant sons even though they might not have any migrant household member providing economic support to the household. They usually allowed their son to *pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn,* at least at some stage before getting married. Many of them considered migration to Bangkok as a way in which their children could demonstrate their maturity and prove their ability to handle any family problems that may arise in the future. Mr Damrong Phonyiam, for instance, who was 46 years old and had two sons (20 and 15 years), suggested that ordaining as a monk is no longer the way to prove male maturity. He explained *"Now, many young male villagers can probably ordain for only 7 days or less than a month due to their commitment of working in the city. We cannot force our sons to practice that kind of traditional way to pay back parental obligations. They have their own way of life. For their own future, the success of migration to work in Bangkok is very important. Many parents of girls in the communities consider success in migration as an effective*

measure of maturity for their prospective son-in-law, because it can underpin their daughter's future."

> ***Box 7-2*** *A case study of a male remaining reversee in Ban Nong Thabkhrua*
>
> *Mr Rungsuriya Phonyiam, 22 years old, migrated to Bangkok to work as a labourer in Mr Thawin's telephone wire operating company when he was only 17 years old. He worked there until he returned home in December 1997 due to the economic crisis. His income was reduced by 10 per cent from a total of 5,500 Baht per month. Although he could survive in Bangkok because he stayed for free with his employer, he felt that he could not spend as much money as he did before the economic downturn. He then made the decision to return home to help his parents do farm work on their 13 rai of paddy and 7 rai of cassava. He also earned some money from agricultural wage-labour. Although he insisted that working in Bangkok had been more fun than living in the village, he would not re-migrate in the near future because he was bored with the busy life in Bangkok. He also admitted that his parents had never required him to help with the household income. He migrated to Bangkok mainly to experience the urban life in Bangkok. He also expected to make a fortune from migrating to Bangkok, and perhaps find love.*

In general, most male single remaining reversees belonged to unaffected households. They did not feel it was necessary to re-migrate during this period, even though many of them expected to re-migrate in the near future. They preferred to wait for the economic recovery. Many of their parents were happy with their return, and did not push their reversee children to re-migrate. However, these circumstances were different from married remaining reversees.

In comparison, the number of married male and female remaining reversees were not distinctively different between the two study communities. From the total of 42 married remaining reversees, there were 23 males and 19 females in the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae respectively. From interviewing the village headmen, it was evident that around half of them had returned home together as couples. Indeed, migration to Bangkok as a couple was a normal circumstance in the study communities before the economic crisis. Many young couples migrated to work and remitted money back home, while leaving their children with their parents. They migrated to work in Bangkok mainly as 'a strategy of accumulation'. They, therefore, made their decisions to return home together because during this period it was not a good time to accumulate funds. They came back to farm their paddy and cassava fields. Most of them had enough agricultural land to sustain their household in the village. They belonged to unaffected households.

Similar to the reversee couples, many married male remaining reversees came back home to rejoin their family left in the village for the same reasons as the reversee couples. They realised that working in Bangkok during this period could not earn them enough money to save and to remit back to their family. Returning home was the better choice for both themselves and their household (see the case study in Box 7-3). In contrast, female remaining reversees who returned home alone or with their children, while their husbands stayed working in Bangkok, expressed the main reason for their migration reversal as 'a strategy of survival'. If they stayed together in Bangkok, their husband's income might not be enough to support the whole family (see the case study in Box 7-4). Returning home was a practical survival strategy for them. Remaining in the village required fewer living expenses than staying in the city. They had rice to eat and they could find some natural food to feed the family. Their husband in Bangkok might also save some money to send back to help meet their household needs.

Box 7-3 *A case study of a male married remaining reversee in Ban Nong Thabkhrua*

Mr Sawat Thipphachote, a 43-year-old remaining reversee in Ban Nong Thabkhrua, returned home without any economic pressure. Like many male migrants, he started migrating to work in Bangkok when he was only 16 years old. He circularly migrated to Bangkok until he got married and returned to do agriculture with his wife's family in their home village. He sometimes migrated as a seasonal worker to a construction site or sugar cane fields. Three years ago, he made the decision to work in Bangkok for a longer period in order to care for his youngest daughter who went to study at a university there. He worked as a driver of a cement-container truck for a construction company, while leaving farm work to his wife. Before the economic downturn, he got a high wage of 12,000 Baht per month, but since September 1997 his income had reduced by half to 6,000 Baht monthly. He still worked there until April 1998 when he made decision to return home permanently because his daughter had nearly finished her degree and she was able to prove that she could take care of herself. He came back to help his wife do agricultural work on 14 rai of paddy fields and 10 rai of cassava fields. He also had a truck for hire to transport cassava and do a small business of tendering cassava produces. His household economy was not really affected by the economic crisis and his migration reversal. His last migration was not for 'a strategy of survival', but for 'a strategy of accumulation' and obviously for his daughter's higher education.

Box 7-4 *A case study of a female married remaining reversee in Ban Kud Hae*

Mrs Thian Sidaalert, a 26-year-old remaining reversee, returned to Ban Kud Hae in December 1997. Her husband was still working in Bangkok as a bus-driver. Before the economic downturn, her husband earned a very high average income of 19,000 Baht per month, but since November 1997 his income had been reduced to around 6,500 Baht monthly. She then made the decision to bring their two children (3 months and 2 years old) back to their home village. She came back to live with her parents because she is the only daughter in the family. She helped her parents work on the small farm of paddy and cassava. She also earned some money from agricultural wage-labouring. Although she had less income, she also had fewer expenses. She insisted that she might return home permanently because she wanted to care for her parents who were getting older. She let her husband stay working in Bangkok because he wanted to keep his well-paid job and wait for an increase in income after the economic recovery.

It can be said that more than two-thirds of married remaining reversees belonged to unaffected households. If they were in affected households and needed to go back to work in Bangkok, they would re-migrate at some stage after a short spell of return, within a year of the economic crisis erupting. They actually still had strong migration networks to support them in finding jobs. They did not have much economic pressure to drive them to re-migrate. They felt comfortable to remain in the village rather than to return to the city.

7.2.2 Short-term reversees

The pattern of re-migration and the characteristics of short-term reversees between the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae were generally not different. Most of the short-term reversees went back to work in Bangkok in the areas where they had strong connections, while some re-migrated to Khorat, Ubonratchathani, Lopburi, Chonburi and Rayong. Data in Table 7-5 show that the majority of them were married migrants over 29 years old, while there were not any short-term reversees under 20 years old. There were a few more males than females in each sub-group of age and marital status, except the group of the single short-term reversees. In fact, there were only 4 and 3 single short-term reversees from the Nong-Yai and Ban Kud Hae respectively. Their ages ranged from 21 to 24. The study had a good chance to interview 4 of them (2 from Ban Kud Hae and 2 from the Nong-Yai community). They all returned home during late 1997 and early 1998, but they only stayed in the village for less than three months. They made the decision to re-migrate mainly because of their household's poverty. If they had not re-migrated,

their household would have problems in finding agricultural capital in the next agricultural cycle.

Table 7-5 *Short-term reversees in the study communities, by sex, age and marital status.*

Community /Sex	By age group			By marital status	
	< 20	20-29	=> 30	Single	Married
Nong-Yai					
- Male	0	7	24	2	29
- Female	0	5	21	2	24
Ban Kud Hae					
- Male	0	3	5	1	7
- Female	0	1	3	2	2

Source: field research between June and December 1998.

For example, Mrs Thonglian Janmaphrao (an old widowed woman in Ban Kud Hae), like other poor households in the village, had only 14 *rai* for both paddy and cassava fields for herself and her youngest daughter, Khamphan (24 years old). Her living and farming expenses had mainly depended on Khamphan's migratory income and remittances. She was too old (60 years old) to work on her farm alone. Although her two older daughters' families, living in the same village, always helped her do agriculture, she had to hire some agricultural labourers for planting and harvesting. Khamphan had worked in Bangkok for more than 10 years. She rarely came back to help her mother farm, but she had regularly remitted money back every two months. When she returned home between April and June 1998, her family had earned a small amount of income from wage-labour in cassava fields. Therefore, she and her mother decided together that she should re-migrate to work in Bangkok because they needed some money for their agricultural investments. She contacted her former employer and re-migrated to work in a tailor shop at Din Daeng. She suggested that it was easier for migrant women than migrant men to re-migrate and find jobs during the period of the economic crisis. She explained the conditions of working between migrant women and migrant men in late 1998 as follows:

> "In comparison, there are more migrant women than migrant men (from Tambon Nong-Yai) working as tailors, seamstresses and hairdressers at Huay Khwang and Din Daeng because employers prefer to hire women over men. More women than men accept a lower income, in particular the migrant women from a poor household like me. We have to accept the condition of a reduced wage because we need money to support ourselves in Bangkok and our family in the village. Moreover, women seem to show more obedience to their employer than men do. Women also intend to stay in the same job for longer periods of time than men, and women have more patience and prefer to stay in their position rather than change."

In the case of Khamsi's household, before the economic crisis, she moved to Bangkok fully expecting to raise her economic and social mobility, but during the economic crisis she merely expected to earn enough income for her own living expenses and to help her mother meet basic household needs. She was a distinct representative example of a short-term reversee from a poor and affected household. She had to re-migrate to Bangkok because she realised that her household's small and infertile agricultural land plot offered limited prospects for her household's survival. However, although her household economic conditions reinforced her need to go back to Bangkok, she deeply believed she had to re-migrate in response to her duty as a youngest daughter. She was socially and culturally aware that she had to attempt to provide better living conditions for her mother. She said many times in her interview that it was her duty to provide money, better food, and anything that her mother needed and wanted. Therefore, although economic constraints might be a push factor in her decision-making process, social and cultural factors were fundamental motives for her re-migration.

In comparing between single and married short-term reversees, it was distinct that there were many more married than single short-term reversees in both the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae. This information was confirmed by the follow-up study in Bangkok, which found that most of the short-term reversees were married migrants who were responsible for the majority of their household's income. However, male and female married short-term reversees had moved back to Bangkok at different periods of time. Many married male short-term reversees explained that they just returned home for a short spell before re-migrating (see the case study in Box 7-5). At the same time, many married female short-term reversees waited for a longer time to ensure that their husband could earn enough money to support them, or for the whole family to live together in Bangkok (see the case study in Box 7-6). Many of the female reversees who re-migrated to join their husband could not find any jobs after re-migrating, while some of them could undertake casual work from which they earned only a little money. They had two main constraints due to their gender and marital status. Firstly, many employers did not want to hire married

women, particularly with small children, because they could not commit themselves to their jobs like single women could do. Secondly, they were expected by their husband to be responsible for caring for their small children and domestic tasks rather than working in full-time jobs.

Box 7-5 *A case study of a male married short-term reversee from Ban Kud Hae*

Mr Thawan, aged 35, was a short-term reversee from a poor agricultural household in Ban Kud Hae. He worked as a taxi-driver in Bangkok for more than 7 years. He had always returned to help his household farm during the planting and harvesting periods. Before the economic crisis he remitted around 5,000 Baht every two months, but during late 1997 and early 1998 he earned too little income to remit back home. Some months he earned only enough money to support himself in Bangkok. Every two months he was able to remit around, or less than, 1,000 Baht back to his family. He returned home during March and April 1998. It was really hard for his family to feed two school children, one in the primary school and the other in the secondary school, without any support from a migratory income. He and his wife then made the decision that he should re-migrate to Bangkok because he would not earn an adequate income to support the whole family if he remained in the village.

Box 7-6 *A case study of a female married short-term reversee from Ban Kud Hae*

Mrs Boonruam Saengthong, a 39-year-old short-term reversee, returned to Ban Kud Hae during October 1997 and April 1998. Before the economic crisis, her husband worked as a security guard in a big entertainment club near Din Daeng, but she did not work because she had to care for her youngest son (5 years old). Her husband earned enough income for the whole family, but after the economic downturn the situation was reversed. They had to choose the best way to survive, but it was quite difficult for them to return to their home village together because they only had a small amount of agricultural land, 11 rai of paddy fields. Therefore, Boonruam had to return home with her son, while letting her husband stay working alone in Bangkok. Since January 1998 her husband has changed his job to be a minibus-driver, which has given him a higher income. She waited for three months until her husband ensured that he was earning enough income for the whole family. Then, she and her youngest son returned to rejoin him as a family in Bangkok.

Most female short-term reversees from the study communities worked as seamstresses in small garment factories and street vendors in the areas of Lard Phrao 101, Don Muang, Huay Khwang and Din Daeng. In comparing their incomes, we find that female short-term reversees from Ban Kud Hae earned more money than their counterparts from the Nong-Yai community. This was mainly because the business of the small garment factories in Huay Khwang and Din Daeng had benefited from the weakening Thai currency. They received many sub-contracts to export clothes to many countries. They, therefore, were able to hire many female workers from Ban Kud Hae. This circumstance also had a positive impact on the street vendors who sold their hot food and cold drinks to workers in those factories. They earned enough money to support their family in Bangkok as well as to remit

some money back to their family and parents in Ban Kud Hae. Female short-term reversees from the Nong-Yai community had less luck than those from Ban Kud Hae. They earned a much lower income than they had before the economic crisis occurred. Only some street vendors earned a bit more money than before.

In brief, most married short-term reversees belonged to affected households. Initially, they had to return home because of the impacts of the economic crisis. When they had stayed in the village for a period of time, they knew that the village economy was not enough to meet their household needs. They, therefore, had to re-migrate as 'a strategy of survival'.

7.2.3 Stayers

The follow-up study managed to interview 17 male and 24 female stayers who did not return to the study communities after the economic collapse. Only 10 of them were single stayers, the others were all married. Most of the latter had children staying with them for the better schooling they could obtain in Bangkok. The study found that stayers in the areas of Lard Phrao 101, Huay Khwang and Din Daeng were more likely to be non-laid-off workers rather than laid-off workers. The laid-off workers were mostly laid off from small factories and business firms (including the telephone wire operating companies). Some of them were laid off and subsequently moved from Don Muang, Rangsit, Bang Plee Yai and Samutprakarn. These were the areas where migrant workers from the Nong-Yai community had jobs in the formal sector before the economic crisis. The laid-off workers came to join their relatives and friends who had various jobs in the informal sector (such as motorcycle-taxi drivers, hairdressers, barbers, street vendors and casual work as seamstresses). Although their income was less than that before the economic downturn, they earned enough to support themselves and their family in Bangkok. Street vending was the most popular occupation for the stayers. The majority of their customers were migrant workers or labourers whose income had obviously been reduced by the impact of the economic crisis. Having less income, those workers had to change their food habits to buy cheaper food from street vendors.

Table 7-6 *Stayers in the study communities, by sex, age and marital status.*

Community /Sex	By age group			By marital status	
	< 20	20-29	=> 30	Single	Married
The Nong-Yai					
- Male	1	5	7	3	10
- Female	0	14	1	4	11
Ban Kud Hae					
- Male	0	2	2	1	3
- Female	0	4	5	2	7

Source: field research between June and December 1998.

According to the interviewed stayers, there were more female stayers in the areas of Din Daeng, Huikhwang and Lard Phrao 101. The obvious circumstance of gender differences was among the single stayers. The single female stayers were aged between 19 and 24 years old. Their main reason for staying in Bangkok was because their parents wanted and encouraged them to contain working in Bangkok. Most of them seriously discussed and evaluated with their parents the costs and benefits between returning to their home village and staying in Bangkok. They, both parents and single female stayers, agreed that returning to the village would offer less of a chance to earn enough income for their household's expenses, while working in Bangkok might offer better chances of survival. They mostly remained working in Bangkok in order to fulfil their household economic responsibilities and commitments, which tied them to the role of being a 'good daughter' to provide a better living for their parents even though they may have a harsh time in Bangkok.

However, some single female stayers from other areas (in particular Don Muang and Rangsit) suggested that they stayed working in Bangkok because they wanted to keep their employment opportunities in the formal sector until the national economy recovers. If they returned home, they would not be able to come back and find well-paid jobs, like the ones they already occupy (see the case study in Box 7-7). Although they could link with some networks to find work in the informal sector in other areas, they realised that their present work would give them more constant incomes in the longer term in order to fulfil their individual and household economic expectations. A female and single stayer at Don Muang expressed her good reasons that: *"I have kept my position in the Thai International Airways Company for two reasons. One is the fact that although my wage had decreased by 30 per cent, it*

is still higher than many jobs for unskilled worker like me. The other is the long-term reason for myself to build up a new career and get away from being a farmer. Moreover, my high income will also help my parents to fulfil their desire to build a new house with comfortable facilities. If I can afford their dream to come true, it would be great for me to fulfil my obligations to be a 'good daughter'. It is one of my serious commitments to myself and my parents.

> ***Box 7-7*** *A case study of a single female stayer from Ban Kud Hae*
> *Sunee Jandee, aged 24, is a single female stayer who worked in an electronics factory at Rangsit. During August 1997 and May 1998 her wage was reduced and over-time working hours were dropped, thus her income was reduced from around 12,500 Baht per month to only 7,000 Baht per month. During late 1997, she almost made the decision to return to Ban Kud Hae, but she thought it would be very difficult for her (at the age over 20 years old) to apply for a new well-paid job like the one she had, if she returned home. She decided to stay and accept the reduced income. It was a hard period of 10 months for her to manage her living expenses with only a half her former income. Fortunately, she had her own saving money from working in Bangkok for 8 years, which was enough to help her to survive. Her patience had been rewarded. Since mid 1998, her factory has received some export advantages due to the weakening Thai exchange rate. Her wages and working hours have returned back to normal. She returned to the same economic situation that she was in before the economic crisis.*

In fact, most stayers from the study communities were married migrants, and many of them had migrated with their family. They have mostly worked in Bangkok for more than 10 years. Before the economic downturn, they had earned a higher income than was necessary for the survival of their family. Many of them had a large amount of household savings. Their main motive of migration was as 'a strategy of accumulation' rather than 'a strategy of survival'. When the economic crisis occurred, many of them could afford to keep their family in Bangkok. They used their savings to support their family to stay together for at least half a year during the first stage of the economic crisis. However, some couples who did not have much saving money were required to work for additional supplementary household income (see the case study in Box 7-8).

Box 7-8 *A case study of a stayer household from Ban Nong-Yai*

Mrs Pramaiphorn Phonyiam, aged 29, got married when she was 21 years old to her husband who had been an out-migrant for more than 15 years. Since then she followed her husband to work in Bangkok. Firstly, she worked in a small garment factory at Lard Phrao 101, but she had to quit the job after having a daughter, who is now 7 years old. Her husband had worked in the telephone-wire operating company which belonged to Mr Thawin Phonyiam, who provides the largest migration network of the Nong-Yai community. This company has also been affected by the economic crisis. Her husband's income has decreased by around 30 per cent since late 1997, which was not enough to feed the whole family. She, therefore, had to go back to work as a casual seamstress in her former garment factory for the household's economic survival. She and her family could not return to Ban Nong Thabkhrua because she did not have her own agricultural land. Her expected agricultural land inheritance from her parents was only around 10 rai which was not enough to earn an adequate income for her family. Working in Bangkok then was the only alternative for her family.

Although the majority of interviewed stayers suggested that the economic recession had made them worse off due to their declining incomes, many of the street vendors gained advantages from selling food and drinks to the affected wage-labourers because people were turning to cheaper food from vendors. Mr Chat Phonyiam, for instance, was a stayer from Ban Noon Phoe. He had sold fried meatballs to wage-labourers in factories at Don Muang and Rangsit for more than 6 years. His business after the economic downturn was better than before. Although the costs were higher than before, he was able to sell more meatballs than before. His income has increased by at least 10 per cent in his former total income per month. He could afford to return home regularly and bring savings of approximately 10,000-12,000 Baht per month back to his wife in Ban Noon Phoe. He had actually migrated to Bangkok as 'a strategy of accumulation'.

7.3 Discussion: Gender, the Economic Crisis and Migration Decision-Making

This section aims to discuss the influences of gender relations and household relations on the migration decision-making process by using the circumstances of the economic crisis in Thailand to examine how and why gender factors differently influence the migration decision-making of male and female stayers, short-term reversees and remaining reversees. The discussion also deals with the different

aspects of gender-role and economic-role expectations, household responsibilities and household obligations between males and females.

The circumstances of migration reversal and the impacts of the economic crisis in Thailand have affected migrants and their households in the Nong-Yai community and Ban Kud Hae differently. Due to the poorer environmental settings and smaller average agricultural landholdings, people in Ban Kud Hae have been more seriously affected by the economic crisis than those in the Nong-Yai community.

According to the *Phuyai-ban* of Ban Kud Hae, agricultural production alone is definitely insufficient for at least half of the total agricultural households in the village to survive economically. The decision of the laid-off migrant workers either to return home or to stay working in Bangkok has been a critical point in the evaluations and discussions between parents and migrant children, as well as among migrant couples. Most affected households need at least one household member to work in the city and supply money in order to help meet the household's livelihood needs. In most cases, the migration decisions were made in favour of staying in the city because there was not much paid work available in the village. If they had to select between a migrant son and a migrant daughter, they would not hesitate in choosing their migrant daughter to remain working in Bangkok. They felt confident that their migrant daughter could survive in the harsh conditions and also try to support the household's economic needs as much as she could. At the same time, the decisions among the married migrant couples mostly went in the opposite direction of the younger migrants. The migrant husbands stayed working in Bangkok, while their wife and their children returned to live temporarily in their home village. Therefore, fewer young female than young male migrants, and more married female than married male migrants, returned to Ban Kud Hae as reversees. All young female reversees had to re-migrate to work in Bangkok after a very short spell of returning home.

In contrast, migrant households in the Nong-Yai community were luckier and had more alternatives than their counterparts in Ban Kud Hae. They in general had

larger landholdings and mostly earned enough income from their cassava fields for the whole family's economic survival. Many stayers and short-term reversees from the community were young couples who had not inherited their own agricultural land and who preferred to work elsewhere rather than work on their household's farms. However, in the earlier period of the economic crisis they realised that their whole family could not survive in Bangkok, so they therefore decided to let their wife and small children return home and wait for a chance to regroup as a family after they had been able to earn sufficient income. At the same time, only a few young male and female migrants in the community had economic and social pressures which influenced their decision either to stay working or to re-migrate to work in Bangkok. Some migrant parents were even happier to have their migrant children return home.

According to the in-depth interviews, it is evident that economic factors were not the main influences on the process of migration decision-making. If economic conditions were totally dominant, the migration decisions would not have been so selective. Both male and female migrants, as well as both migrant husband and migrant wife, would have had equal needs and opportunities individually to choose their migration paths. In reality, they had to choose (or choices were made on their behalf) on the basis of social and cultural conditions and in respect of their positions and roles as determined by household relations and gender relations. If economic factors had had more influence than non-economic factors, the affected households would not have been able to choose either a son or a daughter to be the one who stayed working or who re-migrated to work in Bangkok.

This study considers gender relations and household relations to be the main factors that influence any patterns of migration decision-making. It is necessary to remind you at this stage that a significant connection of those relations in *Isan* village communities is that "being a daughter or a son as well as a husband or a wife socially and culturally determines that people are expected to play different gender roles and economic roles both in their household economy and in their migration behaviour." The complexity of migration circumstances cannot be explained simply

by a change in individual and household economic conditions during the period of the economic crisis as being the sole determinant of migration decisions. Gender and marital status, which influence household relations and gender relations between members of affected and unaffected households, are very important in helping to unravel the complexity that lies behind migration decision-making, both in times of crisis and 'normality'.

Distinctively, the economic crisis created more pressures on migrant women than on migrant men, although it varied according to marital status. More single migrant women than migrant men in affected households were encouraged by their parents to remain working in Bangkok rather than to return home as reversees, even though their income earnings had been significantly reduced. However, not all of single female stayers stayed in Bangkok because of their household economic requirements. Some of those who belonged to unaffected households made their own decision to stay in Bangkok because they wanted to maintain their well-paid jobs. They had some savings to support themselves for a period of time, but they could not commit themselves to sending money back to their parents. They decided to stay in order to continue their non-agricultural career rather than return home to resume their inherited farmer career. They therefore remained in Bangkok for career reasons rather than as a way of supporting their household's economic needs. At the same time, many single female laid-off migrants returned home for a short spell and re-migrated in response to their socially- and culturally-determined household obligations. These short-term female reversees mostly wanted to return to work in Bangkok for two main reasons. Firstly, there was not much for them to do in their home village. Although there were some employment opportunities in the cassava mill and the sugar-refinery, those firms preferred to hire male workers. Secondly, most of them felt social pressure to respond to their household's economic expectations and parental obligations. It was quite obvious that those in poor households had no choice but to re-migrate.

In contrast, single reversee sons socially and culturally enjoyed much greater flexibility in relation to their household's economic expectations and obligations.

After the economic downturn, we could see more single male reversees than single female reversees had remained in their home village. From in-depth interviews, Somchai Phonyiam, a young male remaining reversee in Ban Nong-Yai, insisted that he felt free to make his own decision whether to re-migrate or to remain in the village; his parents rarely forced him to make any migration decisions. His mother also gave her own reason for letting Somchai remain in the village; he did not remit much money during his previous four-years period of migration. His remaining at home benefited the family because he could help to search for some natural foods, such as catching fish, frogs and so on. Meanwhile, she let Somchai's younger sister stay working at Don Muang because her daughter had a secure job with enough income for her to survive. She also expected some possible remittances from her daughter in the near future. In short, it might be said that single female stayers and female short-term reversees had been expected to fulfil their household economic responsibilities to a far greater extent than those male reversees who remained in the study communities.

The married migrants faced rather different circumstances. In most cases, women were the ones who had no choice but to return home, responding to the duty to care for their children, while men had to stay working in Bangkok as a duty of the household head responding to the needs of their household economy. Similarly, most male married reversees had to re-migrate in order to fulfil their economic responsibilities, while their wife had to remain caring for their children at home. In the cases of couples of reversees who had no children or had someone to care for their children, they may re-migrate together if they both expected to be able to find jobs.

However, the patterns of migration decision-making were not quite as straightforward, in gender and marital status, as the above discussion suggests. Some single female reversees were not expected by their parents to re-migrate because of their obligations to their parents, while some single male short-term reversees in fact re-migrated to work in Bangkok because of their household obligations (i.e. to provide money for their parents remaining in the village). At the

same time, many married female reversees were not forced to return home to care for their children, as this was undertaken by their parents, while some married male reversees were not expected to re-migrate for their household economy. Some stayers, short-term reversees and remaining reversees might also have made their migration decisions in order to serve their individual aspirations as well. Thus, household relations and gender relations might influence the migration decisions of most migrants and reversees, but this was not the case for all migrants. Therefore, it is dangerous to be too categorical in interpreting post-crisis migration behaviours according, inter alia, to gender. Nevertheless, based on the foregoing discussion and the information provided by the in-depth interviews, we can generally classify the patterns of migration decision-making according to Table 7-7 in order to clarify the interrelationships between gender and household relations.

Table 7-7 *Patterns of migration decisions, by gender and marital status*

Sex/ Marital status	In Bangkok		In the village	
	Stay working	Return home	Remain at home	Re-migration
Single male	*M*	*M*	*Mp*	*Mp*
Single female	*Mp*	*Mp*	*MP*	*MP*
Married male	*Ms*	*Ms*	*MS*	*MS*
Married female	*Sm*	*Sm*	*Sm*	*Sm*

M = Individual migrant
S = Migrant couple
P = Migrant parents
(P) = main decision
(p) = minor decision

The generalised patterns of migration decisions shown in Table 7-7 suggest some influences of household relations on migrants' and reversees' decisions, framed by their gender and marital status. Among single migrants, parents appear strongly to influence their migration decisions, particularly in the case of single female migrants. In contrast, although married migrants mostly discussed their situation with their spouse, the degree of influence exerted by their spouse appears to be quite variable. Nonetheless, if the married female migrant is the youngest daughter in her family, she and her husband may have to consult her parents, as culturally they reside with and have responsibility towards her parents. Somjai Uthid, for instance, had to return to Ban Kud Hae with her husband and her fifteen-months son. She is the youngest daughter in the family. After the economic downturn, she and her husband firstly made their decision to stay working as gardeners in Nontha Buri,

but her ageing widowed father asked her to return home. He wanted Somjai to come back to stay with him and to take over the household's farm. She could not refuse her father's requirement. She let her husband stay working in the city, but her husband could not bear to stay alone, far from the family. They therefore decided to return home together, and they may well settle permanently in the village.

During the early stages of the economic crisis, single male migrants in Bangkok made their migration decisions by themselves, rather than asking their parents. They mostly made their decisions based on their own economic and working conditions. Their parents gave them more freedom to make their own migration decisions. Many of them insisted that they did not even tell their parents why they returned home and what they expected to do next. Their parents rarely complained about their return, even though it may have affected the household's supplementary income. In contrast, single female migrants telephoned their parents in order to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of remaining in Bangkok or returning home. However, some of them did not consult their parents, only telephoning their parents to let them know their decision. Some single female stayers might only telephone or write a letter to tell their parents that they had decided to stay working in Bangkok and that they would not be able to remit any money back home for a while.

All married migrants made their migration decisions by discussing and evaluating the advantages and disadvantages within their spouse. However, married male migrants made their own decisions, rather than being influenced by a joint decision. The reason they gave for this was because they were the head of the household. The married female migrants, in contrast, made all their migration decisions within their spouse. A female reversee at Ban Nong-Yai explained the way she made decision to return home as follows:

> "We (me and my husband) had different household responsibilities as well as different employment opportunities. If we had to choose one of us to return home, it would be me. It would be better to let my husband stay working in Bangkok, while me and my two children returned home. I could not find the same well-paid job as him. Indeed, according to Isan social and cultural practices, the household head has more household economic responsibilities than the other members, while the wife is directly responsible for the domestic tasks and caring for children. Caring for children is a really difficult task for a man. I can't let him do it alone. We have basically made our migration decisions together, we discussed every possible outcome which might be advantageous or disadvantageous for all of our household members."

The decisions of reversees to either remain at home or re-migrate to work have obviously been made under different circumstances to those that influenced their initial decisions to return to their home village. After living in the village for a while, the influences of the migrants' parents and/or their spouse appeared to have become stronger/clearer than was the case when they had been living away from home.

Single female reversees had obviously been more influenced by their parents than their male counterparts. They consulted with their parents and mostly asked for permission either to re-migrate or to remain in the village. Decisions were actually made together between the single female reversees and their parents. Among the affected households, some parents might encourage their reversee daughter to re-migrate to resume their prospect of receiving a supplementary income. In contrast, those in the unaffected household might allow more flexibility for their reversee daughter to make her own decisions. In contrast to those females, the single male reversees in both affected and unaffected households had much more flexibility to make their own decisions, but most of them said that they would ask their parents' permission because they needed some economic support from their parents in terms of the costs of re-migration, as mostly they did not have any savings which could be used to travel to and live in Bangkok. They might have earned an income from wage-labouring in cassava fields or in the local factories, but this was typically spent on their personal expenses, such as cigarettes or alcohol. Hence, some single male reversees had to remain in the village because their parents would not support their re-migration if they could not ensure that they had good employment opportunities in order to earn enough income to support themselves in Bangkok.

Both male and female married reversees in the study communities would discuss and consult with their spouse about whether to re-migrate or to remain in the village. They all admitted that they carefully evaluated every prospective cost and benefit which could result from each alternative migration decision. Serious

discussions were more likely to happen among reversee couples in affected households than those in unaffected households. Most married male reversees discussed the situation seriously with their wife before making the final decision together, while their female counterparts mostly asked for a final decision from their husband.

To interpret all patterns of migration decisions, which would appear to be influenced by the migrants' gender and marital characteristics, is necessary to consider differences in gender-role and economic-role expectations between children and parents as well as between wife and husband. These role expectations drive each household member to play their gender and economic roles in an appropriate way in response to his/her household responsibilities and obligations. A son and daughter are socially and culturally expected to play different roles. The recognition of a son as a long-term 'out-family' member offers him more freedom from his parents than a daughter who is culturally considered as a long-term 'in-family' member. This is the fundamental reason why most *Isan* migrant sons have the flexibility to make their own migration decisions, while migrant daughters have been more restricted by their parents' authority. Differences in migration decisions between a husband and a wife have also been based on differences in their household and social role expectations. In many cases involving married male stayers and short-term reversees, they used their authority as a household head to dominate the couple's migration decisions among. They believed that, due to the limited employment opportunities and economic constraints in post-crisis Bangkok, they had better potential and opportunity to work and earn a better income than their wife. In contrast, many married female migrants decided either to stay or to return home, and either to re-migrate or to remain in the village, based on their husband's suggestions. They were sometimes restricted by their household roles as a wife and a mother. Many of them could not make their own migration decisions because they were tightly tied to their household reproductive roles, particularly in relation to child-care. Moreover, some married female migrants, if they were the youngest daughters in their family, were also expected to take care of their ageing

parents. This additional role might create role conflict problems where the youngest daughter is expected to play all requested roles at the same time (see the case study in Box 7-9).

Box 7-9 *A case study of a married female remaining reversee in Ban Nong-Yai*
Mrs Thong-in Phonyiam was a married female remaining reversee who had problems with role conflicts because she had to juggle her three roles as a wife, a mother and a youngest daughter at the same time. She had to choose either to re-migrate to live together with her husband or to remain at home to care for her old parents. Before the economic crisis, she used the excuse of working to accumulate money for the household to make her decision to work in Bangkok, while leaving her young children with her parents. But when she returned home because of prevailing economic constraints, her older brothers and sisters forced her to resume her familial duty as the youngest daughter. She, then, finally made her decision to remain in the village to care for her old parents and her young children, while letting her husband stay working in Bangkok alone. She knew that she could not deny the restriction associated with familial responsibility as the youngest daughter.

Indeed, the impact of the economic crisis left migrants with fewer choices in making their migration decisions. They had to evaluate the disadvantages and advantages very carefully. Gender and household relations have thus become much more important in the process of migration decision-making post-crisis, because not every household member could migrate or wanted to migrate. Each household member had therefore to make decisions according to their household responsibilities and household obligations. A daughter or a son, as well as a wife or a husband, is required to play different roles in the household according to prevailing gender-role and economic-role expectations.

The economic crisis as an economic phenomenon may be the starting point for a new wave of economic and social change in rural *Isan* communities. Villagers may have to change their social and economic ambitions, which may help to lessen the huge pressure on their migrant daughters. They realise that it is impossible for them to expect large remittances from their migrant daughters. Some interviewed parents of migrants from unaffected households admitted that after the economic crisis they had not seriously expected any household economic responsibilities from their migrant daughter. They just thought they would be very pleased if their migrant daughter could remit some money back home, but they were not concerned if they did not receive any remittances. They only had some 'moral expectations',

which provided some flexibility for their migrant daughter to respond to her expected household roles. Although parents from the affected households still expected their daughters to fulfil their household economic responsibilities, they also gave their migrant daughter some flexibility during this period of time. However, many migrant daughters, especially the youngest daughter, still preferred to play the important role of a 'good daughter'. They felt fully responsible for providing their parents with a better standard of living. Even married women who have their own family also want to be a 'good daughter' in their parents' perception. Most migrant daughters try to fulfil their 'moral obligations', which necessitates a change in their way of life in tandem with prevailing social and economic changes.

Another interesting point from the field research is that the circumstances of the economic crisis and migration reversal have affected some attitudinal changes among the young migrants towards a modern way of life in Bangkok. Some young migrants had realised that the urban way of life does not really suit them, and that they socially and culturally belonged to the rural society. They also insisted that their future life would be in the village rather than in the city. Pichai had formerly migrated to Bangkok to enjoy the social and economic opportunities associated with the modern way of life. Once the economic crisis erupted, he came back to Ban Nong Thabkhrua. He committed himself to stay permanently in the village. If he does not have any serious economic needs, he will not re-migrate to Bangkok. Although he acknowledges that working in Bangkok provides a very good chance to earn a lot of money, he also realises that he has to spend a large amount of money on his everyday living expenses. Like many young male migrants from the study communities, he has never been able to save money to remit to his parents. He may have had a lot of experiences and fun in the city, but those experiences have not been really useful for his village life.

However, many young interviewed reversees in the communities still express a preference to re-migrate in the near future because they do not want to be considered as 'failures', especially by their parents and close relatives. Roong, a close friend of Pichai, explained that after returning home some of his siblings and close

friends sometimes teases him and called him as a 'failure' because he was cheated out of his wages by a telephone-wire operating company. His former employer could not pay his, as well as his colleagues', approximately six-months outstanding wages (a total of 39,000 Baht). He had to return home like a hungry man coming back to beg for food to survive. He wants to re-migrate as soon as possible in order to regain his feelings of pride and prestige.

This social pressure was also mentioned by some single female migrants who have for a long time remitted part of their earnings which, in turn, have become the source of household income, particularly in the poor and affected households. Malee Tarnwaeng, for instance, had to return to Ban Kud Hae without any chance of retaining a new job. After remaining at home for three months, economic pressures in her family made her feel like a loser. Although her parents did not blame her, they sometimes asked her about the progress she had made in searching for a new job in Bangkok. She then made a decision to re-migrate to work as a seamstress in the same garment factory as her close friends, even though she did not have any experience of garment-making.

7.4 Concluding Remarks

The current economic crisis in Thailand has created quite fundamental changes in *Isan* migrants' way of life. The primary change has been in the patterns of migration. The circumstances of 'migration reversal' and 're-migration' have evidently been a result of economic collapse, affecting and decreasing employment opportunities in urban areas. The later change has been in negative impacts on their household economies in the village because most of their households depended at least in part on their remittances.

The conditions of migration reversal and re-migration in the study communities clearly depended to a significant degree upon gender relations and household relations, which have long evinced gender differences in the migration decision-making. Although the different economic conditions between 'affected' and 'unaffected' households primarily put pressure on the migrants and reversees when

making their migration decisions, differences in household gender-role and economic-role expectations between single male and female migrants, and married male and female migrants, were influential factors in determining their migration decisions. The process of consultation and negotiation was made under the aegis of household relationships between sons or daughters and their parents, and between husbands and wives.

As a result of the continuing economic changes and associated migratory changes in the study communities, the economic crisis and migration reversal may have been responsible for introducing another wave of social change in the rural Northeast. It is evident that before the economy collapsed, most migrants from the study communities went to Bangkok with expectations of raising their social and economic mobility, but their aspirations have been reversed. This in turn may change the migrant's household gender-role and economic-role expectations from that which prevailed in the period before the economic downturn. The social and economic pressures on young female migrants, especially the youngest daughters, may have declined or even been eliminated. However, the author still believes that the migration decisions will continue to be influenced mainly by gender relations and household relations, at least in the short-term following the economic crisis and initial recovery. These circumstances will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Chapter Notes

[1] A study by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), for instance, indicated that the unemployment rate in Thailand would rise to about 1.8 million by the end of 1998 (Nivatpumin 1998). In addition, the NESDB (National Economic and Social Development Board) predicted that in 1998 about 500,000 skilled and educated young unemployed people would migrate from rural areas to Bangkok, while many unskilled workers would return to their home village after being laid-off (Janchitfah and Kanwanich 1997).

[2] An expected survival coping-strategy in this circumstance is that there is a greater sufficiency of food for the reversees in the village than in the city (Holm 1992: 248).

[3] An example of migration reversal in the past, as far as Thailand is concerned, was the huge volume of international reversees from Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Middle East because of the 'Gulf Crisis' and 'Gulf War' during August 1990 and January 1991 respectively. More than ten thousand Thai workers were repatriated even though their labour contracts were still remaining. As a consequence of enforced mass 'migration reversal', most of them were left hugely indebted and impoverished, particularly the ones who had been unable to pay off the debts incurred for their travelling and work contracts (Stern 1998 quoted in Parnwell 2001).

[4] This hypothesis supports an argument posited by Arjan de Haan (1999: 1-2). He states that, although labour migration generally occurs as a normal element in the livelihoods of many households in most societies, the process of migration has also often been caused and changed by some kinds of crisis - environment, economic or demographic.

[5] Sanitsuda Ekachai (1997) suggested that, when the economic bubble burst, it was the female workers who were laid off first because of their lack of job security and their own submissiveness. Of the two million workers who would be out of jobs due to massive factory lay-off (estimated by the NESDB), the majority would be women.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Gender and Migration Decision-Making: A Reappraisal

This chapter is a reappraisal of the early analyses and discussion of gender and migration decision-making in Northeastern Thailand. It aims to reassess the whole set of ideas discussed in previous chapters of this study. It draws on the main evidence from the field study in Phon Thong District, Roi-et Province, as an exemplary case of *Isan* migration circumstances. The interrelationships between gender relations, household relations, migration decisions, social changes and the impacts of the current economic crisis in Thailand are factors which will be discussed in the next three sections. The first section aims to re-evaluate the conceptual framework of this study in order to refine how 'migration' is defined from a local perspective, and how and why migration decisions have been made differently between male and female migrants. It also re-evaluates the conceptual framework of the interrelationships between migration decisions, gender and household relations. The second section aims to reassess which gender approach provides the most effective tool for analysing the circumstances of gender selectivity in the process of migration decision-making. It concentrates on the interrelationships between the gender stratification approach and the forces internal to the household that lie behind migration decisions. The final section aims to re-evaluate interrelationships between female migration and the process of social changes in *Isan* as seen through the lens of changes in external forces. It also anticipates changes in female migration in the near future.

The reassessment provided in this chapter constitutes a very important part of this thesis. It reflects the process whereby the researcher has refined the various concepts and frameworks of the study from the initial theorisation to the end of the analytical component. The findings of the field research have led to the modification

of some fundamental initial concepts. It is hoped that this re-evaluation may be helpful for future migration research.

8.1 Conceptual Framework Reassessment: Gender and Migration Decisions

8.1.1 Reconceptualising 'migration' and gender differences

'Migration' in this study is basically considered as one alternative among many household livelihood strategies involving all household members. It is not only an alternative open to the individual household members themselves, but more significantly it also carries potential costs and benefits to the household as a whole. This is because the movement of any member will affect household social interactions and economic interests.

Although the term 'migration' is now locally conceptualised as *'pai thiaw Krungthep'*, which literally means 'travelling to Bangkok' and superficially seems to be an individual activity, each spell of migration has in fact to be decided together with the migrant's parents and/or spouse. Moreover, *'pai thiaw Krungthep'* does not mean that *Isan* migrants travel to Bangkok without any purpose. With regard to rural-urban migration, the term has long been used to explain the migration behaviour of rural *Isan* people for two main purposes: *'pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn'* (travelling for individual experiences) and *'pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham'* (travelling for work). Indeed, those two purposes cannot always be separated from each other because at the same time that migrants work for a cash income they also experience the urban way of life. Similarly, migrants who move to Bangkok for *'pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn'* also have to work because they cannot stay in Bangkok without any means of financial support. Their family in the village cannot generally support them for a long spell of *'pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn'*. Therefore, most migrants actually move to the cities with these two purposes in mind. They realise that they will not have fun in Bangkok if they do not have any money.

However, in the study communities, the concepts of 'migration' are defined differently for young male and female migrants. Many parents consider their son's migration as *'pai thiaw Krungthep'*, while they express *'pai tham-ngaan Krungthep'* (go to work in Bangkok) as their daughter's reason for migration. This is mainly because they do not expect any serious responsibility towards the household economy from their migrant son. Many case studies saw sons migrating to Bangkok for their own experience and fortunes of work and love. They did not expect regular remittances from their migrant sons. Some parents consider migration as an effective way for their son to gain in maturity before he gets married and moves to live with his future wife's family. Success of working in Bangkok is now seen as an assurance, by which young male migrants can give confidence for their fiancée's parents. In contrast, most parents expect much more household economic responsibility from their migrant daughter, in particular from the youngest daughter. They expect their young daughter to migrate for *'pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham'* rather than for *'pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn'*. This is mainly because, in *Isan* society, a daughter is expected to pay back her parental obligations *(bun khun)* by providing a better living for her parents. Female migration is probably the only way in which most young *Isan* girls can earn enough cash income to fulfil their parental obligations at the present time.

8.1.2 Conceptual framework for gender and migration decision-making

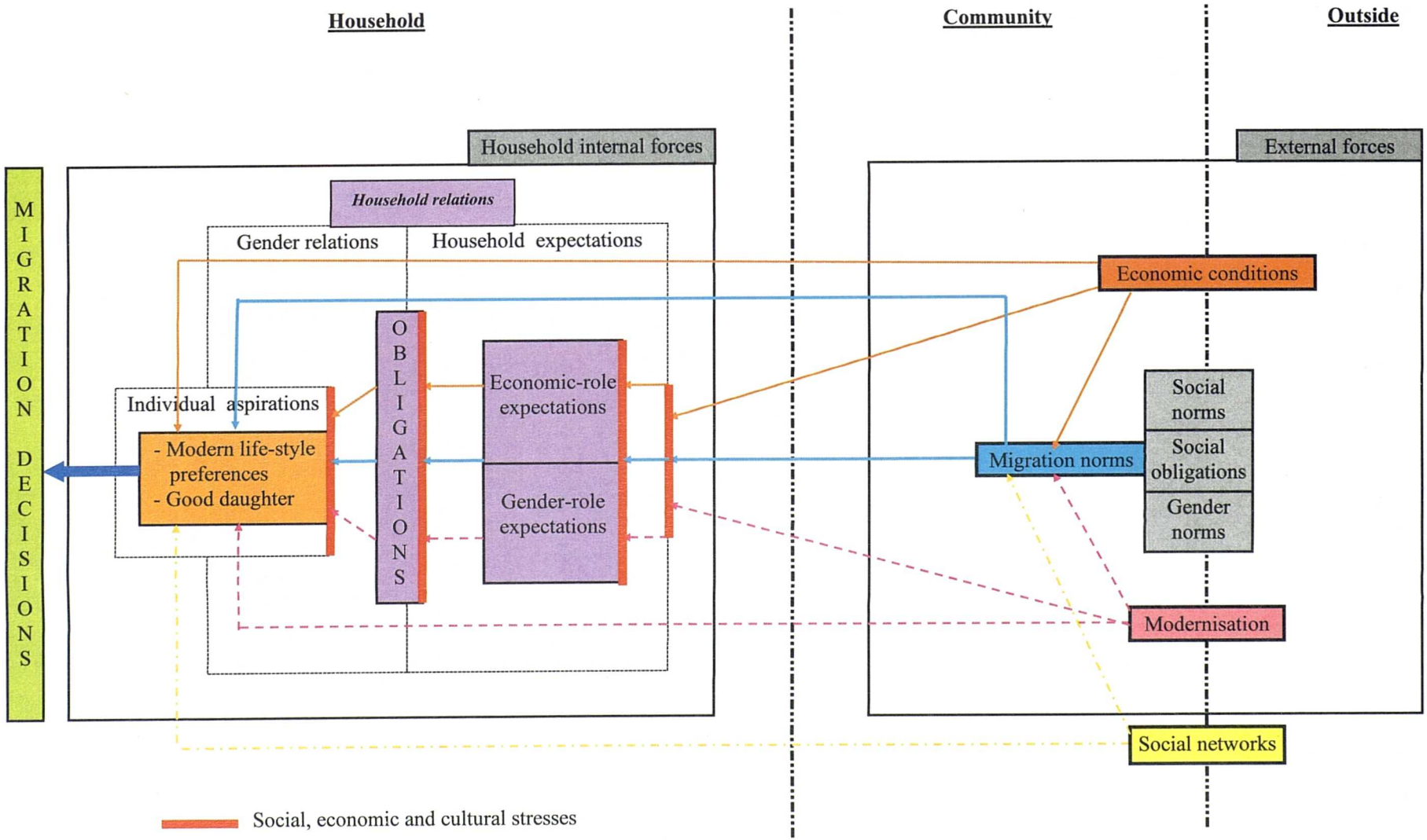
My revised conceptual framework for the gender influence on the process of migration decision-making begins with two main assumptions: (a) the migration decisions are influenced by both external and internal social and economic factors; and (b) gender relations and household expectations, in the sphere of household relations, are the main influences on the migration decision-making process. The first assumption reflects the fact that economic circumstances are not the sole factors driving rural-urban migration from *Isan*, but that non-economic factors in both places of origin and destination also significantly influence migration decisions. The second assumption reflects the condition that, in most cases, gender issues influence migration decisions, and that rural-urban migration is effectively decided

by the household rather than by the individual. The process of migration decision-making linking gender relations, household expectations, individual aspirations and external factors is depicted in Figure 8.1.

The Figure shows that all four main external forces (economic conditions, migration norms, modernisation and social networks) directly and indirectly influence household relations and individual aspirations in the process of migration decision-making. However, these factors may increase or decrease their influence on migration decisions when faced by social, economic and cultural stresses. The stresses at each stage of confrontation between household internal forces and external forces may react against, or in favour of, the decision to migrate depending on how influential the stresses are. For example, in the past, modernisation might have attracted young girls in the village to move to big cities, but the stresses of traditional household economic-role and gender-role expectations, as well as household obligations, might have acted against those young girls' aspirations. However, the influence of such stresses have usually changed through time in relation to changes in household relations and prevailing social and economic conditions.

From these four external factors, migration norms appear to have a stronger influence on household internal forces than other factors. They are formed and changed by the circumstances of social norms, social obligations and gender norms. They are also affected by and changed along with the dynamic functions of economic conditions, modernisation and social networks. They conform to household expectations which regulate the gender roles and economic roles of household members. Migration is now a desirable and shared expectation of behaviour among parents and their children. The children who do not, or cannot, move to work elsewhere are more likely to be considered as incapable. Young children expect and are expected to migrate to work in the big cities in response to both their household's expectations and their own individual aspirations. However, it cannot be denied that economic conditions, modernisation and social networks also directly and indirectly affect the influence of household expectations and individual aspirations on the migration decision-making process.

Figure 8-1 *The interrelationships of household relations, gender relations and the migration decision-making process*



Economic conditions have had a strong influence on migration since the cash economy replaced the self-sufficient economy in rural *Isan*. The penetration of the cash economy has accelerated mass migration to Bangkok. It has resulted in most rural households requiring their household members to migrate to help satisfy cash needs. The changes in economic conditions have always affected changes in migration behaviour. The influence of prevailing economic conditions has been most obvious in households with certain economic constraints, in particular poverty and limited agricultural land-holdings. Now, in the study communities, agricultural production alone is insufficient to fulfil the economic needs of poor households, and off-farm employment has become a common means of providing those needs. These families have to encourage or even demand a household member or members to migrate to *'pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham',* in order to strengthen the household economy. Hence, economic conditions can be a factor in either encouraging or discouraging rural *Isan* people to make their migration decisions, whether it is to migrate or to return home.

Modernisation is a non-economic external force driving rural-urban migration from *Isan* to the big cities. Modernity, literally translated as *'than samai',* is considered by most respondents to constitute the urban life-style, which contrasts with the traditional rural way of life. For the villagers, the concrete change from being 'traditional' to being 'modern' is seen to centre on the possession of facilities like urban people have. Having a cement-built house with electrical appliances, a motorcycle or a pick-up is a dream of many migrant parents in the study communities. These all require cash. Modernity is therefore a crucial push driving household members to migrate to earn a cash income in order to provide materials and modern facilities for their household. Many migrants are encouraged to migrate to Bangkok for *'pai thiaw ha- ngaan-tham'* in order to fulfil their household's ambitions of being more 'modern'. For the migrants, the bright lights (literally *'sang-si'*) and entertainment (literally *'sanug-sanaan'*) in the city are important pull factors, which lure *Isan* people, in particular the young villagers, to migrate and work in Bangkok for *'pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn'*.

In *Isan,* social networks have been key elements in stimulating and directing much population movement. The networks have continuously affected and crucially dismantled the rigidity of migration norms by providing important information and employment opportunities for potential and prospective migrants. A further key role of social networks in the decision-making process is that of taking much of the uncertainty out of the migration process, by providing assurances of assistance in seeking employment and initial accommodation, as well as helping migrants to adapt themselves at the place of destination. The networks are effective in taking care of the basic needs of initial migrants immediately after their arrival in the cities.

Although those external factors have directly and indirectly affected migration decisions, household expectations and gender relations are obviously the main influences. In the *Isan* household, each member is traditionally expected to play particular different gender and economic roles. The household expectations have traditionally been stratified by local practices of household divisions of labour and resource allocation, and influenced by the social, cultural and economic conditions of matrilocality. *Isan* people have for a long time followed the practices of matrilocal[1] (or uxorilocal) residence, which provides a mode of intergenerational succession of land and household responsibilities for women as the key member of the household (Pongsapich 1997: 10-1). Since the agricultural and residential land are supposed to be inherited by daughters, the parents traditionally expect more household responsibilities and obligations from their daughters than from their sons. Daughters are expected to pay back their parental obligations by providing the parents with a better living, which now can be achieved by working in Bangkok and remitting part of their earnings back to their parents. By the same token, sons are traditionally expected to ordain as a monk in order to pay back their parental obligations, before getting married and moving out to live with their wife's family. Hence, matrilocality and traditional practices not only determine different gender and economic roles for male and female household members, but also require different household obligations between sons and daughters. These aspects of gender difference and matrilocality will be discussed more in the next section.

In the study communities, it is evident that many young female migrants, in particular from poor households, practise migration as a means of maintaining their household obligations and responding to their household gender-role and economic-role expectations. In contrast to young female migrants, most parents do not expect any serious economic responsibilities from their young migrant sons, who rarely remit money to their parents even though they come from a poor household. Although many of them may remit some money back home if they have enough saved, it is an irregular pattern of behaviour. They have more economic flexibility and fewer expectations from their parents when compared to migrant daughters. If a household has both a migrant son and a migrant daughter, the parents will merely expect and require household economic responsibilities to come from their migrant daughter. Although the burden of household economic responsibilities appears to be laid heavier on the shoulders of young migrant daughters, especially in the cases of the youngest daughter of the family, they mostly are willing to respond to their obligations.

The traditional practices of paying back household obligations have allowed parents to have decision-making authority in regards to their child's migration. Migrant daughters and migrant sons have to ask for the permission of their parents before moving elsewhere, but the degree to control is different between the sexes. It would be an exaggeration to say that parents control the movements of all migrant daughters, but most prospective female migrants always acknowledge their parents' influence when making their migration decisions. It is evident that in the study communities the parental authority and parental obligations have been strongly responded to by young daughters rather than young sons. Most migrant daughters in Ban Kud Hae, in particular, follow the advice of their parents concerning any move. They strongly respect their parental authority and seriously respond to their expected gender and economic roles. It is also evident that although many migrant daughters in the two communities prefer to experience the modern life-style in Bangkok, they also want to be 'good daughters' in responding to their household obligations. This circumstance is quite obvious among the stayer daughters and short-term reversee daughters. They regard their staying and re-migrating to work in

Bangkok as their duty, in that they aim to contribute to their parents' well-being. This migration motivation is actually different from migrant sons, who regard migration as a way in which they can gain individual experiences, have fun, and earn prestige (in the case of successful migrants).

In these regards, the process of migration decision-making in rural *Isan* has been influenced by gender selectivity, but its influences have changed over time. For example, in the past, daughters were not allowed to migrate elsewhere because most parents preferred to keep their daughter at home to help with farm and domestic tasks, while letting their son migrate to gain individual experiences. Nowadays, parents encourage their daughters to work in Bangkok for extra household economic support, while expecting fewer household responsibilities from their migrant sons. These patterns of migration decisions are evidently related to circumstances of gender selectivity. Moreover, gender selectivity has presumably been determined by the conditions of gender stratification in the place of origin and by wider opportunities for female employment available in the big cities. Gender stratification is categorised by the traditional practices of the household division of labour and resource allocation in *Isan* society. The interrelationships between gender stratification and internal forces in the process of migration decision-making will be discussed in the next section.

8.2 Gender Stratification in the Migration Decision-making Process

Gender stratification, which classifies gender inequality and gender differences among societal members, is a subset of social stratification (Huber 1991: 38). Janet Chafetz (1991: 76-7) refers this term to the circumstances whereby societal members are unequal in their access to the scarce values of their society on the basis of their membership in a gender category. However, the degree of gender stratification in a society may vary in the extent to which females are socially and economically disadvantaged in their access to the available resources when compared to males in their own society. The theory of gender stratification focuses

on what men and women do each day to secure their 'basic human needs', and how they organise their work around the available resources to sustain their household livelihoods (Huber 1991: 38). It assumes that men and women have unequal opportunities in this regard, and that they have been required to play different roles and responsibilities in their household. Two main factors that are used to examine all systems of gender stratification are the gender-based division of labour and resource allocation.

Chafetz (1991) links the gender division of labour to gender stratification in her conclusion that women are disadvantaged because they are chiefly responsible for child rearing and domestic tasks regardless of their other economic work, while men focus on the more powerful arenas of the economy and polity. In contrast, Blumberg (1991b) hypothesises that gender stratification on the basis of resource allocation should be based on *"women's relative economic power in terms of the degree of control of key economic resources: income, property, and other means of production. In other words, neither mere work in economic activities nor even ownership of economic resources is enough if the person does not control them. . . . Furthermore, the degree of control over surplus allocation is more important for relative male/female economic power than is the degree of control over the resources needed for bare subsistence"* (Blumberg 1991a: 100). To examine gender stratification in rural *Isan* society, we can apply both theories but in different periods of time. In the past, the gender division of labour obviously determined gender inequality and gender differences in household members' social and economic responsibilities. Men were responsible for the main household economic activities. They had authority to make decisions on all household economic activities because they controlled the main household economic resources: agricultural products. In contrast, nowadays the gender division of labour is much more flexible. Women have more responsibility for household economic activities, and are able to authorise more economic decisions because they possess one of the main household economic resources: a cash income (from migration). Women receive a degree of autonomy in terms of physical mobility and decision-making, particularly for household economic activities. In these

regards, the study of migration should apply both factors (division of labour and resource allocation) in examining the impacts of gender stratification on the alteration of household gender-role and economic-role expectations between male and female household members.

However, to examine the impacts of gender stratification on the process of decision-making for *Isan* migrants, it is necessary to understand the conditions of gender inequality and gender differences in the context of traditional Thai society, which have been fundamentally influenced by Buddhist ideology. Kornvipa Boonsue (1989) concludes in her study that women have never been recognised as equal to men in Buddhist societies. She explains that gender inequality in traditional Thai society lies in the reciprocity of the relationship between the ideology of Buddhism and the practices of the traditional Thai way of life, which can be identified as three main myths:

> "**1) the myth of female inferiority**, which leads women to perceive themselves as inferior to men both mentally and physically and therefore to believe that they need male protection; **2) the myth of female subservience to the male**, which causes women to perceive themselves as submissive and dependent and justifies their acceptance of male supremacy and the role of the men as head of the household; **3) the myth of domesticity**, which leads women to believe that their aim in life should be marriage, reproduction, and domestic work." (Boonsue 1989: 56-7)

According to this, women in Thai society were traditionally and ideologically inferior to men at the level of both the household and socially (van Esterik 1996: 4, Kirsch 1996). Men were the household heads who had jural authority to make final decisions for the family interests, including decisions regarding their children's migration. At the same time, women were dependants who shouldered the burden of caring for children, processing food, preparing meals, keeping the house clean, and nursing the sick (Thitiprasert 1991).

However, in practice, Thai women were not inferior to men in all aspects because of the influences of the bilateral kinship system and matrilocality in Thai society. In my point of view, household relations and gender relations in *Isan* society (and Thai society as a whole) have been traditionally and fundamentally influenced by matrilocality. The role of matrilocality is closely connected with the allocation of land and other household economic resources. In the past, because land was the

most important agricultural resource, it was traditionally inherited by daughters while sons inherited movable property (such as money and cattle).[2] The family home was allotted only to the youngest daughter, or the one who was expected to be responsible for taking care of ageing parents. Therefore, a son-in-law might come to live with his wife's family with only some or even without any economic resources, but he was expected to shoulder the main burden of agricultural labour for his wife's family, and eventually to be the household head. Because women have owned the main household economic resources, the dominance of men in *Isan* society has not been as strong as it could have been in other Buddhist societies. Thai women seem to have a certain authority in their household, therefore gender inequality is not obvious in the social meaning of gender relations (Mensendiek 1997: 163-4). *Isan* men and women have lived together with no obvious domination and exploitation of one another. Women may have occupied different roles and household responsibilities from men, but in the household sphere they have had fewer disadvantages than women in other Buddhist societies.

However, because of the influence of Buddhist ideology as discussed above, women are not more powerful or influential than men in the traditional practices of matrilocality. Jural authority does not lie with women, but belongs to men. Its succession is from father-in-law to son-in-law rather than from father to son or daughter. The household relations and gender relations differ from the classical matrilineal mode where jural authority and land passes from the mother's brother to the sister's son, and also differ from the classical patrilineal system where jural authority and land passes from father to elder son (Phodhisita 1984: 92). This atypical pattern of social system (where residence, inheritance and authority are handed down differently) makes the system bilateral with a matrilineal-bias[3] (Pongsapich 1997: 10-1). This pattern of social system provides an authoritative position for men while creating certain household responsibilities and expectations on the social and economic roles of women (Tantiwiramanond and Pandy 1991, 1996). The youngest daughter, in particular, is expected to take care and provide her parents with a better living while her husband is given the authority as the

household head. This social system also stratifies the social and economic status of young *Isan* sons as a long-term 'out-family' member, which makes their parents expect fewer household economic responsibilities than they expect from their daughters.

In the past, the gender division of labour had distinctively influenced gender stratification in *Isan* society. *Isan* men had more power and prestige than women because they played significant economic roles in agricultural production. Women were required to be responsible for domestic tasks and helping with farm work, but not the main labour force for household economic activities. Although women owned agricultural land, they could not control agricultural production and its economic value. The authority to make decisions on economic activities belonged to men. Migration as an economic activity was, therefore, decided by the male household head, and was previously male dominated because men were responsible for all kinds of household economic labour.

Nowadays, due to the fact that the gender-based division of labour in economic activities is not distinct, and cash income is the main economic resource to control rather than agricultural products and land, the mother has more influence on the migration decisions of the children than in the past. The mother or wife is generally the one who collects all household income from agricultural production and migratory revenues, and is the one who provides and manages the household expenditures. In the study communities, all sources of costs and benefits of migration are closely controlled by the mother and wife. However, the increasing influence of the mother and wife on migration decisions does not mean that migration behaviour is female-predominant and that the decisions are independently made by females. Indeed, migration decisions still vary according to the women's household position as a mother, a wife, or a daughter. The mother has obvious influence on the migration decisions of the children. The husband, rather than the wife, has much influence on the decisions of the migrant couple because of his position as the household head. The daughter has less independence in migration decision-making than the other household positions. In *Isan* society, matrilocality

and women's land inheritance have determined household gender-role and economic-role expectations, which require daughters to have more household obligations and economic responsibilities than sons. Those household expectations and obligations have affected the gender norms, which require daughters to obey and be respectful to their parental authority.

In the study communities, every girl grows up to believe that the interests of the family are paramount and take precedence over individual interests. Individual aspirations are given far lower priority than household responsibilities. According to *Isan* culture, women who sacrifice their self-interest for their parents are given far more respect and reverence than those who pursue their own pleasure without taking the concerns of others into account. The idea of voluntary renunciation in pursuit of being a 'good daughter' continues to be the ultimate goal for every daughter. An *Isan* woman will be very honoured if her family holds her up as an example of a 'good daughter'. Even her neighbours will hold her in high esteem for her resolute commitment of parental obligations. Today, to be good daughters, *Isan* women migrate in search of work in Bangkok in order to fulfil their household gender-role and economic-role expectations and household obligations.

In brief, the approach of gender stratification, categorised by the gender-based division of labour and resource allocation, classifies gender differences for the ways in which daughters and sons should respond to their household expected roles and household obligations. It has distinctively affected the influence of household internal forces on gender selectivity in the process of migration decision-making. However, migration decisions, in particular those concerning female migration, have not only been changed and affected by the influences of gender stratification and internal forces, but have also been influenced by external forces over time, as we shall see below.

8.3 Female Migration and External Forces in the Process of Social Change

Female migration in *Isan* has evidently changed its pattern and behaviour over periods of time along with changes in external forces (including migration norms, economic conditions, modernisation and social networks). This section reassesses the changes in female migration and those external forces by separating the periods of changes into three phases: before, during, and after the economic crisis in Thailand.

8.3.1 Before the economic crisis

Before the 1960s, *Isan* migration norms were very rigid in controlling the pattern and behaviour of female migration. Only male household heads and mature men (after leaving the monkhood) could migrate away from home, while women could not migrate elsewhere on their own. Their pattern of migration was rural-to-rural migration rather than rural-to-urban migration. Their migration actually did not respond to the household need for a cash income. They mostly migrated for *'pai yaam yaat'* (literally, travelling to visit relatives) and some migrated for *'pai thiaw ha-na-di'* (literally, travelling to search for good paddy land). The migration behaviour was undisputedly male dominant.

During the 1960s and 1970s, migration behaviour entered an era of change due to the effects of development in both places of origin and destination. Many male household heads started moving to the big cities around the Northeast for *'pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham'*, in search of cash income for investing in new agricultural technologies and, in some cases, to relieve their household debts or economic constraints. At the same time, many young sons and some young daughters followed their fathers to work in the cities, but they migrated for their own experiences rather than to fulfil their household economic responsibilities. Their reason for migration was mainly to *'pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn'*. They mostly wanted to experience the urban way of life outside their village community. However, young girls could not make their own migration decisions. They had to ask for permission from their

parents. At that time Bangkok was not a popular destination for young female migrants because they had little information about Bangkok and their parents still thought that it was insecure for young girls to travel to the capital city.

In the late 1970s, when migration networks started playing a significant role in support of female migration, many young girls negotiated with their parents for permission to go and work in Bangkok. Since then, female migration has become more and more obvious in rural *Isan*. However, at the early stage of female migration, migration opportunities were still limited for young female migrants from poor families, in comparison to middle-range and rich families, because they needed some support for their costs of migration. Many young female migrants from poor families in the study communities started working in Bangkok in the early 1980s. They moved to Bangkok mainly in order to work and remit part of their earnings back to support their household economy. Their migration purpose was to *'pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham'* rather than to *'pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn'*. Their remittances helped their household meet its economic needs. Many of them helped their parents build a new house, buy new agricultural equipment and inputs, and provide better food and consumer goods. They were good examples of young female migrants, regarded as 'good daughters'.

Their migration behaviour gradually affected the migration norms for the later stages. The previous rigid migration norms for young girls have become more and more flexible until they have recently changed the parental attitude to favour the practice of female migration for their young daughters.

During the 1980s and 1990s, it is evident that the rural-urban migration pattern in *Isan* gradually changed from seasonal migration to circular migration. A large number of single and married men and women migrated to the cities not only in the period after the harvest but also the whole-year period or longer. More and more married migrants brought their families to join them in the cities and stayed working there for longer spells.

The influx of female migrants to work in the cities is also a result of changes in the demands of the labour market. Employment opportunities for women have

been widened in various industries. Therefore, throughout this period, the proportion of female migrants, both single and married, has increased rapidly. In the late 1990s, the proportion of young female migrants exceeded that of their male counterparts, at least in the study communities.

In brief, the influences of social changes and external forces on female migration in rural *Isan* have been very obvious over the past three decades. Social changes were gradually affected by governmental development programmes, which launched the new cash economy in rural areas. Although cash cropping increased economic opportunities and raised household agricultural incomes, it is a matter of fact that 'modern agriculture' destroyed *Isan* natural resources. Some scholars (e.g. Ruang 1996: 24-6, Kitahara 1996: 92-3) argue that cash cropping and the use of Western agricultural concepts are held responsible for the increasing indebtedness of farmers. Farmers must work hard on their farms just to survive, and their household labourers have been pushed to work in the city for supplementary incomes in order to meet their economic needs and to respond to their growing economic aspirations. Modernisation and consumerism, a way of life for urban people, has also accelerated economic needs and greed in rural *Isan.* The needs and expectations for cash incomes have critically changed the migration norms in *Isan.* These changes in external factors have particularly affected female migration. Young girls have migrated to work in the city in response to their household economic expectations, driven by the need and greed for cash, as well as in response to individual aspirations driven by modernisation. These external factors have influenced the internal factors to force young girls to migrate to work in the city.

8.3.2 During the period of the economic crisis

During the early stage of the current economic crisis, economic conditions had significantly affected migration decisions in terms of whether to return home or to stay working in the cities. The laying-off of wage labourers and declining employment opportunities pushed many *Isan* migrant workers to return home. Many of them had no option but to return to their home village either permanently or temporarily. Because of the high living costs in urban areas, many migrants were

unable to support themselves if they did not have access to a well-paid job. They involuntarily had to return home in order to benefit from the lower living costs in their home village. Therefore, migration reversal was widespread throughout rural *Isan* villages. Migration reversal has generated significant social and economic impacts on the rural poor because of their strong dependence on the income from urban employment. The poor saw their household incomes largely reduced because their migrants were laid off, while the costs of living rose rapidly.

However, this study has found that the circumstances of migration reversal are different between male and female and between single and married migrants. The stayers, short-term reversees and remaining reversees all made different migration decisions because of differences in household gender-role and economic-role expectations related to their gender and marital status. Male single reversees remained in the home village without any serious tension from their parents, while young female reversees had to re-migrate after a short spell of returning home because of their household economic responsibilities. In contrast, male married migrants decided to stay working in Bangkok, while their wife and children returned home because they could not afford to keep the whole family together in the capital, where the cost of living was high. Male married short-term reversees also decided to re-migrate to work in Bangkok, while leaving their family in the home village. Those male and married stayers and short-term reversees made migration decisions for themselves and their wife because they were the household heads. They thought that they had to be responsible for the household economy, while their wife has to care for their young children. The decision for their wife to return home was also a household survival strategy. Their migration decisions reflect the significance of gender stratification in the process of migration decision-making. In this regard, gender issues have firmly affected the migration decisions for all patterns of movement during this period.

According to patterns of gender stratification, the majority of young and single female remaining reversees in the study communities have a stronger intention to re-migrate to work in Bangkok than their male counterparts. They

intend to re-migrate as soon as possible in order to respond to their household economic-role expectations. At the same time, many married female reversees have been forced to remain at home by responding to their reproductive and productive roles. Many of them have to remain in the village to care for their young children and ageing parents (in some cases), as well as to take charge of farming while allowing their husband to work in Bangkok in order to earn cash for the household's living and farming expenses. However, the differences between single and married female reversees lie not only in the conditions of gender stratification but also the conditions of gender bias in employment opportunities. During this period, many large and medium sized factories in Bangkok and its vicinity recruited mainly young and single women or those without young children (Charoenlerd and Kanchana-aksorn 1999). Consequently, more married female reversees with young children than single ones remained in the village during the early stage of the economic crisis.

However, in the later stages most female reversees, both single and married, have found ways to reverse their fortunes in regards to work. Although they cannot apply for many of the jobs available in the formal sector, they can rebuild their hopes by working in the informal sector, in particular in occupations like street vendors and seamstresses. These occupations have largely benefited from the decrease in purchasing power of migrant labourers and the weakness of Thai currency. Informal sector employment has become an obvious alternative for many unskilled and married female stayers and short-term reversees. It is evident that many female reversees from the study communities re-migrated to work in those informal occupations in the main destination areas of Din Daeng, Huay Khwang, Lard Phrao 101, and Don Muang.

In brief, even though the trend of rural-urban migration is undergoing some reversals as the cost of living in the city soars and employment opportunities dwindle, many female reversees have still re-migrated to find work in Bangkok. This is because rural communities in the Northeast are now more economically dependent upon cash than in the past. Young female reversees, in particular, have to find a way to re-migrate to work in order to provide supplementary incomes for their household's economic survival. They continue to respond to their household

expectations and obligations even though their opportunities for employment have declined. It seems that female migration will continue to be an important strategy for the rural households during the period of the current economic crisis and also possibly in the near future after the economic recovery.

8.3.3 *The future of female migration after the economic recovery*

According to the influences of economic conditions and social change on the process of migration decision-making, this study primarily believes that the current economic crisis in Thailand may usher a new wave of migratory change for female migration in *Isan*. This final part of the chapter provides some predictions on female migration trends, based on information from in-depth interviews of young migrant children and their parents, in regard to gender issues and social change in *Isan* in the near future, after the national economy starts to recover. It considers the future of female migration in rural *Isan* through the changes and influences of household internal forces and external forces.

It is undisputedly the case that the economic crisis has affected economic conditions in both places of origin and destination, but the changes have not been negative for all migrant households. The migrants who work as street vendors and seamstresses have obviously received good fruits from the economic crisis. They can earn more income than they previously expected for their household's economic survival. Those occupations are new alternatives, in particular for female migrants, during the period of the economic crisis. However, the benefits from those occupations may even themselves out soon after the national economic recovery. Many of them may have to change their jobs again. In the near future, although the employment opportunities for female migrants may change, the study believes that female migration will continue to be the predominant mode of migration. Female migrants will adapt themselves to the new circumstances, just as they have done during the economic crisis, in order to continue to work in the city for their own survival and that of their family. It is evident that now most young girls and boys in rural *Isan* are refusing to work in farming and low-paid wage labour in the village, and instead they prefer to migrate to work in the city.

The determining factors of future female migration will remain the household internal forces, in particular household expectations and household obligations. Indeed, parents now realise that their migrant daughters are unable to remit much money back to support the family. Their household economic expectations and household obligations have, therefore, tended to reduce in terms of their rigidity. The parents may not require their migrant daughters to remit much money regularly, in the present circumstances. At the same time, some migrant sons who continue to occupy well-paid jobs may remit more money to support their family even though they rarely remitted money back home before the economic crisis occurred. They know that during this period of economic constraints their parents need economic support from every household migrant, not only the migrant daughter.

This study believes that the influx of female migration into Bangkok will continue. Although most of them will still migrate temporarily, they will work in the cities for a longer spell than they had done before the economic crisis erupted. Almost all young girls will leave *Isan* villages to search for work in the big cities soon after finishing their compulsory education. The trends of female migration in the near future will depend on three main conditions in their household relations and gender relations as follows:

a) Due to the fact that agricultural land is now often too limited for all daughters to inherit, only the youngest daughter, or the one who prefers to care for her ageing parents, may receive a small plot of agricultural land to continue their household farming occupation. Other daughters and sons have no choice but to build up their own, possibly permanent, non-agricultural careers which are definitely limited in rural areas. It is evident that now most parents try to provide higher education for their daughters and sons, at least to the end of the first level of secondary school, in order to give them more chance to apply for non-agricultural employment in the urban areas. Then success in working in the cities will be very important for young migrants and their future. Many parents in the study communities admit that they expect to change their traditional practices of giving their agricultural land to the daughter who fails to build up her own career in the

city, even though they still prefer to have their youngest daughter care for them. In particular female migrants from poor families will expect to work in the cities not only in order to remit to pay back their parental obligations but also to build up their prospects for permanent work in the city. For example, two from five daughters of Mrs Thonglian Janmaphrao in Ban Kud Hae expressed their decision to live in Bangkok permanently because their family is very poor. Their household can merely provide a small plot of agricultural land for the youngest daughter. If they want to return to live in their home village, they must buy their own agricultural land or establish a small business.

b) In the future, most young girls in rural *Isan* will have no choice but to migrate to work in Bangkok as a routine occupation or as a part of their life cycle. They will grow up with a certain expectation from their parents, along with their own aspiration, to migrate and work in the city for several years, or probably for their entire working life. Some may work until they fulfil their social and economic ambitions, they then return home to resume their farm tasks. Some may spend most of their time in the city, while returning home for a short spell to retain their reproductive roles (such as giving birth, caring for small children, and so on). Some may even work, get married and live permanently in the city. Thus, it can be anticipated that many rural women will spend a large part of their life in the big city.

c) Many elderly people in the study communities are concerned that social ties between parents and migrant daughters will not be as strong as in the past. The longer time they spend in the city, the less chance they have to contact their parents. Young and single female migrants will also make migration decisions in response to their individual aspirations rather than their household expectations. Even though they still want to fulfil their intention to pay back their parental obligations in order to be a 'good daughter', soon after getting married they will be relieved of the burden of their household obligations and household responsibilities as a daughter. Female migration in the near future will be more flexible in terms of the influences of household expectations and household obligations, which will possibly cease as soon as they get married.

To conclude, from the past to the present gender issues have influenced migration decision-making differently between migrant sons and migrant daughters, but this influence may gradually decline in the near future. Gender stratification has been shown to be an effective gender approach to analysis of the gender selectivity in the process of migration decision-making, to the extent that it has been influenced by household internal forces rather than by external forces. In the near future, gender selectivity in the process of migration decision-making will continue to show a preference towards female migration, because parents will depend much more on their migrant daughter's economic contribution than that of their migrant son. Although the issue of gender differences in household obligations and household gender-role and economic-role expectations will continue to encourage female migration, it is likely to slacken previous rigidity of moral expectations and moral obligations.

Chapter Notes

[1] Chai Podhisita states that there is no question of matrilocality being the predominant type of post-nuptial residence among most of the rural population of Thailand. It is found to be so in all regions except the South where people may have had Islamic influence (Podhisita 1984: 88).

[2] This is mainly because sons are generally expected to leave home and obtain land through marriage; daughters are considered to have the principal duty of looking after their parents, so they receive farmland in order to live near their parents. The youngest daughter is traditionally expected to do this, so she receives the largest share of farmland inheritance. However, in cases where parents have large land holdings, it is tentatively to be divided between sons and daughters with the youngest daughter receiving the largest share, while smaller holdings tend to be inherited by daughters or only by the youngest daughter. These inheritance customs result from the different role expectations between men and women in *Isan* society (Fukui 1993: 332).

[3] The bilateral and matrilocal characteristics generally give women not only relatively good control of economic resources, but also relatively high power within the family (Wolf 1991, Karim 1995b). It is believed that a woman with access to economic resources such as land and income can affect her status and power relations, which are impossible in a highly patriarchal system (Papanek 1990).

CHAPTER NINE

Conclusion

9.1 The Research Themes and Findings

The overall aim of this study was to illuminate gender influences in the process of migration decision-making and social change. Based on a study of two Northeastern Thai rural communities, this research has focused on the interrelationships between migration decision-making, household relations, gender relations and external socio-economic factors. A further objective of this study was to analyse in depth how and why migrant men and women and their households have reacted to the specific circumstances of the economic recession and the resultant phenomenon of 'migration reversal'.

The main findings of the thesis can be summarised as follows:

9.1.1 Concepts and patterns of migration in Isan

From the community history profiles, migration in the periods before the 1980s was largely an individual matter rather than a household economic strategy. This was mainly because the village economy at the time was essentially self-sufficient and centred on subsistence production. Households could survive without a cash income. Traditional patterns of movement were not directly associated with providing basic household economic necessities. The traditional short-distance and long-distance trading caravans (*Nai-hoi* caravan) were arranged on the rare occasions when the villagers had problems of rice-shortage, or when they had surplus cattle. Although some villagers moved to work as agricultural wage-labourers in the Central region, their movement was mainly to *'pai thiaw'* for not purely economic reasons (such as visiting relatives and friends, individual experience, or searching for new agricultural land – *ha-na-di*) rather than for their household's cash needs. They also travelled far away from home only during the period after the rice harvest. It could be said that they migrated mainly for *'pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn'* or *'pai thiaw ha-na-di,*

and it was evident that their migration patterns were seasonal and absolutely male-predominant.

The new era of rural-urban migration in *Isan* gradually developed during the 1960s and the 1970s, but the influx of male and female migrants to Bangkok began as recently as in the early 1980s. Since then, cityward migration has become part of the common way of life of *Isan* rural people, in particular the youths.

According to the field investigation, the concepts of migration from the local perspective are different between single and married migrants, as well as between male and female migrants. Due to the fact that the main destination for most *Isan* migrants is now Bangkok, the local concept of migration has now become defined as *'pai thiaw Krungthep'* and *'pai tham-ngaan Krungthep'* for single migrants and married migrants respectively. Specifically, among the group of young and single migrants the concept of migration is different between male and female migrants. It is evident that the migration of young male migrants is always recognised as *'pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn'*, while that of their female counterparts is considered as both *'pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn'* for most of young female migrants from rich and middle-range households, and *'pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham'* for those from poorer households. Therefore, the local perspective or concept of migration would appear to be fundamentally differentiated according to the gender and marital status of migrants, and the economic status of the migrant's household. This differentiation is reflected in the pattern of migration and the process of migration decision-making of *Isan* migrants across time.

It may well be a popular notion that the Northeast is constantly being drained of its human resources, but in the main this is a temporary circumstance rather than a permanent one. This raises an interesting question as to why migrants do not stay on in the city. The main reason is that they still consider the land, house, family and village as their long-term source of livelihood and a social safety net. They prefer the culture and way of life in the village to that in the city. Hence, it can be deduced that, in general (although there are of course many exceptions) the villagers' commitment is to their home village in the Northeast, even though they may spend

many years in Bangkok. Migrants maintain the option of eventually returning to their rural roots by frequent visits and the sending of remittances, which in turn have become very important for the *Isan* rural economy.

In brief, the local concepts of migration as *'pai thiaw Krungthep'* and *'pai tham-ngaan Krungthep'* have reflected not only the different basis of migration decision-making related to gender and marital status, but also the pattern of temporary migration in *Isan*.

9.1.2 Gender approach to migration decision-making

I would like to start my conclusion of this part with the explanation of Ms Suree Phonyiam, a 22-year-old single female migrant from Ban Noon Phoe, as to why she has circularly migrated to work in Bangkok for more than six years, as follows:

> "I don't want to be left at home. I don't want to spend my whole life to cook, clean, raise children, and work on the farm. I want to go out and achieve some things on my own. I have my goals and ambitions, which I can only achieve by going to work in Bangkok. I want to move forward, not to go backwards by remaining in the village. I don't want to be like my mother, going out to work in the field from early morning until late afternoon and coming back home to cook everybody's meal. . . . Of course, I will finally go back to live in my home village, but I want to return home with an image of a successful migrant. My dream is to establish a small business in Phon Thong town centre, rather than to go back to work in my household paddy and cassava fields."

Her explanation, similar to that of many young female migrants from the study communities, critically confirms that migration is not solely, or even mainly, influenced by economic necessity. In fact, both social and economic factors influence the decisions of young migrants. They realise that cityward migration is an important means to achieve social and economic success. According to the present community norms in the study area, there are many social pressures on young migrants and prospective migrants. The one who does not migrate to work in the city, or the migrant who returns home without any success, may be treated by the others as a failure or an incapable person. However, these norms differ markedly according to gender.

This study painstakingly undertook fieldwork by using in-depth interviews and participant observation to explore the importance of gender and other social factors in the process of migration decision-making. Theoretically, the field research insists that a gender-selective approach is suitable for exploring and examining the

process of migration decision-making. From time to time *Isan* male and female migrants have had different migration opportunities, which in turn have been manipulated by their household relations, the community norms, and also the employment opportunities in the destination. However, it does not mean that gender selectivity represents the only influence on migration decision-making.

It is also true that push-pull factors and cost-benefit evaluations have influenced the decisions of *Isan* migrants. The migrants in the study communities express their migration decisions to work in Bangkok as being rooted in the fundamental motive to experience urban life and to improve the standard of living for themselves and/or their family, and based on the belief that the benefits will exceed the costs of moving. This applies to a range of circumstances in which it is assumed that people are motivated by a desire to do what is best for themselves and their family. The young migrants, like Suree, are dissatisfied with the present situation in their home village, which is manifested in the perceived disparity of social and economic opportunities. They expect improvements (which would result from migration) whether these opportunities are income, social status, or other forms of physical improvement. After carefully evaluating the perceived advantages and disadvantages, they mostly decide to move to search for jobs and experience in the city rather than remaining and working on their household farm.

Rural-urban migration has now become a central part of the rural *Isan* family life cycle, but the motives and behaviour behind migration change along with the cycle of the migrant's life. When they are young and single, male migrants may move to work in the cities mainly for their own urban-life experiences rather than as a manifestation of their household economic responsibilities. However, after getting married and a change in status to being a husband and maybe a household head, they also change their migration motivation and behaviour. They migrate to the city mainly because of their household economic responsibilities.

Meanwhile, young and single female migrants may migrate to work in Bangkok in response to both their household obligations and their individual aspirations. After getting married, they mostly migrate in response to the needs of

their own household economy. Even though some of them may still remit a small amount of money to their parents, they have no commitment to do so as part of their parental obligations. Therefore, the migration decisions of *Isan* migrants are significantly differentiated by gender and marital status.

9.1.3 Gender, household relations and migration decision-making

This study revealed that household relations and gender relations have reflected growing tensions between individual aspirations and household expectations in the process of migration decision-making. Migration decision-making is not a simple process responding to either an individual's aspiration or a household's expectation, but they come together within a complexity of interrelationships between household relations, gender relations and various external socio-economic factors (in particular the social networks, modernisation, migration norms and prevailing economic conditions).

For young female migrants, working in Bangkok is a lucrative opportunity and an alternative way of achieving their individual aspirations, while at the same time responding to their household obligations. Suree, for instance, wants to work in Bangkok mainly to earn her own income to spend independently on urban consumption goods and personal experiences, but she also remits regularly a small part of her income to her parents as a way of paying back her parental obligations. The migration decision-making of young women is simultaneously rooted in the social and cultural values of *'bun khun'*, and in powerful aspirations for the comforts and status attached to the urban life-style emblems of being 'modern women'. According to the former perspective, migration to work in Bangkok becomes a very important means for young rural women to acknowledge their obligations to their parents by earning money to send home. *Isan* daughters are traditionally raised to express their filial gratitude by caring for the day-to-day needs of their parents. They are expected by their household and community norms to be more responsible in household economic matters than their brothers. Migratory income and remittances provide an opportunity for them to respond to their household's expectations in a

form that is both concrete and highly valued by their parents and the community's norms. The latter perspective draws upon the powerful influences of modernism in both places of origin and destination. Young male and female migrants in the study communities consider the move to Bangkok at least in part as an opportunity to experience the modern life-style and to earn the cash to purchase urban consumer goods for themselves and their household.

In most cases, young migrant daughters offer the best expectations of remitting and providing the material resources needed to secure a comfortable and modern livelihood for their parents. In contrast, most parents do not seriously place their household's economic expectations on their migrant sons who, in turn, mostly do not classify their migration as the way of redeeming their household obligations. Most parents in the study communities allow their sons to migrate to Bangkok for *'pai thiaw ha-prasob-karn'* without any serious expectation of economic responsibilities, while they expect their daughters to go to Bangkok for *'pai thiaw ha-ngaan-tham'* in order to send part of their earnings back home to support the family. According to *Isan* traditions, parents believe that sons are long-term 'out-family' members, and thus they cannot expect too much from them. This belief determines gender differences in household gender-role and economic-role expectations between sons and daughters in the process of migration decision-making. This study has found that gender differences in migration decision-making have been rooted in the traditional patterns of a gender-based household division of labour and resource allocation. These patterns have provided the circumstances for gender stratification and inequality through household relations.

Among married migrants, the process of migration decision-making is a bit different from the single migrants. Most male and female married migrants do not move to work in the city mainly for their individual aspirations, but for their household responsibilities. Their purpose of migration is as a 'strategy of survival' or a 'strategy of accumulation', but not principally for 'fun'. It could be said that economic motives are more important for married migrants than young and single male and female migrants who move to work in the city partly for their own

aspirations and partly for their household expectations. This means that the change in marital status of household members affects the gender-role and economic-role expectations that lie behind the process of migration decision-making.

Although this study supports the argument, discussed by Mills (1993, 1997), that many young female migrants move to the city in response to their desire both to be a 'good daughter' by sending remittances to repay their parental obligations and to be a 'modern woman', it also finds that the process of migration decision-making has been influenced mainly by various conditions of household relations and gender relations which determine the gender-role and economic-role expectations, which male and female household members have to fulfil. However, it has to be recognised at this point that these role expectations have also changed in form and impact according to the dynamic external influence of social networks, migration norms, modernisation and prevailing economic conditions.

9.1.4 Gender, migration decision-making and social change

In Chapter 6, I suggested that the combination of migration decision-making, gender and social change could be examined through the co-evolutionary approach. Fundamentally, developmental changes, economic changes and social changes have co-evolved, and change is seen as an on-going process. In the case of female migration in *Isan*, these changes have particularly affected the community's gender and migration norms. Three decades or so ago, female migration was discouraged because women were expected by their family to play significant reproductive rather than productive roles. However, since the 1960s social change and economic development have gradually changed the *Isan* rural way of life and associated production practices. The development of intensive agriculture in rural areas, coupled with population growth and changing rural land-use patterns, have resulted in decreasing needs for agricultural labour and increasing needs for cash for the new agricultural technologies and other consumption requirements. These circumstances have encouraged young women to move to find non-agricultural employment for earning incomes in response to their household's cash needs.

Moreover, non-agricultural employment opportunities in the city for women have widened, in particular for young women. These opportunities have been a 'pull factor' to lure *Isan* women to move far away from home. Nowadays, young daughters in the rural Northeast are thus more likely to be encouraged by their parents to migrate to search for jobs in Bangkok. In turn, the mass influx of female migrants to Bangkok has also affected their household's economic and social conditions, due to the flow of remittances and the widening social distance between migrant daughters and their parents.

It is evident that migratory income and remittances have changed the rural way of life. Villagers have a more comfortable life with modern consumer goods, but they have come deeply to depend on the cash economy. Moreover, the migrants' experiences of different life-styles compared to village life and their freedom from any social controls in the village have also changed them in subtle ways. They enjoy their city experiences and freedom and they have become more independent than in the past. As a result of this, there has been a marked relaxation of moral standards in traditional *Isan* practices. For example, the social and cultural practice of the youngest daughter having responsibility to take care of her ageing parents is now not so rigid. The youngest migrant daughter may refuse to return home for her traditional duty, though she will not receive any land inheritance, which will instead transfer to the daughter who fulfils this duty. Many parents are now quite flexible in this circumstance as well. Some also have no strict requirement for their migrant daughter to send remittances back home. With this relaxation of moral standards, more and more young female migrants are proposing to migrate permanently, or at least as long as they can keep their work position. In addition, their parents' authority seems to be declining in its significance in terms of this influence on their children's migration decision-making.

9.2 *The Current Economic Crisis and Migration Reversal: The Theoretical Implications*

This study has theoretically examined migration reversal as an on-going process of migratory change, and as a result of rapid social and economic change affecting migrants in both their individual and household socio-economic surroundings. During the initial period of the economic crisis, the migration trend was reversed due to many laid-off migrant workers having been forced to return to their home village as 'reversees' in order to survive economically. Logically, in a situation where living in the city might be more troublesome than in their home village, many migrants made their decisions to return and remain in the village. They might plan to re-migrate to work in the city after the national economy has recovered. However, I must remind you that in the same prevailing economic circumstances not everyone experienced the same social conditions and economic opportunities, and thus not all people are able to make migration decisions in the way they preferred. Reversees in wealthy households may have more flexible alternatives in terms of whether to remain in the village or to re-migrate, while the others in poorer households may have little choice and must do as best they can upon re-migrating to work in the city in order to help satisfy their household's economic needs. At the same time, many out-migrants from poor households may not even have had the option of making decisions, but had to 'stay' working in the city because of their household's cash needs.

Although it is evident that the prevailing economic conditions have influenced those patterns of migration decision-making, each stayer and reversee has made his/her migration decisions based mainly on his/her household gender-role and economic-role expectations (which differ between male and female migrants and between single and married migrants). Young and single female migrants are more likely to be stayers and short-term reversees in response to their household's economic needs and household obligations, while most of their male counterparts are remaining reversees with considerable freedom to make their own decisions. In contrast, many male married migrants are stayers and short-term reversees, while

most female married migrants are remaining reversees and some are short-term reversees. Most married migrants make their migration decisions based on their role expectations and household responsibilities. Male married migrants play the role of household heads with full responsibility for the household's economic needs, while the decisions of female married migrants are influenced by their traditional reproductive roles as a wife and a mother.

In fact, the economic crisis has not had an entirely negative set of effects on all migrants. Migrants working in the informal sector have had some advantages from the economic crisis. For example, many female stayers and short-term reversees from the study communities are still working in small garment factories (where export orders have been very buoyant due to the favourable exchange rate following the economic crisis) and street food trading (which has benefited from there being more poor people with limited purchasing power in Bangkok). Female stayers and short-term reversees who have benefited from working in these sectors have preferred working in Bangkok to returning to their home village.

An obvious lesson that has been learned from the phenomena of the economic crisis and migration reversal is that rural-urban migration remains an important strategy for most *Isan* migrants to support their household economy, and that agricultural activities cannot provide an adequate income for poor households to survive in the rural village. They have to depend on migratory income even though working in the city during the period of the crisis cannot ensure an adequate income to cover their expenses in the city and to support their family in the village. They have to take a risk because they may earn nothing if they remain in the village. However, these conditions have created much less trouble for migrants and reversees from rich and middle-range families. Another lesson is that, during any period of economic change, migrants can clearly adapt themselves to the change and find a means of surviving and remaining in the city because they can rely on strong social networks for help and support.

9.3 *Policy Recommendations and Future Research*

9.3.1 *Policy issues and implementation*

During the period of field research, I regularly thought about what policy options might be developed in order to promote more alternatives for *Isan* people to earn more income from agriculture and other economic activities, such as in rural industry. However, rural industry is not an option for development in every rural community. In my study communities, for instance, people have for a long time ignored the practice of local skills and traditional activities which might provide the foundation for some kind of rural industry. The villagers have not even practised raising silk worms and weaving for decades. After their harvesting period, they usually leave their villages to work in the sugar cane plantations or in the city. They seem to accept cityward migration as a common practice of their way of life, at least before they get married. Nowadays, it is quite difficult to encourage the villagers to stay and do agriculture in their home village.

From my point of view, the state's policies for the circumstances of migration in *Isan* could involve three main elements: regional economic development, educational development for rural people and grassroots rural development for self-reliance. For decades, Thailand's economic development has centred in Bangkok and its vicinity. The Northeast has also generally been given less priority than the other regions, especially Central Thailand. Large cities (such as Khon Kaen, Udon Thani, Nakhon Ratchasima, Ubon Ratchathani, and so on) have not been developed as important industrial and economic centres, especially when compared with the rate of industrial growth in Bangkok and other large cities in the Central and Eastern regions. This means that there are limited non-agricultural employment opportunities available in the Northeast. *Isan* migrants thus have no choice but to move to work in Bangkok. The government should thus give greater priority to the promotion of regional economic development in the Northeast in order to provide more in situ opportunities. This should help to reduce the flow of *Isan* migrants moving directly to Bangkok.

According to this thesis, it is true that we cannot keep young people farming in the village, thus we should provide them with the means, knowledge and ability to apply for well-paid jobs in the formal sector, with all its attendant social welfare benefits. Educational development for rural people is a way to provide support for prospective and potential migrants. Migrants with less than secondary-school level education can only work as unskilled labourers with low incomes and limited social welfare. The government should thus provide more chances for rural children to achieve a secondary education. This support will not only help them to increase their potential to compete with others in the labour market, but may also as a side-effect keep them longer in the village which may help them to strengthen their social ties with their household and the community as a whole.

I personally consider the grassroots approach to strengthening self-reliance in the village as the most appropriate path towards rural development for *Isan* people, who now depend heavily on the cash economy and consumerism. It does not mean that they have to return to their traditional self-sufficient economy and barter system. If they can change their agricultural practices to generate 'more self-sufficiency' and 'less cash dependence', the rural economy will at least retain its safety net for them when they face economic constraints, as they have during the current period of economic recession. However, the path towards an agricultural self-reliance is not the same way as the government agencies have tried to promote since the economic crisis.

In order to counter the negative effects of the economic crisis and the circumstances of migration reversal, the Thai government launched a number of new development projects to promote a 'self-sufficient economy' in rural areas. These projects were a political and fundamental response to the King's speech on the 4th December 1997, for his 70th birthday, to the Thai people, proposing the concept of the 'self-sufficient economy'. The King's message on self-sufficiency, the so-called 'New Theory' (Bunnag 1998), was like a blueprint for the government agencies to promote alternative projects as a means of salvaging the collapsed economy. The Ministry of Interior suddenly started acting like staunch supporters of the idea

(Chinvarakorn 1998), and saw it as its duty to help rural communities become economically self-reliant (Olarikkachat and Santimatanedol 1997). However, although the Ministry appeared to adjust its rural development strategy only to heed the King's suggestion, its reactions may hopefully provide a platform for some pragmatic programmes to improve and sustain rural people's livelihoods.

I had a chance to participate in a meeting on the 'self-sufficient economy' projects between government officials and villagers in Ban Noon Phoe and Ban Nong Thabkhrua. The officials tried to convince the villagers to join these projects. They explained, "After having experienced the economic troubles, we should realise the importance of a self-sufficient economy. We should change our farming system to sustain ourselves rather than to depend on the market economy. We have to be satisfied with our traditional way of life and not focus solely on production for sale. We should aim to produce for self-sufficiency. . . . In the past, we just led our life simply, in a self-sustaining manner. We ate simple food, mostly the kind we produced in the community. We ate more home-grown vegetables and rice." He also explained to me, when we had a chance to discuss the issue informally, "This is the time to change our economic development strategies. We should let the villagers know how to tackle their own problems. This is also an opportunity to confront the conditions which push them to be just a source of cheap labour."

I was actually impressed with the way they presented the new projects to the villagers. However, in my point of view, Thailand's rural development has for too long been approached as a set of interventions, guided or, more usually, implemented by the state agencies. The development projects for a self-sufficient economy will be impossible to implement if the state's interventions and interventionism remain unchanged. The withdrawal of the state from such interventions should be the first step towards a strategy to increase people's self-reliance. These projects should not start with providing long-term loans as an incentive for villagers to develop an integrated farming system, along the lines that the King has suggested. Villagers should thus be supported to develop their own ways to improve their self-sufficient and subsistent agriculture. Local development organisations and government agencies may play significant roles as supporters and providers of the necessary

knowledge or technologies, but this should be minimal when compared with the previous approaches to rural development.

I personally believe that, given the choice, most villagers and migrants prefer living in the village to living in the city. If the village economy can make them feel confident of their ability to remain in the village with less cash needs for everyday life, the number of migrants may decrease, at least among married migrants from the rich and middle-range households.

9.3.2 *Future research*

Firstly, I would like to declare some weak points in my study in order to suggest some important aspects for future research involving gender issues and the process of migration decision-making, particularly in the context of Northeastern Thailand. Due to the use of a qualitative research methodology, although the study has been able to analyse the circumstances of household relations and gender relations quite deeply, it has been a very difficult to categorise and measure the degree of influence of some household internal factors which are normative variables (in particular the individual aspirations, household expectations and household obligations). This constraint may lead to the study being criticised as unsystematic, even though it provides adequate empirical information to illuminate the main influential factors.

In this regard, an uncovered circumstance in the framework is the degree of influence and the strength of influence between factors. It is therefore difficult to use this framework to anticipate the long-term future of migration decisions. For example, this study anticipates that moral expectations and moral obligations will replace, or reduce the restriction of, household expectations and household obligations because of changing conditions in the gender-based division of labour and resource allocation. However, the study is unable to examine the degree of those changes and their causes and effects on the process of migration decision-making. The unclear degree of influence between them makes me have less confidence in applying the framework to the anticipation of future female migration circumstances.

In the future, if someone can develop valid and reliable indicators to measure those normative internal household factors, it will be very useful for the study of migration and may be able to remove the gap in the framework that I perceive still to exist. However, I stand by my use of qualitative methods in the study of gender and the migration decision-making. Quantitative research alone would not provide the rich, insightful and contextual material around which this thesis has fundamentally been built.

APPENDIX 1

Tables of Socio-Economic Information in Roi-et

Table 1 *Statistics of Northeastern population from registration in 1995, by provinces.*

Provinces	No. of population	Population density
Nakhon Ratchasima	2,467,831	120
Buri Ram	1,458,288	141
Surin	1,345,220	166
Si Sa Ket	1,396,035	158
Ubon Ratchathani	1,696,795	108
Yasothon	543,283	131
Chaiyaphum	1,093,063	86
Amnart Charoen	354,298	112
Nong Bua Lamphoo	477,129	124
Khon Kaen	1,652,030	152
Udon Thani	1,456,154	124
Loei	621,544	54
Nong Khai	873,313	119
Mahasarakham	910,750	172
Roi-et	1,291,750	156
Kalasin	960,357	138
Sakon Nakhon	1,057,674	110
Nakhon Phanom	690,035	125
Mukdahan	317,642	73
Total Northeast	20, 663,191	122

Source: Bureau of Registration Administration, Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior.

Table 2 *Poverty in Northeast Thailand by province, 1994.*

Provinces	Population	No.of Poor	% of Poor	Poverty Line
Roiet	1,039,074	560,297	53.92	623
Mukdahan	213,375	97,906	45.88	613
Kalasin	634,496	271,775	42.83	620
Sakon Nakhon	837,215	354,499	42.34	608
Yasothon	320,336	133,451	41.66	617
Loei	391,717	160,753	41.04	619
Buri Ram	1,607,197	635,572	39.55	602
Nong Khai	688,226	242,333	35.21	603
Chaiyaphum	2,082,091	683,781	32.84	585
Nakhon Phanom	425,044	133,912	31.51	598
Si-Saket	1,903,840	560,814	29.46	595
Surin	969,588	267,578	27.60	600
Maha Sarakham	633,971	168,505	26.58	624
Amnart Charoen	261,237	69,135	26.46	597
Nong Bua Lumphoo	332,903	77,863	23.39	593
Ubon Ratchathani	1,672,047	353,850	21.16	626
Khon Kaen	2,105,276	400,764	19.04	631
Udon Thani	1,243,750	214,701	17.26	606
Nakhon Ratchasima	2,913,881	410,025	14.07	622
Total Northeast	20,275,264	5,797,514	28.59	586
Total Thailand	59,154,923	9,654,852	16.32	636

Source: National Economic and Social Development Board.

Table 3 *Poverty in Northeast Thailand by province, 1996.*

Provinces	Population	No.of Poor	% of Poor	Poverty Line
Kalasin	900,851	332,281	36.89	694
Sakon Nakhon	1,006,291	364,151	36.19	693
Yasothon	565,315	181,754	32.15	695
Amnart Charoen	348,598	107,899	30.95	702
Nakhon Phanom	665,360	187,812	28.23	679
Si-Saket	1,369,785	374,705	27.36	680
Loei	572,576	146,850	25.65	706
Maha Sarakham	943,511	241,710	25.62	698
Ubon Ratchathani	1,648,995	393,025	23.83	704
Mukdahan	280,933	63,512	22.61	701
Surin	1,324,317	292,099	22.06	676
Nong Khai	861,192	182,699	21.21	696
Nong Bua Lumphoo	467,541	97,635	20.88	678
Buri Ram	1,450,839	274,597	18.93	690
Roiet	1,206,703	153,750	12.74	707
Udon Thani	1,422,587	168,046	11.81	700
Nakhon Ratchasima	2,575,461	244,285	9.49	714
Chaiyaphum	1,074,268	83,923	7.81	701
Khon Kaen	1,743,191	79,419	4.56	712
Total Northeast	20,428,314	3,970,152	19.43	696
Total Thailand	59,979,127	6,837,216	11.40	737

Source: National Economic and Social Development Board.

Table 4 *Percentage of Northeastern migrants within and between the region, between 1955 and 1997.*

Unit: per cent

Regions	Migrants Within Region	Migrants Between	Total Internal
1955-1960	87	13	100
1965-1970	77	23	100
1975-1980	77	23	100
1979-1984	39	61	100
1983-1988	43	57	100
1992-1994[1]	40	60	100
1995-1997[1]	39	61	100

Source: Teera Ashakul, Thailand Development Research Institute (1990: 6)
[1] NSO (1997: 40, 1998: 16)

Table 5 *Estimated and surveyed unemployment in Thailand, March 1998.*

Region	Estimated Unemployment	Surveyed Unemployment	Differentiation
Northern	246,116	292,343	(46,227)
Northeastern	582,094	925,074	(342,980)
Central	286,541	71,037	215,504
Southern	186,420	33,525	152,895
Bangkok &	154,829	na	na
Total Thailand	1,456,000	1,321,979	134,021

Source: Ministry of Interior

Table 6 *Estimated and surveyed unemployments in North-east Thailand, March 1998.*

Region	Estimated Unemployment	Surveyed Unemployment	Differentiation
Surin	30,175	165,486	(135,311)
Sakon Nakhon	19,834	106,419	(86,585)
Khon Kaen	39,723	80,475	(40,752)
Maha Sarakham	8,942	74,812	(65,870)
Buri Ram	27,026	70,818	(43,792)
Udon Thani	67,754	67,547	207
Si-Saket	84,698	62,948	21,750
Nakhon Ratchasima	27,621	50,788	(23,167)
Nong Khai	33,429	48,899	(15,470)
Chaiyaphum	22,727	43,510	(20,783)
Nong Bua Lumphoo	44,897	33,805	11,092
Ubon Ratchathani	52,638	32,267	20,371
Nakhon Phanom	35,389	26,743	8,646
Amnart Charoen	12,728	15,181	(2,453)
Loei	4,824	13,990	(9,166)
Yasothon	8,019	11,019	(3,000)
Mukdahan	24,535	8,739	15,796
Roiet	23,798	7,747	16,051
Kalasin	13,337	3,881	9,456
Total Northeast	582,094	925,074	(342,980)
Total Thailand	1,456,000	1,321,979	134,021

Source: Ministry of Interior

APPENDIX 2

Interview Guides

1. Community profiles

The community profiles were conducted by interviewing the community leaders (formal and informal leaders) and other key informants (such as the elders, monks, the most respected villagers, and other reference persons).

1. Name of the village and leaders
2. Location, geographical and environmental settings, infrastructure and public facilities in the village
3. Who set up the village? When, how, why and where did it move from?
4. Brief history of the village and its important social change (time series of significant social change in the community, including economic and agricultural development)
5. Kinship system, social relations and social stratification in the community: What are the significant factors to connect them with each other? How close are social relationships between them? How social norms, gender norms and migration norms have influenced migration propensity and household expectations?
6. Community conceptions and ideological settings of gender roles and gender relations. This also includes conditions of gender-differentiated division of labour and resource allocation, and other gender dimensions. What role models does *Isan* culture provide for women?
7. The number of households, population and migrants (classified by gender) in the village.
8. Who was the pioneer migrant from the village? When, how, why and where did he/she initially migrate?

9. Migratory changes and the contemporary migration patterns and behaviour, associated with gender dimensions.
10. What are local concepts of migration and main purposes of moving away from the village? Are they different between male and female migrants? How and why?
11. What are the impacts of migration on the people's way of life? Are they different between male and female migrants? How and why?
12. What are specific kinds of jobs available for the male and female migrants from the village?
13. What do male and female villagers think about working in Bangkok and farming in the village?
14. What are social and economic consequences of migration reversal and the economic crisis? Do they affect differently between males and females? How and why?
15. Who have returned to the village as 'reversees' since July 1997? Who have re-migrated to work in the city after a short spell of returning home? To where and why?
16. The basic information of remaining reversees and short-term reversees will be classified by sex, age, marital status, education, previous work (before returning home because of the economic crisis) and present work (for the cases of short-term reversees).

Name	Sex	Age	Marital status	Education	Previous work	Present work

2. *Semi-structured Interview Questions*

This part was conducted by interviewing the migrant's household members (migrants themselves, their parents and partner). It provided details about:

2.1 Personal details

Sex, age, marital status, educational background, occupation and earnings, kinship affiliation, and household's members and migrants (by gender)

2.2 Household economic conditions

1. Household possessions and modern belongings (land, house, electrical appliances, motorcycle, pick-up truck, lorry, tractor, etc.)
2. Compare your household economic resources available to the poorest households in the village. What are the most important differences between your household and them? Do you have enough rice for your household's needs for the whole year? If yes, how much surplus did you have last year, and what did you manage the surplus (keep them for next year or sell them for additional income)? If not, what and how do you cope with your household shortage rice?
3. Agricultural conditions (agricultural land holdings, agricultural land uses, agricultural production and earnings), and household non-agricultural work and earnings
4. Experiences and effects of the economic crisis
   - How has the economic crisis affected your household economy and the migrant members?
   - How do you, your family and household migrants cope with those economic consequences, particularly in a comparison between male and female household members?

2.3 Migration profiles

1. Absent residents and their socio-economic classifications in the periods of before and after the economic crisis: What were their occupations? What were their incomes? How long have the movers been absents? How often has (s)he visited home? What gifts were brought? What items were taken

on his/her departure? How much and how often does the mover provide remittances? What are their main uses? Has the value/frequency of remittances altered over time? If so, why?

2. Time-series information precluding a detailed consideration of migratory changes and migration history of the household
3. The on-going relationships between migration and socio-economic activities among the household migrants, non-migrants and returnees
4. The basis for the analysis of migration behaviour (derived from the live-history of the household migrants and returnees)
5. Relationships between migration and other important social events in an individual's life and in the community's norms and values (they want to migrate, or they have to migrate)
6. Understanding of migration dynamics by considering the links between individual migration and the household relations under the patterns and circumstances of migration linkages and social ties
7. What are the effects of migration on household relations and gender relations comparing between male and female household members?
8. How and why does the pattern of female migration into the urban centres differ from the pattern of male migration?

2.4 Migration decision-making process

1. When, where, how and why did you initially migrate?
2. Who did make decision for your initial migration? How and why? Did you have any conflict with your parents or partner? What were the problems? How did you resolve them?
3. Since your initial migration, have you migrated to work in the city? Who has made decisions? How and why?
4. What factors are most likely to influence your migration decisions? Are they different from your household male/female counterparts? How and why?
5. Who is most likely to influence your migration decisions? How and why?

6. After you have decided to leave the village, did you consult anyone about your plan? (household members, villagers who have been there, the elders in the community, friends in the community, etc.)

2.5 <u>Social networks</u> *(kinships, friendships, neighbourhoods, village ties, and work mates)*

1. Whom did you firstly contact for your initial migration? How and why? Did (s)he help you to search for work and other supports for your migration?
2. Whom did you travel with for your initial migration? How and why?
3. Have you still used your networks to make your migration decisions? How and why?
4. Who have you considered as your best networks of migration?
5. Who have you asked for help when you have had some problems during your spell of working in the city?

2.6 <u>Future prospects</u>

1. Where do you wish to live permanently, comparing between your home village and the city? Why?
2. What do you plan for your future?
3. What do you plan for your next migration, or your next return to your home village? When and why?
    - If you plan to re-migrate to work, where do you plan to go and what kind of job do you think you will get? How do you know about this place and work?
    - How long do you think you will be away?
4. What do you plan for your children's migration, if you have potential and prospective migrant children? Is the plan different between your daughter and son? How and why?

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