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A DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF FEMALE PARTICIPATION  
IN THE THAI LABOR FORCE 1960-1970

THESIS

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The purpose of this study was to analyze the participation of females in the labor force in Thailand between 1960 and 1970. The demographic variables tested were age, sex, migration rates, employment, youth dependency ratio, and educational attainment.

The findings of the study indicate that demographic trends are affecting economy, culture, and roles of women. Female participation rates in the economic sector increased, particularly in Bangkok. Although many Thai women still occupy traditional female roles, there are indications that sex roles are being modified as related to industrialization and urbanization.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the female labor force participation in Thailand between 1960 and 1970 using census data. Changes during this decade will be compared with those during the 1950-1960 decade in order to relate participation to selected variables, such as age, sex, employment, youth dependency ratio, migration, and education.

Valerie Kincade Oppenheimer, who studied the female labor force in the United States, explained that in analyzing the female labor force participation, several theoretical disciplines are relevant: economy, sociology, and demography. The economic variables are important for analyzing paid employment while sociological variables are also significant for analyzing the employment of women outside the home relating to institutional changes. The demographic factors are always potentially significant because the labor force must be drawn from changing population groups with varying demographic characteristics. Fertility, for example, may be highly related to female labor force participation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Valerie Kincade Oppenheimer, The Female Labor Force In The United States: Demographic and Economic Factors Governing Its Growth and Changing Composition (Berkeley, 1970), p. 2.

## General Description of Thailand

In order to determine significant changes that may occur in the Thai female labor force participation, an understanding of the land, people, culture, and economy is essential.

Thailand is an agricultural nation with a limited degree of urbanization: one metropolis, a few medium-sized cities, and a number of small communities. According to the 1960 census only about 12 percent of the population lived in places classified as Municipal Areas.<sup>2</sup> Of the 120 Areas, 98 percent have fewer than 20,000 persons each. By 1970, however, the urban population was estimated to have grown to almost 15 percent of the nation's total population.<sup>3</sup>

Geographically, Thailand is located on the Gulf of Thailand in Southeast Asia. The country is divided into four regions: Northern, Northeastern, Central and Southern

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<sup>2</sup>A Municipal Area is a legal unit established by the Royal Decree of the 1953 Municipality Act. There are three categories of Municipal Areas: Nakohon (city), Muang (town), and Tambon (commune). A Tambon municipality is established wherever it is deemed appropriate. A Muang municipality is established in each area where the administrative seat of the provincial government is located, or where the population is at least 10,000 persons, with an average density of not less than 3,000 persons per square kilometer. The sources of tax revenue must also be sufficient for the execution of municipal affairs as stipulated in the 1953 Municipality Act. A Nakon municipality is established in areas where the population is at least 50,000 persons, with an average density of not less than 3,000 persons per square kilometer. Tax revenues must also be sufficient for the execution of municipal affairs as stipulated in the 1953 Municipality Act. National Statistic Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand Population and Housing Census: Whole Kingdom, 1970 (Bangkok, 1970), p. XV.

<sup>3</sup>Information Office of the Population Council, Country Profiles: Thailand (New York, 1972), p. 3.

see Appendix A). These four natural terrain regions, outlined by the pattern of rivers and mountains, have no official political or administrative significance, but their different geographical characteristics and the available resources determine the settlement patterns and the quality of the country's national life. For example, in the North the mountains are thickly covered by forests that yield valuable timber. These mountains receive heavy rainfall and are the sources of many of the streams which support rice cultivation. In the Northeastern Region, comprising about one-third of the country's land area, the soil is poor and arid. The short monsoon season brings heavy rains that cause considerable flooding in the river valleys. Although the dry season is long, some sparse grasses or shrubs are grown providing forage for livestock.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, the Central lowland region, the fertile basin of the Cha Phaya River, is the political and economic center of the country.<sup>5</sup> Bangkok, the capital, and Thonburi constitute the region's urban area. The population is highly concentrated in this metropolitan center. In 1970 the population of Bangkok-Thonburi was about 2.9 million, which is more than half of the population classified as urban, and almost three-fourths of the population

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<sup>4</sup>John W. Henderson, Hern A. Barth and others, Area Handbook for Thailand (Washington, 1971), p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-10.

living in places of 20,000 persons and over.<sup>6</sup> Because of the fertile silt deposited by annual flooding, this region is also the most productive rice area.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the Southern Region has unproductive soil, but is rich in tin deposits, rubber, and coconut palm.<sup>8</sup>

For the most part, Thailand is hot and humid with heavy rainfall during the months of June through October. The cool season is during December and January, and hot during March through May.<sup>9</sup>

Presently, the people in Thailand are called Thai, but before 1939 they were known politically as Siamese, and the country was known as Siam. Physically, the Thais are primarily Mongoloid.<sup>10</sup> As they migrated from Southern China they mixed with other Mongoloid groups such as Mon, Khmer, Lawa, Rian, Burmese, Indian, Malay, and Chinese.<sup>11</sup> In general, the Thais are individualistic with some degree of

<sup>6</sup>Information Office of the Population Council, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>Henderson, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>Donald W. Fryer, Emerging Southeast Asia, A Study in Growth and Stagnation (New York, 1970), p. 133.

<sup>9</sup>U. S. Department of State Publications, Background Notes: Thailand (Washington, 1973), p. 2.

<sup>10</sup>Phya Anuman Rajadhon, Introductory Cultural Thailand in Outline (Bangkok, 1962), p. 4.

<sup>11</sup>Erik Seigenfaden, The Thai Peoples Book: The Origins and Habitats of the Thai Peoples with Sketch of Their Material and Spiritual Culture (Bangkok, 1958), p. 11.



independence and autonomy.<sup>12</sup> Reciprocal obligations and expectations are flexible rather than regimented.<sup>13</sup> Thais like to moralize and expect others to feel the same. Respect toward superiors and gracefulness are also dominant characteristics among the Thai people.<sup>14</sup> These characteristics are becoming less noticeable due to the increasing urbanization, modernization, and industrialization that is underway. Thai people also have a sense of nationality, sharing a common language, religion, and above all, a common king. Although the present king, Bhumibol Adulyadej, has not direct power and authority, he still maintains prestige and respect from the people.<sup>15</sup> The Thai language, as spoken, is distantly related to Chinese, and the written alphabet, "derives its characters (representing 44 low, middle, and high class consonants and 30-odd vowels--the exact numbers are disputable) from the Indian languages of Pali and Sanscrit."<sup>16</sup> Most of Thai culture derives from both India and China. For example, Theravada Buddhism is the official state religion

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<sup>12</sup>Ralph Thomlinson, Thailand's Population: Facts, Trends, Problems and Policies (Bangkok, 1971), p. 13.

<sup>13</sup>John F. Embree, "Thailand: A Loosely Structured Social System," American Anthropologist, LII (February, 1950), 182.

<sup>14</sup>D. J. Enright, "Thai Personalities," Encounter, XXXII (February, 1969), 229-31.

<sup>15</sup>Anthony M. Paul, "Mr. The Greatest, Thailand's Remarkable Monarch," Reader's Digest (October, 1974), 231.

<sup>16</sup>Thomlinson, p. 13.

and 95.27 percent of the population, according to the 1970 census, are followers.<sup>17</sup> This variety of Buddhism with some modifications was originally borrowed from the Indian culture. Art and literature also borrow much from the Indians, while methods of preparing food are related to those used in China.<sup>18</sup>

Because of the rich land areas, especially in the Central Plain, agriculture is predominantly the Thais way of life. The cultivation of rice by small landowners has been the principal economic activity for many centuries, and thus has been the economic strength of the country. Currently, 75 percent of the total cultivated land is devoted to production of rice.<sup>19</sup> Fishing and forestry also play a significant role in the economy. Fish, the second principal food, provides additional protein for the Thai diet. Timber, primarily teak, has been an important export for centuries. Rice, rubber, tin, and timber are the principal exports which have provided the economic base and given the people a relatively high standard of living.<sup>20</sup>

While the Thai economy is still undiversified, there are signs of industrial modernization and diversification. Thailand started the immediate post-war period of 1947-55 with

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<sup>17</sup>National Statistic Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand Population and Housing Census: Whole Kingdom, 1970 (Bangkok, 1970), p. 38.

<sup>18</sup>Thomlinson, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>20</sup>Wendell Blanchard, Thailand: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture (New Haven, 1958), pp. 245-246.

considerable problems of reconstruction, heavy budget deficits, and inflationary pressure. To cope with the situation, Thailand adopted a multiple exchange system and a government "rice monopoly," under which the profits occurring from the differential exchange rates were used to meet the budget deficits. The post-Korean War depression caused Thailand's position to become unstable. A series of drastic financial reforms were launched in order to encourage export expansion. Some of these reforms included the devaluation of the currency, allowing the Chinese people to act as the middle men, buying what the peasants produced and exporting it to the world market; and finally, improving transportation and communication, enabling the peasants to open up unused lands for the production of new cash crops. Thailand was able to manage and maintain financial stability and a healthy balance of payments position until 1969. At this time the Green Revolution for rice production was introduced to the developing countries, causing a reduction in the markets for rice exports and a loss of balance of payments.<sup>21</sup> The Green Revolution brought new agricultural techniques to the developing countries of Southeast Asia. The United States, in particular, was the key country exporting these new techniques to Southeast Asian countries under the aegis of spurring economic development, crop diversification, and self-sufficiency in agricultural production. One result of this program was to

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

lessen the need of other countries in the area for rice from Thailand which traditionally had supplied large quantities of rice to these countries. The United States military withdrawal from the Vietnamese conflict and the resulting decrease in United States military expenditures was another factor that affected Thailand's balance of payments.<sup>22</sup>

Today, Thailand's most urgent problems arise from major regional imbalance in the distribution of income. "Per capita income in the Central Plain is about twice the national average, while in the Northeast it is little more than half."<sup>23</sup> With decreasing rubber prices, the Southern Region has also become a region of economic stagnation and growing dissatisfaction.

The problems are also intensified by the minority groups speaking differently from the Thais; for example, many Laotians have migrated to the Northeastern Region of Thailand, and have had to learn Thai.

Communist infiltration into the Northeastern Region has become a major concern for the Thai government. However, the situation is being helped by both the Thai and American governments. Two-thirds of American non-military aid was channeled into the Northeastern Region. Village self-help programs, such as enlargement of local supplies of drinking

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<sup>22</sup>Hla Myint, Southeast Asia's Economy: Development Policies in the 1970's (New York, 1971), pp. 30-31.

<sup>23</sup>Fryer, p. 128.

water, and introduction of new economic activities such as coconut and silk worm production, have been promoted by the Thai government. This identification with the Thai central government has helped the villages recognize the support of their own government and thus resist the enticements of the Communist infiltration.<sup>24</sup>

Thailand today continues to be a largely agricultural country. Though efforts have been made by the government to speed up the process of industrialization, the output of employment in the manufacturing sector is still very small. According to the 1960 census, "of the economically active population aged eleven years or more (totaling almost 13.8 million), only 471,000 or 3.4 percent were engaged in manufacturing."<sup>25</sup> This data also included some 70,000 unpaid family workers and those in seasonal activities such as rice and sugar-milling.

Other areas such as transportation, communications, education, and urbanization still need to improve in order to help speed up economic development. Canals and rivers have long been major means of transportation; however, use of the automobile has increased, as has the use of railroad and airplane routes. All the routes tend to converge at the capital (Bangkok), making travel between outlying regions both time consuming and expensive.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 129.      <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>26</sup>Thomlinson, p. 60.

There are obstacles to communication and migration. During the slack season, many farm workers will leave their village to seek jobs in the city, especially Bangkok. These migrants often stay for a short time to earn enough money to help solve their financial problems at home. According to the International Labor Office, both permanent and temporary migration often results in such problems. These difficulties include quarrels with permanent residents, difficulties in supplying isolated settlers with health and educational needs, increased crime, indebtedness, arguments by migrants over inheritance, growth of urban slums, job competition, lowering of wages, exposure to unfamiliar disease, and manpower turnover.<sup>27</sup>

The Thai government has tried to increase levels of education in order to permit its population to adapt better to technological change. Although the country is in a developing stage, it has achieved at least up to Pratom four (fourth grade) level of mass education without giving rise to either explosive urbanization or political instability. Four years of primary schooling are now compulsory, and it is hoped that this will soon be extended to seven years, by introducing an extra three years of upper primary training before the commencement of secondary education. Education has helped to produce a more literate citizenry. Among the population over ten years of age, the literate proportion climbed from 31 percent in 1937, 54 percent in 1947, and

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

67 percent in 1956, to 71 percent in 1960. Of all the pupils enrolled in 1970, "seventy-six percent were in the fifth to seventh grades, seven percent in the eighth to tenth grades, two percent in the eleventh and twelfth grades, and one percent at the university level."<sup>28</sup>

These data indicate that a high level of education is still the privilege of the very few; more widespread higher education is needed to meet the needs of the expanding bureaucratic government. Most Thais will aim for as high a level of education as possible. Better educated individuals can qualify for high level civil service jobs, which can provide economic security and avenues for social mobility. To be qualified for the bottom level of the civil service, one must complete at least Matayom six (grade ten).<sup>29</sup> In the civil service system a person is classified according to level of education and training and is paid according to that classification.<sup>30</sup> Because the civil service is a part of the bureaucracy and because the Thai society is still status-oriented, working in civil service gives a person security and prestige. "The social strata are largely bureaucratic strata, and bureaucratic rank remains a critical index of social status."<sup>31</sup> Wealth is not the only key to power and

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<sup>28</sup>Information Office of the Population Council, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup>William J. Siffin, The Thai Bureaucracy: Institutional Change and Development (Honolulu, 1966), p. 245.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 178-198.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

prestige; associations deriving from the status acquired in the bureaucratic system enhance social mobility, power, and prestige.

The importance of the Thai society's status orientation is derived from ancient roots. During the era of King Trailok (1448-1488 A.D.) every person was given rank or status, called "Sakdi-na" or "dignity mark" (literally, "power over land"). This system then evolved to include hierarchial position in the society. Later, the society was divided into two parts, the civil and military, each having similar hierarchial systems.<sup>32</sup> This system was set up to serve the king, "the source of all authority."<sup>33</sup> Personal identity was determined by reference to the hierarchial system.

The present form of the bureaucratic system is a hierarchial and service structure. "Every civil official in the kingdom except for a small number of special officials, special foreign service officials, and political officials has a personal rank."<sup>34</sup> In this system, responsibility and authority are designated at each level in the hierarchy. One does not have to face "the need for discovering, assessing, and responding to authority."<sup>35</sup> Thus, this system secures one's position, clearly identifies one's mobility chances, and allows everyone's status positions to be known. As

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.



Siffin points out, the bureaucracy in Thailand may not epitomize the ideal, but "it has not been guilty of failures in the form of inadequacies contributing to social collapse."<sup>36</sup>

This greater emphasis on higher education to meet civil service requirements and to satisfy the traditional Thai desire for prestige has afforded more women, as well as men, higher education opportunities. This result is reflected in female labor participation. According to the 1969 labor force survey, among the population eleven years and older, seven out of every ten persons were economically active. Seventy-nine percent of the males and 66 percent of the women were economically active.<sup>37</sup> According to the International Labor Office, in 1960, female labor force participation included wage earners and women who work for the family without pay.<sup>38</sup> This high rate of participation represents 80 percent of rural women in the working ages and almost half of urban women. Female employment for pay outside the home, both before and after marriage, is highest in the capital and lowest in the countryside.<sup>39</sup> Younger women under forty-five have tended to work more, both before and after marriage, as

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>37</sup>Information Office of the Population Council, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup>Thomlinson, p. 41.

<sup>39</sup>Institute of Population Studies, "Review of Findings from the Longitudinal Study of Social, Economic and Demographic Change in Thailand," Working Paper No. 1 (Bangkok, 1973), p. 7.

indicated by a recent trend toward increasing employment outside the home.<sup>40</sup>

Comparison of Economic Development in Southeast Asia  
to Economic Development in Thailand

Southeast Asia and Central America share the highest rate of population increase of any major continental region. In 1965 the population of Southeast Asia was 70 percent above the pre-war level. Total domestic consumption of many food-stuffs (formerly exported in large quantities), such as rice, coconut products, sugar, tobacco, and spices, was higher than before the war. But although per capita consumption of such products has actually declined, population has continued to increase. In Southeast Asia, countries with large populations have low gross national products per capita. (See Appendix B.) The smaller countries, with comparatively small populations, enjoy the highest living standards. Thailand is typical of this circumstance in Southeast Asia. Its living standards rank in the medium range for all Southeast Asian countries.<sup>41</sup>

Economically, Southeast Asia is viewed by many scholars as composed of "outward-looking" or "inward-looking" countries. The "outward" group would include Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines, and the "inward" group, Burma and the Indochinese states of Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos.

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<sup>40</sup>Visid Prachuabmoh and others, "The Rural and Urban Populations of Thailand: Comparative Profiles" (Bangkok, 1972), pp. 27-28.

<sup>41</sup>Fryer, pp. 16-21.

"Outward-looking" countries have been active in promoting schemes for regional cooperation and integration and have agreed on all major world issues involving a confrontation of the Western and Communist powers. They have tendencies to support the West.<sup>42</sup>

Among "inward-looking" countries, economic growth has never been regarded with a high degree of governmental priority. "Inward nations tend to follow dogmatic doctrine rather than pragmatic policies."<sup>43</sup> They are concerned with maintaining their own cultural values rather than with accommodating themselves to the modern world. Most of the states in this group have adopted a marked anti-Western position (though claiming to be neutral); however, the problem of stagnating production has caused Burma and Indonesia to accept Western aid and to realize that fundamental changes in their economic policies are inevitable.

Thailand is unique in Southeast Asia, never having experienced colonial rule, primarily because of her geographic position and indigenous leadership. Although the country was influenced by the West through "imposition of extra-territoriality, the employment of Western advisors and the acquisition of Western education by a growing number of Thai at home and abroad."<sup>44</sup> Although there is strong

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>44</sup>Frank Darling, "Political Development in Thailand and the Philippines: A Comparative Analysis," Southeast Asia, An International Quarterly, I (Winter, 1971), 93.

national pride, the Thais have never felt so threatened by Western intervention as to refuse to assimilate selected customs and values. These Western influences range from dress patterns, household conveniences, and entertainment to bureaucratic government, higher education, increased technology, and economic policies.

Although industrialization has occurred in Southeast Asia, the labor force is still engaged mostly in agriculture. "Agriculture's share of each Southeast Asian nation's labor force varies from about sixty percent for Malaysia to eighty-five percent for Laos and Cambodia, with the mean around seventy percent."<sup>45</sup> These figures are similar to those of Western Europe and North America in the eighteenth century. European agriculture never possessed such a large proportion of workers as does that of Southeast Asia, where there is far too much farming in relation to other factors of production. Unlike Europe, Southeast Asia's expansion of population was not accompanied by industrialization. Urban populations throughout the region have grown rapidly through a mass influx of migrants from rural areas, but growth resulting from the natural population increase has also risen. Economic motivation has been a major factor for the movement to the city; unfortunately, rapid urbanization, especially after World War II, is not always a modernizing process.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Fryer, pp. 77-78.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 78-79.

Thailand, like other Southeast Asian countries, is predominantly agricultural, in that agriculture employs about three-quarters of the work-force and provides over two-thirds of the country's export income. Thailand still has an abundance of agricultural land in relation to its population. In 1950, the national average farm size was some twenty-six rai (10.4 acres), and the 1960 census of agriculture revealed that a population increase of more than 3 percent per year over the decade had caused only a slight decline of approximately four rai.<sup>47</sup> Table I demonstrates that in 1950 the holdings were largest in the Central Plain, where the average was over thirty rai (12 acres). Only in the North, which is a region of intensively farmed small holdings, did the average fall below ten rai (4 acres), and in every other region the average size of holdings was more than twice as large. According to the table, the average size of holdings in all the regions has declined except in the Southwest regions. Although the North Region has a low average of farm holdings, there are a number of very large holdings, which offset the great majority of very small farms. Farms of more than fifteen rai (6 acres) account for more than half of all holdings.

Similar to other Southeast Asian countries, manufacturing and industries in Thailand are operating on a small scale

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 138-139.

TABLE I  
 THAILAND: DISTRIBUTION OF HOLDING BY SIZE AND AVERAGE SIZE OF HOLDING,  
 1950 and 1960\*

Regions	Percentages							Average size of holding (rai)	
	1950								1960
	Total holding	Below 6 rai	6 to below 15 rai	15 to below 30 rai	30 to below 60 rai	Over 60 rai	Average size of holding (rai)		
Central	30.2	14.6	19.9	27.1	26.6	12.2	30.8	27.8	
Southeast	2.7	12.7	23.0	29.8	26.9	7.7	29.1	28.2	
Northeast	38.5	10.0	25.4	32.8	22.2	9.7	27.4	21.6	
North	12.5	34.7	46.3	15.4	3.2	0.5	9.6	8.8	
Southwest	4.5	15.8	30.4	29.7	18.9	5.1	21.0	23.4	
South	11.6	14.2	32.5	29.6	19.2	4.5	27.8	22.6	
All Regions	100.0	15.0	26.8	28.4	21.3	8.5	25.6	21.7	

\*Source: Donald W. Fryer, Emerging Southeast Asia, A Study in Growth and Stagnation (New York, 1970), p. 138.

known as cottage industries. However, like Malaysia and Indonesia, Thailand encourages participation in large-scale industries. For example, the silk industry traditionally meant a hand loom in the village, especially in the Northern region. But through the help of American businessmen in reorganizing the silk industry, products of improved quality have become attractive to the foreigners and ultimately a part of the world markets.<sup>48</sup>

Foreign investments are encouraged, but only by joining with local investors. Foreign investors are restricted from sole proprietorship and must combine their capital with local money. Fearing colonial rule, Thailand has restricted Western enterprise. Most foreign holdings are maintained by Thai-Chinese cooperation; in 1950, 90 percent of foreign investments belonged to this group.<sup>49</sup>

The above discussion illustrates the Thai economy and its relationship to other Southeast Asian countries. There are four major trends toward industrialization and modernization. The traditional agrarian society is still the predominant Thai way of life; however, new cash crops are now utilized. Urbanization has expanded transportation and communication, enabling farmers to open up unused land for production of these new cash crops. Regional imbalance still exists, but a general trend toward urbanization has affected the entire nation.

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

The second trend is the greater emphasis on higher education. Stricter requirements for attaining civil service employment and the traditional Thai desire for prestige has dictated the expansion of compulsory education and increased the total numbers of enrollment.

The third trend is the assimilation of selected Western customs and values. These Western influences affect Thai daily life as well as government policy.

The final trend is the Thai position in Southeast Asia as a developing, "outward" nation. Thailand, like Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines, has been promoting schemes for regional cooperation and integration. The "outward" nations have also agreed on major world issues, including the conflict between the Communists and the Western Democracies, tending to support the West.

The combined effect of these trends has created a climate suitable for greater female participation in the Thai labor force.



## CHAPTER II

### DESCRIPTION OF ROLE-CHANGES IN WOMEN'S STATUS

#### Traditional Sex Roles

A discussion of traditional sex-roles of Thai women is required to understand changes that have occurred in female participation in the labor force since 1950. The Thai concept of personal values is a blend of Theravada Buddhist doctrine and autonomy of action. "The Buddhist values find their expression daily in the behavior of the people."<sup>1</sup> Some of these values are karma (Hindu law of causation), cheoi, and sanuk. Thais believe in merit-making so that when they are reincarnated they will have a better karma in the next life. For example, the poorer one is the more one should pursue a course in life emphasizing the accrument of merits so that they will be reincarnated in a higher social status and relieve themselves of the misery associated with low status. Cheoi emphasizes noninvolvement and keeping cool in all circumstances. Sanuk means to enjoy life and can be characterized as a "live for today" philosophy of life. These personal values strengthen individualism of the Thais.

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<sup>1</sup>Eliezer B. Ayal, "Value System and Economic Development in Japan and Thailand," Man, State, and Society in Contemporary Southeast Asia, edited by Robert O. Tilman (New York, 1969), p. 546.

Individualism includes a sense of no obligation, solidarity, ideological commitment nor loyalty to anything but personal values. One is punished or rewarded according to one's own needs, thoughts and cravings. For example, do good and you shall receive good; do evil and receive evil.<sup>2</sup>

In general, then, Thai society is a loosely structured social system, except for the Thai governmental bureaucracy and the loosely organized Buddhist church. Thus, it is quite obvious that independence and flexibility are very important to the Thai people. These characteristics make impersonal cooperation such as political parties or labor unions usually unsuccessful, but personal relationships, such as marriage, more successful. Furthermore, although the society remains basically one of sexually defined roles, this pervasive independence allows for a tolerant view of female achievement as either a marriage partner or a productive individual.

To the Thai parents, neither sex is considered stronger or weaker, so parents hope to have children of both sexes.<sup>3</sup>

As children, boys and girls play the same games and share the same responsibilities, such as cooking or caring for their younger brothers and sisters. Achievements for all children in school are applauded, and permission to continue education to a higher level is granted to daughters as well as to sons, providing that parents can afford it financially.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 545-547.

<sup>3</sup>Lucien M. Hanks, Jr. and Jane Richardson Hank, "Thailand: Equality Between the Sexes," Women in the New Asia: The Changing Social Roles of Men and Women in South and South-east Asia, edited by Barbara E. Ward (Paris, France, 1963), p. 435.

In the lower economic class, boys are encouraged to seek higher education more so than girls, if the choice has to be made. In adulthood, the division of labor between the sexes is differentiated, but when necessary, both in rural and urban areas, men care for children and cook.<sup>4</sup> "Farm women plough and harvest in the fields beside the men and men garden or purchase food in the market."<sup>5</sup>

With old age, women as well as men are relieved of responsibility for housework, fieldwork, or earning income. At death, the sexes are again treated equally from the first washing of the body to the great cremation ceremonies.<sup>6</sup>

Although girls and boys are treated similarly in childhood, Thai society does recognize certain differences. At puberty, the girls remain at home and abstain from heavy work and are not allowed to "roam about" like boys. When young girls leave the home, they must go in groups. The degree of supervision varies with the economic level. For the male, puberty passes with little notice. Although he helps with the routine family chores, the male is free for many hours or even days to spend his leisure time visiting distant relatives. Boys gather in groups and move about in the country as well as the city, "testing their strength and talking of their sexual conquests."<sup>7</sup> Since male aggressiveness and self-gratification are recognized as problems, all males are

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 435

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 439.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 441.

encouraged to enter priesthood for a certain period of time. All males are supposed to take their vows as monks or novices for at least a few months in order to learn the evil consequences of their "natural inclinations." "Before he takes monastic vows, a man is called 'raw,' but after his year at the temple he is 'cooked' and ready for marriage."<sup>8</sup> For the girls, there is no corresponding institutional opportunity and ceremony. For a female, marriage and bearing her first child traditionally mark the beginnings of adult responsibility. She will own her own property, manage her own household, tend her baby, and provide for her husband's wants.<sup>9</sup>

In marriage, the pattern is based more on custom and tradition than on any legal provisions which are reinforcing these traditions.

The four principal marriage patterns are (1) ceremonial marriage, in which a man and woman perform certain rites and ceremonies together with relatives and friends in accordance with local customs. Free selection of a marriage partner is a growing trend among Thai young people, although the tradition of parents selecting their children's marriage partner is still widely practiced. The importance of the latter is seen in those marriages in which the newlyweds reside from one to several years in the parental residence. In the second pattern, (2) a couple may elope, and after a period of time return to receive pardon and approval of parents, (3) a man and woman may simply take up residence together expecting that relatives and

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ruth Benedict, "Thai Culture and Behavior," unpublished war-time study, Southeast Asia Program Department of Far Eastern Studies, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 1952, p. 15.

friends will recognize them as husband and wife; and (4) a man already married, who can afford it financially and who has the approval of his (major) wife, may establish a marriage relationship with one or more additional women (minor wives).<sup>10</sup>

This last pattern is associated more with men of high status or wealth. In most marriages, especially in the urban areas, the relationships between husband and wife are usually partnerships. Authority over household, children or other problems of common concern outside the household is equal. Men talk freely with their wives about mutual accomplishments and plans for the future.

In Thai society, the concepts of masculinity and femininity do exist. Ruth Benedict, an anthropologist who did a study of Thai culture and behavior in 1943, has an interesting discussion of male dominance. She points out that the strong male dominance in Thai culture is powerfully reinforced by Buddhist doctrines and the exclusion of women from Buddhist religious orders. However, the Buddhist definition of a monk is asexual; therefore, Thai men, while they are monks, do not suffer from feelings of anxiety to prove their virility before marriage.<sup>11</sup>

The Thai concept of masculinity includes hardness, indifference, and power, while the concept of femininity embraces softness, pity, and nourishment. These concepts are exemplified in traditional sex roles. It is a man's

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<sup>10</sup>Harold E. Smith, "Polygyny and Marriage Registration in Thailand," Southeast Asia, An International Quarterly, II, No. 3 (Summer, 1972), 292.

<sup>11</sup>Benedict, p. 44.

duty to deal with the world beyond the hearth. Men must bring into the home what is needed from outside. As hunters once brought home their game, so Thai farmers bring crops from the field. The responsibility of social mobility or establishing connections with a new patron is theirs and so is the responsibility of losing a patron through inept services. This task requires hardness, self-centeredness, and power. The female is the dominant force at the hearth. The farmer's wife cooks rice for her children while the city wife manages her servants. Through her softness, pity, and nourishment, a woman distributes to the group the benefits which her husband has brought her. Her femininity influences the group not only by childbearing but also the amplitude of benefits she gives.<sup>12</sup> The wife may help the husband in the family business or act as coordinator for various family enterprises.

From childhood through marriage, traditional views are held toward males and females. The male is the traditional provider and decision maker; the woman is the traditional nourisher and household manager. However, contrary to the custom of many Southeast Asia nations and other developing nations, the female in Thailand is not a totally "second-class" minority. Female children are as desirable as male, and although the female role in marriage is defined, it is viewed as of equal importance, as one-half of a partnership.

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<sup>12</sup>Hanks, p. 440.

During times of economic hardship, females are expected to go outside the home and earn extra income or even take over typically male tasks. The husband-wife relationship is complementary, separate but of equal value.

#### Changing Sex Roles

Despite the traditionally organized Thai society with its sex differentiation, standards from the West have affected certain gains for Thai women. Various aspects of Thai society, such as modified Buddhism, changing marriage patterns, increasing political rights for females, and increases in education have facilitated the situation where women who wish to achieve are able to succeed.

Religion in Thailand is a modified form of the orthodox Indian Buddhism. Thai Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism, holds a more flexible view of the female. While the institutional organization of the religion still offers greater opportunities to men, the spiritual concept of the female maintains that she is a human being of equal value and potential to the male. Theravada Buddhism thus helps to perpetuate the male dominance (institutionally in particular) as well as supports the expansion of the female role.

"The Indian Buddhist Tradition holds that rebirth as a male indicates greater virtue than rebirth as female."<sup>13</sup> The Thais, however, disregard this concept and rationalize that everyone can expect many hundreds of rebirths before

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 435.

release from suffering and is expected to be reborn in both sexes. Being born to a higher position on the social ladder is more important than one's sex.<sup>14</sup> Thus, one's accomplishments and status are of more significance than one's sex, and the religious view of the female does not prohibit her from achievement and success on her own.

A recent study done by Harry W. Gardiner, V. P. Signh, and Ronald E. D'Orozio has found that Thai women in Thailand are more strongly equal in their marriage than either American or Indian women. For example, Thai women have long held the governing voice in the financial matters and have disagreed more strongly than the other groups that marriage is the best career and should be a full-time job for the wife.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the study is limited because the data are based only on urban, college women. This study showed the attitudes of educated Thais. According to the authors, the results from this study illustrated the increasing degrees of emancipation among Thai women. Although present data indicate the change is at the higher educated-urban level, the seeds of ultimate equality have been planted. The male view of female roles remains unmeasured and may still retain much of the old concept of the "separate but equal" female.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 436.

<sup>15</sup>Harry W. Gardiner, V. P. Signh, and Ronald E. D'Orozio, "The Liberated Women in Three Cultures: Marital-Role Preference in Thailand, India, and the United States," Human Organization, XXX, No. 4 (Winter, 1974), 414.



The character of higher education in Thailand is changing; admission standards at professional schools now establish quotas of women enrollees equal to those of men enrollees. Traditionally, Thai women were excluded from education since schooling was given to males in the monasteries by monks. Later when public schools were established by King Chulalongkorn, only the elites and government officials attended. These privileged attended for the purpose of national consciousness and patriotism among the people.<sup>16</sup> Since then, the Thai central government has increased support for and reformed the national education system in the 1920's to improve opportunities for women to acquire primary education. Increases in education which occurred in four Asiatic countries in the ten years following the Second World War are compared with selected Western major colonial powers in Table II. For example, the enrollment of Thai women in post-secondary education was not significantly less than that of other Asiatic nations. According to Barbara E. Ward, it is common knowledge that there is no country in which the number of women receiving post-secondary education is as great as the number of men. It is interesting to note in this regard that, according to Table II, several Asian countries are among the most progressive in the world as indicated by high percentages of women in

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<sup>16</sup>Eunice S. Matthew, "Cultural Values and Learning in Thailand," Educational Leadership, XVI (April, 1959), 419-424.

TABLE II

CHANGES IN NUMBER AND PERCENT OF WOMEN STUDENTS ENROLLED IN  
INSTITUTES OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR THE ACADEMIC  
YEARS BEGINNING IN 1945, 1950 AND 1954,  
IN SELECTED COUNTRIES\*

	1945		1946		1955	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Thailand	2,908	15.5	2,522	8.4	9,554	36.5
Ceylon	133	8.1	387	14.7	664	16.0
India	20,844	9.1	43,185	11.2	83,751	12.4
Phillipines**	965	42.9	2,749	42.6		
Netherlands	3,245	14.9	4,346	15.4	5,152	17.4
United Kingdom	17,907	33.4	19,904	22.7	20,420	24.6
France	40,211	32.6	47,260	33.9	58,534	33.8
United States	585,431	41.7	724,609	29.4	791,234	34.4

\*Source: Barbara E. Ward, Women in the New Asia: The Changing Social Roles of Men and Women in South and South-East Asia (Paris, France, 1963), p. 57.

\*\*Public institutions only.

post-secondary education. Asian women have had generally increasing opportunities for college training since World War II, but education is not the only criterion for entering the labor force.

Literacy and educational attainment in Thailand are high by Asian standards. The Thai educational system has been changing to meet the needs of the work force. While a modern

educational system has been functioning since the 1890's, compulsory education actually began in the early 1920's. Four years of primary school are now compulsory, but recently the government has committed itself to reach the goal of seven years compulsory education for all children by 1990. The literacy among the population over ten years of age has climbed from 31 percent in 1937 to 54 percent in 1946 and 67 percent in 1956.<sup>17</sup>

Table III indicates that the percentage for literacy is greater among males than females, although the compulsory education laws cover both men and women. This discrepancy may occur because males are encouraged more than females to further their education. Males are expected to be the breadwinner of their own household and even perhaps even larger family units.

Women have also gained in the area of political rights, particularly the right to vote and to hold political office. During the reign of the absolute monarch, female voluntary associations were not popular practices; however, after the 1932 Revolution, women began to gather in groups and established associations largely for education and social purposes. In addition, women also participated in the discussion of domestic problems. For example, the National Thai Women's Council gave its recommendation on economic policy, social

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<sup>17</sup>Institute of Population Studies, p. 35.

TABLE III  
 PERCENTAGES OF LITERACY FOR THAI POPULATION  
 TEN YEARS AND OVER, 1947 and 1956\*

	Population age 10 years and over	Percentage of Literacy
1947 Total	12,327,386	54
Male	6,143,460	34
Female	6,183,926	20
1956 Total	14,220,210	67
Male	7,064,650	38
Female	7,155,560	29

\*Source: Central Statistic Office, Office of the National Economic Development Board, Statistical Yearbook: Thailand, 1956-1958, Vol. XXIII (Bangkok, 1958), p. 51.

welfare, and patriotism to the Thai Parliament. Since 1932, enfranchisement has been an official policy of the Thai government.<sup>18</sup> The Thais view enfranchisement as a general level of freedom to engage in social, economic, and political participation, such as joining active political organizations. Large numbers of political positions are now open to women in Thailand, as well as in Southeast Asia.<sup>19</sup> Table IV shows an apparent minimum of opposition to women having franchise, but few women actually hold political office, and there is generally a low level of political activities. In 1963, Ward

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<sup>18</sup>Bunchana Attakorn, Vistas: Thailand, edited by Nai Witt Siwasariyanon (Washington, 1969), pp. 142-143.

<sup>19</sup>Barbara E. Ward, "Men, Women and Change: An Essay in Understanding Social Roles in South and South-East Asia," Women in the New Asia: The Changing Social Roles of Men and Women in the South and Southeast Asia, edited by Barbara Ward (Paris, France, 1963), p. 59.

TABLE IV

## WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION IN BURMA, INDIA, PAKISTAN, SINGAPORE, AND THAILAND

	Burma	India	Pakistan	Singapore	Thailand
Traditional family and division of labor non-restricting	+	-	-	-	+
Women's participation in prolonged anti-colonial or other political struggle	-	+	+	-	-
Dominant religion relatively tolerant of change (a) Early franchise (b) Franchise with independence	+	+	+	+	
Relatively many women in political office	-	+	-	-	-
Relative freedom to engage in activities outside the home (present day)	+	Increasing	Increasing only slowly	Increasing	+
Relative political awareness of women	-	+	?	-	-

+ = presence of trait    - = absence of trait    ? = data not adequate

\*Source: Barbara E. Ward, "Men, Women and Change: An Essay in Understanding Social Roles in South and South-East Asia," Women in the New Asia: The Changing Social Roles of Men and Women in South and Southeast Asia, edited by Barbara Ward (Paris, France, 1963), p. 69.

saw the relative freedom to engage in activities outside the home as a significant part of Thai culture, despite the lack of relative political awareness on the part of women.

Thai society continues to be basically oriented toward the usual male-female roles; however, despite this traditional delineation, certain trends in marriage patterns, education, and political rights, in combination with religious flexibilities and Western influences, indicate a loosening of such tradition. With increased opportunities for higher education social awareness, the female role is changing, and female labor force participation is increasing. These conditions imply an increased future impact of female participation in the labor market.

## CHAPTER III

### A DEMOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE OF THE THAI LABOR FORCE

#### Urbanization in Thailand

By focusing on the demographic components of urbanization in Thailand, it is possible to elucidate additional ancillary reasons for the type of change the Thai labor force reflects. Only by studying the interplay of the demographic variables of fertility and mortality with those of the Thai social structure can an understanding of the patterns of urbanization be realized. Because Thailand is undergoing a form of modernization, it is also experiencing a unique form of urbanization. Evidence of these patterns can be seen in the demographic factors involved in the increase of the population. Hauser and Schnore point out that

Although there are many similarities with respect to urbanization in the advanced nations and the present developing areas, there are also important differences. The differences merit attention for at least two reasons. First, they demonstrate that it may be hazardous to assume that all of the patterns of urbanization observed in the past in advanced areas will necessarily apply in the future to the developing region; second, critical examination of the process and impact of urbanization in the developing areas may provide a basis for testing the generalizations and the hypotheses in respect to urbanization derived from the experience of the West.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Phillip M. Hauser and Leo F. Schnore, The Study of Urbanization (New York, 1965), p. 34.

Of the three demographic variables, a decrease in mortality rate has affected the growth rate. In the late nineteenth century, the death rate remained fairly constant at about thirty per thousand. By the mid 1950's, it had declined to twenty per thousand, and according to the 1960 census declined further to thirteen per thousand. This rapid decline in mortality rate was due to a number of key factors, the most important of which was the introduction of new medical technology and public education programs. When the United Nations Children Fund, the World Health Organization, and United States Agency for International Development began to aid Thailand in spraying D.D.T. over the country, the annual death rate decreased. In 1970, the infant mortality rate was eighty or ninety per thousand. Maternal mortality had decreased considerably to only four per thousand.<sup>2</sup> This improvement resulted largely from a Maternal and Child Health Program sponsored by the Ministry of Public Health.<sup>3</sup>

The Western experience with fertility rates during early urbanization differs from that of developing countries such as Thailand. This is one of the key differences between the urbanization of underdeveloped countries and that of developed countries. The growth of urbanization in Thailand was not

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<sup>2</sup>Information Office of the Population Council, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Thomlinson, p. 65.



due primarily to immigration, as it was in the United States. Natural increase, rather crude birth rate minus crude death rate, has been the major factor. For example, the 1970 death rate was between ten and fifteen, combined with a birth rate of about forty-five, producing a rate of natural increase somewhat larger than thirty.<sup>4</sup> Ralph Thomlinson notes that

the national growth rate of an estimated 3.2 percent a year in 1970 reflects mainly the continuing tendency of Thai women to bear an average of 6 or 7 children, most of which result of increasingly favorable mortality condition now survive well into adulthood.<sup>5</sup>

Amos Hawley aptly described the experience of Thailand and other Third World countries. These developing countries have experienced a sharp decline in mortality rates, while fertility rates remained constant and high. Countries that fall into this second stage of the demographic transition will have overcrowding on the land where over 70 percent or more of the population are engaged in agriculture, and will not support a growing labor force. Although food production in these countries has increased, it is still behind the population growth. Hawley also points out that population redistribution will become imperative as cities become the center for rural migrants seeking work.<sup>6</sup> Due to the pressures of large migration of unskilled laborers to the cities,

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<sup>4</sup>Thomlinson, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>6</sup>Amos H. Hawley, Urban Society (New York, 1971), pp. 287-289.

frustration and disillusionment often accompany the migrants, leading to numerous administrative problems concerning the type of services to provide for these workers. Squatters' settlements often arise due to this over-congestion in the large cities. The developing countries are often classified under the concept of "over-urbanized."<sup>7</sup> Many areas contain few, if any, of the resources and goods available in the cities, and represent polar ends of the income scales existing in the countries. The cities exert "pull" factors in the form of the modern amenities available there. Industrialization is slow because distribution of the external economies is uneven.<sup>8</sup>

Sidney Goldstein suggests that "urbanization in itself will transform and improve the social and economic conditions that characterize the various regions of Thailand."<sup>9</sup> At the present, the over-all level of urbanization in Thailand is low but the rate of urban growth is high, averaging 5 percent a year. If judged by population in urban places, the Central region, containing Bangkok-Thonburi, dominates the urban structure of Thailand. This is the most urbanized region of the country; other regions, however, are also experiencing urbanization. By 1967, Thailand's second,

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<sup>7</sup>Sidney Goldstein, "Urbanization in Thailand, 1947-1967," Research Report No. 2 (Bangkok, 1972), pp. 20-21.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

third, and fourth ranking urban places (treating Bangkok-Thonburi as one) were each located in different regions outside the Central Region. Next to the Central Region, the South has the highest proportion of people living in urban places, 11.2 percent of the regional population. Urbanization levels in the North and Northeastern Regions are even lower at 6.3 and 4.0 percent, respectively. However, each of these regions, excluding the Central Region, contains only between 9 and 10 percent of Thailand's total urban population. This trend may be a step toward decentralization of industries through development of new towns. The concept of decentralization is often cited as the panacea for the problems created by continued growth of a big city.<sup>10</sup>

Intraregional movement is more important than interregional movement. It is at its greatest in the Central Region where there is considerable movement to Bangkok. Interestingly enough, Bangkok-Thonburi still encourages further industrial, commercial, and service activities, which continue to attract rural migrants into the city. A primate city is a place where most people reside. It is also a place where the greatest talents are to be found, the most skilled workers, the young and ambitious aspirants to fame and fortune, and the superlative intellectual and material production. "To merit primacy, a city must not only be the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

most populous in the area, but, more importantly, the most powerful and evocative of rewards and splendors."<sup>11</sup> Bangkok-Thonburi qualifies as a primate city where transportation, communication, education, the arts, and intellectual activity are the most dominant in the nation. Its population is thirty times as large as the second largest Thai city. While the nation's population is growing at 3.2 percent a year, Bangkok is increasing by 6.5 percent each year.<sup>12</sup>

Goldstein cautions that

urbanization in itself will not guarantee improvements in social and economic development in various regions, but other complex factors are involved as well, such as the socio-economic characteristics of the migrants, their motives for moving and their level of participation in the new urban setting against their traditional social structures and values.<sup>13</sup>

#### Methodology

In analyzing the labor force, selected variables of the 1960 and 1970 censuses, such as age, sex, migration, economically active population, youth dependency ratio, and education are used. The type of statistics used in the study are percentages, rates, and ratios. Computation from the data utilized above are computed from formulas utilizing the previously mentioned variables. The basic demographic measures used are the age-sex pyramid, migration rate, youth

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<sup>11</sup>Thomlinson, p. 59.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, p. 61.

<sup>13</sup>Goldstein, p. 22.

dependency ratio, employed population, and level of education.

The age-sex pyramid is a variation of graphic-presentation technique called the bar chart, in which the length of a bar represents a proportion of the total.<sup>14</sup> Intervals of five years are used, and the baseline represents the total population of the 1960 and 1970 censuses.

Migration is the movement from one place of residence to another by an individual or group who has the intention of remaining in the new place for some substantial period of time. Migration may be analyzed in terms of rates. Migration is defined as change of residence within five years preceding the census. Example:

$$\text{Migration rate} = \frac{\text{Total number of migrants, five years of age and over}}{\text{Total number of population of each region}} \times 100$$

The basis for the dependency ratio is that younger age groups in the society are generally non-productive and dependent upon the efforts of the productive group.<sup>15</sup> For the purpose of this study, the economic youth dependency ratio is used, focusing on the economically active population of fifteen to sixty-five years. Example:

$$\text{Youth Dependency Ratio} = \frac{\text{Number of non-economically active under 15}}{\text{Number of persons 15 to 65 years of age of each region}} \times 100$$

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<sup>14</sup>Kenneth C. W. Kammeyer, An Introduction to Population (San Francisco, 1971), pp. 41-42.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

The Thai censuses define the economically active population as all persons eleven years of age and over who were employed on the census date, or who had worked on any day during the seven days preceding the census date, as well as experienced workers who were looking for work and those waiting for the farm season. For the purpose of this study, each age group, consisting of four years, was divided by the total population of that region.<sup>16</sup> Example:

$$\text{Rate of employment per 1000} = \frac{\text{Employee Population}}{\text{Total population of region}} \times 1000$$

15 years and over

This study defined education in terms of nine categories ranging from lack of education to primary education, secondary education, and university levels. Persons of school age were defined by the Thai census as persons between six and twenty-nine years of age. They were asked if they attended school as of January 1, 1970, or during 1969-70 school year, and if so, which grade they were attending.<sup>17</sup>

School was defined to include all regular schools and vocational schools teaching regular academic courses, as well as colleges and universities. This term does not include vocational schools not teaching academic courses, such as beauty schools teaching courses in hair dressing, dress-making schools or tutorial schools.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>National Statistic Office, p. XVI.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

### Limitations of Data

Prior to 1960 the demographic statistics available on Thailand were very limited and of poor quality; thus, very little is known about trends in fertility or the extent of fertility differentials within the population. Early analysis of the Thai population had to rely heavily on ecological studies in which the demographic characteristics of the population living in each of the seventy-one provinces of Thailand were related to the levels of fertility of the population living within these provinces. Invariably, the results of these studies showed low correlations. However, the types of data used and the data collection procedures limited any conclusions projected by these studies. The Thai vital statistic system suffers from considerable under-registration.<sup>19</sup>

Before 1960, the analysis of the labor force relied solely on demographic characteristics. Half of the employed population consisted of unpaid family workers. However, the 1960 and 1970 censuses provide more reliable information. Accuracy and the percentage of completeness was greatly increased, as it was again in the 1970 census.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>J. C. Caldwell, "The Demographic Structure," Thailand: Social and Economic Studies in Development, edited by T. H. Silcock (Canberra, Australia, 1967), p. 49.

<sup>20</sup>Thomlinson, p. 24.

### The Demographic Analysis of Age-Sex

In analyzing the age-sex structure, the data are tabulated in percentages and presented in a form of pyramid. One striking feature shown in Appendix C is the proportion of the age distribution in age group 5-9 compared to that of group under 5. A possible explanation for this large population of ages 5-9 is underregistration. Undercounts of infant and small children are common features of censuses and surveys in many countries and are evident in the national age distribution based on the 1960 Thai census.<sup>21</sup> It is also interesting to note that the age category 10-19 in the 1970 population is greater than that for 1960. The sex ratio of Thai males and females is almost balanced, according to both the 1960 and 1970 censuses. There are more males than females under 20 years of age, but from 20 years of age and over, the two are more balanced. It is important to note that there is a decline in both male and female population in the 10-19 age category. This may be due to the demographic effect of World War II and the fact that fertility rates were very low during World War II. The fertility rate was estimated to range between 45 and 50 per 1,000 per year as recently as the 1960 census.<sup>22</sup>

#### Age-Sex of Central Region

Appendix D illustrates the age-sex structure of the Central region. In this region, two significant patterns are

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<sup>21</sup>Caldwell, p. 50.

<sup>22</sup>Information Office of the Population Council, p. 3.



observed. The proportion of males and females from the 0-9 age group of the 1970 census has declined compared to the 1960 census; however, the proportion of both males and females has increased for the 10-19 age group for the 1970 census. Internal migration may play a significant role in these results. Young people of this age come to the city, especially Bangkok, which is located in the Central Region, to seek jobs and attend the university.<sup>23</sup> Thomlinson confirms that the Central Region has traditionally the largest number of immigrants. For age group 20-29, the pattern is the same as the national population, which has declined according to the 1970 census.<sup>24</sup>

#### Age-Sex of Northern Region

The Northern Region, shown in Appendix E, shares the same pattern as the Central Region, a tremendous increase in the population of both sexes between the ages of 10-19. School facilities in the Northern area have improved and more young people remain in the area to complete higher levels of education. There is a decrease in the population of the 20-34 age group. This pattern follows that of the Central region and of the nation as a whole. A possible explanation for this trend is the national distribution where the death rate is low and the fertility rate is high according

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<sup>23</sup>Prachuabmoh, pp. 8-12.

<sup>24</sup>Thomlinson, p. 52.

to the 1960 census. Another significant pattern occurs in the 20-34 age group which still reflects the effects from World War II. In addition, migration may play a major role where the push factor exists.

#### Age-Sex Structure of Northeastern Region

The Northeastern Region shows some contrasts to the Central Region and Northern Region. In Appendix F the pyramid appears normal, the youngest age group being the largest and the structure decreasing as age increases. Yet this region still remains one of the poorest regions in the country. Farming is the dominant way of life; large families are common. According to the 1964-65 population change survey by the National Statistic Office, the gross reproductive rate is 3.22 and the net reproductive rate is 2.63. The Northeastern Region shows the highest rate of fertility compared to other regions.<sup>25</sup> There is, however, a decline in the 15-34 age group for the 1970 Census. This may be due to a high migration rate which is common in this region characterized by utilization of swidden agriculture. According to Ralph Thomlinson, the largest-volume of intra-regional migrants occurs mostly in the Northeastern Region.<sup>26</sup> Many young adults move to the city for better jobs and the

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<sup>25</sup>National Statistic Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Some Important Statistics of Thailand 1968-1969 (Bangkok, 1969), p. 7.

<sup>26</sup>Thomlinson, p. 43.

"push factor" is significant here since it is the poorest region of all. It is a region where dry rice farming is common and where there is always the danger of Communist terrorists and of the monsoon. However, migration is not always permanent and many migrants return home after a period of time.

#### Age-Sex Structure of Southern Region

Appendix G illustrates the age-sex structure of the Southern Region. It is interesting to note that the population of age group from 0-19 for 1970 exceeds that reported in the 1960 census.

The pattern is reversed for next age group 20-34 where the proportion of both males and females in the 1960 census are greater than that of 1970 census. These patterns are unusual since Thomlinson indicated from a pilot study of Family in Thai Muslim Communities in South Thailand that women over age 40 had completed family sizes averaging about two children fewer than the national average. Muslim women had about the same number of children ever born as had other Thai women and lower at ages 35-39.<sup>27</sup> From another point of view, this pattern is unusual since Muslims have little education, low income, and many favor large families. Birth control is not commonly used. A study had previously shown

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

that of the 502 Muslim women of childbearing age, only 1 used modern birth control methods.<sup>28</sup> Another possible explanation for this fluctuation is underenumeration, especially in the 1960 census. Ralph Thomlinson noted this atypical phenomenon and speculated that some explanatory factors may be malnutrition, disease (especially malaria) among women, and a high frequency of widowhood or separation from spouse.

#### Migration Rates

As Thomlinson indicates the rate of movement of persons between regions and provinces is not great.

There has been no tendency among the Thai people to transfer readily from one section of the country to another, to shift radically their occupational interests, or to seek work beyond the borders of their country; there is no evidence that mobility will increase. Bangkok is unique in its growth.<sup>29</sup>

According to the 1960 census, 4.3 percent of the male population and 3.3 percent of the female population (making 3.8 percent of the total population) had moved at least once during the period between 1955-1960. The largest movement is from the Northeast to the Central Region. As might be expected, the Northeast contributed the largest number of migrants.<sup>30</sup>

In Table V, the most significant result is the high ratio of 1970 migration compared to 1960 migration in the Southern Region. The 1960 rate is higher for all age groups except the 20-29 age group.

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

TABLE V  
AGE SPECIFIC MIGRATION RATIOS 1960-1970\*

		Central			Northeastern		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total	1960	384,646	219,258	165,388	208,759	117,452	91,307
	1970	1,461,091	770,139	690,952	1,078,768	592,329	486,439
Total**	1960	46.80	26.70	20.10	23.10	13.00	10.10
	1970	134.70	72.60	65.10	89.70	49.20	40.50
Ratio		2.94	2.72	3.23	3.88	3.78	4.00
5-19	1960	134,117	68,656	65,461	87,393	45,694	31,699
	1970	612,663	305,458	307,205	475,596	243,324	232,272
5-19**	1960	16.30	8.30	8.00	9.70	5.10	4.60
	1970	57.70	28.80	28.90	39.50	20.20	19.30
Ratio		3.53	3.47	3.61	4.07	3.96	4.19
20-29	1960	140,175	87,116	53,009	56,526	34,660	21,866
	1970	420,939	243,302	186,637	294,205	176,954	117,260
20-29**	1960	17.00	10.60	6.40	6.20	3.80	2.40
	1970	39.70	22.10	17.60	24.50	14.70	9.80
Ratio		2.33	2.08	2.75	3.95	3.86	4.08
30-39	1960	54,835	32,356	22,479	32,694	18,669	14,025
	1970	213,205	119,707	93,498	152,126	86,777	65,349
30-39**	1960	6.70	4.00	2.70	3.60	2.00	1.60
	1970	20.10	11.30	8.80	12.70	7.20	5.40
Ratio		3.00	2.82	3.25	3.50	3.60	3.37
40 and over	1960	53,597	29,817	23,780	31,306	17,867	13,439
	1970	209,320	108,498	100,822	149,642	81,793	67,849
40 and over**	1960	6.50	3.60	2.90	3.50	2.00	1.50
	1970	19.70	10.20	9.50	12.40	6.80	5.60
Ratio		3.03	2.83	3.27	3.54	3.40	3.73
Un-known	1960	1,922	1,263	659	840	562	278
	1970	4,844	2,354	2,490	7,119	3,490	3,709
Un-known**	1960	0.30	0.20	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.00
	1970	0.50	0.20	0.30	0.70	0.30	0.40
Ratio		1.66	1.00	3.00	7.00	3.00	0.00

\*Source: National Statistic Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand Population and Housing Census (Bangkok, 1960-1970).

\*\*Migration per 1,000 of total population in that region.

TABLE V--Continued

Southern			Northern		
Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
86,436	51,455	34,981	158,493	88,742	69,751
461,168	249,647	211,521	751,607	402,562	349,045
26.40	15.70	10.70	27.70	15.50	12.20
108.00	58.50	49.50	62.50	33.50	29.00
4.09	3.73	4.63	2.25	2.16	2.38
27,816	14,580	13,326	60,334	31,031	29,303
193,089	97,015	96,074	340,128	172,552	167,576
8.50	4.40	4.10	10.50	5.40	5.10
45.20	22.70	22.50	28.20	14.30	13.90
5.32	5.16	5.49	2.69	2.65	2.73
30,554	19,208	11,346	46,039	27,771	18,268
126,622	71,101	55,521	179,914	103,799	76,115
9.40	5.90	3.50	8.10	4.90	3.20
29.60	16.60	13.00	14.90	8.60	6.30
3.15	2.81	3.71	1.84	1.76	1.97
15,219	9,622	5,597	26,002	15,080	10,922
71,245	42,090	29,155	111,272	62,319	48,953
4.60	2.90	1.70	4.50	2.60	1.90
16.70	9.90	6.80	9.40	5.30	4.10
3.63	3.41	4.00	2.10	2.04	2.16
12,372	7,724	4,648	25,488	14,452	11,036
67,924	38,331	29,593	117,211	55,022	62,189
3.80	2.40	1.40	4.50	2.50	2.00
15.90	9.00	6.90	9.70	5.20	4.50
4.18	3.75	4.93	2.16	2.08	2.25
475	321	154	630	408	222
2,288	1,110	1,178	3,529	1,700	1,829
0.10	0.10	0.00	0.10	0.10	0.00
0.60	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.10	0.20
6.00	3.00	0.00	3.00	1.00	0.00

The Northeastern Region ranks second in this comparison of 1960 to 1970, followed by the Central and Northern Regions. The migration rate for females as a whole is higher than that of the males. Most migration is probably for a short-term. A farm worker may leave his village to seek temporary work in another village, a nearby town, or in Bangkok. He will stay until he has earned enough money to return to his village and solve his financial problems. Other migrants are motivated by the need to make money during the non-farming season.

Another factor which must not be overlooked is the influx of immigration. In the past, immigration has played a significant role. Near the border of Cambodia live considerable numbers of Khmer, Chaung, Sui, and Annamese, and Vietnamese. In the far south there are some Indians, Pakistanis, Ceylonese, Europeans, Americans, and Australians. The majority of these immigrants live in Bangkok. Because international immigrants' quotas have been more strictly determined and enforced since the 1938 revolution, population increase in Thailand in recent decades is more directly corresponded to natural increase than to migration.<sup>31</sup> Table VI shows the population of intraregional and interregional movement, including immigration and emigration. The Central and Northern Regions show a higher percentage of immigrants in the regional population than do the Northeastern and Southern Regions.

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<sup>31</sup>Caldwell, pp. 29-30.

TABLE VI

THAILAND POPULATION MOVEMENTS<sup>a</sup> BETWEEN 1955-1960<sup>b</sup>

Region	Intraregional Movement <sup>c</sup> % Regional Population	Migration Index <sup>d</sup>	Net <sup>e</sup> Migration ('000)	Immigration % Regional Population	Emigration % Regional Population
Central	3.4	+1.27	+21	1.2	0.9
Northeast	2.0	-3.32	-60	0.3	1.0
North	1.6	+1.84	+30	1.2	0.6
South	1.8	+1.56	+9	0.8	0.5

<sup>a</sup>Source: Sidney Goldstein, "Urbanization in Thailand 1947-1967," Research Report No. 2 (Bangkok, 1973), p. 22.

<sup>b</sup>Difference of residence between 1955 and 1960 for persons over 5 years in 1960.

<sup>c</sup>From one change to another.

<sup>d</sup>Larger stream divided by smaller stream; net immigration show positive and net emigration negative.

<sup>e</sup>Immigration positive, emigration negative.



Table VI indicates that the Central Region and North-eastern Region show a greater increase of migrants from foreign countries.

#### Employment Rates

A discussion or overview of the labor force in the 1960's is needed to understand some of the changes that occurred in the 1970's. According to the 1960 statistics, 79 percent of economically active males and 86 percent of economically active females were employed in farming, fishing, or logging. Half of all male farm workers were under 20 years of age. Married daughters joined their husbands, enlarging the source of farm labor. Women assumed rural responsibilities as a result of widowhood. Both males and females were engaged in the non-agriculture sector. In 1960, 30 percent of males and 45 percent of females who worked outside the farming, fishing, and logging sector were employed in sales, and half of this group were peddlers.<sup>32</sup>

Caldwell states that the town creates work to suit the male population rather than the female population. Perhaps working is more difficult for a female, since it is hard for her to free herself from caring for her children. According to 1960 statistics, 4.1 percent of the males and 2.7 percent of the females were engaged in the manufacturing sector. A significant unemployment rate is found mainly in Bangkok,

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 49-50.

where the majority of the work force was composed of males that are under 25 years of age.<sup>33</sup>

Table VII shows the rate of employment in population 11 years of age and over. The most striking feature is the pattern of the male and female participation in the labor force; female participation is greater than male in the 11-24 age group, except for the Northern Region. As age increases above 25 years, the rate of participation of males is greater. The female participation in the 30-34 age group is greater than that of the males. Documents and data are not available to further describe changes 1960 to 1970, although females in this age group may have returned to the labor force when older children could take care of the younger children.

#### Youth Dependency Ratio

The population pyramids, Appendices C-G indicate a predominantly young population. Each adult has a heavy economic burden. For the country as a whole there are 89 dependents for every 100 persons of working age.<sup>34</sup> Table VIII illustrates the youth dependency ratio of the four regions. The highest proportion occurs in the Southern Region which increased during the decade from 76.97 to 91.33 per 100 working persons. The Northeastern Region ranks next to the Southern. The age pyramid shows that both of these regions have large young populations.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 50-51.

TABLE VII

POPULATION ELEVEN YEARS AND OVER OF AGE AND SEX WHO ARE  
ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE 1960, 1970 (per 1,000 population)\*

		Central		Northeastern		Southern		Northern	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total	1960	813.7	682.6	855.8	850.3	810.7	773.2	825.2	780.4
	1970	752.7	594.9	857.9	816.4	780.7	638.7	810.5	698.8
11-14	1960	66.3	56.9	80.4	89.9	38.1	52.1	47.0	59.9
	Ratio	8.0	8.3	9.4	10.6	4.7	6.7	5.7	7.7
	1970	52.9	58.4	97.9	105.2	46.0	52.4	72.2	83.3
	Ratio	7.0	9.8	11.4	12.9	5.9	8.2	8.9	11.9
15-19	1960	99.6	102.6	133.3	144.3	101.8	110.3	104.8	113.7
	Ratio	12.2	15.1	15.6	17.0	12.6	14.3	12.7	14.6
	1970	112.2	106.2	145.3	151.5	110.6	107.4	134.8	135.0
	Ratio	14.9	17.9	17.0	18.6	14.2	16.8	916.6	19.3
20-24	1960	122.7	108.0	124.8	138.4	122.8	117.8	114.2	120.2
	Ratio	15.1	15.8	14.6	16.3	15.1	15.2	13.8	15.4
	1970	101.6	81.4	118.4	116.6	98.6	81.5	99.5	87.0
	Ratio	13.5	13.7	13.8	14.3	12.6	12.8	12.3	12.5
25-29	1960	111.4	87.2	109.2	109.7	115.2	104.9	124.0	111.7
	Ratio	13.7	12.8	12.9	12.9	14.2	13.6	15.0	14.3
	1970	91.6	67.8	101.8	95.6	93.0	72.6	88.9	72.7
	Ratio	12.2	11.4	11.9	11.7	11.9	11.4	11.0	10.4
30-34	1960	95.7	74.0	97.1	89.8	93.5	97.1	108.0	97.8
	Ratio	11.8	10.8	11.3	10.6	11.5	12.6	13.2	12.5
	1970	92.6	65.9	88.8	83.4	93.4	73.3	91.5	74.2
	Ratio	12.3	11.1	10.3	10.2	12.0	11.5	11.3	10.6
35-39	1960	73.8	58.8	79.2	72.8	77.4	65.1	84.6	74.1
	Ratio	9.1	8.6	9.2	8.5	9.5	8.4	10.2	9.5
	1970	79.5	56.8	82.1	75.8	84.2	64.6	88.9	71.3
	Ratio	10.6	9.5	9.6	9.3	10.8	10.1	11.0	10.2
40-49	1960	118.9	97.0	117.9	105.9	118.2	110.9	123.0	111.3
	Ratio	14.7	14.2	13.8	12.4	14.6	14.3	14.9	14.3
	1970	113.1	83.2	118.4	105.3	123.8	94.9	126.9	100.6
	Ratio	15.0	14.0	13.8	12.9	15.9	14.8	15.7	14.4
50-59	1960	79.1	64.6	74.3	68.6	89.1	77.1	81.0	65.9
	Ratio	9.7	9.5	8.7	8.1	11.0	10.0	9.8	8.4
	1970	70.5	50.6	69.7	59.1	76.5	57.7	71.2	53.8
	Ratio	9.4	8.5	8.1	7.2	9.8	9.0	8.8	7.7
60 and over	1960	43.6	31.9	37.7	29.7	52.0	36.1	37.4	24.6
	Ratio	5.3	4.7	4.4	3.5	6.5	4.7	4.5	3.1
	1970	38.4	24.3	35.5	23.8	54.3	34.2	36.4	20.8
	Ratio	5.1	4.1	4.1	2.9	6.9	5.4	4.4	3.0
Un- known	1960	2.6	1.7	1.9	1.2	2.6	1.8	1.7	1.2
	Ratio	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
	1970	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1
	Ratio	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

\*Source: National Statistic Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand's Population and Housing Census (Bangkok, 1960, 1970).

TABLE VIII  
AGE COMPOSITION AND YOUTH DEPENDENCY RATIO  
1960, 1970 AND REGION\*

	14 and under	15 to 59	Youth dependency ratio
Central			
1960	3,498,791	4,298,188	81.40
1970	4,530,898	5,487,739	82.56
Northeastern			
1960	4,120,675	4,542,677	90.71
1970	5,708,426	5,832,080	97.87
Southern			
1960	1,347,902	1,751,241	76.97
1970	1,918,647	2,100,644	91.33
Northern			
1960	2,472,075	2,974,390	83.11
1970	3,348,294	3,746,150	89.37

\*Source: National Statistic Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand Population and Housing Census (Bangkok, 1960, 1970).

#### Education Attainment

The most striking feature of the educational system in Thailand is the percentage of decrease in illiteracy. In the Northern Region, especially, the percentage decrease in illiteracy is most apparent. The decrease of illiteracy for women in the Northern Region, as well as increased enrollment in primary educational levels, is much more noticeable than that for men. The increase for females in secondary and university level is not significant, but has increased as shown in Table IX. Because of compulsory education, both sexes have equal opportunities for education.

TABLE IX  
SCHOOL ATTENDED BY POPULATION SIX YEARS OF AGE AND OVER BY SEX 1960, 1970\*

Region	Year	Sex	Total	No. Ed.	Prim. Level	Sec. Level	Univ. Level	Other Ed.	Unknown
Central	1960	Male	3,363,710	26.9	62.0	6.9	1.5	0.7	2.0
	1970		4,300,975	17.6	66.3	11.0	1.8	0.9	2.4
	1960	Female	3,346,861	41.3	53.7	3.3	0.7	0.1	0.9
	1970		4,422,329	27.2	62.2	7.2	1.2	0.5	1.7
North-eastern	1960	Male	3,569,261	25.7	70.4	2.6	0.2	0.7	0.4
	1970		4,619,538	17.5	76.8	3.4	0.4	0.6	1.3
	1960	Female	3,625,959	37.2	61.5	0.9	0.1	0.1	0.2
	1970		4,733,539	25.2	71.9	1.5	0.1	0.2	1.1
Southern	1960	Male	1,384,398	40.4	53.9	4.0	0.4	0.3	1.0
	1970		1,712,815	28.4	63.0	5.7	0.5	0.5	1.9
	1960	Female	1,314,880	53.2	44.4	1.7	0.2	0.1	0.4
	1970		1,707,409	38.9	56.2	3.1	0.3	0.3	1.2
Northern	1960	Male	2,291,713	38.0	58.0	2.8	0.2	0.5	0.5
	1970		3,049,938	27.1	66.5	3.9	0.4	0.6	1.5
	1960	Female	2,269,331	54.6	43.9	1.1	0.1	0.1	0.2
	1970		3,049,420	38.8	57.6	2.1	0.2	0.3	1.0

\*Source: National Statistic Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand Population and Housing Census (Bangkok, 1960, 1970).

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis of demographic characteristics, using age-sex pyramids, migration rates, youth dependency ratios, percent employed, and years of education provide some understanding about female participation in the labor force between 1960-1970. The findings derived from the analysis indicate that the age-sex pyramids depict Thailand as having a predominantly young population indicative of a country experiencing high fertility. Between 1960-1970 the percentage of female population increased in the lowest age category and decreased in the higher age categories. As high fertility rates occurred in most countries after World War II, the relative decrease of the older population is in part attributed to low fertility during World War II. Higher fertility in the post-World War II period is reflected in the high youth dependency ratio, which was indicated in the findings, particularly in the Southern Region of Thailand. The data on migration also indicate that the rate of migration for females was higher than for males. The trends indicate that females were increasingly migrating from rural to urban areas and that a greater number of females, especially in the rural areas, were more literate and completing the compulsory level of education.

The preceding trends--high fertility, increase in migration, higher youth dependency ratios, and increase in the literacy rates during the 1960-1970 decade--are factors which are related to an increase in female participation in the labor force. Understanding the implications of these trends on the female participation in the labor force requires a brief description of economy, culture, and the sex roles which were presented in Chapters I and II of this study.

In general, Thailand is composed of four geographically determined regions populated by a variety of ethnic groups. (See Appendix A.) These groups are undergoing a transition from a rural traditional outlook based upon an agrarian economy to an outlook modified by modern urban and industrial aspects of Western culture. One of the principal elements which has contributed to reducing the potentially disruptive dimension of this transformation has been that of mass education. The requirements of education have kept pace with the increased demands presented by the break from the traditional toward increased bureaucracy and its rational legal format.

Contemporary Thai society mirrors all the changes which are occurring in developing Third World nations concomitant with industrialization, urbanization, and bureaucratization. These socioeconomic processes have brought with them sharp breaks within many of the traditional, agrarian oriented institutions in Thailand. Other institutions have reorganized

their functions to accommodate changing values and attitudes. The Buddhist religion is an important factor in the socialization of the Thai people and the formation of division of labor along sexual boundaries. Unlike many other Southeast Asian countries, the female is not forced to occupy an inferior role in Thai society. This is due primarily to the changes brought by urbanization and the sectoral transition in Thailand's economic industries. Both males and females are encouraged to compete for educational and athletic achievements. Family life also encourages this equality by the attitude of partnerships in marital relationships and decision-making. During the adolescent period, a more restrictive modus vivendi is adopted by females in Thai society. Females exhibit traditional female roles, abstaining from physical work and competitive activities. Males are allowed to become aggressive and self-indulgent in their behavior. Here the central religion plays a key part. All males usually take vows as monks to assuage the masculine drives of adolescence. Then marriage relationships once again emphasize the equal division of labor, as both men and women participate in work, earning a living.

Educational reforms legislated in the 1920's have also affected a change in the traditional role of females. Although males exceed females at every level of educational attainment, literacy rates among females have steadily



increased. Every decade shows an increase in the literacy rate due to compulsory schooling.

Political opportunities and active participation in politics have also been important in the changing role behavior of Thai women. The power to influence the governmental processes has added a new dimension to the social-political awareness of women.

Thailand reflects not only institutional changes experienced in the transition to modernity, but also demographic changes occurring concurrently with industrialization and urbanization. Thailand epitomizes what urban sociologists refer to as the "demographic transition." From 1890 to 1960, Thailand's mortality rate has fallen from 30/1000 population to less than 13/1000.<sup>1</sup> Improvements in health facilities, housing, medical technology, public education programs, and public inoculation programs have all provided the impetus for the reduction of mortality rate. Simultaneously, the fertility rates in Thailand remained at a relatively stable rate of 45/1000. This would place Thailand in the second stage of the demographic transition characterized by low mortality rate and high birth rates. This demographic phenomenon has meant a rapidly increasing population and pressures in the agrarian provinces due to the ever decreasing ability of the rural areas to support the increasing population. As a result, cities in Thailand are increasing

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<sup>1</sup>Thomlinson, p. 65.

their growth at a rate of 5 percent every year. Bangkok-Thonburi has, in fact, become the primate city of Thailand exerting attractive "pull" factors for the rural population in the form of modern amenities and better opportunities for occupational and social mobility. At present, there is no indication of a lessening of the gravitational force exerted by Bangkok-Thonburi where the population shows an annual increase of 6.5 percent a year. The tables provided in the context of this paper further document the demographic transformation Thailand is undergoing.

To clearly illustrate how the economic, social, and cultural setting and the demographic variables found in this study affect each other, certain significant factors that influenced the female participation in the labor force should be singled out. Some of these factors are sex roles, fertility, urbanization, education, and the labor situation.

One of these significant factors is the prevalent sex roles. In Thailand, being a female is not a barrier to participation in the labor force. Sex roles in Thailand have not been as rigid as in other Southeast Asian countries. Sex roles have always been complementary functions where men work in the fields while women work in the kitchen. In the past, in times of economic hardship, women were expected to engage in other activities to help out with the family's needs. The Thais accept the birth of a female child with the same esteem as a male child. Modern technology has freed women from time

consuming work, allowing them to engage in other activities such as petty trade, home industry, or salaried office positions. This means that women in both rural and urban areas are earning cash to acquire new labor-saving and comfort-giving commodities. In this new setting, women are at present reinforcing their role as partners. Although they are working, they still have not neglected their roles as nourishers to the family.

In general, the Western influence which has brought industrialization has been assimilated into the Thai culture creating a more flexible society where women have the opportunity to be viewed as equal to men.

High fertility may be viewed as both a perpetuating and retarding force on female participation in the labor. For Thailand, the demographic trends found in the study clearly illustrate the increase in fertility and youth dependency ratio. These trends have motivated females' participation in the labor force in order to meet the rising family financial needs. In rural areas, females are often unpaid family workers. In recent times, it has not been easy for a family to depend exclusively on income from farming, especially in industrializing areas. A family with a large number of children has to depend on the female members of the family to bring in additional income.

High fertility and high youth dependency ratios are usually thought of as retarding the economic development of

the country; women who enter the labor force under these circumstances are employed at low-level, unskilled jobs and do not get the chance to realize their potential, efficiency, and earning power.

Another factor influencing women to enter the labor force is the urbanization process. The trends show that female migration has increased from rural to urban areas. The bulk of migration has been to the primate city of Bangkok-Thonburi and areas where more jobs, higher education, and better housing facilities are available. Most urban areas have attracted women from rural areas for jobs which pay wages. In the rural areas, most women work without pay in the family business such as farming, fishing, weaving, or crafting. Moving into the urban areas, women have found themselves having better opportunities for wage employment which allows them to consume commodities that bring them comforts.

Urbanization has not only influenced females to greater participation in the labor force, but has also affected their economic development and the sex roles. Having migrated to urban areas, females are adopting new ideas and attitudes toward family size, participation in politics, higher professional jobs with higher pay, and higher education, which urban females have adopted concurrent with the industrialization. When these migrating females return to their hometown after having been exposed to these new ideas and attitudes,

they pass them on to their families and friends. For example, lower fertility may occur if rural females accept birth control methods used by urban females.

Urbanization necessitates the adaptation of migrating females to the urban areas. A study by Visid Prachuabmoh and others in the analysis of rural and urban population of Thailand has shown that residents in the urban provincial areas resemble their counterparts in the capital city far more than they resemble the population in the rural areas.<sup>2</sup> If females would continue to migrate to urban provincial areas, they might adapt to the new settings much better than they would in the capital which is Bangkok. Migrating directly to the capital city may have certain psychological effects on the new arrivals, especially those from rural areas. In general, the migrating females are aware of the differences that exist between rural and urban areas. They are continuing to migrate to urban areas, but more so to the urban provincial areas rather than directly to the capital city.

Another factor which is of great importance in preparing females for participation in the labor force is the level of educational achievements. Higher education will enable women to enter into different occupations, especially in the professional levels, rather than the tertiary or domestic sector. The trend found in this study shows a decline in illiteracy, as well as the corresponding increase in primary, secondary,

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<sup>2</sup>Prachuabmoh, p. 83.

and university levels of education. However, the majority of women are still engaged in unskilled jobs with little pay. At the present, the Thai government is improving its educational standards in order to upgrade the quality of the labor force and to encourage women to participate more in the labor force with better pay. There has also been an indication of education affecting the level of fertility. A study by Sidney Goldstein has indicated that women in the rural areas who completed compulsory schooling have shown a significant decrease in fertility rates.<sup>3</sup> It seems that educational attainment for Thai women is improving and is affecting the fertility rates. If this pattern continues, women will have fewer obstacles in entering the labor force and will be able to acquire better jobs with better pay, thus helping the country to raise the standard of living. The government will also invest more money in improving the educational standard while decreasing the budget for social services.

Because Thailand is an agricultural country, there are few industries. In the rural areas the majority of women are engaging in farming (with pay and without pay) while most urban women are wage earners engaging in skilled and unskilled jobs. However, the industrialization and urbanization that are occurring in Thailand are helping to create more jobs in

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<sup>3</sup>Sidney Goldstein, Alice Goldstein, and Penporn Tirasawat, "The Influence of Labor Force Participation and Education on Fertility in Thailand" (Bangkok, 1972), p. 25.

different areas and in different technical and professional levels. The trends showing high migration and education in this study seem to indicate that Thai women are improving their educational attainment and are seeking better jobs and pay. If this pattern continues, women will be able to upgrade their skills and enter the labor force at higher levels, which, in turn, raises the entire nation's standard of living.

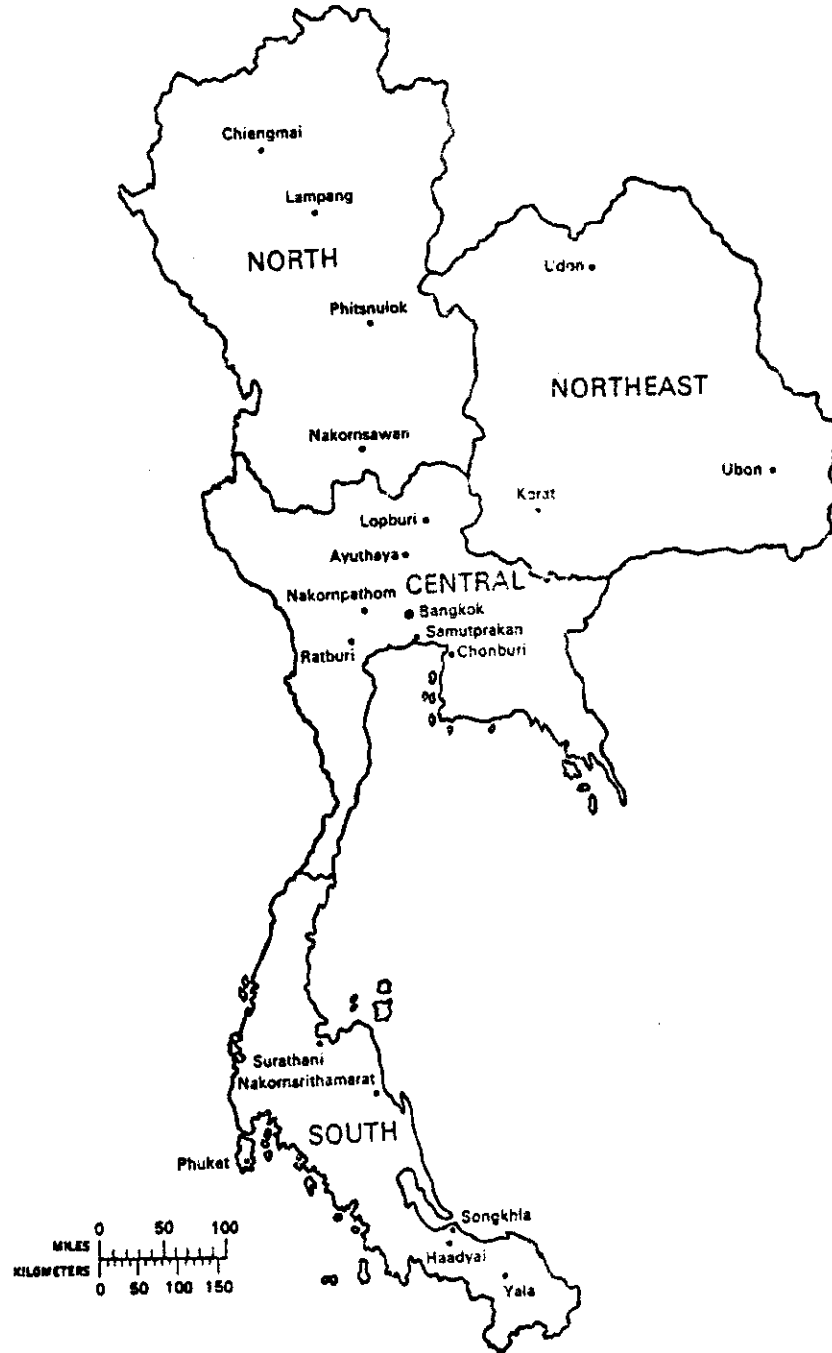
In conclusion, the demographic trends are affecting the economy, culture, and the roles of women. Although still in the early stage of modernization, Thailand's female population during the last decade became increasingly urban. Female participation rates in urban occupations increased in urban areas, particularly in Bangkok which experienced rapid growth. Although the Thai family and the sex roles are predominantly as they were after World War II, there are indications that sex roles are changing, as indicated by demographic and economic changes during the decade 1960-1970. The Thai woman in the future may participate more actively in the labor force and face concomitant social and psychological dilemma. The relative high levels of education in Thailand may facilitate her ability to participate even more actively and enable her to adapt to the changing urban world which may engulf her.

## APPENDIX



APPENDIX A

THE FOUR REGIONS AND THE TWENTY LARGEST MUNICIPAL AREAS, 1967\*

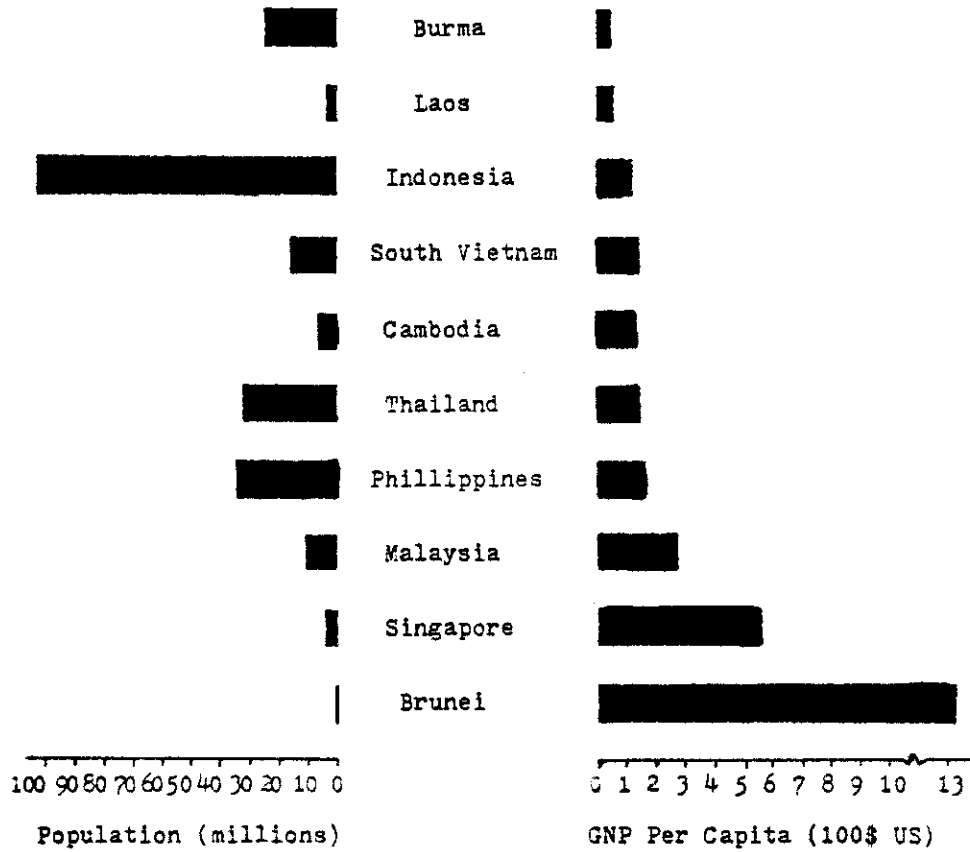


Source: National Statistic Office, Statistical Yearbook, 1967-1969 (Bangkok, 1969), pp. 50-56.

APPENDIX B

ESTIMATED POPULATION AND GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT, PER CAPITA\*

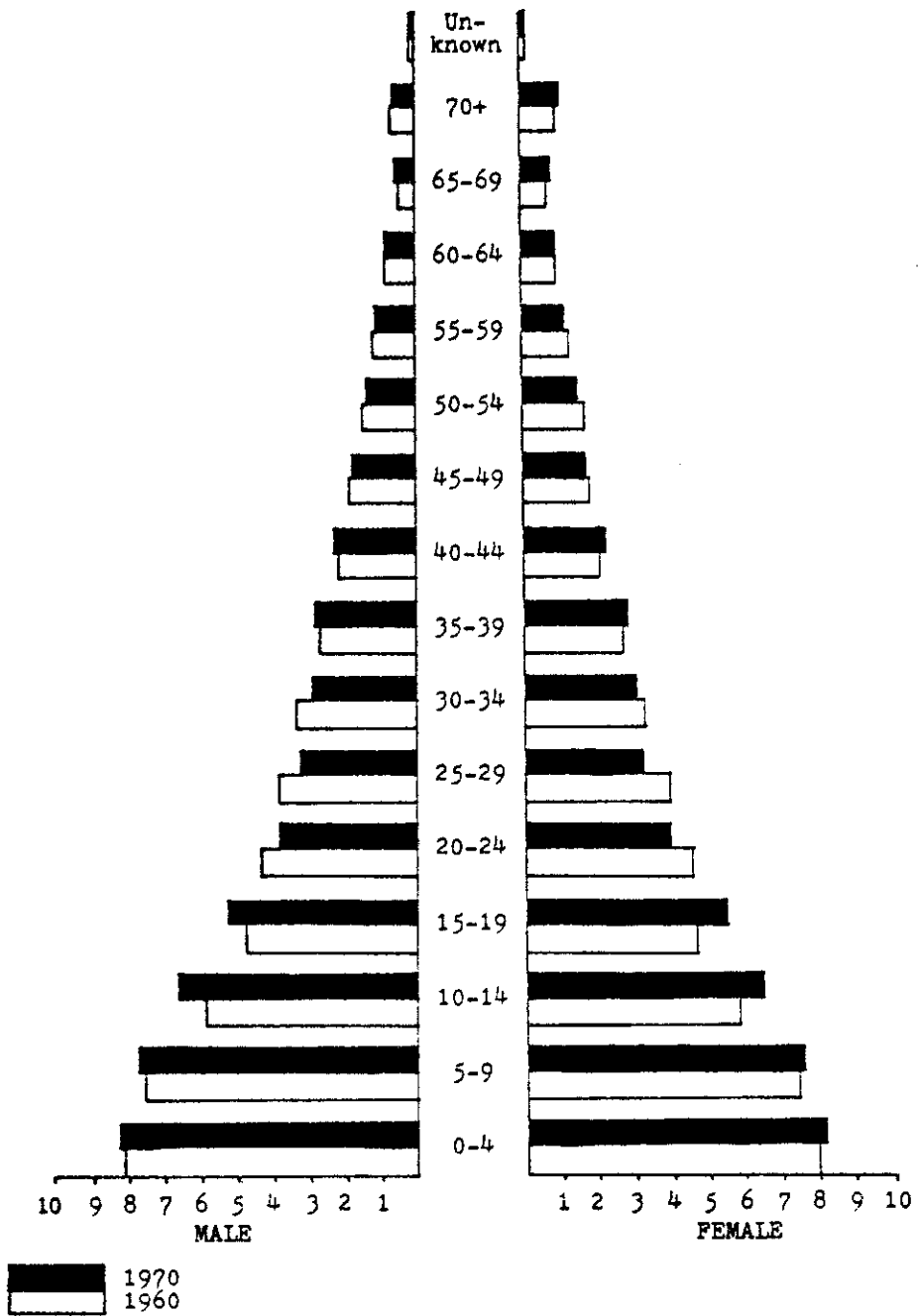
(1966)



\*Source: Donald W. Fryer, Emerging Southeast Asia, A Study in Growth and Stagnation (New York, 1970), p. 10.

APPENDIX C

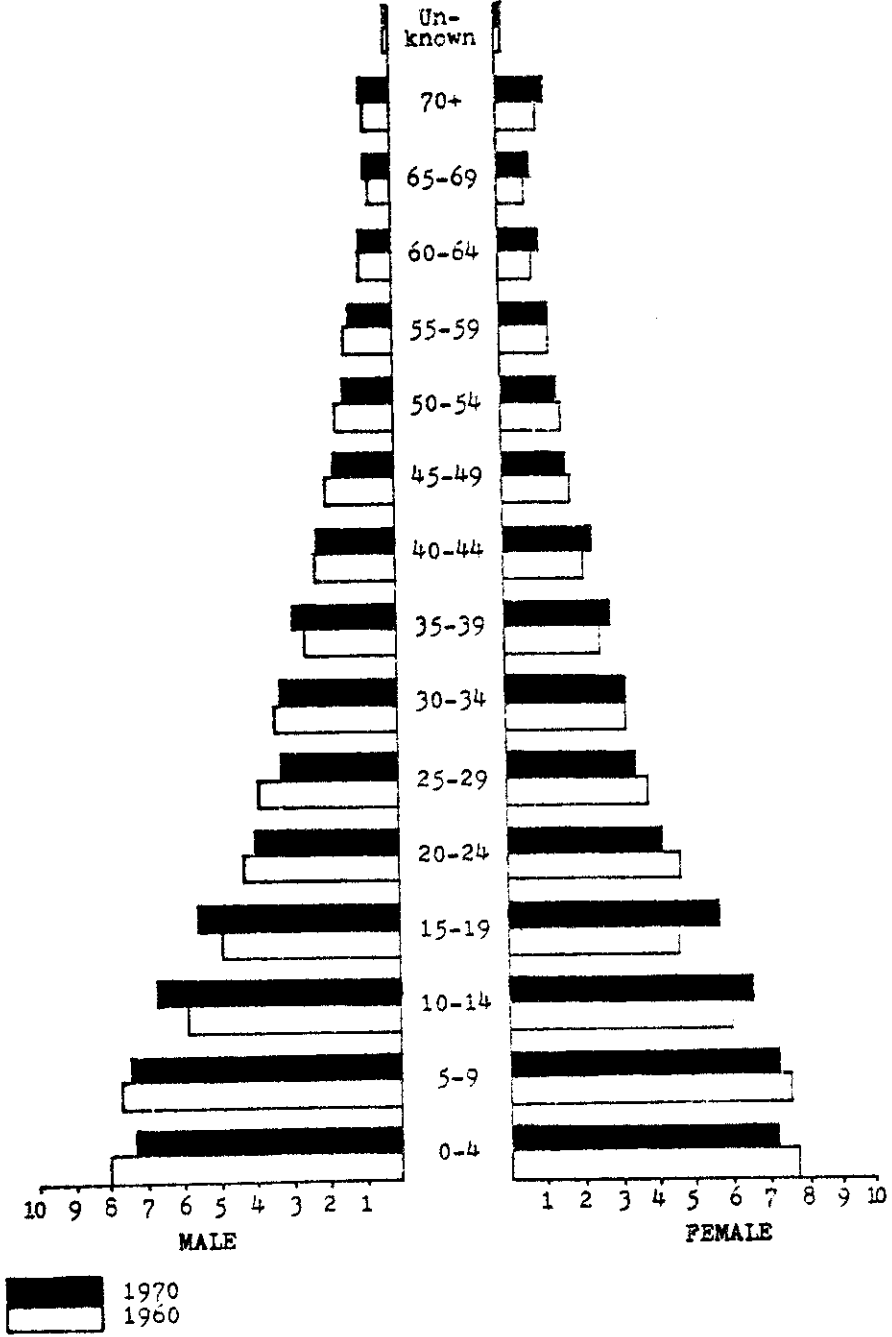
POPULATION BY 5 YEAR AGE GROUP, SEX, WHOLE KINGDOM--1960, 1970\*



\*Source: National Statistic Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand Population and Housing Census, (Bangkok, 1960, 1970).

APPENDIX D

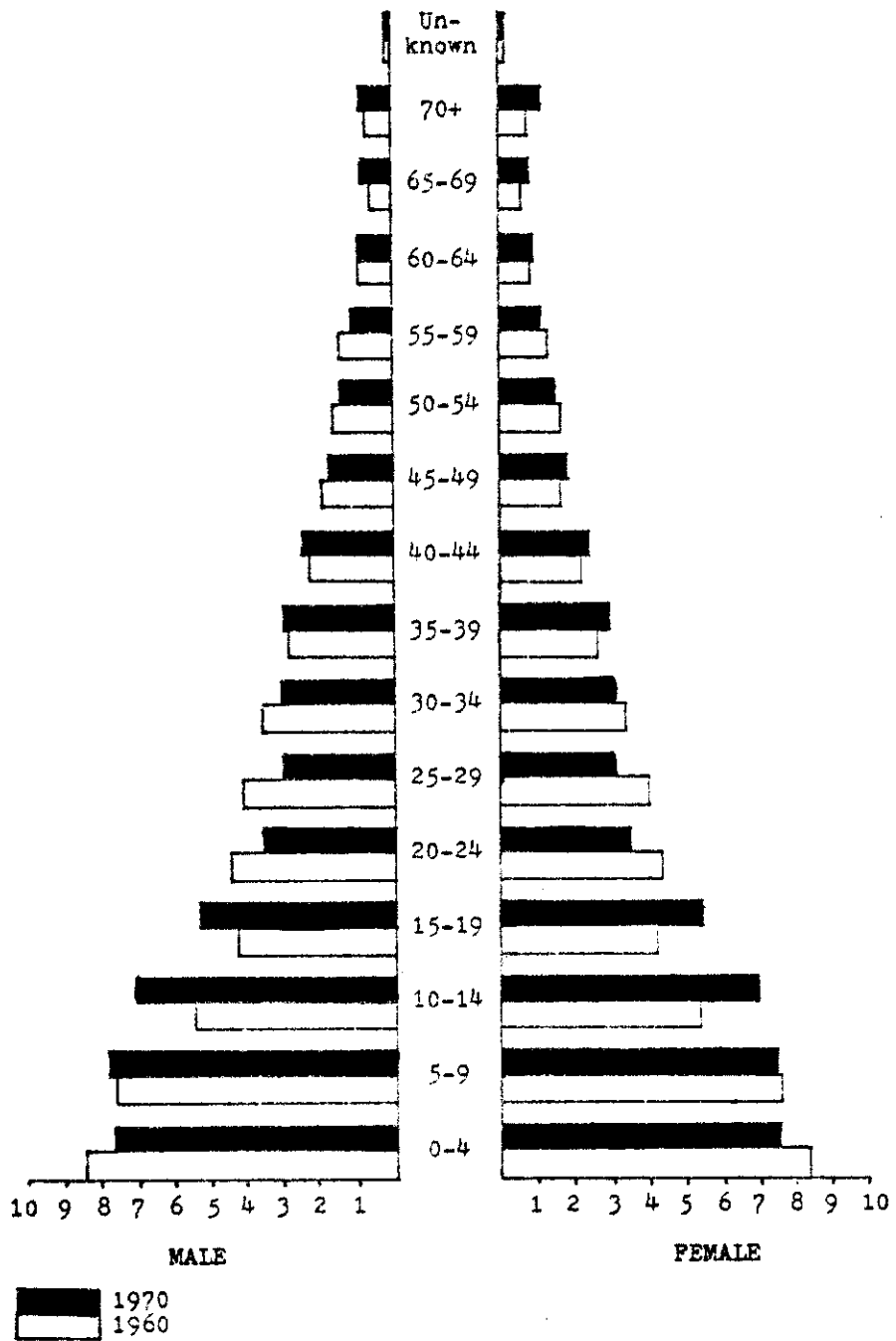
POPULATION BY 5 YEAR AGE GROUP, SEX, CENTRAL--1960, 1970\*



\*Source: National Statistic Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand Population and Housing Census (Bangkok, 1960, 1970).

APPENDIX E

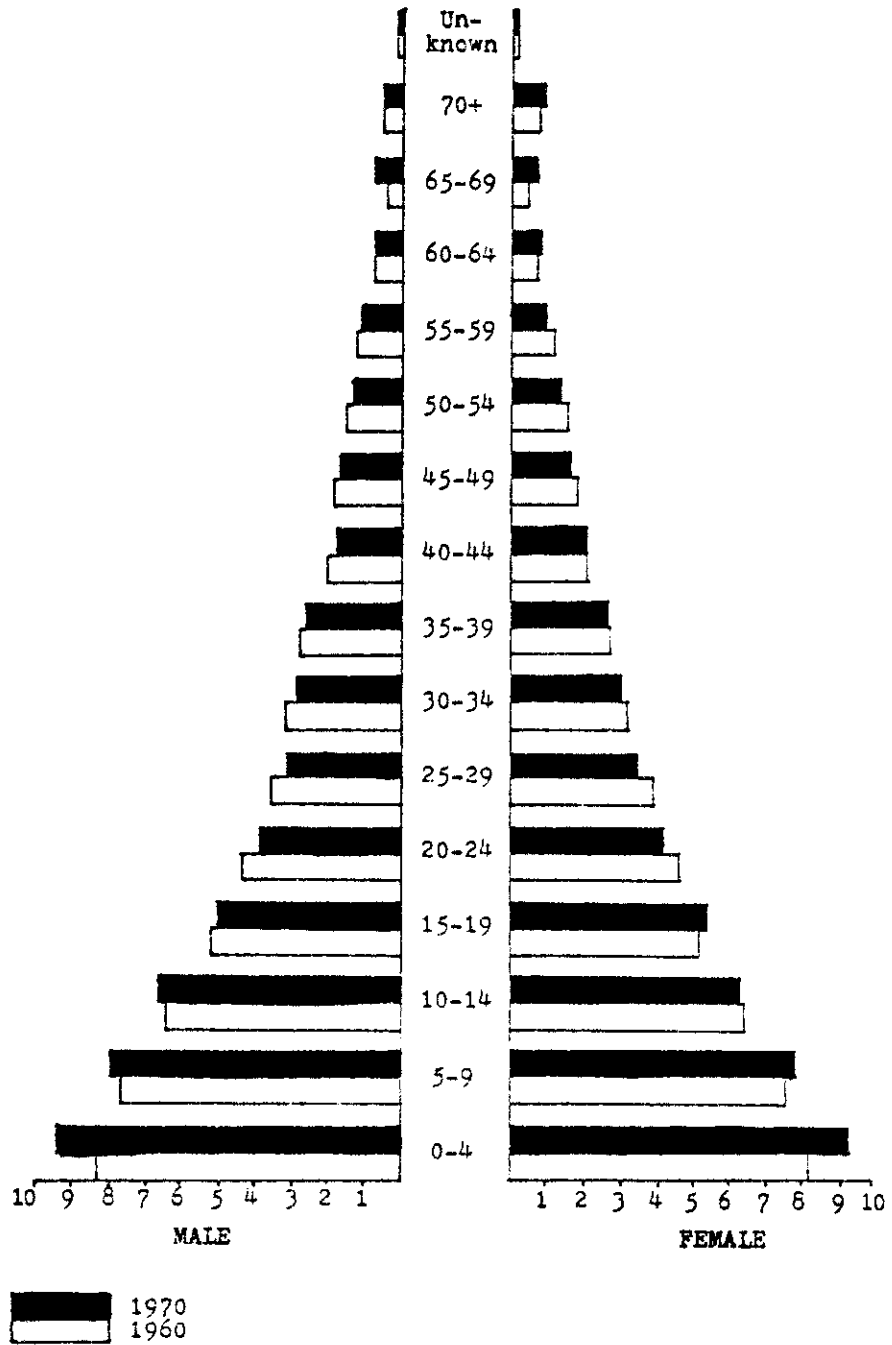
POPULATION BY 5 YEAR AGE GROUP, SEX, NORTHERN--1960, 1970\*



\*Source: National Statistic Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand Population and Housing Census (Bangkok, 1960, 1970).

APPENDIX F

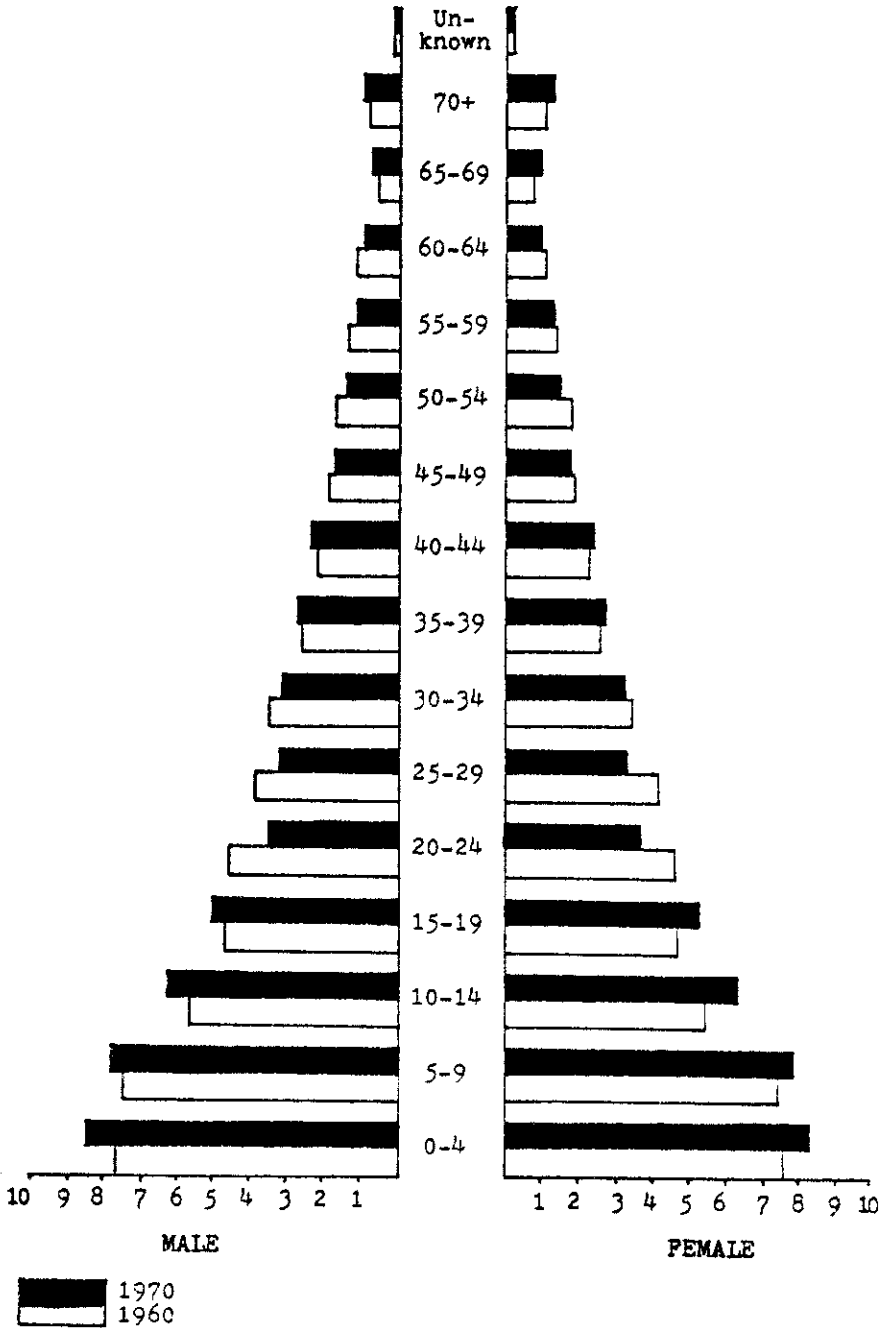
POPULATION BY 5 YEAR AGE GROUP, SEX, NORTHEASTERN--1960, 1970\*



\*Source: National Statistic Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand Population and Housing Census (Bangkok, 1960, 1970).

APPENDIX G

POPULATION BY 5 YEAR AGE GROUP, SEX, SOUTHERN--1960, 1970\*



\*Source: National Statistic Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand Population and Housing Census (Bangkok, 1960, 1970).

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